



ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum
Curriculum Sampler



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Mennonite Education Agency works with Anabaptist educational institutions within and beyond Mennonite Church USA. Our network of pre-K-12 schools, colleges, universities and seminaries extends across the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and Albania.



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Dock Mennonite Academy inspires and equips each student to serve with a global perspective by integrating faith, academic excellence and life-enriching opportunities in a Christ-centered community. Dock serves children from Early Childhood to Grade 12 on two campuses in suburban Philadelphia.



Freeman Academy is a Christ-centered school for grades 1-12. We seek to provide an atmosphere that encourages students to find themselves as persons of worth and purpose. A blend of traditional instruction and project-based learning gives students a superior academic foundation and meets the needs of individuals.



Eastern Mennonite School, founded in 1917, is located in Harrisonburg, VA and serves students representing diverse faith backgrounds through a school culture and philosophy rooted in Anabaptist values. Eastern Mennonite School joins home and church in calling students to faith in Jesus Christ, academic excellence, personal integrity, and compassionate service in the world.

ENCOUNTER: AN ANABAPTIST FAITH FORMATION CURRICULUM

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Welcome to ENCOUNTER: An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

As the Encounter logo demonstrates so well by using speech bubbles, many encounters enrich our faith. These encounters with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit become more fully known by reading, discussing, praying, sharing, and serving. Community-building classrooms provide rich opportunities for God's spirit to be revealed.

We pray that you will take this offering of curriculum as a work in process. The writers believe that their work is important for forming faith, but they know that these lessons will need you to interpret them in your classroom, context, and school. As disciples of Jesus, both writers and instructors inspire faith and values. Your added contribution will make this curriculum come alive for your students.

With humble gratitude we thank the writers, sponsors, and supporters who have worked together to make Encounter: An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum possible.

Sincerely,

Elaine A. Moyer and J. Richard Thomas
Co-chairs, Encounter Steering Committee

Why ENCOUNTER?

ENCOUNTER is a dynamic curriculum where students encounter God, each other, and all of creation. It emphasizes holistic faith formation: not only putting on the mind of Christ (gaining knowledge) but also claiming the heart of Christ (enlarging our love) and following in the footsteps of Christ (putting our knowledge and love into action). Through ENCOUNTER students will know at a deep level that they are known, loved, and valued by God. Knowing God's love and the transformational presence of the Spirit calls students to join with God in bringing healing and hope to the world.



ENCOUNTER Developed by classroom teachers, Encounter is a prekindergarten to Grade 12 Bible curriculum for Anabaptist/Christian faith formation. It grew out of requests from teachers in member schools of the Mennonite Schools Council. Following these requests, a survey of teachers affirmed that this curriculum should be focused on faith formation rooted in the Anabaptist/Christian stream of theology while also being warmly ecumenical.

ENCOUNTER uses a narrative approach to teaching Bible with the incarnation as its base. It tells stories in a way that highlights God at work through human characters in the story. Stories are told and often followed by wondering questions that lead students out of their individual worlds and into the larger world of faith.

ENCOUNTER seeks to help students understand that the biblical story is usually told from the vantage point of people at the margins of society rather than at the center of power. It includes accounts of both failure and faithfulness and speaks to all people in all times and places. The early years of the curriculum focus on Bible stories and wondering questions. The middle years focus on experiential learning. The high school years include study of world religions that shape society at large. Finally, the senior year ends with a capstone project.

Through **ENCOUNTER**, students will grow in their capacity and willingness to respond to join God's work of reconciling all things through Jesus Christ. This includes breaking down dividing walls, working against oppression, practicing compassion, sharing wisdom, and living lives of peace, justice, and service. Students shaped by this curriculum will model alternatives to the dominating, individualistic, power-seeking, and wealth-accumulating society in which we live. Finally, students will be able to articulate the gospel in a compelling way as others ask about their faith and life.

ENCOUNTER also includes material from *Circle of Grace*, a Christian, safe environment curriculum that teaches children and youth how to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries as well as how to take action when boundaries are threatened or violated. It was developed by the Archdiocese of Omaha and others. Individuals connected with the nonprofit Dove's Nest: Faith Communities Keeping Children and Youth Safe reviewed the Protestant version of the curriculum. Visit <https://dovesnest.net/circleofgrace> for more materials and information regarding *Circle of Grace*.

It is fine if teachers wish to access the Circle of Grace material online. Dove's Nest can provide login information (anna@dovesnest.net). However, it is very important that the username and password and content not be shared with others outside of your school, as each school is required to have its own license.



Theological Framework

Based on Anabaptist Christian faith, the curriculum is warmly welcoming and invitational to evangelicals, Catholics, mainline Protestants, and persons with no faith affiliation, particularly international students in high school.

Anabaptist Christian faith traces its beginning to the Protestant Reformation. The new faith grew out of the social, political, and religious ferment of the times. An Anabaptist was a person who was rebaptized upon adult confession of faith with a commitment to follow Jesus daily. Following its beginnings in 1525 in Zurich, Switzerland, this grassroots movement expressed itself in various ways as it spread across Northern Europe.

Many Anabaptists eventually were called Mennonites because one of the leaders named Menno Simons, a former Catholic priest in Holland, brought unity to the movement and made the case for peace being a central understanding of the gospel. His key verse was “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ” 1 Corinthians 3:11, NRSV.

Through migration and mission Mennonites and other Anabaptists have become a global community with the majority of Mennonites living in the global South. This international community of churches continues to learn from each other, seeing and understanding Jesus most clearly through the eyes of persons from many cultures and nations.

For Anabaptist Christians Jesus is the key to interpreting scripture: all scripture is read and interpreted through the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This leads Anabaptists to understand the biblical story as an unfolding revelation of God with Jesus being the fullest revelation of God and of God's way for humanity. Thus the Bible is not a flat book, but rather one in which Jesus offers the interpretative key and final revelation of God's will. Anabaptists look to Jesus for their final understanding when parts of scripture, particularly in the Old Testament, may indicate something other than the way of Jesus.

Being Christ-centered leads Anabaptists to reject war and violence, to practice adult baptism, to interpret the Bible in community, and to claim reconciliation as their work. This is expressed through the vision of one Anabaptist denomination that says, “God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.”¹

¹ Mennonite Church USA Vision Statement

Because of the Anabaptist emphasis on the Bible interpreted through the life and ministry of Jesus, the theology is not creedal, though groups have written confessions of faith that express their best understanding of Christian faith and life. These confessions build identity, are used for teaching, and share core convictions with others. The Shared Convictions of Global Anabaptists adopted by Mennonite World Conference (MWC) form the theological framework for the curriculum. These shared convictions read:

By the grace of God, we seek to live and proclaim the good news of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. As part of the one body of Christ at all times and places, we hold the following to be central to our belief and practice:

1. God is known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator who seeks to restore fallen humanity by calling a people to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service and witness.
2. Jesus is the Son of God. Through his life and teachings, his cross and resurrection, he showed us how to be faithful disciples, redeemed the world, and offers eternal life.
3. As a church, we are a community of those whom God's Spirit calls to turn from sin, acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, receive baptism upon confession of faith, and follow Christ in life.
4. As a faith community, we accept the Bible as our authority for faith and life, interpreting it together under Holy Spirit guidance, in the light of Jesus Christ to discern God's will for our obedience.
5. The Spirit of Jesus empowers us to trust God in all areas of life so we become peacemakers who renounce violence, love our enemies, seek justice, and share our possessions with those in need.
6. We gather regularly to worship, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and to hear the Word of God in a spirit of mutual accountability.
7. As a worldwide community of faith and life we transcend boundaries of nationality, race, class, gender and language. We seek to live in the world without conforming to the powers of evil, witnessing to God's grace by serving others, caring for creation, and inviting all people to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

In these convictions we draw inspiration from Anabaptist forebears of the 16th century, who modelled radical discipleship to Jesus Christ. We seek to walk in his name by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we confidently await Christ's return and the final fulfillment of God's kingdom.²

² Mennonite World Conference Shared Convictions, 2006.



The shared convictions are presented in brief form in three key statements developed by Palmer Becker.

His book, *Anabaptist Essentials: Ten Signs of a Unique Christian Faith* (Herald Press, 2017), is recommended background reading for all teachers using Encounter. Three statements from the book are foundational in Encounter. They are:

- 
1. Jesus is the center of our faith.
 2. Community is the center of our life.
 3. Reconciliation is the center of our work.

Encounter takes seriously a missional commitment to see where God is at work and to join with God in bringing healing and hope in the world. It seeks to help students understand that the Bible is the inspired book of the church that points beyond itself to the triune God revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit. The intention of this curriculum is to help students develop the biblical understanding and literacy essential to faith formation.

Encounter as a curriculum:

- provides an understanding of the development of the Bible and its literary genres;
- calls students to experience the transforming power of God's love;
- teaches students tools to help them read the Bible through the lens of Jesus Christ, the living Word and full revelation of God;
- helps students develop faith practices that will serve them beyond high school;
- asks students to share where they see God at work;
- enables students to share their faith in deed and word;
- calls students to memorize key Bible passages for faith formation;
- helps students to experience the grace of God and to understand that God calls them to live in grace-filled communities of joy and peace;
- invites students to share the passion and will of God for unity in the Christian community;
- provides teaching and tools for students to live in community;
- provides understandings, practices, and mission opportunities for students to practice peace that grows out of justice and reconciliation;
- encourages the use of biblical stories and wondering questions to help students engage scripture personally and as a group;
- provides students practice in inductive Bible study;
- helps students develop and experience biblical discernment of Christian community in the 21st century as modeled in Acts 15;

- aids students to be committed to Jesus Christ while respecting world religions and understanding the commonalities of the great religious traditions which create bridges for conversation;
- enables students in a few words to tell the gospel story in a way that is compelling for others. They will know the master narrative of the Bible: that God through Christ is reconciling all things to God and that we are called to join with God in moving all creation toward God's intention.

Key scriptures for Encounter are:

- Luke 24:13-35: On the road to Emmaus through encounter, interaction, and the breaking of bread, the disciples recognize Jesus. As teachers lead students to reflect on biblical stories and to engage through wondering questions, journaling, discussions and faith practices, learners will encounter the living Christ.
- John 1:14b: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us.” In 1 John 2:6 we read that “Whoever says, ‘I abide in him,’ ought to walk just as he walked.” We want learners to see Jesus as the model of life God intended.
- Romans 12:1–2: To discern the will of God, Christians are called to an ongoing transformation through the renewing of the mind. The Christian life is not transactional but rather transformational. The Apostle Paul wrote that when one turns to the Lord and sees the glory of the Lord, one will be “transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18). We want that for our students.
- Micah 4:4a: “They shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid.” This way of living pictures shalom, which is God’s intention for all humanity. Shalom is further defined in Micah where swords are beaten into instruments for agriculture and nations no longer practice war. Finally, in an Old Testament summary statement, Micah writes, God “has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with you God?” (Micah 6:8)
- Matthew 5:17: Jesus warns not to think that he has come to abolish the law and prophets; instead, he has come to bring them to fulfillment. As we follow in the way of Jesus Christ, we live into the fullness of his life, teachings, death, and resurrection and into the vision of Lord’s prayer—that God’s “will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

Encounter Faith Practices for Schools

#1

In this school students know they are loved and valued by God which enables them to value and love each other.

#2

Peacebuilding, including the use of restorative discipline, is regularly modeled and practiced as a lifestyle of nonviolence, seeking justice, and being part of a reconciling faith community.

#3

Our school values and is responsive to cultural, racial, and socioeconomic diversity.

#4

Our school provides a welcoming community where it is emotionally safe to raise questions, to value and learn from differences, and to care for each other.

#5

Our school enables students to practice global awareness, cultural sensitivity, antiracism, and compassionate living.

#6

Students grow in their understanding of stewardship of all God has entrusted to them, including the natural environment.

#7

All staff are committed to modeling the life of Jesus Christ.

#8

Students grow in understanding the process of biblical discernment by asking questions, practicing spiritual disciplines, and engaging with other Christians.

#9

Students are encouraged to grow in relationship with Jesus and to follow Jesus daily in life through attitudes and practice.

#10

Our school does everything it can to eliminate obstacles that exclude or hinder the ability of students to receive a faith-infused education of excellence.

#11

Stories and symbols of faith and reconciliation are regularly shared in our school community.

#12

Our school invites parents to partner in children's faith formation.

#13

Our school is a community that lives the gospel message through praying, serving others, and enabling students to grow in understanding so that they can make a positive difference locally and globally.

#14

Our school builds a strong faith and learning community in which students and staff support each other.

#15

Our school enables students to live a life of curiosity, wonder, and mystery as they join with God to bring the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Encounter Scope and Sequence

Prekindergarten: Peaceful Living

Students in PreK are guided to consider how they can love and care for each other and live peacefully. Bible lessons focus on the life and ministry of Jesus and relate to children's families and congregations.

Kindergarten through Grade 2: Jesus: The Center of Our Work, Our Play, and Our Community

Young children will recognize that they are valuable members of a community, which calls them to love their neighbors. They will know that Jesus loves them and that Jesus models the way to live. Finally, children will understand that as a part of a community and as followers of Jesus, they are invited to be peacemakers.

Grade Three: Building Relationships

Grade Three students learn about relationships that create community as God intended for humanity. Using biblical stories, the Bible curriculum helps students think about friends, family, and community. Learning about persons who lived lives of faith in other times and places helps students consider their place in the community of faith today in relationship with God, humanity, and all creation.

Grade Four: The Jesus Life Today

Students in Grade Four will explore and learn about the life of Jesus and apply his life and teachings to their lives. Using biblical stories, they will learn how biblical characters worked through the same questions that are real today. Students begin to find answers of faith in a complex world.

Grade Five: The Bible Story Is Our Story

Students in Grade Five are guided through a narrative from the book of Genesis to the life of the church today. Many stories are learned quickly over a brief period, so the goal is not to delve deeply into each one, but rather for students to build a framework on which to hang each story they encounter throughout the biblical narrative. Students will see how the church birthed a widespread Christian movement, including the Anabaptist movement, which continues today. Students will look for how they can continue God's story.

Grade Six: Explore the Story of Jesus

In this Anabaptist approach to understanding Jesus, Grade Six students will be introduced to who Jesus is and was, focusing on the sociopolitical context in which Jesus lived and worked. Students will explore the meaning of discipleship in relation to Jesus' parables and miracles. This study focuses on the good news Jesus practiced and how his words and actions affected those

around him. Students will then read Old Testament stories through the lens of the good news Jesus lived. The year will conclude with a study of current global stories of how people today are affecting their communities through the practice of the good news.

Grade Seven: Transformed by the Story of Jesus

Students in Grade Seven will delve deeper into who Jesus is and was, focusing on the reactions of the people and groups who interacted with him. Students will be exposed to the concept that Jesus was the fulfillment of the law. New Testament stories will be examined from a viewpoint of how people were transformed or reconciled after hearing Jesus' good news. The year will conclude with an introductory study of the diverse global church. As students learn about God's people (historical through present day), they will begin to articulate how God is transforming many communities through discipleship.

Grade Eight: Live the Story of Jesus

Grade Eight students will incorporate the concepts/ideas learned about the identity of Jesus and apply them to stories from the local and global church. Students will study how church practices of congregations and denominations are connected to faith understandings. Focus will also be given to how global and local churches share Jesus' good news with their neighbors, forming, informing, and transforming them. Throughout the year, students will examine how their personal stories connect with God's story.

Grade Nine: Creation and Promise

Students in Grade Nine will study the Bible using a thematic view of God's narrative with humanity. The course begins with an introduction and overview of the Bible. Following the Old Testament narrative, themes include Caring for God's Creation, Listening to God's Voice, Working for God's Shalom, and Living God's Way. To encourage critical thinking and synthesis, each unit also includes New Testament stories with modern stories of God's encounter, love, and interaction with humanity. The themes align with the Anabaptist Faith Practice Statements of Mennonite School Council.

Grade Ten: Jesus Story

Grade Ten students will study a thematic view of God's narrative with humanity. The course begins with an introduction and overview of the New Testament. Following the life of Jesus, themes include Following God's Call to Love. Being Known and Loved by God, Celebrating Diversity, Being a Citizen in the Upside-down Kingdom, and Practicing Grace and Forgiveness. Each theme is studied using Gospel stories. To encourage critical thinking and synthesis, each unit includes Old Testament and modern stories of God's encounter, love, and interaction with humanity. The themes of the course align with the Anabaptist Faith Practice Statements of Mennonite School Council.


Grade 11: Global Christianity

Students in Grade Eleven will study global Christianity, the birth of the church, the formation of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and other non-Western Christian faith streams, and the Reformation with an emphasis on the rise of Anabaptism. The curriculum includes study of the development of the global Anabaptist movement, denominations, and the rise of nondenominational churches in post-Christendom.

Grade 12: Kingdom Living

Students in grade twelve will engage with world religions and Jesus as the center of our faith. Other themes include Living in Community within God's Kingdom; and Reconciliation Is the Center of God's Kingdom. This senior level Bible course challenges students to reflect on their faith journeys and culminates with a capstone project that focuses on an area of interest/service for the student, and how that it connects to their personal faith journeys.

