



God as Light/Statements of Faith

23rd Confirmation Class Lesson

Supplies Needed: Journals; Handout; laser pointer and light box/pvc pipe contraption (see separate document entitled “light box instructions”)

OPENING PRAYER

Introduce LIGHT DEMONSTRATION

- The last few weeks we’ve been talking about what the Church/Body of Christ looks like.
- During that time, we also talked about the limitations of being God (remember the activity where we were all looking for shoes while “God” kept introducing him/herself, but no one paid “God” any attention because we were all talking about shoes?)
- Throughout the year, we’ve talked about what we see when we follow Jesus and what we experience when we follow Jesus (healing, teachings, miracles, forgiveness, abundance, disruptions, resurrection, formation of the Jesus Tree/Body of Christ/the Church etc).
- We’ve talked about how the ways of the Crowd and Pharisees kill the way Jesus is living.
- We’ve talked about how resurrection is like a seed: For a seed to become a plant, the seed must die in order to grow into something different, bigger and better, into the truth of what the seed originally contained.
- But what does God’s role in Jesus’ life, in our life, in all of this look like?
- That’s what this next demonstration is about.

Explain the Light Demonstration/Experiment

- Can you see light? (let them discuss this for a moment)
- For those of you who answered, “No,” you are correct. We cannot see light.
- However, we can see the things that light bounces off of.
- At first this may not make sense.
- So we have a demonstration.
- We have here a box/pvc pipe that we’re going to shine a laser through.
- And that laser light will not hit anything inside that pipe, including the side of the pipe.
- So what do you think the inside of the pipe will look like?

GO AROUND CLASS AND let each student LOOK in the box/Pipe.

- It’s dark, right? It’s dark because we can’t actually see light.
- So now what we’re going to do is insert an object (a popsicle stick) into the light.
- Nothing else has changed. The laser light hasn’t been moved. It’ll still be on. The **ONLY** thing that is different is that we’ve inserted an object into the light.
- Now, let’s look inside the pipe again.

GO AROUND CLASS AND let each student LOOK in the Pipe/Box again.

- What do we see that's different?
- The inside of the pipe is lit up, isn't it? (not necessarily a lot, depending on the strength of the laser light)
- God's role, not just in Jesus' life, but in all our lives, is an invisible one. God's role cannot be seen until there is an object, a person, who is willing to step into God's light.
- That's what Jesus did. And that's what Jesus calls us to do.
- Jesus says Follow me.
- And, if we make that choice, if we make following Jesus a priority, then we will become better and better at keeping ourselves in the light.
- And that means we will shine more brightly as God's gifts to one another.
- We become very visible.
- We become God's shining gift to one another.
- We illuminate the rooms we're in.
- We light up the world.
- We help others to see.
- And then, as others see, then they shine too.
- God is the light that makes Jesus shine.
- That same light is available to us too.
- We've seen all the good that comes from Jesus standing in God's light.
- We've seen how the people resisted and then killed Jesus because they didn't want to stand in the light.
- So which world do we want? The world that Jesus shows us? Or the world that kills Jesus?
- That is the choice that is before us, not just today, and not just about Confirmation, but every day.
- Every day we must choose to seek God first, to follow Jesus as well as identify and say no to the voices of temptation that make life without God seem attractive.

TELL about 1st Part of the Act of Confirmation

- Today, we're going to talk about the Act of Confirmation because it is soon to be upon us.
- The Act of Confirmation has two parts: 1. Confirming your faith which completes the baptism covenant your parents and this congregation made together and 2. Establishing your own covenant with this congregation by becoming a member of the congregation.
- The first part of the Act of Confirmation is confirming our faith.
- You will do that by writing a statement of faith (which we'll do in a moment) and by answering this question in the affirmative in worship on Confirmation Sunday:
 - *Do you choose to confirm your faith, follow in the way of Jesus and become part of the East Granby Congregational Church? If so say "I do with the help of God."*
 - Any questions about this question?
- Your statement of faith will be printed in the bulletin on Confirmation Sunday.
- A statement of faith consists of you naming the things you've learned in Sunday school class, in worship and in Confirmation class that you accept to be true and the most important aspects to your faith life.
- This may not sound so easy and you're right – it's not.