A complete Scope and Sequence can be found as an addendum at the end of the Front Matter. Grade level information includes:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approximate number of lessons2. Theme3. Purpose4. Story5. Bible texts6. Enduring questions7. Anabaptist connections
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Encounter: Scriptures for Life

Using a variety of strategies, students will focus on scripture passages to inspire and equip them for their lifelong journeys of following Jesus and meaningful interaction with God's Word. As shown in the passages below, reflecting on scripture has been an essential practice of God's people since ancient times:

*This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth;
you shall meditate on it day and night. —Joshua 1:8.*

*One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. — Matthew 4:4*

While biblical words themselves are more accessible than ever, committing passages to memory helps students to internalize key truths so that they are

available when needed. Yet good as it is, rote Bible memory is not enough. Since most academic activities—memorization included—employ the mind, reflective strategies contribute to a person’s faith formation by engaging heart and soul and by bolstering the retention and meaning of biblical passages. Younger students (early childhood to elementary) may need simplified reflective strategies, but all students should be able to engage in and be inspired by deeper connections to God discovered through reflective strategies. Practicing a variety of strategies teaches students that there’s more than one way to engage scripture and helps them discover what practices work best for them. The point of learning scripture passages is to help students develop a faith identity which results in practices of faithful living as a witness to the world. Passages chosen are not intended to equally cover the span of the Bible, but rather to align with an Anabaptist focus of following Jesus and his ministry in daily living. By graduation, students will have committed key passages to memory, discerned how to apply those passages to their lives, and embraced the use of a reflective strategy in their own devotional life.

Reflective Bible engagement practices

SOAP¹

Students can use this practice with a journal or in prayerful meditation.

- Scripture: Read the passage slowly or write it out.
- Observation: Note the phrases, verses, or ideas that stick out to you.
- Application: Reflect on how these words or phrases could be applied to your life. What could you do differently or focus on today or this week?
- Prayer: Seek God’s presence, asking for help to live out what you have learned.

Lectio divina

- Find a quiet, secluded spot. Minimize distractions by silencing your phone and putting aside devices, food, entertainment, and anything else that could interrupt this time. Perhaps light a candle. Sit in a way that’s comfortable and relaxed but that allows you to stay alert.
- Take a few slow, deep breaths. Rest your hands on your legs, facing upward, as a way of quieting your mind and opening your heart to the presence of the Lord with you. As you exhale, imagine releasing to God the stress and distractions of the day. As you inhale, imagine being filled with God’s presence. If you find yourself distracted, breathe these distractions away.
- Read slowly through the Bible passage the first time. Pause at words or phrases that catch your attention to allow them to sink into your heart. Consider what God may be saying to you through these words.

¹ Soapstudy.com

- Reflect for a minute in silence. Read slowly through the passage a second time. Savor the words and become aware to images or emotions that emerge. Consider how these may relate to God's presence in your life. Pause in these moments to discern if God lays something on your heart.
- Read through the passage slowly a third time. Enter the conversation with God by expressing what you are feeling and thinking. Speak aloud or silently in words or feelings. Pay close attention to what God may be saying or encouraging in you, or how you're drawn to or resisting God's presence. Ask God to help you hear God's voice and feel God's presence within you.
- After you have expressed what came to your heart and gave time to listen, slowly read the text one final time. Linger in God's presence. Say, "Thank you for your presence, God," as you wrap up this time.
- To reflect further, write a journal response of 200 to 300 words. This could include:
 - What does the passage mean to you?
 - What words, images, or emotions stuck out to you?
 - How could you apply this to your faith walk?
 - What did you feel in the silence and as you prayed to God?

Bible memorization

While the process of memorizing scripture is beneficial for all, for some, memorization comes easily while others have to work at it. The ability to memorize scripture is not an evaluation of one's faith; however, for more than two thousand years, Christians have been encouraged and transformed by internalizing passages from the Bible.

Here are some suggestions to help with memorization and comprehension:

- Look up the passage for yourself in a printed Bible to determine how it fits with the broader narrative.
- As you begin to recite from memory, don't stop and start over each time you make a mistake. Check for missing words; then continue to recite as much as you can before starting over.
- Associate parts of the passage with visuals, emotions, and themes.
- Put the passage into a song; a melody usually leads to more long-term retention.
- For longer passages, break your Bible memory passage into sections. Title each one so that you have a sense of the overall thought.
- To retain the passage, repetition over time is crucial. Set a reminder to recite the verses once each week. If you think and pray about how the verse applies to your life, this will build retention and influence you towards an ongoing relationship with God.

Encounter Student Outcomes

Students will understand:

#1

The Bible is the book of the church that points beyond itself to a triune God, revealed as Parent, Son, and Spirit;

#2

The development of the Bible and the processes that led to some Christian groups having a different number of books selected for the canon; part of a reconciling faith community.

#3

The genres of writing found in the Bible;

#4

Biblical discernment in community under the Spirit's guidance;

#5

How to look at the cultural/religious context of various parts of the Bible, ask what it spoke to people of the time it was written, and discern what the Spirit is saying to the church today through these scriptures;

#6

How to read the Bible through the eyes of Jesus who is the living Word and the full revelation of God; part of a reconciling faith community.

#7

The desire and will of God for church unity;

#8

A commitment to the particularity of Jesus Christ while also respecting and understanding other world religions and that the great religious traditions hold much in common which builds a bridge for conversation, faith, and life;

#9

Living the upside-down kingdom that calls followers of Jesus to a life of love expressed in nonviolence and peace building based on justice, a commitment to antiracism, and care for all creation;

#10

Growing in faith, committing to participation in a community of faith, and sharing faith with others by deed and word;

#11

Sharing the gospel in a way that is compelling for others. Students will know the master narrative of the Bible that God through Christ is reconciling all things to God's self and that we are called to join with God in moving all creation toward God's intention.

Understanding Stages of Faith

by Shine: Living in God's Light

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Faith understands that God is the source of all life and the One who gives us identity and purpose. As a gift of the Holy Spirit, faith breaks into our individual and communal lives, inviting us to follow Jesus Christ in daily living. Within the community of believers, faith grows through worship, response, and sharing God's good news with the world. Faith formation is a lifelong process that happens through relationship with God and others. Faith is active and relational, always in process, constantly transforming us to be more like Christ. We grow in faith within a loving, accepting community. Students will grow in their understanding of God and Jesus, as revealed by the Spirit through scripture and Christian community. Wonder questions are an important part of Encounter that enables children to connect the biblical story to their stories and understandings.

People follow a developmental path. The faith experienced by young children is the foundation upon which all other growth takes place and deserves to be a priority. Our first desire is that children in our schools know that they are loved and valued by God, enabling them to love and value each other and all creation.

Early Childhood faith experience

A young child best experiences God's love through interaction with adults who serve as God's hands, face, and heart. If caregivers are found to be trustworthy and loving, children are provided with language for spiritual thought and expression. That trust and love is transferred to feelings and expressions for God. Expressions of faith begin with nonverbal communication and evolve along with physical, mental, and social development. Creative play based on key faith stories and rituals is important for exploring and owning the ideas and symbols of the spiritual community.

Because children in PreK and K make little clear distinctions between reality and fantasy, we can expect them to weave together a variety of symbols from Bible stories, secular storybooks, television characters, and real experiences. Children feel powerless and vulnerable at this age; they identify with giants and heroes who do what they cannot. They are responsive to stories that evoke both fear and trust. It is dangerous to play on their fertile imaginations by giving images of terror and destruction. Avoid attributing wrath or acts of violence to God. Teach children instead to trust our loving and gentle God.

Primary faith experience

This experience is characterized by a sense of fairness and belonging as children think more concretely and develop relationships outside their immediate families. Children in Grades 1 and 2 enjoy playing with others. Belonging to the faith community is important for children in this stage.

They like participating in worship and singing and being part of the gathered community. Primary children respond deeply to faith stories and view Bible characters as good faith heroes. They enjoy Bible stories of good winning over evil but are sometimes confused by stories Jesus tells because they seem unfair. Creative, imaginative play remains an important way to express and internalize the faith community's symbols and ideas.

Children at this age begin to apply their growing social understanding to religious ideas. Some will ask questions about our world and the causes and purposes of things. At this age children need the freedom to discover and create their own ways of expressing a deepening relationship with God. If children experience love and trust in their early years, they will develop the ability to expand that faith into a deeper relationship during later elementary school years. Children who have not experienced love and trust before these years will require patient love, understanding, and consistency as they learn to love and share.

Elementary faith experience

Children in Grades 3 through 5 respond to God in deeply personal ways. They express their feelings through art, prayer, silence, and faith conversations. Wonder questions and experiential learning experiences are important components of the curriculum from the middle to junior high years. With guidance, this age can personalize scripture and pray with it. Their growing writing skills provide a way to articulate their understandings about God. With adult assistance, they can develop thoughtful inquisitiveness about spiritual experiences and articulate this to others. They may become hesitant to express spiritual experiences for fear of being dismissed or laughed at.

Stories of the church, family, and faith community make children of this age feel part of God's household of faith. They want to participate in worship through drama, music, litanies, receiving the offering, and special programs. By affirming their gifts and accepting them as valued people, adults convey a powerful message of unconditional acceptance and love. They perceive God as both creator and friend. They want to know how God is at work in their lives and the larger world. As they become increasingly aware of the larger issues of the world in which they live, they enjoy learning about the world and doing service projects. They appreciate the beauty of creation, our dependence upon it, and our responsibility to care for it.

They know the rules and want life to be fair. They are beginning to understand wrongdoing and forgiveness. They have a strong need for assurance of unconditional acceptance, especially when they have failed and need to accept negative consequences for their actions. They are idealistic, expecting adults to live up to values and commitments.

Junior High faith experience

Junior high youth in Grades 6 to 8 are filled with critical questions and insecurity as they undergo puberty and establish new levels of independence from their caregivers. They rely heavily on peer relationships, yet also value relationships with adults outside their immediate family. As they develop skills for critiquing what they have been taught, they become increasingly aware of inconsistencies between the words and actions of adults. During this time, they begin to develop personal values.

Junior high youth most often have faith experiences that are influenced by the expectations and judgments of others (both peers and significant adults), and they often believe what church and friends believe. Faith must be relevant during more complex relationships and issues that move beyond home and church. Junior youth need to ask important faith questions to move them toward making the thoughtful and personal commitment to follow Christ. The school classroom should continue to tell and show them that they are gifted by God and that their gifts can be shared with the larger community.

Their image of God may expand to include a personal, affirming friend or a guide or a counselor who understands and loves them unconditionally. As junior youth form identities apart from family and friends, they need to feel that they belong and are loved and accepted in the family of God. Spiritual practices help them understand God's intentions for the world, process questions, and develop a personal relationship with God.

High School faith experience

High school students in Grades 9 to 12 have encountered God and others through story, wonder questions, and experiential learning. Through loving and mentoring teachers, they have learned that they are valued and loved by God and this serves as the basis for them to love and value each other.

As they move through high school, they grow in their ability to deal with ambiguities and questions that do not have easy answers. In fact, they understand the importance of living with questions rather than seeking quick answers to faith questions.

They are equipped to study the development of the canon and the history of the Christian church and how that relates to their own faith tradition. Teachers nurture deep listening and sharing, encouraging students to learn from each

other and/or at least understand each other even when not in full agreement. They also build on earlier learning and study scripture together under the leading of the Spirit to hear how it speaks to questions of faithfulness in this twenty-first century. They also learn that discerning such answers is not a quick process and that they must respect equally committed persons who may have different understandings and yet are equally committed disciples of Jesus Christ.

The foundation of work in earlier years provides them with confidence to explore other philosophies and world religions that are so much a part of the culture in which they will live. While they learn to live with and respect diversity, they also grow in their commitment to the way of Jesus Christ.

Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs require modifications in their learning environment in order to be successful in school. This includes students with specific learning or emotional disabilities, those who are gifted, and/or those with physical challenges. The goal of Encounter is to provide all students with the environment and resources to meet Jesus in our classrooms. While the curriculum may not list all the possible modifications, we trust that teachers will tailor the learning experiences to meet the needs of their specific students.

Above all else, it is important for each student to know with their whole being that they were created by God and loved by God. This is particularly important for those who know that, in some way, they are different from others. Their value as a person is not defined by what is considered their disability. One of the primary responsibilities of teachers is to foster that sense of value in each child by finding and building on students' abilities first, even as we help students find ways to manage their unique needs. When teachers model and create a classroom where everyone in the class sees each other through God's eyes, making modifications for each learner to be successful becomes part of class routines.

Here are some simple suggestions to jumpstart your creativity:

- Encourage paired reading so that readers who struggle are able to hear the text read fluently.
- Provide multiple retellings or readings. Acting out the story is one way to do this.
- Include a Bible center with props for retelling and remembering sequence and details of a story.
- Provide a variety of story Bibles with various reading levels.
- Allow for multiple ways to respond to story—not always written. Music, verbal, and art options provide opportunities for those who struggle with writing.

- Assign routine tasks—such as carrying the electric candle to your gathering space or passing out student Bibles—to students who might feel excluded due to their abilities.
- Provide opportunities for movement for those students who have difficulty sitting still. Movement can be as simple as touching their ear every time they hear a certain word in a story.
- As you build a community of caring in your classroom, invite and encourage all students to notice and respond to each other's needs. Allow them to support, encourage, and help each other. Be a keen observer of classroom dynamics so that you can acknowledge ways you see classmates paying attention to the needs of others.

How to Teach for Faith Formation

by Shana Peachey Boshart

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It's going to be different. It may take you out of your comfort zone. Teaching for faith formation will not be like teaching other subjects. Nevertheless, Christian people teaching in Christian schools are well positioned to teach faith formation well.

In faith formation, the outcome we are looking for is children and youth who know they are loved by God, who experience transformation through God's forgiveness, and who respond to the invitation to become disciples of Jesus.

This means that the most important things you need to teach for faith formation are your own understanding of God's love for you, your own experience of the grace and forgiveness of God, your own reliance on the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and your own love for Jesus expressed in a desire to obey him.

Reflect on these questions. Your answers will show you the raw materials you already have to teach for faith formation.

- What habits are you cultivating to become more aware of God's presence in your life and in the lives of those around you?
- What Christian practices help you mature in faith?
- What practices help you trust God more?
- How are you listening for the Holy Spirit's guidance?
- What is helping you become more like Jesus?

The most important thing I can convey to you is that when we teach for faith formation, the role of the teacher shifts and expands. The teacher, also a learner, models for students how to learn.

A good metaphor for teaching for faith formation might be a community of learners exploring a forest together. In the forest, there is so much to learn! You might examine the soil, trees, plants, animals, birds, climate, or any number of other things. The teacher becomes leader and decides what the group will focus on and learn about. That's the traditional model.

In another model, we take into account that students are already engaged in their own interests and will naturally gravitate toward certain aspects of the forest. Some things they already know and can show others. They become engaged in learning as a group and the teacher learns about the forest along with the children. Everyone is engaged, everyone is curious, and everyone is learning on their own and from each other as they explore together.

So it is with our faith formation. There is so much happening in our lives that captures our spiritual attention, makes us curious, and invites us to learn. One child is captivated by feeling close to God in nature, another child is excited about learning about God through Bible stories, and still another is energized by collecting supplies

for health kits as a way to show God's love. We are a community of learners, learning from God and learning from each other. In this setting, you are more than a teacher, you are also a role model of how we mature in faith. In this endeavor, your own wisdom, maturity, and experience benefit of the learning community.

As the lead learner modeling the way in a community of other learners, you will need a different set of assumptions than when you teach other subjects. These assumptions include:

- The community of learners looks to Jesus as our main teacher via the Holy Spirit, and we believe we can hear, understand and learn from the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit is already engaged in teaching all of us.
- Since everyone is being taught by Jesus, we have a community of learners who are learning from each other as each one learns from the Holy Spirit. You will be listening to hear what is already going on in the minds and hearts of the children. You can trust that God is in fact speaking to children and they will be able to hear God.
- You and the children will enter this task with reverence and expectation, with an understanding that God will meet you there and teach you. It is appropriate to incorporate worship and reverence into class times.
- The role of the teacher includes being the first to notice and point out the movement of the Holy Spirit.
- Because Jesus is in charge of the outcomes, we will learn to rely on new and vital practices like letting go of our desired outcomes and waiting for God's intervention and guidance.
- You can trust that when you open a space for God to meet children and youth, God will joyfully show up. Trust that God has learning goals for you and the children that you may not know but that you can trust God to achieve.
- You will be changed along with the children. Learning means transformation and transformation means change.
- The teacher will model all these things—for example, confidence in God's love, trust in God, reverence for God, and the transformation that occurs with learning.

You likely will need to remind yourself over and over that in Bible class your role is different. Start each Bible period with a ritual that signals to the class and to yourself that we are entering a different kind of learning space and to end with a ritual that signals that we are returning to the usual teacher-student space.

It's going to be different. It may take you out of your comfort zone. Teaching for faith formation will not be like teaching other subjects. But you can do it, and you can do it well. If you can remember and tell your own story of God's grace and forgiveness, if you can rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, if you can allow your love for Jesus to propel you to radical obedience—in other words, if you are living your faith—you are already on your way!

Reading List for Teachers using ENCOUNTER

Teaching from a faith formative perspective is a shift in mindset from a traditional school classroom where a teacher provides access to facts and research. Faith formation is a lifelong process that happens through relationship with God and people. The following list offers options for you and your colleagues to choose from as you read and discuss a book for professional development.

For elementary:

Csinos, David M. and Ivy Beckwith, *Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus*, InterVarsity Press, 2013.

Yust, Karen Marie, *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*, Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Beckwith, Ivy, *Formational Children's Ministry: Shaping Children Using Story, Ritual, and Relationship*, Baker Books 2010.

For high school:

Hendricks, Patricia, *Hungry Souls, Holy Companions: Mentoring a New Generation of Christians*, Morehouse Publishing, 2006

Creasy Dean, Kenda, *The God-bearing Life: The Art of Soul-Tending for Youth Ministry*, Upper Room Books, 1998.

For any teacher:

Becker, Palmer, *Anabaptist Essentials: Ten Signs of a Unique Christian Faith*, Herald Press, 2017.

Benner, David G. and Thomas H. Green, *Desiring God's Will: Aligning our Hearts with the Heart of God*, InterVarsity Press, 2015.

Benner, David G. and M. Basil Pennington, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*, InterVarsity Press, 2015.

Benner, David G. and M. Basil Pennington, *Surrender to Love: Discovering the Heart of Christian Spirituality*, InterVarsity Press, 2015.

Kraus, C. Norman, *The Community of the Spirit*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974.

Kristian, Bonnie, *A Flexible Faith: Rethinking What It Means to Follow Jesus Today*, New York: Faith Words, 2018.

Nesser, Joann, *Contemplative Prayer: Praying When the Well Runs Dry*, Augsburg Books, 2007.

Neufeld, Alfred, *What We Believe Together: Exploring the Shared Convictions of Anabaptist-Related Churches*, Good Books, 2007.

Roth, John D. *Teaching That Transforms: Why Mennonite Education Matters*, Herald Press, 2011.

Weaver, J. Denny, ed. *Education with the Grain of the Universe: A Peaceable Vision for the Future of Mennonite Schools, Colleges, and Universities*, (C. Henry Smith Series, vol. 11). Cascadia, 2017.



Over many decades Mennonite Schools Council, in partnership with the Mennonite Education Agency, has given attention to accreditation, professional development, and curriculum. *ENCOUNTER: An Anabaptist Bible Curriculum* is the most recent example of MSC's commitment to Bible teaching and faith formation from an Anabaptist/Mennonite perspective. The curriculum continues MSC's commitment to education from an incarnational perspective where faith, community, and reconciliation mean something.

MSC schools participated in a survey whose results formed the basis for this work, along with a session for Bible teachers that was offered during a Mennonite Educators Conference. We express our appreciation to all who participated in the survey and the session.

A **Steering Committee** guided Encounter work, and faculty from across MSC wrote the curriculum. We are grateful to the Steering Committee for their dedication to this project. J. Richard Thomas and Elaine Moyer served as co-chairs.

MSC members included Jake Becker, The City School (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania); Dawn Graber, Sarasota Christian School (Sarasota, Florida); Sharon Fransen, Dock Mennonite Academy (Lansdale, Pennsylvania); Phyllis Nofziger, Hinkletown Mennonite School (Hinkletown, Pennsylvania); and consultant Ann Schultz, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate (Kitchener, Ontario).

Masterfully engaging writers through **theological guidance** was Rachel Miller Jacobs, associate professor of congregational formation at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Stimulating conversations about content, scripture, atonement, and memorization refined the work.

Lead editor Beth Oberholtzer took the good work of eighteen writers and formatted it. This essential editing brought the curriculum to the availability that follows.

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We acknowledge the support of **prayer partners** who journeyed with us in this work. The spirit of God was with us, and we are aware that the Encounter curriculum was inspired as faithful followers of Jesus engaged with colleagues to offer their best.

We thank God for colleagues who shared their expertise, humor, pedagogy, and intellect.

Encounter writers included:

Maria Archer	Janice Greenleaf	Lynette Mast
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Bethany Christian Schools, Goshen, Indiana
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Eastern Mennonite School, Harrisonburg, Virginia
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Lancaster Mennonite–Lancaster, Lancaster, Pennsylvania
Lancaster Mennonite–Locust Grove, Lancaster, Pennsylvania
Lancaster Mennonite–New Danville, Lancaster, Pennsylvania
Sarasota Christian School, Sarasota, Florida
Shalom Christian Academy, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania
Warwick River Christian School, Newport News, Virginia

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Scope & Sequence

Grade: PreK	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Dates	Aug.-Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Number of lessons	16	16	16	16
Theme	Peacemaking	First Families	Stories of God's people	Advent Christmas
Purpose	To understand that we are all children of God and must work together cooperatively, respecting our similarities and differences.	To learn about God's care.	To hear stories of God's compassion and faithfulness.	To celebrate the birth of Jesus.
Story	The I-Care program guides students in making peaceful choices in interactions with others. I-Care Cat puppet introduces stories.	Garden in Eden; Noah and God's promises; Abram, Sarai, and Lot.	Moses is saved; The Exodus; In the Wilderness; The 10	The prophets show the way; John the Baptist shows the way; An angel shows the way; Jesus is born; Shepherds show the way.
Bible texts (Mark)	Gen. 37:39;40-45; 1 Sam. 1-2; Luke 8:40-42, 49-56; Col. 3:8; Gen. 25:19-34; Gen. 27	Gen. 1,3, 6-9,12-21	Exod. 1-2:10; 3-17; 19-20; Num. 13-14; Josh. 3,6	Isa. 40:1-11; Neh. 8-10; Mal. 1,3,4; Ezra 7; Luke 1-2
Enduring Questions	How can we learn to live at peace with one another?	How do I know that God cares for me and is with me always?	How can we know that God loves and values us?	Who is Jesus?
Anabaptist Connections	MSC 2-Peacebuilding; MSC 5-Compassionate living	MSC 1-Loved and valued by God	MSC 1-Loved and valued by God; MSC 2-Peacebuilding	MSC 9-Relationship with Jesus

Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9
Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May–June
16	16	16	16	16
Jesus is a light for all people	Jesus' Ministry	Jesus' Ministry	Lent Easter	The First Church/ I Can Know
To hear and learn of the stories of Jesus' ministry.	To hear and learn of the stories of Jesus' ministry.	To follow the story of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, his death and resurrection.	To follow the story of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, his death and resurrection. To make meaning out of the parables.	To learn how the early church shared the love of Jesus. To be introduced to the work of the Holy Spirit in and through believers.
Light for all people (Magi); Jesus calls disciples; Jesus and friends	Jesus heals a servant; Jesus heals a daughter; Feeding the 5,000; Jesus walks on water; Parables.	Jesus loves children; Jesus and Bartimaeus; Mary anoints Jesus; Jesus rides into Jerusalem	Jesus and Passover; Jesus is risen; Jesus appears to disciples.	Early Christians; Stories of Paul; Fruit of the Spirit (Character Building)
Matt. 2:3-4; 5:1-12; 6:7-24-27; 9:9; 10:1-4; Mark 1-3; Luke 1; 2:25-38,41-52; 3:5-6; 12; John 1; 2:1-11	Matt. 8:5-13; 23-27; 9:1-8;14:13-22, 18:10-14; Mark 2:1-12; 6:30-44; Luke 5:1-11,17-26; 8; 9:10-17; 10:25-27; 15; John 6:1-15	Matt. 5:14; 22-33; 18; 19; 21:1-11; Mark 6:45-51; 7:22; 10; 11:1-11; Luke 10:38-42, 17:11-19; 18; 19; John 3:16; 6:15-20; 9:1-2, 11:1-44; 12:1-8; 12-19	Matt. 27; 28; Mark 14-16; Luke 22-24; John 13; 14; 18-20; Acts 1-5	Acts 2:42-47; Acts 3; Acts 8; Acts 9; Acts 12:1-17; Acts 16; Gal. 5:22-23.
What can Jesus' works teach us about working with others?	What can Jesus' works teach us about working with others?	What does Jesus' death and resurrection mean to me?	What does Jesus' death and resurrection mean to me?; How do Jesus' parables help me live?	What can the early Christians teach me about loving others? How can I apply the fruit of the Spirit daily? How does the Holy Spirit work in and through believers?
MSC 9–Relationship with Jesus	MSC 13–Serving others and making a positive difference	MSC 1–Loved and valued by God	MSC 5–Cultural and racial sensitivity; MSC 11–Stories of faith and reconciliation are regularly shared	MSC 2–Peacebuilding; MSC 8–Engaging with other Christians.

Grade: K	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3
Dates	Aug.–Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
Number of lessons	5	4	3
Theme	Fruits of the Spirit	Children of God	God is good
Purpose	To recognize the fruits of the Spirit	To know that we are children of God and that God loves each child	To enjoy the goodness of God's creation and to trust God's care
Story	Fruits of the Spirit: Love Joy Peace Patience Kindness Goodness Faithfulness Gentleness Self-control	Jesus welcomes children, Circle of Grace, God cares for us, God knows us and loves us	God creates the world, God creates plants, animals, and people, Praise and prayer
Bible texts (Matthew)	Matt. 7:24–27; Mark 12:28–34; Luke 10:25–37; 13; 15:3–7, 11–32; Gal. 5:22–23;	Ps. 23; 139:1–18; Luke 18:15–17	Gen. 1:1–6, 7–19; 2:4–19; Ps. 98; Matt. 6:25–34
Enduring Questions	What does it mean to live in a faith community?		
Anabaptist Connections	Community the center of our lives.		

Grade: 1	Unit 1	Unit 2
Dates	Aug.–Sept.	Oct.–Nov.
Number of lessons	6	6
Theme	Peaceful, Loving Neighbors	God's Faithfulness
Purpose	To learn how to live in community	To recognize God's faithfulness in the story of God's people
Story	Respect everyone, Love Lord and neighbor, Gift of love, Time of peace, Walk in the light of the Lord, Circle of Grace	Creation, Noah and God's promise, Abram, Sarai, and Lot, God's promises to Abraham and Sarah, God leads Rebekah, Isaac and the wells, Jacob and Esau, Joseph
Bible texts	Deut. 6:1–13, Isa. 2:1–5; Zech. 8:1–8; Matt. 5:14–16; 22:36–40, 1 Cor. 13; James 2:1–13	Gen. 2:4–19; 6:5–9:17; 12–13; 16; 18; 21; 24–25; 26:12–33; 27; 32–33; 37; 39–45
Enduring Questions	What does it mean to live in a faith community?	
Anabaptist Connections	Community the center of our lives.	

Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7
Dec.	Jan.–Feb.	March	April–May
4	9	3	8
Advent Christmas	Stories of Jesus through the lens of the Beatitudes	Lent Easter	Friends of Jesus
To celebrate the birth of Jesus	To learn about the life of Jesus; to apply the Beatitudes to our lives	To accompany Jesus in his last days	To learn from the example of the early church to live in peace
Mary Joseph Jesus' birth Magi	Jesus is baptized, Jesus calls disciples, Poor in spirit–Depending on God, Those who mourn–God comforts us, The meek–Being content, Hunger and thirst for righteousness–Following God's way, The merciful–Kindness, Pure in heart–Seeing God at work, Peacemakers–God's family shows love, Persecuted–We belong to God	Triumphal entry, Anointing of Jesus and the last supper, Jesus' death and resurrection	Pentecost, Enough for all, the early church, Peter, John, and the lame man, Saul sees the light, Paul's first missionary journey, Mission in Philippi–Lydia, Paul and jailer, The church in Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla
Matt. 1:18–25; 2:1–12; Luke 1:26–56; 2:1–17	Matt. 3:13–17; 4:18–22; 5:3–11, 38–48; 14:13–21, Mark 2:1–12; 6:30–44; Luke 15:11–32, 19:1–10; John 4:1–42; 9:1–41; 11:1–44	Matt. 21:1–11; 26:1–30; 27:1–2, 45–61; John 20:1–18	Acts 2:1–47; 3:1–10; 4:32–37; 9:1–31; 13–14; 16:11–40; 18:1–28; 1 Cor. 13
Who is Jesus?			What does it mean to live in right relationship?
Jesus the center of our faith.			Reconciliation the center of our work

Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
Dec.	Jan.–March	March or April	April–May
4	9	3	8
Jesus is Born	Stories of Jesus	Lent and Easter	Trip around the World
To celebrate the birth of Jesus	To learn about the life of Jesus; to apply Jesus' mission to our lives	To accompany Jesus in his last days	To learn from the example of the early church to create peace in our world
Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Jesus is born, Shepherds, Magi	Simeon and Anna, Give–Zacchaeus and widow's offering, Pray–Hallowed be your name, Kingdom and will be done, Give daily bread, Forgive our debts, Time of trial, Fast–Jesus calls the disciples	Jesus rides into Jerusalem Jesus washes feet, The last supper, Jesus death and resurrection	All the people of the world, Themes from Matt. 25
Matt. 1:18–25; 2:1–12; Luke 1:5–80, Luke 2:1–20	Matt. 6:1–18; Mark 1:16–45; 5:21–24; 6:30–44; 12:41–44; Luke 2:21–40; 4:1–13; 5:1–11; 10:38–42; 19:1–10	Luke 19:28–40; 22:1–18; 23; 24:1–12; John 13:1–20	Matt. 25:31–45, Acts 2:42–47; 3:1–10; 4:32–37; 9:1–31; 18:1–3, 18–28; Heb. 11:1–12:2; James 2:1–13
Who is Jesus?			What does it mean to live in right relationship?
Jesus the center of our faith.			Reconciliation the center of our work.

Grade: 2	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3
Dates	Aug.–Sept.	Oct.–Nov.	Dec.
Number of lessons	6	6	4
Theme	A Picture of Community	Listening to God's Call	Jesus is Born
Purpose	To learn how to live in community	To recognize God's faithfulness in the story of God's people	To celebrate the birth of Jesus
Story	<p>Respect everyone, Turn the other cheek, God is like a mother bird, Love your neighbor, God is like a safe place, Sun shining on everyone, God is like a shepherd, God loves everyone, God's presence Circle of Grace</p>	<p>Review of Creation and First Families through Joseph, Moses birth and call, Moses in Egypt and wandering, Moses teaching–Ten Commandments, Golden Calf, Love the Lord, Moses teaching–Sharing the harvest, Jubilee, Sisters solve a problem, Moses and Promised Land</p>	<p>Comfort for God's people, John the Baptist prepares the way, Peace in the city Zech. and Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, Jesus is born, Shepherds show the way, Simeon and Anna, Magi</p>
Bible texts	<p>Deut. 32:10–12; Ps. 91:1–4; 139:7–16; Ezek. 34:25–27; Matt. 5:38–48; 23:37b; James 2:1–13</p>	<p>Exod. 1–4; 7–16; 19–20; 24; Lev. 23; 25:8–55; Num. 13–14; 27:1–11; Deut. 6; 30; 34</p>	<p>Isa. 40, Zech. 8:1–8; Matt. 1; 2:1–12; Mark 1:1–8; Luke 1; Luke 2:1–40</p>
Enduring Questions	What does it mean to live in a faith community?		Who is Jesus?
Anabaptist Connections	Community the center of our lives.		Jesus the center of our faith.

Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
Jan.–March	March or April	April–May
9	4	7
Stories of Jesus	Lent and Easter	The Early Church Builds God's Kingdom
To learn about the life of Jesus; to apply Jesus' parables to our lives	To accompany Jesus in his last days	To learn from the example of the early church about building God's kingdom
<p>Parable of the seed, Jesus calls disciples, Parable of the pearl, Jesus heals two daughters, Parable of the sower and seed, Jesus heals blindness, Parable of the yeast, Mary anoints Jesus, Parable of the banquet, Zacchaeus responds, Parable of the lost sheep, Jesus heals a little girl, Parable of the lost coin, Jesus in the temple, Parable of the good shepherd, Jesus walks on water, Parable of the vine and branches, Jesus refuses to cast stones.</p>	<p>Washing feet, Last supper, Jesus' arrest and death, Jesus is risen, Jesus appears, Walking the Emmaus Road, Jesus appear to disciples, Jesus' ascension</p>	<p>Pentecost, Caring for those in need, Healing–Peter and the lame man, Saul sees the light, Cross cultural–Philip and the Ethiopian, Paul's first missionary journey, Rescue from prison, The Church in Corinth, Kingdom project</p>
<p>Matt. 13: 44–50; Mark 1:16–45; 4:1–20; 5: 21–43; 6:45–52, 7:24–30; 11:15–18; Luke 13:18–21; 14:1–24; 15:1–10; 19:1–10; John 7:53–8:11; 9:1–41; 10:1–18; 12:1–19; John 15:1–17</p>	<p>Mark 14:1–2; 10–26; 32–72; 15: 16:1–8; John 21:1–18; Luke 24:13–35; John 13:1–20; John 21:1–14; Acts 1:1–11</p>	<p>Matt. 25:31–46; Acts 2:1–41, 3:1–10; 8:4–8, 26–40; 9:1–31; 12:1–17; 13–14; 1 Cor. 13</p>
Who is Jesus?		What does it mean to live in right relationship?
Jesus the center of our faith.		Reconciliation the center of our work

Grade: 3	Unit 1	Unit 1B	Unit 2	Unit 3
Dates	Aug. – Sept.	Sept.	Oct. – Nov.	Nov. – Dec.
Number of lessons	8–15	3–6	5–20	4–18
Theme	Biblical Overview	Circle of Grace	Community– Center of our life	Community– Center of our life
Purpose	To create an overview of the biblical story and a timeline.	To educate and empower children to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.	To build community through stories from the Old Testament	To build community through stories from the New Testament
Story	Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel; Moses; The wilderness; Solomon; Queen Esther; Nicodemus; Jesus' ascension; Paul's first missionary journey	What is a Circle of Grace?; Boundaries and Limits of our Circle of Grace; Action Plan	Moses accepts God's call; Bālam, donkey, and angel; David and Jonathan; Widow of Zarephath; Jeremiah and a new covenant	Many gifts; Pentecost; Jesus washes disciples' feet; Taking care of others; Philip and the Ethiopian
Bible texts (Matthew)	Gen. 3; 4:1–16; Exod. 4; 15; 1 Kings; Esther; Luke 24, John 3; Acts 1; 13–14 (Christmas and Easter lessons to be taught at appropriate times)		Gen. 2:4–19; Exod. 2:23–3:22; 2 Kings 4:1–7; Ps. 104:5–23	2 Kings 4:1–7; Matt. 25:31–40; John 13:1–17; Acts 2:1–41; 8:4–8, 26–40
Enduring Questions	What does it mean to live in a faith community?			
Anabaptist Connections	Community the center of our lives.			

Grade: 4	Unit 1	Unit 2
Number of lessons	8	8
Theme	Overview of Biblical Story	Community the Center of Our Life
Story	God calls people to be in shalom	Two are better than one, Community celebrations, Laws for the community
Bible texts	Gen. 3–4; 11–12; Exodus, Joshua, Judges, 1,2 Samuel; 1 Kings; Gospels; Epistles	Lev. 19:9–18; Neh. 8; Eccles. 4: 9–12; Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–37
Enduring Questions	What is shalom?	What would community look like if we combined faith with living like the early Christians did?
Anabaptist Connections	MSC 4–Welcoming community; MSC 7–Modeling Christ; MSC 9–Relationship with Jesus; MSC 10–Faith–infused education; MSC 11–Stories of faith; MSC 12–Living the gospel message; MSC 14–Faith community; MSC 15–God's kingdom	MSC 1–Loved by God; MSC 4–Welcoming community; MSC 11–Stories of faith; MSC 15–God's kingdom

Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7
Jan. – Feb.	Feb. – March	March – April	April – May
4–18	5–20	4–18	5–20
Jesus–Center of our faith	Jesus–Center of our faith	Peace and Reconciliation–Center of our work	Peace and Reconciliation–Center of our work
To hear and respond to Jesus' teaching	To hear and respond to Jesus' teaching	Learn about Peace and Reconciliation through Old Testament Stories	Learn about Peace and Reconciliation through New Testament Stories
Matthew: Mary anoints Jesus; The Samaritan woman; Jesus blesses children	Healing on Sabbath; Beatitudes; Greatness; Good Samaritan; Salt and light; Eye for eye; Love your enemies;	Jacob and Esau; Jubilee; Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath; Abigail prevents war	Love your neighbor; Loving father, prodigal son; Jesus refuses to cast stones; Saul sees the light; Paul and Silas
Matt. 9:9–13; Mark 10:13–16; John 4:1–42; 12:1–19	Matt. 5:1–16; 38–48; Mark 9:33–37; Luke 6:1–11; 10:25–37; 13:10–17	Gen. 27:1–41; 33:1–10; Lev. 25:8–55; 1 Sam. 25:1–35; 1 Kings 17:7–15	Mark 12:28–34; Luke 15:11–32; John 7:53–8:11; Acts 9:1–31; 16:11–40
Who is Jesus?		How can we work for peace and reconciliation in our communities and world?	
Jesus the center of our faith.		Reconciliation the center of our work.	

Unit 3	Unit 4
11	10
Jesus the Center of Our Faith	Peace and Reconciliation the Center of Our Work
Jesus brings good news, Being disciples, Searching for Jesus, The kingdom of God is like..., Jesus calls	Aquila and Priscilla, Isāc and wells, Elisha turns back soldiers, Ruth and Naomi, Mustard seed and yeast
Matt. 20:1–16; Luke 4:14–30; 10:38–42; 19:1–10; 24:44–53	Gen. 26:12–33; Ruth 1–4; 2 Kings 6:3–23; Luke 13:18–21; Acts 18:1–3, 18–28
What does it mean to be a disciple in the 21 st century? How are we led by Jesus' life, death, resurrection?	How can people respond to conflicts in ways that build relationships? What does it mean to respond nonviolently to a situation?
MSC 2–Peacebuilding; MSC 3–Value diversity; MSC 7–Modeling Christ; MSC 9–Relationship with Jesus; MSC 13–Living the gospel message; MSC 15–God's kingdom	MSC 2–Peacebuilding; MSC 4–Welcoming community; MSC 6–Stewardship; MSC 11–Stories of faith; MSC 13–Living the gospel message; MSC 14–Faith community

Grade: 5	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Dates	Aug.–Sept.	Sept.–Oct.	Oct. – Nov.	Nov.
Number of lessons	8	8	3–6	4
Theme	Beginnings	God Creates a People	Shalom	God's People on a Journey
Purpose	Outlines the creation and fall of humanity, and initiates Bible study and peacebuilding rituals.	Discusses the lives of Abraham and the patriarchs, formation of Israel.	Revisits shalom in inner life, economics, and worship. Includes Circle of Grace lessons to discuss shalom in our media consumption.	Follows Israel's bumpy ride through the period of judges, kings, prophets, and exile.
Story	Creation, fall stories, Cain and Abel	Abraham and Sarah's family tree, Isaac and the wells, Moses and the Exodus, wilderness wanderings	10 Commandments, worship in the Tabernacle, Jubilee practices	Cycle of judges, kings Saul and David, exile and prophets
Bible texts	Gen. 1–2; 4:1–16; Ps. 3; 23; 80; 104; Luke 13:4; James 2:1–13	Gen. 12; 26:12–33; Exod. 1–3; 7–17:7; 19–20:21; Isa. 54:10	Exod. 19–21; 26; Lev. 23:33–43; 25:8–55; Num. 27:1–11; Deut. 16:13–15; Mic. 6:8	Judges 2:10–19; 1 Sam. 8–10:25; 16:1–13; 2 Kings 24:18–25:21; Ezra 1
Enduring Questions	What does it mean to live in right relationship?			Who is Jesus?
Anabaptist Connections	Restorative justice, victim–offender conflict resolution	Nonviolent responses to conflict explained and modeled	Following Jesus as a guide for personal and social ethics	Mennonite Central Committee stories from Iraq or about refugees

Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9
Dec–Jan.	Jan – Feb.	March–April	April	May–June
6–12	4–6	2–4	6	6–12
God With Us	Mission Accomplished	God's Spirit Moving	Living God's Story	Carrying the Story Forward
Encounters Jesus in his early life, ministry, and teachings. Studies examples of discipleship.	Highlights Jesus' life of love which led to his death, and then compares the resurrection accounts.	Encounters the Holy Spirit revealed to Jesus' followers at Pentecost, and moving among Gentiles who become followers.	Enables students to dig into and practice spiritual disciplines used by followers of Jesus.	Follows church history through the ages, focuses on Anabaptist movement and how students can carry on God's story in their own lives.
Jesus' birth, Jesus rejected at Nazareth, Jesus' stories of the kingdom, Beatitudes, Nicodemus, Rich Young Man, Zacchaeus, Mary and Martha	Jesus' arrest and death, resurrection accounts in the gospels	Pentecost, Peter and Cornelius	Saul's conversion, baptism stories, the Lord's Supper, inner and outer spiritual disciplines, spiritual gifts	Early church, Constantine, Protestant Reformation, Swiss, German, and Dutch Anabaptist stories, global Anabaptism
Isa. 61:1–2; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 1:18–25; 5:1–12; Mark 6:30–44; 10:17–21; Luke 1–2; 4:1–13; 10:25–42; 19:1–10; John 1:14, 3:1–21	Matt. 26–28:10; Mark 14–16:8; Luke 22–24:12; John 13:1–20; 18–20:18; 21:1–14	Acts 2:1–41; 8:4–8, 26–40; 10	Matt. 3:13–17; 6:1–18; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; 22:14–23; John 1:29–34; Acts 9:1–31; Rom. 6:1–14; 1 Cor. 11:33–34; 12:4–13, 25–31	Ps. 139; Matt. 5:3–12; 6:9–13; 1 Cor. 3:11; 13:12
Who is Jesus?			What does it mean to live in a faith community?	
Jesus' life and teachings as guide for ethics. Songs from Hymnal: A Worship Book	Footwashing for Christians, Anabaptists, practices footwashing or handwashing.	God's kingdom is accessible to all.	Believer's baptism, the Lord's Supper, and making amends in the community	Anabaptist history, stories confessions, prayer book

Grade: 6	Strand 1 Unit 1	Strand 1 Unit 2	Strand 2 Unit 1
Pacing	12 to 16	20 to 24 + 5	12 to 14
Number of Activities	8 (plus optional fair)	12 + 4 COG, 1 Digital Citizen	6
Strand Theme	Just Jesus		Living the Gospel
Unit Focus	The Life of Jesus	Longing for a Messiah	What is the Good News?
Life Scripture	Isa. 42:1–4	Isa. 42:5–9	Luke 1: 46–49
Other Key Bible texts	Matt. 22; Mark 8; 12; John 11	Isa. 7:14; 9:6–7; 11:1–5; 42:1–9; 53; Mic. 5:2–4; Matt. 4:23–25; 12:15–21; Mark 2:17; Luke 4:16–21; John 3:16–17; John 6:40; John 14:6	Matt. 4:23; 9:1–8; 18:21–25; Mark 1:1; 4:35–41; Luke 4:16–21; 7:40–50; 9:35; 11:4–5; 15:11–32; 17:11–19; 24:14
Enduring Questions	Who is Jesus?		What is a disciple? What is the good news?
Anabaptist Connections	Jesus the Center of our Faith		Community the Center of our Life

Strand 2 Unit 2	Strand 2 Easter	Strand 2 Unit 3	Strand 3 Unit 1
22 to 26	3 to 5	15 to 18	10 to 13
11	1	6	7
Living the Gospel			Disciples at Work
Practice of the Gospel (the good news)	Jesus is our Bridge	Building the Gospel Bridge to the Old Testament	Discipleship Today
Luke 1: 50–53		Luke 1:53–55	Mark 7:24–31
Matt. 9:1–13; 16:24–25; 21–22; 28:16–20; Mark 1:16–34; 10:17–27; Luke 5:1–11; 9:23; 19:1–10; John 3:1–21; 4:1–42; 8:31–32;	Matt. 26–28; Mark 11; 14–15; Luke 22–23; John 20	Gen. 12:1–9; Exod. 3; Josh. 2; Ruth 1:15–17; 1 Kings 17:8–24; 2 Kings 5; Luke 1:46–55	Matt. 4:18–22; 9:9–12; 16:24–25
What is a disciple? What is the good news?			What are the stories of God's people today?
Community the Center of our Life			Reconciliation the Center of our Work

Grade: 7	Strand 1 Unit 1	Strand 1 Unit 2	Strand 1 Unit 3	Strand 2 Unit 1
Pacing	27–39 days	42–56 days	13–18 days	8–10 days
Number of Activities	8	10	5	3
Strand Theme	Who is Jesus?	Who is Jesus?	Who is Jesus?	Being the Gospel
Unit Focus	In Jesus' name	Follow me!	Fulfillment	Word on the street
Life Scripture	Philippians 2:1–4	Philippians 2:5–11	Philippians 2:5–12	Isa. 6:8
Other Key Bible texts	Heb. 1:1–4	Heb. 1:1–5	Heb. 1:1–6	Gospels
Enduring Questions	Who do people say Jesus is?			How do biblical stories communicate God at work?
Anabaptist Connections	Jesus the Center of our Faith		Community is the Center of our Life	

Grade: 8	Strand 1 Unit 1	Strand 1 Unit 2
Pacing	17–22 days	22–26 days
Number of Activities	6	6
Strand Theme	Jesus and the Church	Jesus and the Church
Unit Focus	The church	Identifying the church
Life Scripture	Acts 15:1–4	Acts 15:5–11
Other Key Bible texts	Acts 15	Rom. 6:1–4; 1 Cor. 11:23–26; 1 Pet. 3:18–22
Enduring Questions	What is the story of the global church?	
Anabaptist Connections	Jesus the Center of our Faith	

Strand 2 Unit 2	Strand 2 Unit 3	Strand 3 Unit 1	Strand 3 Unit 2
18–20 days	8–12 days	13–17 days	19–27 days
6	3	3	4
Being the Gospel	Being the Gospel	Heritage of Discipleship	Heritage of Discipleship
The rest of the story	What if...?	Where is the church?	Who is the church?
Isa. 6:9–10	Isa. 6:11–13	Rev. 7:9–10	Rev. 7:11–12
Gospels	Gospels	Acts 2:1–21	Matt. 26:17–30; Matt. 28:16–20; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:1–38; John 13; Acts 1; 1 Cor. 11:17–34
How do biblical stories communicate God at work?		How is the church a part of God's transforming work around the world?	
Community is the Center of our Life		Reconciliation the Center of our Work	

Strand 2 Unit 1	Strand 2 Unit 2	Strand 3 Unit 1
24–28 days	17–24 days	23–28 days
7	5	7
Practicing the Gospel	Practicing the Gospel	Connecting with God's story
Who is my neighbor?	Loving my neighbor?	My story...God's story
Luke 10:25–29	Luke 10:30–37	Selected Psalm
Rom. 6:1–4; 1 Cor. 11:23–26; 1 Pet. 3:18–22	Luke 4:16–21	Personally significant scriptures
Who are my neighbors? How do we relate to our neighbors?		How does my life story connect with God's story?
Community the Center of our Lives		Reconciliation the Center of our Work

Grade 9	Unit 1	Unit 2
Number of lessons	17 class periods	17 class periods
Theme	Introduction	Caring for God's Creation (Stewardship)
Purpose	Provide a biblical overview of God's story within a historical and cultural context	God has created a wonderful beautiful universe and desires that humans serve as stewards of creation to care for themselves, others, and the earth
Story	Story of God intersecting with humanity	Adam/Eve
Bible Texts	Canonization, Types of literature, How to read the Bible	Gen. 1-2; Lev. 25:1-10; Deut. 17:14-17; 1 Kings 10:14-11:18; Job 38; Eccles. 5:10-11; Mic. 4:1-5; Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:13-21; John 1:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Tim. 6:10; Rev. 21:1-8
Scripture for Life	1 Cor. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17	Gen. 1:27-28; Ps. 23
Enduring Questions	<p>What does it mean to read the Bible through "the eyes of Jesus"?</p> <p>How do Christians, Jesus and the Bible fit into the realm of the world religions?</p>	<p>What does it mean to be stewards of God's creation and gifts?</p> <p>How does reconciliation with God, creation, others, and all of creation happen?</p>
Anabaptist Connections	<p>MSC 1-Loved by God</p> <p>MSC 8-Biblical discernment</p> <p>MSC 9-Relationship with Jesus</p>	<p>MSC 1-Loved by God</p> <p>MSC 6-Stewardship</p> <p>MSC 8-Biblical discernment</p>

Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
17 class periods	17 class periods	17 class periods
Listening to God's Voice (Call)	Working for God's Shalom (Human Rights, Peacebuilding)	Living God's Way (Following the law with grace)
God desires a relationship with us. Listening to and for God is a discipline that takes time to develop.	God desires that we work towards shalom. To practice peacebuilding as a lifestyle of nonviolence, seeking justice and being part of a reconciling faith community	God desires that people live in community. To be a welcoming community where it is emotionally safe to raise questions, to value and learn from differences, and to care for each other
Abraham and Sarah	Exodus and the release from slavery	Moses and the law
Gen. 17; 1 Sam. 3; 1 Kings 19; Ps. 32; 34; 42; 51; 67; 121; 139; Matt. 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; 1:35–37; Luke 6:12	Gen. 1:27–28; 3–11; 32–33; 45; Exod. 1; 2:23–25; 12; Lev. 25; 1 Sam. 8; 1 Kings 6; 12; 1 Chron. 17:1–12; Ps. 85; Isa. 13–23; 61:1–3; Mic. 7; Luke 10:25–37; John 3; Acts 15:37–40; 2 Tim. 4:9–13; Philem.	Exod. 13–15; 20:1–21; Lev. 25; Num. 12; Deut. 6:4–5; Josh. 1; Ps. 19:7–14; 90; Mic. 6:6–8; Matt. 5–7; 22:34–40; Mark 2:23–27; John 8:1–11; Acts 15; 1 Cor. 8:1–13; Gal. 2:11–21
Ps. 40:1–8;	Mic. 6:8; Isa. 61:1–3	Ps. 19:7–14
How do we hear God's call for our life? How does one develop a relationship with God?	What does it mean to use power in a responsible way? What does it mean to be a peacemaker as we relate to others daily? How can we keep Jesus as the center of our faith in conflict situations?	In community, how does one balance law and grace? What does it mean to "be church"? How is being a Christian both a relationship with God and a relationship with others?
MSC 4–Welcoming community MSC 9–Relationship with Jesus MSC 13–Making positive difference in world	MSC 2–Peacebuilding MSC 3–Value diversity MSC 5–Global awareness MSC 13–Making positive difference in world	MSC 4–Welcoming community MSC 8–Biblical discernment MSC 13–Making positive difference in world MSC 15–God's kingdom

Grade 10	Unit 1	Unit 2
Number of lessons	12 class periods	14 class periods
Theme	Preparing for God on Earth	Responding to God's Call
Purpose	To provide a historical context that explores first century Jewish perspectives and discusses sources and gospel differences.	To understand the Jesus' birth (God's work with others in preparation to the birth) and its centrality to the Christian message.
Story		Call of Elizabeth and Mary, Jesus' birth
Bible Texts	Matt. 1-2; Luke 1-2	Luke 1
Scripture for Life	Matt. 5:3-16	Matt. 5:38-47
Enduring Questions	<p>What does it mean to study the Bible in community?</p> <p>How is each gospel account different and the same?</p>	<p>What does it mean to hear God's call?</p> <p>What roles do parents and relatives play in hearing God's call?</p>
Anabaptist Connections	MSC 8-Biblical discernment	MSC 1-Loved by God

Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
19 class periods	25 class periods	12 class periods
Knowing and Being Known by God	Being a Godly Citizen in the Upside-down Kingdom	Practicing God's Grace and Forgiveness
<p>To practice global awareness, cultural sensitivity, antiracism, compassionate living.</p> <p>To be responsive to cultural, racial, and socioeconomic diversity.</p> <p>Recognition of blind spots in our efforts to establish just community.</p>	<p>To live the gospel message through praying, serving others, and gaining an understanding on how one can make a positive difference in the world globally and locally.</p> <p>Seeing all people as deserving of God's love and our love.</p>	<p>To grow in relationship with Jesus daily in life through attitudes and practice.</p> <p>Preparation for real life opportunities to be Jesus' hands and feet.</p> <p>Recognize the surprise of the suffering servant.</p> <p>Set the stage of recognizing the meaning of "take up your cross and follow me". (Modeled by disciples as well)</p>
Stories of Jesus showing love to children, outcasts, rich, and elite.	Sermon on the Mount	Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, Jesus death and resurrection
Matt. 15; Luke 19:1-10; John 3-4; 17	Matt. 5-7	Matt. 18:21-35; 21-28; Luke 19-24; John 12-21
Matt. 6:1-15	Matt. 6:16-21	Matt. 6:25-27; 7:1-5
<p>What does it mean to be loved by God?</p> <p>How does God's love impact how we relate to others?</p> <p>What does it mean to be a citizen of God's global community?</p> <p>As Christians, how are we called to deal with/celebrate differences?</p>	<p>What does it mean to be a citizen of an earthly kingdom?</p> <p>What does it mean to be a citizen of God's kingdom?</p> <p>How do the values and practices of God's kingdom differ from an earthly kingdom?</p>	<p>How does forgiveness contribute to community?</p> <p>How does forgiveness benefit the victim, offender and the broader community?</p> <p>How do we practice accountability in community?</p> <p>How is blood language helpful and not helpful in understanding the death of Jesus?</p>
MSC 1-Loved by God MSC 3-Celebration of diversity	MSC 13-Live the gospel message MSC 15-Reign of God	MSC 9-Relationship with Jesus MSC 15-Reign of God

Grade 11	Unit 1	Unit 2
Number of lessons	16 class periods	10 class periods
Theme	Birth and Spread of Christianity Globally (A.D. 30–500)	Rise of Christendom (A.D. 500–1054)
Purpose	To understand the core characteristics of the early Christian church and the shift from Jerusalem to a global community based on the teachings and travels of Paul	To understand the rise of Christendom in Europe in the Middle Ages along with the challenges facing the Christian church.
Story	<p>Pentecost</p> <p>Growth of the early church</p> <p>Persecution of the early church</p> <p>Changing relationship between church and state</p>	<p>Gregory I and Charlemagne (their impact on the Church);</p> <p>Coptic and Syrian Christians</p>
Scripture for Life	Rom. 12:1–8	Rom. 12:9–21
Enduring Questions	<p>What are the core understandings of the early Christian church? And what are the implications for today?</p> <p>How did the early Church resolve diverse opinions, and how does this serve as an example for today?</p>	<p>What can we learn from the challenges the early church faced?</p> <p>What are challenges in church–state relations?</p>
Anabaptist Connections	<p>Persecution of the early Church,</p> <p>“Christian” (Christ-like),</p> <p>Apostles Creed,</p> <p>Infant baptism,</p> <p>Peace, Reconciliation</p>	<p>Relations with Islam today,</p> <p>Jesus the center of our faith</p>

Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
10 class periods	24 class periods	30 class periods
The Great Schism (1054–1517)	The Great Reformation (1517–1945)	Post–Christendom (1945–Present)
To understand the Great Schism of 1054 and decline of the church's power along with growing calls for reform.	To understand the spread of Christianity into the West and East and the impact of the Reformation on Christianity.	To understand the global demographic trends for all religions with a focus on Christianity and the global Anabaptist movement.
Great Schism of 1054 (Eastern and Western Empires); Implications for East–West relations; Renaissance	Martin Luther Rise of the Anabaptists Anabaptists move to North America	Changing religious landscape in U.S. Global Anabaptist movement
Ps. 40:1–8	Ps. 40:1–8	1 Cor. 13:4–13
How do the sacraments of the Catholic Church compare/contrast with core understandings of Anabaptist Christians?	What factors led to the rise of the Anabaptist movement? What are the core values of Anabaptist Christians?	How are Anabaptists today a global movement? What are the core values that unite global Anabaptist Christians?
Relations with Islam today, Jesus the center of our faith	Menno Simons, Core values of Anabaptists	Growth of the global Anabaptist movement

Grade 12	Unit 1	Unit 2
Number of lessons	20–25 class periods (15 for student presentations at end)	15 class periods
Theme	Introduction and Faith Practice Capstone Project	Engaging with World Religions
Purpose	To demonstrate meaningful, spiritual insights that show growth throughout the student's high school spiritual journey The Capstone Project is opportunity to share reflective, meaningful spiritual insights	To use critical thinking to compare/contrast Christianity to world religions To understand skills for developing healthy relationships with persons of other faiths.
Bible Texts		Acts 10; 15; 17:16–34; 1 Cor. 6:1–7
Scripture for Life	Mic. 6:8; 1 Cor. 3:11; Matt. 5:1–16	Ps. 8; 121; Matt. 5:38–47
Enduring Questions	How can I demonstrate my understanding of my gifts, talents and interests to serve God's kingdom?	How does Christianity compare/contrast with Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam? Why are dialogue, bearing witness, peacemaking, and hospitality significant in developing healthy relationships with persons of other faiths?
Anabaptist Connections	MSC 1–Loved and Valued by God MSC 9–Relationship with Jesus	MSC 2–Peacebuilding MSC 4–Welcoming Community MSC 5–Global Awareness

Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
15 class periods	15 class periods	15 class periods
Jesus as the Center of Our Faith	Living in Community within God's Kingdom	Reconciliation is the Center of God's Kingdom
<p>To understand spiritual disciplines that deepen one's faith</p> <p>To understand relationship with God also impacts relationships with others.</p>	<p>To discern how we are to live today as citizens of God's Kingdom</p> <p>To understand that leadership and power are gifts from God that need to be used in a responsible manner.</p>	<p>To discern how we are to work for shalom and reconciliation within God's Kingdom</p> <p>To understand the scope of God's shalom as encompassing justice, reconciliation, and salvation.</p>
1 Sam. 3; Matt. 6:1–21; Luke 3:1–18; John 1:19–34; Acts 16:11–15	Lev. 25; Matt. 5–7; 25:31–46; Luke 4:31–37; 22:24–30; John 1:1–5; Acts 4:32–36; Rom. 12	Gen. 32–33; Matt. 5–7; 18:15–20; Rom. 12
Ps. 22; Matt. 6:1–21; Heb. 12:2; Rev. 21:1–5	Deut. 6:4–5; Matt. 6:25–27	Isa. 61:1–3; Matt. 7:1–5
<p>How can spiritual disciplines promote vertical relationship to God and horizontal relationship with others?</p> <p>What is the significance and meaning of baptism?</p> <p>In what ways did Jesus model qualities of healthy relationship?</p>	<p>What does it mean to be a citizen of God's upside-down kingdom?</p> <p>How do we discern the way of Jesus in light of current issues facing society?</p>	<p>What does it mean to view the Bible through the eyes of Christ?</p> <p>How is the life of Christ the fulfillment of Old Testament law?</p>
<p>MSC 9–Grow in relationship with Jesus</p> <p>MSC 13–Live the gospel message</p>	<p>MSC 4–Welcoming Community</p> <p>MSC 6–Stewardship</p> <p>MSC 15–God's Kingdom</p>	<p>MSC 1–Loved by God</p> <p>MSC 2–Peacebuilding</p> <p>MSC 3–Value Diversity</p> <p>MSC 5–Global Awareness</p> <p>MSC 13–Live the gospel message</p>



ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

Pre-Kindergarten

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

They are invited to embrace the call of God to follow Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in justice, peace and joy, so that, God's healing and hope flow through them to all of creation.



Unit 1: Peacemaking

Unit #1

Summary: This unit is designed to assist the students in cooperatively creating a classroom environment of peace from the beginning of the year. Students will learn that each has been created as a unique individual, their feelings are important, all must learn to respect one another, and that they can all be peacemakers. Students will learn the I-Care Language to help with this process.

Key Bible texts:

- Genesis 25:19–34, 27, 37–45
- 1 Samuel 1–2
- Luke 8:40–42, 49–56
- Colossians 3:8

Scripture for Life: Ephesians 4:32

Biblical background:

One major thread of the Anabaptist faith is that of living at peace with everyone. We strive to follow Jesus' example and find many examples in the Bible of how Jesus led a peaceful life:

- In John 4, Jesus openly speaks with a Samaritan woman at a well. At that time, Jews refused to interact with Samaritans, considering them to be unclean. When this woman went to the well, Jesus not only spoke to her, but he asked her to draw him something to drink. She recognized him as a Jew and was very surprised that he would ask such a thing of her. Jesus showed love and compassion when it was least expected by the recipient.
- After Judas betrayed Jesus and the soldiers came to find him in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter tried to defend Jesus and cut off the ear of one of the soldiers. Jesus reprimanded Peter for taking such violent actions against his captor, stating that he must “drink the cup that the Father has given me” (John 18: 11b NRSV).

Essential questions:

- How can we learn to live at peace with others?
- What does it look like when we all work together cooperatively?

Anabaptist faith practices:

- MSC 2: Peacebuilding
- MSC 5: Compassionate living

**Worship/Devotional focus:****Sing:**

At the beginning of each lesson, sing:

“I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy (Down in My Heart)”

“Peace like a River”

See Resources or search on YouTube.

Bible Stories:

These Bible stories and verses can reinforce peacemaking concepts in this unit. Please note these are used elsewhere in the curriculum.

- **Mark 4: 35–41:** Jesus calms the storm. These can help students understand that it is important to remain calm, even in the face of turmoil and disagreement.
- **John 11:** Jesus restores Lazarus to life. This story can help students understand how we can show compassion to our friends, just as Jesus had great compassion for his friends Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.
- **Luke 17: 11–19:** Jesus heals the ten with leprosy. Use this story to remind students how important it is to show love to others different from ourselves and to share our gratitude with others when they do something kind for us.
- **Luke 2:41–52:** The boy Jesus at the temple. These verses can help students understand that we are all important parts of a family whether that family is in our homes or in our schools.
- **Genesis 37–45:** Joseph. Teachers can choose some Genesis passages to discuss Joseph’s feelings and emotions during events in his life.

We recommend that teachers use *Shine On: A Story Bible* to share the stories in kid-friendly language.

Scripture for Life: Throughout this unit, have the students learn the following Bible verse:

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32 NRSV).

This verse reminds us about important components of peacemaking: compassion and forgiveness.

Pray: At the end of each lesson, conclude with a prayer such as:
God, we thank you for our friends here at school. We are working hard to remember to live at peace with each other. Help us to remember all of the ways we can be peacemakers. Amen.

Resources:

Beall, Pamela Conn and Susan Hagen Nipp. “Down in My Heart.” *Wee Sing Bible Songs Book and CD Collection*. Penguin Random House, 2006: 60.

Beall, Pamela Conn and Susan Hagen Nipp. “I’ve Got Peace like a River.” *Wee Sing Bible Songs Book and CD Collection*. Penguin Random House, 2006: 48.

Shine On: A Story Bible. Shine: Living in God’s Light curriculum. Menno Media and Brethren Press, 2014.



Unit 1: Peacemaking Skills for Little Kids

Week 1: We Become Friends

Lesson 1: We're getting to know each other

Objective: The students will get to know one another and build a sense of classroom community by listening to one another.

Essential question: How can I build community right in my own classroom?

Biblical text:

- Genesis 37

Scripture for Life: Ephesians 4:32

Estimated lesson time: 20–30 minutes

Materials:

- Paper cups
- String
- Picture of sheaves of grain (See jpg in Resources.)

Teacher preparation:

Make a “telephone” by connecting two paper cups to a 10-foot piece of string that has been knotted inside the cups.

The students will be introduced to I-Care Cat for the first time. Follow “Introduction: I-Care Cat’s Visit” on page 4 in the book *Peacemaking Skills for Little Kids*. An optional resource is the I-Care CD. See Resources.

Lesson steps:

Introduce I-Care Cat.

Ask: *What does it mean to be a peacemaker? What is peace?*

Encourage children to think of times that they were a peacemaker and how they listened to their friends.

Tell the story about Jacob:

Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob. Jacob loved him so much that he made a special, colorful robe for Jacob. This made Jacob’s 11 brothers jealous.

One night, Joseph had a dream. In this dream, he and his brothers were gathering sheaves of grain. (Show picture of sheaves.) Joseph’s sheaf stood straight up, while his brother’s sheaves bowed down to his. This made Joseph’s brothers angry with him because they thought he was saying that he would rule over them.

Joseph then had another dream. In this dream, the sun and moon and 11 stars were bowing down to Joseph. his brothers were so mad at him. How could he think that they would ever bow down to him? Joseph's brothers did not want to listen to what Joseph had to say about these dreams. They thought he was crazy and the dreams meant nothing. In the next few weeks, we will learn that these dreams were very important, and Joseph's brothers should have listened.

To begin the activity, show the students the telephone that was made out of paper cups and string. Ask students if they know what it might be. Tell them that they are going to practice listening to one another. Have a pair of students demonstrate how to use the telephone. Encourage them to think of something they would like to say prior to pairing them.

Lesson extension:

Read a Book

Read *The Grouchy Ladybug* by Eric Carle. Ask the students why the other animals didn't like the Grouchy Ladybug. Ask them how she changed her behavior.

Listen to Nature

Take the students outside for a sound walk. Have them sit silently with their eyes closed for a short amount of time. Ask them what sounds in nature they were able to hear.

Assessment:

Ask: *Why is it important to be a good listener?*

Resources:

Carle, Eric. *The Grouchy Ladybug*. HarperCollins, 1996.

"Stooks of Barley in West Sommerset." Wikimedia. JPG. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stooks_of_barley_in_West_Somerset.jpg

Schmidt, Fran and Alice Moffat-Friedman. *Peacemaking Skills for Little Kids, Pre-K/K*. Peace Works/Peace Education Foundation. <https://peaceeducation.org/by-age/prek-k.html>

Schmidt, Fran and Alice Moffat-Friedman. *Peacemaking Skills for Little Kids: An I-Care Cat Music and Lessons CD*, performed by Gustavo Lezcano. 2012. Audio CD. <https://peaceeducation.org/by-age/prek-k/peacemaking-skills-for-little-kids-music-cd.html>





ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

Kindergarten

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

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Unit 1: Fruits of the Spirit

Week 1: Fruits of the Spirit

Enduring Question: What does it mean to be in a faith community?

Essential Question: How do the words of Jesus help us be a community?