- So we have a list of yes/no questions for you to answer that might help you think about and create your statement of faith.
- In answering these questions, think about why you are answering yes or no.
- Write your thoughts down.
- If there are some beliefs about God that you think you have that are important and were not addressed by these answers and questions, write a number of statements about God with each statement starting with, "I believe..."
- Then, circle the four or five answers that you find to be most important. Using those circled answers, write each answer out, starting each sentence with "I believe..." Once you have them written out, place the sentences in the order of most important to you to least. Once you've done that, you now have a statement of faith.
- Spread out and keep a respectful silence to allow everyone to work on these.
- We'll leave the statements here for next week to finish them up. If you want a copy to take home with you to work on, we can make copies downstairs.

PASS OUT and DO faith question sheet

Questions that are on the handout:

--What's one thing that you have learned about God in the last year that you think is helpful to you?

--What's one thing that you have learned about Jesus in the last year that you think is helpful to you?

--What are some things that about the faith stories that you've learned this past year that you didn't know before?

--What knowledge or understanding or spiritual practice/discipline have you received while at this church?

The following questions are to help you think about your faith. They are yes/no questions, but if you ask yourself "why" after your yes/no answer and then answer that question, that might further help you understand what exactly it is that you believe.

Do you believe there is a God?

If yes to the first question:

Do you believe God is person-like?

Do you believe God is an energy?

Do you believe God is with you?

Do you believe God loves you?

Do you believe God talks to you?

Do you believe God wants to help you? If yes, what does that help look like?

Do you believe God is calling you to pay more attention to God?

Do you believe that Jesus existed?

Do you believe you can study Jesus?

If yes, do you believe all, some or none of what Jesus taught?

Do you believe that studying Jesus (following Jesus) helps you be more like Jesus?
Do you believe that the way Jesus lived is how you have to live to be closer to God?

Do you believe that God sent Jesus as a gift to the world?

Do you believe that you can be God's body, part of the body of Christ and therefore God's gift to the world?

If yes, do you believe following Jesus would help you better know how to be God's gift to the world?

Do you believe the church are the people who seek God first?

Do you believe you are God's home?

Do you believe the church accurately reflects God and shines God's light to the world?

Do you believe that God needs your help to shine God's light?

If there are some beliefs about God that you think you have that are important and were not addressed by these answers and questions, write a number of statements about God with each statement starting with, "I believe..."

SNACK

TELL About 2nd Part of the Act of Confirmation

- The 2nd Part of the Act of Confirmation is by becoming a member of the congregation, which is a covenant that you make with the congregation.
- In so doing, you'll be agreeing to what's next in your faith journey.
 - Becoming a member of the church involves publicly (and jointly) reading a covenant and filling out your covenant card. We'll talk about filling out the covenant card in just a moment.
 - Here's the covenant you'll read outloud together in worship: *We acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and accept the Bible as our guide to Christian living. With the aid of God and Jesus Christ we covenant to join as a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ following the teachings of the Gospel, by public worship of God, by bringing Christian beliefs and practices into the world, and by taking an active part in the administration of the Church*
- As you hear this information, do you have any questions?
- Before we go any further, we, the teachers, are wondering where you are with this decision?
 - Who is at yes?
 - Who is undecided?
 - Who is at no?

PASS OUT COVENANT CARDS and LETTER

TELL

- First, let's start with the question, "What does joining the church have to do with Confirmation?"
- The short answer is that Confirmation doesn't just end a covenant, it also *begins* a new covenant – and that new covenant takes the form of joining the church.

- This covenant card is how members of __this church__ define their membership. The covenant card also helps you answer the question of “As a member of this church, what exactly do I do?” And, hopefully, it helps you also answer the “what does taking responsibility for my faith journey look like” question.
- If you look at the covenant card, you’ll see that it has two columns.
- On the left hand side, there are opportunities to receive.
- On the right hand side, there are opportunities to share.
- We’ve talked about the Church and the Body of Christ being the same thing, right?
- We’ve talked about God needing a body, and that God doesn’t just choose one body, but chooses all of us to be God’s body, if we choose to accept. And that those who do choose to be God’s body are part of the Jesus Tree or Body of Christ, aka, the Church.
- And like any body, we need to receive energy before we use energy.
- So, if we do choose to accept to be God’s body, then how, as the Body of Christ, do we receive energy and how do we use the energy we receive?
- The covenant card is set up to help us answer the question.
- The options that you choose to mark are the options that will define what your membership at __this church__ looks like for this year.
- Please do not feel worried or overwhelmed by this.
- Think about this as an experiment because, every year, you’ll be able to update and change your covenant with __this church__.
- Do you have any questions about the items you see listed here?
- On __date__, which is our last class, we’ll finish filling these cards out and turn them in. If you want to do that sooner, you certainly may.
- [If there’s time, go over the options on the Covenant Card, explaining/answering questions about what those options are, exactly.]