Biblical text:

- Galatians 5:13–26

Materials:

- A talking piece (an object of your choice, perhaps something important to you)
- Loose leaf paper and folder for each child
- One large sheet of poster paper
- *Shalom Journal* (A binder or folder for each student for the year.)

Unit
#1

Teacher Preparation:

Learn sign language or create gross motor movements to symbolize love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control using sign language. See Resources.

Read supporting information on respect agreements from *Discipline that Restores* by Ron and Roxanne Claassen to familiarize yourself with the Shalom concept. See Resources.

Familiarize yourself with the circle process. See Resources or search online.

Opening and Closing Ritual:

As you begin the session, place a plant or item from nature in the center of the circle. To begin, say:

God, open our hearts so that we may hear what you have to say.

To close each session, say:

God, open our hearts so that we may know what to do.

Teaching Movements:

1. Discover life experiences

Ask the students what the word *community* means to them. Using the circle process, pass a talking piece telling the children they are invited to speak when holding it and invited to listen when not. Any child has the option to pass.

Pass the talking piece around a second time to allow opportunity for those that passed to respond. To learn more on circle processes, see *The Little Book of Circle Processes: The New/Old Approach to Peacemaking* by Kay Pranis.

Following the circle discussion, share about when you have felt the strength of community and a place where you belong.

2. Reflect on life experiences

Allow students to share their own experiences of community and belonging in a class discussion, followed by an opportunity to draw a picture of that. This could be the first page of a journal titled “*Shalom Journal*.”

1. Share the story and vision

Read Galatians 5:13–26 or “Growing the Fruit of the Spirit” on page 309 in *Shine On: A Story Bible*. Introduce sign language (or gross motor movements) for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These can be used throughout the unit.

The Spreadthesign website allows you to enter a word and the country you are in and gives you the sign language for that word.

See Resources.

4. Integrate the Story with My Life

Create a respect agreement for your classroom. Begin by having students generate specific examples to show what it looks like when:

- Students respect students
- Students respect teachers
- Teachers respect students
- Everyone respects the school

One idea is to make a four-part grid where students give concrete examples of each category in the grid. This grid can be turned into a class poster to refer to throughout the year. This document could be signed by all class members.

Option: Storybook discussion

Read or view *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate (on YouTube). Compare and contrast the kindergarten in the story with what they expect kindergarten to be for them.

Option: Prayer

During a circle time, conduct a bubble prayer. With each dip of the wand, blow a bubble and name one of your students, thanking God that they are part of the class this year. Repeat until each child is named.

You could try it a second time with each child naming the student to their right after a bubble is blown.

5. Living the Faith Story

Note to teachers: Remember that this is a living curriculum where the goal isn't that our students memorize a story, but that they see God's purpose and respond to it. Keep in mind that projects are where we see God's hand at work in the world through our students. You can start thinking about what kind of project you would like to do with your students. Examples that could fit this unit's theme:

- Collect stories from your community (church, school or neighborhood) where people have experienced belonging and community. Share



them with your students or, if at all possible, invite an individual in who may have felt alone and then was brought into a supportive group of people.

- Take several Bible periods to focus on building relationships in these early weeks of the year; the time spent early in the year will affect the classroom environment for the remainder of the year (Create an environment of shalom; see more in Unit 2 Week 1.)
- Participate in a service project through local initiatives in your city, church, or school or through global projects). When possible, these should be student-driven and connect to a student's experience.
- September 21 is International Day of Peace. Organize a celebration for your class or school. Suggestions are listed at the Jane Goodall Institute website: Read, *Can You Say Peace?* by Karen Katz.

Resources:

Claassen, Ron and Roxanne Claassen. *Discipline That Restores: Strategies to Create Respect, Cooperation, and Responsibility in the Classroom*. BookSurge Publishing, 2008.

Claassen, Ron. "An Introduction to 'Discipline That Restores' DTR." 2002: 2. PDF. <http://restorativejusticediscipline.com/library/IntroDTR.pdf>

"International Day of Peace." The Jane Goodall Institute. <http://rootsandshoots.org/peaceday>

Katz, Karen. *Can You Say Peace?* Square Fish, 2016.

Lapiak, Johanna. American Sign Language Dictionary. Handspeak®, 2018. <https://www.handspeak.com/word/>

Lydell, Thomas. Spreadthesign. European Sign Language Center, 2018. <https://www.spreadthesign.com/en.us/search/?cls=1>

Pranis, Kay. *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking*. Good Books, 2015.

Shine On: A Story Bible. Shine: Living in God's Light curriculum. Menno Media and Brethren Press, 2014.

Slate, Joseph and Ashley Wolff, ill. *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*. Puffin Books, 2001.



ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

1st Grade

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

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Unit 1: Peaceful, Loving Neighbors

Week 1: Respect Everyone

Enduring Question: What does it mean to live in a faith community?

Essential Question: How should we treat others with respect?

Biblical text:

- James 2:1–13

Materials:

- A talking piece (smooth rock, small stuffed animal, or feather)
- A large sheet of paper for creating a classroom poster

Unit
#1

Opening and Closing Ritual:

Have children stand in a circle holding hands and say, “We are a community. Jesus, help us follow you.” Close your time together by having children go to a friend and say, “We are a community,” and then fist bump, shake hands, or give a hug.

Teaching Movements:

1. Discover life experiences

Ask: How has someone showed you kindness? How did that make you feel?

2. Reflect on life experiences

Students share their experience with a neighbor. If time allows, introduce the idea of circle sharing. Students sit in a circle or in a U facing one another. Ask the question again, and pass a talking piece. When students are holding the talking piece, they are invited to speak. When they are not holding it, they are invited to listen. They may share their experience or choose to pass the talking piece on to the next student.

3. Share the story and vision

Read James 2:1–13 or “Respecting Others” on page 312 in *Shine On: A Story Bible*. Encourage silent or spoken reflection on the passage with wonder statements:

I wonder why people were treated differently.

I wonder how we treat others with respect.

4. Integrate the Story with My Life

Create a respect agreement for your classroom. (See the two Claassen references in Resources.) Students generate specific examples to show what it looks like when:

- Students respect students

- Students respect teachers
- Teachers respect students
- Everyone respects the facility

One idea for the Respect Agreement is to make a four-part grid where students give concrete examples of each category in the grid. This grid can be turned into a class poster to refer to throughout the year. This document could be signed by all class members.

4. Living the Faith Story

Note to teachers: Remember that this is a living curriculum where the goal isn't that our students memorize a story, but that they see God's purpose and respond to it. Keep in mind that unit projects are where we see God's hand at work in the world through our students. Begin thinking about what kind of unit project you would like to do with your students. You could also choose to wait to do a project until the next unit. Examples that fit this unit's themes include:

- Set up a way for students to report on each other showing kindness and respect. Keep a notebook where the names and deeds are recorded. Students could write their friend's name on a slip of paper to hand in to you or simply tell you. Make sure time is taken to announce and celebrate these acts.
- Memorize Matthew 5:16.
- Create a balance to illustrate the power of good, kind acts. Using any size balance, place a container of large rugged rocks on one side. On the other side place an empty container. As children demonstrate showing love, kindness, and respect to each other, give them small, smooth rocks to place in the empty container. Continue adding rocks throughout the unit and/or the year. This balance will eventually show the power of many small acts to lift the heavy boulders that weigh us down.
- Find a story that you like to read or one in your Language Arts curriculum that has a conflict. Before finishing the story and revealing the solution, use the STORY mat (See Lesson 1.1.3) and have students take on the roles of two characters in conflict. See what kinds of solutions the students create. Compare and contrast their solution with the story's solution.
- Choose a peace project from Jane Goodall's site. See Resources.
- Create a peace book library. See suggestions in Lesson 1.1.4.
- Create a peace mural. Have students sing any songs they can think of about peace. Talk about what peace looks like in their lives or what they think peace is. Use the songs and conversation to draw out symbols and images of peace. On a large sheet of paper, write the word "peace." Have students create those images around the word peace using paint or markers. This would be a beautiful display to keep in your



classroom as a reminder of peace.

Resources:

Claassen, Ron and Roxanne Claassen. *Discipline That Restores: Strategies to Create Respect, Cooperation, and Responsibility in the Classroom*. BookSurge Publishing, 2008.

Claassen, Ron. "An Introduction to 'Discipline That Restores' DTR." 2002: 2. PDF. <http://restorativejusticediscipline.com/library/IntroDTR.pdf>

"International Day of Peace." The Jane Goodall Institute. <http://rootsandshoots.org/peaceday>

Shine On: A Story Bible. Shine: Living in God's Light curriculum. Menno Media and Brethren Press, 2014.



ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

2nd Grade

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

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Unit 1: A Picture of Community

Week 1: Respect Everyone

Enduring Question: What does it mean to live in a faith community?

Essential Question: How do we see the image of God in each other?

Biblical text:

- James 2:1–13

Materials:

- *Shine On: A Story Bible*
- Large poster board

Unit
#1

Teaching Movements:

1. Discover life experiences

Before starting lesson, pray for the Spirit's guidance in helping you understand what it means to live in community with your students.

Ask: Have you ever experienced a time when you felt like you did not belong or where you were not included in something fun? (Teacher: share a time in your life when you were feeling alone and not included in something when your friends were.)

2. Reflect on life experiences

Have children draw a picture or journal about a time when they were not included in something. Then share these experiences with small groups of children.

3. Share the story and vision

Read James 2: 1–13 or “Respecting Others, page 312 in *Shine On: A Story Bible*.

Ask: Have you ever heard of the word shalom? Allow responses.

Be sure to explain the following. This sets up purposeful community in your classroom.

Shalom is a Hebrew word meaning peace, a place of harmony where everyone gets along—place of wholeness, a place where we are all one group. Shalom is what God desires for everyone in our world to experience. When we are together in a classroom of shalom, we will feel loved, valued, and accepted by everyone. I want us all to explore what it would look like in our classroom for everyone to experience shalom right here.

4. Integrate the Story with My Life

Create a respect agreement for your classroom. You can also call this a class covenant. Students generate specific examples to show what it looks like when:

- Students respect students
- Students respect teachers
- Teachers respect students
- Everyone respects the facility

Create a class poster to refer to throughout the year. This document should be signed by all class members, including the teacher.

(Throughout the year if a new student joins the class he/she should sign it as well!) See information in Resources.

5. Living the Faith Story

Note to teachers: Remember that this is a living curriculum where the goal isn't that our students memorize a story, but that they see God's purpose and respond to it. Keep in mind that unit projects are where we see God's hand at work in the world through our students. Think about what kind of unit project you would like to do with your students. Units will be located in the first lesson of each new unit.

Scripture for Life: The following scriptures may be used for memory verses for this unit:

John 13:34–35 (primary verse)

Matthew 5:44–45

Psalm 91:1,4

Psalm 139: 7–10

Psalm 133:1

1 Corinthians 1:10

1 Peter 3:8

- Create a Bible journal for each student to use all year. They can decorate their covers with art supplies that are available.
- Students could write a song about what it means to be a community.
- Plan and do a service project to show love to others who need to be loved. If this unit is at the beginning of the school year, students could do odd chores at home to earn money and buy pencils and crayons to donate to another school that needs supplies.



- Create a Buddy Spot on the playground. If someone is playing at recess and is lonely and wants someone to play with, that person goes to the buddy spot. When another classmate or student notices the lonely person, the child asks that student to play. Think of a way that this Buddy Spot and the purpose of it can be communicated with the whole school.
- Sept. 21 is International Peace Day. Plan an activity for the whole school. Choose a peace project from Jane Goodall's site. See Resources.
- Create a Classroom Peace Journal. Whenever the students experience a peaceful situation (for example, a friend shares his/her crayons or another classmate volunteers to help), the student writes it in the Classroom Peace Journal. Continue this throughout the year and at weekly class meetings, excerpts from the journal.

Resources:

"International Day of Peace." The Jane Goodall Institute. <http://rootsandshoots.org/peaceday>

Claassen, Ron and Roxanne Claassen. *Discipline That Restores: Strategies to Create Respect, Cooperation, and Responsibility in the Classroom*. BookSurge Publishing, 2008.

Claassen, Ron. "An Introduction to 'Discipline That Restores' DTR." 2002: 2. PDF. <http://restorativejusticediscipline.com/library/IntroDTR.pdf>

Shine On: A Story Bible. *Shine: Living in God's Light curriculum*. Menno Media and Brethren Press, 2014.



ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

3rd Grade

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

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Unit 1: God's Story of Shalom (Biblical Overview)

Week 1: Lesson 1: God's Plan: Shalom (2–3 class periods)

Unit #1

Unit 1 Introduction: The goal of this unit is to provide a framework for understanding the connections that run through our Bible. To accomplish this goal in a short amount of time, this unit, while firmly grounded in biblical texts, will summarize some of the significant events from the overall story. As the next units are studied, they can then be put in context of the larger story.

Themes repeat in the biblical story: God wants shalom for all people, people fall away from God and break shalom with God and with others, God welcomes people back, and the cycle continues. Then Jesus comes to help people have a better understanding of shalom. After Jesus returns to heaven, God is still calling us to be in shalom with God and with others in our world.

You may want to develop a timeline. One option is to write the title of each story on an 8 ½" x 11" sheet of paper. You or students draw a picture that represents the story. Each of the stories in the first unit can be put on the wall with space in between. As new stories are read, place them where they belong in the broader story of the Bible.

This could also be developed as a book for each student—either instead of or in addition to. The student book would be added to as the year progresses. Booklets like this can be found online.¹

At the beginning of each lesson is a time for student reflection (“Discover life experiences”). This is a way to help students connect with the lesson before reading the biblical story. You might consider having a faith journal for each student. This could be a place for them to write their reflections during Bible lessons.

The stories of Jesus’ birth and death are not in this first unit. They are in separate lessons so that they can be studied at the appropriate time of the church calendar.

Unit Notes: Since shalom is building and strengthening relationships with God, others, self, and God’s creation, it’s lived out in countless ways. Sometimes it’s playing games together, laughing, and having fun; other times, it is helping someone who is hurt or sad, healing a broken relationship with a classmate, or quietly reflecting and praying.

¹ Gaylord, Susan Kapuscinski. “Free Projects.” makingbooks.com, 2016. Blog. <http://www.makingbooks.com/freeprojects.shtml>



Students often respond well to the words, “doing the work of God” when referring to shalom. When one of your students solves a problem that she/he has with another student, the two are “doing the work of God.” And when they are having fun and playing a game together, they are “doing the work of God.” Throughout the day, whenever they are building, strengthening, or mending relationships, they are “doing the work of God.” Point that out often, especially in the beginning of the year.

Enduring Question: What does the biblical story teach us about God and God’s mission for us?

Essential Questions: What is shalom? What keeps shalom from happening in a community?

Biblical texts:

- Genesis 3; 4:1–16

Materials:

- *Shine On: A Story Bible*

Teaching Movements:

1. Discover life experiences

Have students use their faith journal to think and/or write about these questions:

- Think about a time you did or said something you shouldn’t have.
- What happened, and how did it affect the people around you?

2. Reflect on life experiences

Ask your students to share their responses with a partner or small group. Then allow time for sharing with the whole class.

3. Share the story and vision

Read “Trouble in the Garden, page 17, and “Jealousy between Brothers,” page 18 in *Shine On: A Story Bible* or the biblical text in Genesis 3 and 4:1–16.

Have students think about the essential questions as the story is read. Discuss.

4. Integrate the Story with My Life

Timeline activity: Have students draw or sketch a picture that goes with the story using the timeline titles—for the wall, the student booklets, or both. These drawings are to represent the story’s theme of the story and to help students remember it. Place stories in chronological order. Take time to talk about what students are drawing. Sometimes hearing what others are drawing will help them to know what picture will be the most meaningful for them.

Recommended activity: Respect Agreements

See “Respect Agreements Lesson Plan.”

This activity may take more than one class period; allow as much time as needed.

1. Living the Faith Story

Note to teachers: Remember that this is a living curriculum where the goal isn't that our students memorize a story, but that they see God's purpose and respond to it. We want to teach, talk, and pray about faith, but we want our students to see that faith also involves living and action. Think about how your students experience a living faith.

For this shorter unit, keep deep faith discussions shorter as your community gets to know one another and you better.

Some possibilities could be:

- Play a game in the gym together.
- Play board games in the room together.
- Make and eat food together.
- Do other fun activities where your students interact, laugh, and build relationships. Remind them that they are “doing the work of God.”

Creating Respect Agreements**Materials:**

- Blank paper for each student (8½” x 11”)
- Construction paper for each group of 3 to 4 students
- Large construction paper or poster-sized paper—4 pieces

Teacher Instruction

Tell your class that for the next two lessons, they will be creating the expectations for their community. It will be important for you and your students to remember God's shalom as you do this task.

Give each student a blank paper and ask them to fold it into four sections.

Title each section with:

- a. Students —> Students
- b. Students —> Teachers
- c. Teachers —> Students
- d. Everyone —> Facility (or school)

Independently

Each student writes specific ideas in the first box for how students respect students. Once finished, they move on to the next box (students —> teachers). Leave the next two boxes for your next session.

Divide into groups of three to four students

Give each group one construction paper and fold the paper into fourths, labeling each the same as they did on their own papers. Each student needs to share their ideas with their group, making sure that each member's ideas are written down. Once finished with the first section, move on to the second. Again, leave the next two boxes for your next session.

Entire class

Groups share their list with the class.

Before the next session, gather each group's papers and write all ideas on a larger paper that you can display to the class.

For the next class period, repeat for the final two sections of the paper.

Resources:

Claassen, Ron and Roxanne Claassen. "Chapter 4 Respect Agreement" in *Discipline That Restores: Strategies to Create Respect, Cooperation, and Responsibility in the Classroom*. BookSurge Publishing, 2008.

Shine On: A Story Bible from *Shine: Living in God's Light* curriculum. Herald Press, 2014.



ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

4th Grade

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

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Unit 1: God's Story of Shalom (Biblical Overview)

Week 1: Lesson 1: God's Plan: Shalom



Unit 1 Introduction: The tone and layout of this first unit in the Grade 4 Encounter curriculum is significantly different from the next three. This unit's goal is to provide a framework for understanding the connections that run through our Bible. To accomplish this goal in a short amount of time, this unit, while firmly grounded in biblical texts, summarizes some significant events from the overall story. These summaries should be used to pull out themes and to tell/remember the larger story, but they are not intended to be studied in the same way that you will with the actual Bible for the rest of the year.

Recommended Visual – Biblical Timeline/Booklet: Create a timeline that helps your students organize the larger biblical story. The pictures from the *TimelinePictures* document can be used with the *TimelineBooklet* document to create booklets that each of your students could keep and refer back to throughout the year. See Resources at the end of this lesson for a link or find other resources that inspire booklet creation so your students can grasp the overall biblical narrative.

Enduring Question: What does the biblical story teach us about God and God's mission for us?

Essential Question: What is shalom?

Time: 30–40 minutes

Biblical texts:

- Genesis 3
- Genesis 4
- Genesis 11

Materials:

- *God's Story of Shalom Booklet* (see front matter)
- Shalom poster



Teacher Preparation:

- Put up shalom poster.
- See the instructions for creating the God's Story of Shalom Booklets.
- Consider how to live out shalom in the classroom:

In preparation for the discussion at the end of the lesson, think about what shalom could look like in your classroom.

Since shalom is building and strengthening relationships with God, others, self, and God's creation, it's lived out in countless ways. Sometimes it's playing games together, laughing, and having fun, while other times, it could be helping someone when they are hurt or sad, healing a broken relationship with a classmate, or quietly reflecting and praying.

Students often respond well to the words, "doing the work of God" when referring to shalom. When a student solves a problem that she/he has with another student, the two are doing the work of God. And when they are having fun and playing a game together, they are doing the work of God. Throughout the day, whenever they are building, strengthening, or mending relationships, they are doing the work of God, and point that out often, especially in the beginning of the year.

Teaching Movements:

1. Discover life experiences

Ask: What are some of the important relationships in your life?

2. Reflect on life experiences

- Have your students make a word web where they write their names in the center of a paper and the names of the people who are most important to them around their name.
- Briefly ask your students to share their responses with the people around them.

3. Share the story and vision

- Explain to the class that the next 10 minutes will be a read-aloud time where you will read a few stories that talk about who God is and what God cares about. Tell them to pay special attention to the relationships in these stories.
- Read the story "God's Plan: Shalom," followed by "Story Themes."
- Show your students where this event fits in their timeline booklet.

God's Plan: Shalom

After creating all the world and everything on it, God lived with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In the garden, God showed them the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and told them not to eat its fruit. But a serpent told Adam and Eve that eating its fruit would make them “be like God” and they chose to eat it. After eating the fruit, and trying to be like God, they realized shame and judgment for the first time. With this knowledge, it was no longer safe for them to stay in the Garden of Eden so God sent them away. But God clothed, protected, and cared for them after they left.

Away from the garden, Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. The two brothers presented offerings to God. But, consumed by jealousy because of what Abel could offer to God, Cain murdered his brother. Seeing this violence, God sent Cain away, but promised to protect him from anyone who may want to harm him because of what he had done.

Many years later, after the human population had grown a lot, the people of the world decided to build a city with a tower that would reach into the heavens. They wanted to be important. They wanted to be noticed. They were hoping that their tower would make them equal to God. Seeing this destructive path, God made them speak different languages and scattered them so they could not communicate and finish their tower.

Story Themes: God's Nature and Shalom

Through these three stories, God's character is revealed to us. We see a God who is concerned with right relationships. In two of the stories (Adam and Eve and The Tower of Babel) people are attempting to be like God, or to be equal with God. In the Cain and Abel story, people are harming their relationships with one another. But we also see that God offers grace and peace by caring for people even when they break relationships. God keeps Adam and Eve safe after they eat the fruit. God protects Cain, even after his terrible act. And God prevents the tower from being finished.

In these stories, God, the Creator, is God of love, grace, and peace. We sometimes use the Hebrew word *shalom* to mean “peace,” but to the Hebrew people, it meant much more than that: it meant right relationships between us and God, others, ourselves, and all of God's creation. This word, shalom, is God's goal and mission for us in the world.

If God's mission for all humanity is to build shalom (strengthen relationships), every time that we are building relationships and community, we are doing the work of God.

But we are also a people who make mistakes. When we harm a relationship with God, others, ourselves, or with God's creation, we are called to make it right. So if there is a conflict or broken relationship at recess, in the classroom, or at home, if we repair that relationship, we are also doing the work of God.

4. Integrate the Story with My Life

Display the shalom poster to your class. Lead a whole group discussion on shalom. Talk about ways that your community can live in shalom throughout the school day and record their ideas on the board.

Tell students to go back to their relationship web and add more people to it. Make sure that they also include God, themselves, God's creation, and other people. Allow them to be as specific within these categories as they want.

Respect Agreements (recommended): See *Respect Agreements Lesson Plan*

- This activity may take more than one class period, but allow it to take up to as much time as needed.

5. Living the Faith Story

Teachers, remember that this is a living curriculum where the goal isn't that our students memorize a story, but that they see God's purpose and respond to it. We want to teach, talk, and pray about faith, but we want our students to see that faith also involves living and action. Think about how you want your students to experience a living faith.

Some possibilities could be:

- Play a game in the gym together.
- Play board games in the room together.
- Make and eat food together.
- Other fun activities where your students interact, laugh, and build relationships. Make sure to constantly remind them that they are "doing the work of God."

Resources:

Gaylord, Susan Kapuscinski. "Free Projects." makingbooks.com, 2016. Blog. <http://www.makingbooks.com/freeprojects.shtml>



ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

5th Grade

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

They are invited to embrace the call of God to follow Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in justice, peace and joy, so that, God's healing and hope flow through them to all of creation.



Unit 1: Beginnings

Week 1: A Good Creation

Enduring Question: What does it mean to live in right relationship?

Essential Question: How is your life different if you choose to see all of God's creation as good?

Biblical text: Genesis 1–2 (Shine On: A Story Bible, p. 12–15), Psalm 104

Unit #1

Materials:

- Class copies of God's Story Our Story by Michele Hershberger
- Shine On: A Story Bible: A Story Bible
- A talking piece (examples: smooth rock, small ball, stick, feather)

Teacher Preparation:

To understand lesson flow and approach, read the introductory teacher information for teaching Encounter.

Plan for students to sit in a circle or U formation in room or outdoor area.

Teaching Movements:

1. Discover Life Experiences

Ask, Where is God?

2. Reflect on Life Experiences

Students respond by drawing, speaking a phrase, or discussing with a partner.

If time allows, introduce the idea of circle sharing. Students sit in a circle (or U shape) facing one another. Ask the question again and pass the talking piece. When students are holding the talking piece, they are invited to speak; when they are not, they are invited to listen. They may share or pass the item to the next student.

3. Share the Story and Vision

Read Genesis 1–2 from Shine On: A Story Bible or from another Bible. You may want to read it twice and have students sketch their thoughts as they listen.

4. Integrate the Story with My Life

Choose one or more of the following pieces or develop another that works for your class:

Recommended: Discussion

- Use the circle sharing process to discuss any of these questions:
- Is God far away or close up? How might you change your response from earlier?
- What does it mean for us to be created in God's image?
- How does it change our lives if we see all of creation as good?



- How should we treat others in light of this message?
- How should we treat the earth in light of this message?

Option: Introduce Spiritual Discipline - Notice God in Nature

Spend time outdoors leading students in appreciating the largeness and smallness of the nature around your school grounds. Discuss how the intricate and majestic elements of creation reveal God's presence as both near to us and far over us (See God's Story Our Story, p. 16.).

Option: Illustrate and Reflect

Read Psalm 104, a creation poem. Illustrate the images.

Option: Additional Reading - Introduction to the Book

Have students read the parts of the conversation partners in God's Story Our Story, pp. 16-17.

5. Living the Faith Story - UNIT PROJECT

Note to teachers: This step is for you. Remember that this is a living curriculum where the goal isn't that our students memorize a story, but that they see God's purpose and respond to it. Keep in mind that unit projects are where we see God's hand at work in the world through our students. Begin thinking about what kind of unit project you would like to do with your students. *You have 12 weeks until the end of the unit.*

Examples that fit this unit's themes could include:

- Tend a garden or care for plants, or help students create or promote creation care projects like recycling, composting, or reducing their environmental impact.
- Interview people who have experienced God's call (parents, pastors, grandparents, mentors). Generate questions together and have students do interviews. They could be written or on video to share with the class/school.
- Study courageous women of faith—in the Bible, in history, or today. Students each research a person or the teacher selects local women of faith who could speak to the class or do an interview. Students could write a letter to these women asking questions.
- Research "The Peaceable Kingdom" art piece by Edward Hicks. Students draw their own versions of the painting (Responding to "Shalom in Relationships"). See Resources.
- Research, plan, and celebrate Hebrew Fall Feasts:
 - Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets)
 - Yom Kippur (Feast of Atonement)
 - Sukkot (Feast of tabernacles)

**Resources:**

Hershberger, Michele. *God's Story. Our Story: Exploring Christian Faith and Life*. Herald Press, 2003.

Hicks, Edward, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (1826) in National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Hicks#/media/File:Edward_Hicks_-_Peaceable_Kingdom.jpg

Lee, Jennifer Dukes. "A Messianic Passover Seder for Families with Children." 2010. Online. <https://jenniferdukeslee.com/a-messianic-passover-seder-for-families-with-children/>

Shine On: A Story Bible from Shine: Living in God's Light curriculum. Herald Press, 2014.





ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

6th Grade Explore the Story of Jesus

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

They are invited to embrace the call of God to follow Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in justice, peace and joy, so that, God's healing and hope flow through them to all of creation.



Strand 1: Just Jesus

Unit 1: The Life of Jesus

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- 1.1.A. Identify cultural aspects of Jesus' life.
- 1.1.B. Compare and contrast different political/cultural groups during Jesus' life.
- 1.1.C. Describe the Judean political/governmental structure of Jesus' time.

Unit
#1

Essential Questions:

- Who was Jesus?
- What did Jesus do when he lived on earth?
- What is a governmental structure?
- What was the Judean governmental structure during Jesus' life?
- What were the Jewish political/cultural groups during Jesus' life?
- How might a political/cultural group affect Jesus' life or teachings?

Biblical texts:

- Isaiah 42:1–9
- Biblical texts referencing Jewish groups

Scripture for Life focus *(to be introduced in Unit 2 of Strand 1):*

- Isaiah 42:1–9

Pacing:

- 12 to 16 days
- Optional cultural fair: 5 to 6 days

Materials and Resources:

- Bibles
- Teacher materials for cultural introduction
- Student resource pages
- Computers or laptops
- Bible encyclopedias (print and online)
- Website/videos (The Bible Project)
 - Gospel Series: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/gospel-series/>
 - The Law: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/the-law/>

Teacher Notes/Prep:

Things to think about:

It is important for students to gain a cultural understanding of Jesus before they focus on his teachings. The cultural understanding will help develop later understanding of how people related to or thought of Jesus' life and teachings.

Daily Encounters:

The concepts in this strand's Scripture for Life are not formally introduced until Unit 2 in Strand 1. However, it is a good idea to have Isaiah 42:1–9 available for students to see and/or read before beginning Unit 2 so the passage is not completely new to students.

Encounter #1: Brainstorm (Objective 1.1.A)

Goal: Pre-assess previous knowledge of Jesus and gain awareness of what students want to learn about Jesus.

Activity #1 Summary: To gain an understanding about what students already know and want to discover about Jesus, ask questions about their knowledge of Jesus.

Process notes:

1. Explain that before we begin to talk about Jesus, as a class, we want to discuss what we already know about Jesus.

2. Ask questions. This can be done as a think-pair-share, KWL chart (first column), a gallery walk, or student-created responses on paper. Suggestions include:

- What do you know about Jesus?
- What did he do while on earth?
- What was his purpose?
- What was his “town”/area like where he lived?

3. As a class, create a class list (or other form of visual) of student's previous knowledge about Jesus.

Reflection: Why is it important for us to think about what we already know about Jesus before we begin our year?

Activity #2 Summary: Using the class list as a connecting point, transition the discussion into what students want to discover about Jesus this year.

Process notes:

1. Using a similar format as above (If using a KWL chart, include this section in the second column), ask questions that encourage students to consider what they want to learn about Jesus this year.

- What do you want to discover about Jesus?
- What do you want to know more about where and how he lived?
- What stories or parables do you want to know more about?

Reflection: Why is it important for us to think about what we want to discover about Jesus before we begin our year?

Final reflection: How is what we already know about Jesus going to connect with what we discover about Jesus this year?





ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

7th Grade Transformed by the Story of Jesus

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

They are invited to embrace the call of God to follow Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in justice, peace and joy, so that, God's healing and hope flow through them to all of creation.



Strand 1: Who is Jesus?

Unit 1: In Jesus' Name

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- 1.1.A. Explain the origins and meanings of the names of Jesus.
- 1.1.B. Identify the use and meaning of symbols in scripture.
- 1.1.C. Reflectively create their own name for Jesus.

Unit
#1

Essential Questions:

- How do names have meaning?
- In what ways in your culture do names matter?
- How does Jesus fulfill Old Testament law?

Biblical texts:

- Philippians 2:1–11
- Hebrews 1:1–4

Scripture for Life:

- Philippians 2:1–11

Pacing:

- 27 to 39 days

Materials and Resources:

- Bibles
- Poster board, cardboard or cardstock for the tabernacle.

Teacher Notes/Prep:

Things to think about:

The point of this exercise is to engage students in a hands-on experience of the symbolism of the tabernacle. Do your part by creating a worshipful, symbolic experience in the classroom. Suggestions include opening worship, guided prayer, and scripture reading times. In other words, make symbols a part of the classroom experience, paying attention to their symbols.

The task of creating a piece of the tabernacle needs the proper context. Communicate to students that this is not simply a “looks nice” project. Thought should be given to the symbolism of the tabernacle. Method should match meaning.

Symbolic meaning in scripture can be found and understood in several levels:

- **Look within the text for meaning.** Often the text itself will explain the symbol.
- **Look beside the text for meaning.** Sometimes passages near the text will explain a symbol's significance.

- **Look outside the text for meaning.** Commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other tools have helpful information.

See article “Raising Thomas” on the value of questions as catalyst for faith development:

Csinos, David M, and Ivy Beckwith. “Raising Thomas: Questions and Doubts as Catalysts for Faith Formation in Children and Youth.” *Journal of Family and Community Ministries*, vol. 27, 2014, 87–100.

If the article is unavailable, check chapter 6 in:

Csinos, David M. and Ivy Beckwith. *Children’s Ministry in the Way of Jesus*. IVP Books, 2013.

Encounter #1: Symbols in scripture (Objective 1.1.B)

Goal: Examining the tabernacle and Jesus' parables, students will develop an understanding that God uses symbols to communicate.

Activity #1: (Tabernacle) Students create one of the items described in the tabernacle, using several main categories of items in the tabernacle construction. Each includes several symbols (5–7 days).

- Tabernacle: curtains and space
- Ark: mercy seat, cherubim
- Table of the Bread of Presence: bread, gold, space
- Lampstand: branches, almond blossoms
- Altar of Burnt offering: horns, space
- Court of the Tabernacle: pillars, hooks, linen hangings

Process notes:

1. Reading selections of Exodus 25–27 about the Tabernacle construction. This would be great as a class read-aloud exercise.

Class call-out session: Look for the symbols in the passage. Students call out to make a class list of the symbols they find in the passage. Students do not need to know what the symbols mean at this point; they do need to be able to understand why they think it is a symbol. One student group developed the following list:

acacia wood
almond blossoms
altar of burnt offering
ark
blood
bread of presence
calyx
cherubim
cloud
court of the tabernacle
cubits
curtains of goat hair
curtains of linen
devouring fire
hooks
horns
lampstand
linen hangings
mercy seat

pavement like sapphire
pillars
pillars
poles
pure gold
silver
tabernacle
table of the bread of presence

2. Assign the tabernacle construction sections (tabernacle, ark, table, lampstand, altar, court) to groups or pairs of students. Students should read over their assigned portion of the tabernacle and record the details necessary for construction. You may find that some students require help organizing the details. See the Graphic Organizer example at the end of this section for one possibility. Give students several days to complete this activity. When challenged appropriately, students may work on this for three to five days.

3. As teams complete the exercise, challenge them to create a written or verbal presentation summarizing the meaning of the symbol they just constructed.

Reflection: How does the tabernacle symbolize God

Activity #2: (Parables) Students develop a dramatic presentation of one of Jesus' parables (5–7 days).

Process notes:

1. Ask, "Why tell parables?" Help students understand that parables are stories used to communicate some type of lesson. For Jesus' thoughts on the use of parables, see Matthew 13:10–17, 34–35; Mark 4:10–20; 4:33–34; Luke 8:9–10. Selected parables and their locations are included in the table. Ensure that no two groups of students are preparing the same parable, or assign parables yourself.

Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke
<i>The sower</i>	13:1-8	4:1-9	8:4-8
<i>Weeds and Wheat</i>	13:24-30		
<i>Mustard Seed</i>	13:31-31	4:30-32	13:18-19
<i>Yeast</i>	13:33		13:20-21
<i>Kingdom of Heaven</i>	13:44-50		
<i>Lost Sheep</i>	18:10-14		15:1-7
<i>Lost Coin</i>			15:8-10
<i>Lost Brothers</i>			15:11-32
<i>Laborers in Vineyard</i>	20:1-16		
<i>Wedding Banquet</i>	22:1-14		14:15-24
<i>Ten Bridesmaids</i>	25:1-13		
<i>Talents/Pounds</i>	25:14-30		19:11-27
<i>Growing Seed</i>		4:26-29	
<i>Wicked Tenants</i>		12:1-12	20:9-19
<i>Good Samaritan</i>			10:25-37
<i>Rich Prideful Guy</i>			12:13-21
<i>Barren Fig Tree</i>			13:6-9
<i>Dishonest Manager</i>			16:1-13
<i>Lazarus and Rich Man</i>			16:19-31
<i>Widow and Unjust Judge</i>			18:9-14
<i>Pharisee and Tax Collector</i>			18:9-14
<i>Fig Tree</i>			21:29-33

2. Groups begin by sketching of one of the parables. The sketch should show understanding of its meaning(s), the purpose of Jesus in telling the parable, and the reaction of the groups listening.

3. Approve the sketches as groups finish them. Give students three to five days to write a script for the parable presentation and practice the presentation.

4. Students present their parable drama to the class during one to two periods.

Reflection: Why did Jesus speak in parables?

Final Reflection: Why do you think God uses symbols to communicate meaning?





ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

8th Grade Live the Story of Jesus

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

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Strand 1: Jesus and the Church

Unit 1: The Church

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- 1.1.A. Identify how the church is a global community centered around Jesus.
- 1.1.B. Identify the church as one body by exploring pivotal connections in the global church.
- 1.1.C. Identify Jesus as the common denominator of the global church.

Unit
#1

Essential Questions:

- What are some of the practices of the early church?
- What is the story of the global church?
- How is the global church connected?

Biblical texts:

- Acts 15

Scripture for Life:

- Acts 15:1-11

Pacing:

- 17 to 22 days

Materials and Resources:

- Bibles
- Bible encyclopedia (print or online)
- Drawing tool
- Poster board

Teacher Notes/Prep:

Things to think about:

Many students are conditioned to think of church as a particular building or group of people so the term “the church” becomes confusing or misleading. Consciously use the wording to condition students to think of the church as a global body.

See the attached sketch as an example of what the shape of the denominational family tree can look like. This example represents only the shape of the tree!



Denominational family tree sample.

Encounter #1: Define church (Objective 1.1.A)

Goal: As a class, create a working definition of church.

Activity #1: (Pre-assess) Teacher checks in with students to gauge the level of experience with church. Some students will be very familiar, others, not at all (3 days).

Process Notes:

1. Pre-assess: Engage the class in a discussion on the nature of church, by posing the question, “What is church?” Create an atmosphere without judging or laughing at any sincere answer, so that you can have the best idea of students’ experience with church. You could have students write down their answers anonymously on pieces of paper and hand them to you to read.

2. Storytelling: Invite personal stories of students’ encounters with church of any kind. Questions like, “Give an example of a typical church event,” or, “Describe the most peaceful organized church activity you’ve been to,” are excellent ways to evoke stories from students. If you encourage a respectful environment, you will be surprised what students will share.

3. Individual exercise. Now that students have had the chance to share stories with each other and open their eyes to others’ perspectives on church, ask each student to come up with a visual way to represent church. Display these in the classroom. Extension: create a class website displaying photos of the representations to share with parents.

Reflection: How does one’s experience of church impact his/her understanding of God?





ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

9th Grade Creation and Promise

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

They are invited to embrace the call of God to follow Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in justice, peace and joy, so that, God's healing and hope flow through them to all of creation.



Introduction

Unit 1: Introduction

Reading/Responsive Writing Focus: Student Journals

Pacing: 4–5 class periods

Academic Standards/Faith Statements:

MSC 1 – Loved by God

MSC 8 – Biblical discernment

MSC 9 – Relationship with Jesus

Objective [1A] – The student will understand the biblical story as one of God’s love for humanity and desire for relationship and reconciliation.

Unit
#1

Essential Questions:

- What is the general flow of the biblical story—Old and New Testament?
- In what ways has God reached out to meet humanity where we are?
- What does it mean to have free will and have choices?
- What does it mean to put Christ at the center of the Bible?

Essential Understandings:

- As an introduction, review the biblical story from creation to Jesus Christ.
- The biblical story is one of God, the creator of universe, who has consistently worked at a relationship with humanity—in past, present, and future.
- The students will have a basic understanding of the main characters in the biblical narrative and how they fit together.
- Despite our failings, God has worked at reconciliation with humankind.
- Jesus Christ is the center for our understanding of the biblical story and God.

Key Concepts:

- Biblical timeline
- Heilsgeschichte
- Reconciliation/restoration/redemption
- Old Testament and New Testament
- Personhood of Jesus
- Reading through the “eyes of Jesus”
- Free will

Learning Activities:

- Students use a journal for all their writings and notes. They reflect on one or two essential questions in their class journal.
- Incorporate Scripture for Life (or Bible memory) from 1 Corinthians 3:11 or 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (modify length of passage or form of assessment based on IEP/IAP or ELL status).
- In-depth Bible study. Psalm 121.
- Student-created visual timeline that fits the text timeline of the biblical story. (Teacher forms groups so that each group includes students with diverse Bible knowledge as well as both genders and various races/ethnicities/nationalities). Students may create artwork to add to the timeline.
- Class discussion on John 1 and reading the Bible through “the eyes of Jesus.”
- Journal assignment on Scripture for Life passage.
- Give each group a series of cards with biblical events written on them. Students put them in chronological order. When they have given it a good try, tell (in brief) the story of the Bible, allowing them time as you do to adjust their cards.
- Tell the story of the Bible from a salvation history perspective (Heilsgeschichte).
- Create a drawing based on a portion of the Old Testament or New Testament.

Assessments:

- Bible memory: 1 Corinthians 3:11 or 2 Timothy 3:16–17.
- Journaling.
- Biblical timeline/narrative created by individual student.

Resources:

Bontrager, Marion. “Hesston College Biblical Literature Timeline.” www.hesston.edu/bib-lit-timeline, © Marion Bontrager. Note from Hesston College: Read *The Bible as Story* to fully understand the context of the timeline: Bontrager, Marion G., Michele Hershberger and John E. Sharp, *The Bible as Story: An Introduction to Biblical Literature*, Workplay Publishing, 2016. Gladding, Sean. *The Story of God, The Story of Us: Getting Lost and Found in the Bible*. IVP Books, 2010. Grimsrud, Ted. *God’s Healing Strategy: An Introduction to the Bible’s Main Themes*. Cascadia Publishing House, 2011.



ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

10th Grade Jesus Story

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

They are invited to embrace the call of God to follow Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in justice, peace and joy, so that, God's healing and hope flow through them to all of creation.



Preparing for God on Earth

Unit 1: Preparing for God on Earth

Reading/Responsive Writing Focus: Student Journals

Pacing: 3–5 class periods

Academic Standards/Faith Statements:

MSC 8 – Biblical discernment

Note to teacher – Unit 1 is intended to review content from Grade 9 to help students transition into the new content. The pacing of class periods can be adjusted to avoid too much overlap with the Grade 9 curriculum. The goal is to reinforce the overall narrative of God's relationship with humanity.

Objective [1A] – The student will understand the brief overview of the biblical story leading up to the birth and incarnation of Jesus.

Unit
#1

Essential Questions:

- How do the Old and New Testaments relate to each other?
- What is the role of Jesus in our understanding of scriptures?
- Why did God choose the Middle East for God's restorative work?
- How was the Middle East uniquely prepared for Jesus and the start of Christianity?
- What does the Old Testament say about the birth of Jesus and why is that relevant to understanding scripture?
- How did the Messianic expectations of the different religious groups differ and how did each of them misunderstand him? (Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots)

Essential Understandings:

- The Old Testament is Act I of the Bible, laying the groundwork for the Gospels and the advent of Jesus Christ.
- The stories of Jesus fit into the broader revelation of God seen throughout the entire Bible.
- God desires to reconcile humanity to God starting in Genesis and continuing into the New Testament.
- God seeks to draw near to creation through the work of Jesus.
- The Roman Empire's infrastructure and influence in the ancient world uniquely prepared it for the spread of Jesus' message.
- The birth of Jesus was prophesied in the Old Testament.
- The birth of Jesus was fulfilled in the New Testament.
- Messianic expectations for Jesus differed.
- Jesus was not the first or last person who was labeled a Messiah.

Key Concepts:

- Map recognition of Old Testament stories
- Jesus is the focus point of scripture
- Old Testament
- New Testament
- Revelation
- Prophecy
- Messiah
- Zealots
- Pharisees
- Sadducees
- Essenes

Learning Activities:

- Incorporate Scripture for Life (Bible memory) from Matthew 5:3–16 (modify length of passage or form of assessment based on IEP/IAP or ELL status).
- Review the Old Testament (Heilsgeschichte or salvation history) leading up to the birth of Jesus, focusing on God's work of salvation throughout.
- Read portions of Chapter 1 in Philip Yancey's book *The Jesus I Never Knew*
- Watch segment 1 of the *The Jesus I Never Knew* DVD.
- Research and discuss ancient geography.
- Research the ancient Roman world.
- Class research and discussion on the Old Testament and the birth of Jesus. How do the Old and New Testaments relate to each other?
 - Numbers 24:17 (a star will come from Jacob)
 - Isaiah 7:14 (born of a young woman)
 - Genesis 17:19 (an everlasting covenant)
 - 2 Samuel 7:12–16 (a descendant of David)
 - Micah 5:2 (born in Bethlehem)
- Class discussion – expectations of Jesus
 - How did the Messianic expectations of the various religious groups differ and how did each of them misunderstand him? (Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots)
 - How or in what ways do we “miss” Jesus today? (Matthew 25:31–46)

Assessments:

- Journaling. Have students reflect on one or two essential questions.
- Read and respond to chapters 1–2 of the Thomas Zanzig book, *Jesus of History: Christ of Faith*.
- Create a chart showing biblical texts from the Old Testament that point to Jesus.
- Completed map of ancient Israel, Rome and surrounding areas.
- Scripture for Life: Matthew 5:3–16.
- Journal response to Yancey.

Resources:

“From Jesus to Christ.” *Frontline*. WGBH Educational Foundation.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/>
Hall, Terry. *The Old Testament Express*. Victor, 1985.
Hymnal: A Worship Book. Brethren Press, Faith and Life Press, Mennonite Publishing House, 1992.
Kraybill, James. *Jesus Matters: Good News for the 21st Century*. Herald Press: 2008.
Yancey, Philip. *The Jesus I Never Knew*. Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.
Yancey, Philip. *The Jesus I Never Knew*. Zondervan Publishing House, 1995. DVD.
Zanzig, Thomas. *Jesus of History, Christ of Faith*. Saint Mary’s Press, 1999.





ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

11th Grade Global Christianity

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

They are invited to embrace the call of God to follow Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in justice, peace and joy, so that, God's healing and hope flow through them to all of creation.



Birth and Spread of Christianity Globally (AD 30–500)

Unit 1: Birth and Spread of Christianity Globally (AD 30–500)

Reading/Responsive Writing Focus: Student Journals

Pacing: 2 class periods

Academic Standards/Faith Statements:

MSC 4 – A welcoming community

MSC 8 – Biblical discernment

MSC 13 – Making a positive difference in the world

Objective [1A] – The student will understand the context and significance of Jesus' sending call to the church in Acts 1:8.

Unit #1

Essential Questions:

- How does society define power? How does Jesus model power in the Gospels?
- In what ways might Jesus' call in Acts 1:8 shape the world perspective of Christians?
- How does society define witness?
- In the biblical text (Revelation 3:14), the word for witness is the same as martyr. What does this say about Jesus' call to those who choose to follow him?

Essential Understandings:

- Jesus has commissioned the church to continue his mission.
- The church is called to witness to the reign of God by embodying Jesus' way in word and deed.
- The church shows the world a sample of life under the lordship of Christ, a way of life different from the societies around it.
- The church exists as a community of believers in the local congregation and as the worldwide community of faith.

Key Concepts:

- Power
- Holy Spirit
- Witness (martyr)
- Jerusalem
- Judea
- Samaria
- Roman Empire
- "Ends of the earth"

Learning Activities:

- Incorporate Scripture for Life (or Bible memory) from Romans 12:1–8, Acts 1:8. As you teach Encounter lessons, modify length of passage or form of assessment based on IEP/IAP or ELL status.
- Journaling. Students reflect on one or two essential questions.
- Think-Pair-Share. Students read Acts 1:8 from a study Bible, along with commentary. They reflect on one of the essential questions and share with another student. Follow up with a class discussion on the impact of this scripture for the church today.
- Class discussion. Discuss the word *power*. How does our society define power, and what does our society associate with it? To what extent is power negative and/or positive? In what ways can power be abused? How did Jesus model power?

Assessments:

- Scripture for Life. Romans 12:1–8, Acts 1:8.
- Journaling.

Resources:

Driver, John. *Radical Faith: An Alternative History of the Christian Church*. Pandora Press, 1999.

Gonzalez, Justo. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*. HarperOne, 2010.





ENCOUNTER

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum

12th Grade Kingdom Living

Students will encounter Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our life and reconciliation as the center of our work.

They are invited to embrace the call of God to follow Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in justice, peace and joy, so that, God's healing and hope flow through them to all of creation.



Introduction and Capstone Project

Unit 1: Introduction and Capstone Project

Reading/Responsive Writing Focus: Student Journals

Pacing: 2 class periods

Academic Standards/Faith Statements:

MSC 1 – Loved and valued by God

MSC 4 – Welcoming community

MSC 8 – Biblical discernment

MSC 9 – Relationship with Jesus

Objective [1A] – The students will briefly review the material from Grades 9–11 Bible classes.

Unit
#1

Essential Questions:

- How is the story of God's salvation traced through the Bible?
- How does being a disciple of Jesus impact our response to contemporary issues?
- What does upside-down kingdom look like?

Essential Understandings:

- Students will review and understand the biblical story starting with Genesis and ending with Acts.
- Students will review and understand their place in a church that was founded 2,000 years ago.
- Students will review and understand the reformation and the founding of the Anabaptist movement.
- Students will review the core issues discussed during the last three years.

Key Concepts:

- *Heilsgeschichte*
- Church
- Reformation
- Anabaptist Movement
- Stewardship
- Creation care
- Community
- Slavery
- Racism
- Freedom
- The Law
- Discipleship
- God's love
- Diversity
- Upside-down kingdom
- Atonement
- Salvation

Learning Activities:

- Journaling based on one of the Essential Question prompts.
- In groups, challenge students to reconstruct Heilsgeschichte from previous years. If they can't complete it after working on it, give them some prompts to help them along.
- Incorporate Scripture for Life (Bible memory) from the suggested passages into studies for each unit. Modify length of passage or form of assessment based on IEP/IAP or ELL status.
- In 100 words, summarize the main themes of the Bible.

Assessments:

- Spiritual Gifts, Interests, Abilities Inventories.
- Scripture for Life: Micah 6:8; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 5:1–16.
- Student journaling.
- Student-reconstructed Heilsgeschichte.

Resources:

Gladding, Sean. *The Story of God, the Story of Us: Getting Lost and Found in the Bible*. InterVarsity Press, 2010.

Grimsrud, Ted. *God's Healing Strategy: An Introduction to the Bible's Main Themes*, revised edition. Cascadia, 2011.

Kraybill, Donald B. *The Upside-Down Kingdom*. Herald Press. 2011

Neufeld, Alfred. *What We Believe Together: Exploring the Shared Convictions of Anabaptist-Related Churches*. Second Edition. Good Books, 2015.