DISCUSS Upcoming Dates, what needs to be done and when

CLOSING PRAYER – ask for prayer requests and give time during prayer for students to pray.

<insert YEAR> Confirmation New Member Covenant Card
<insert Church's Name>

Instructions: On this page, above the set of columns, please print your name and then place an **X** on each ___ that you feel God is calling you to.

For the rest of 20___, I, _____, pledge to
(print name)

<p>Seek Ways To Receive by...</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Daily prayer/reading of the Bible</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attending Sunday morning worship</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attending Youth Group</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> An adult small group class</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The Annual Church Retreat</p> <p>Other: _____</p>
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<p>Seek Ways To Give by Helping With...</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A Sunday morning speaking role</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ushering, Greeting, Coffee hour</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Singing in the choir</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Helping with fundraisers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Working with the local mission</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Visiting others</p> <p>Other: _____</p>
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{church letterhead goes here}

For New Members

<insert Church Name>

Instructions and information for New Member Covenant Card

First and foremost, WELCOME! It is our hope and prayer for you that as a new member of this faith community, you will continue to seek, experience and share God, God's Love and God's Abundant Life.

Usually when you become a new member of an organization, there is some form or type of agreement you make with that organization. Here at <insert church name>, we call that agreement a "covenant." In this covenant, we are agreeing to ways that allow us to better receive and then share the gifts God offers us.

The New Member Covenant Card is the mechanism in which we make our covenant together. It is a way for you to be aware of the opportunities that are available for you to receive and share at <insert church name>. It is also a way to encourage you to think and pray about how you wish to continue your faith journey once you are a member of <insert church name>.

This covenant process is lived out by the whole church, once a year, during a designated time in the Fall that we call the <insert church name for stewardship>. During that time, all of us are encouraged to prayerfully reflect upon and update our current covenant. So whatever decisions you make now in your covenant, can be updated and revised in <insert stewardship month> of each year.

There might be some questions that you have about this process. We have tried to provide some answers in a FAQ format below:

--Q: What is the New Member Covenant/Jubilee Covenant Renewal?

--A: The <insert church name for stewardship> is a time (mid-October through early November) of worship, reflection and celebration. It is a time of remembering and giving thanks to God. It is a time when we consider and renew our commitment to the Body of Christ as made manifest in <insert church name>. The New Member Covenant is the same thing, only it happens when you choose to join <insert church name>. Then, when November comes around, you will be included in the <insert church name for stewardship>.

--Q: Why should we reflect on our commitment to the Body of Christ (as made manifest in <insert church name>)?

--A: The Body of Christ, like any other living body, receives energy (God, love, oxygen, food) that it then transforms into movement, giving, and creating. Our commitment, then, to the Body of Christ has two parts to it:

The first part of our commitment is to *receive* God

The second part of our commitment is to *share* God

If there is an imbalance of receiving and sharing, then the Body will show various signs of this imbalance. For instance, too much giving and too little receiving can cause a body to lose weight and become too weak to be of great use. If we do not reflect on our receiving and sharing, then we cannot consider and respond to whatever imbalance of receiving and sharing we may be experiencing.

--Q: How do we consider our commitment to the Body of Christ?

--A: When we reflect and observe our commitment to receive and share within the Body of Christ, then we can bring these reflections and observations to God in prayer. We can ask God if we need to make adjustments to our receiving and sharing. We can ask God, “How am I called to receive this year from you in worship, in bible study, in prayer?” And we can ask God, “How am I called to share during this year with my time, my money, and my talents?”

Give God time to answer after asking. And keep asking over a number of days and weeks. It may take some time for the answer to be clear. Also, this does not need to be done alone. Pray with family members and with other members of the congregation. They may hear something that you do not. God can speak to us through others.

--Q: How do we make our commitment to the Body of Christ?

--A: Look for the sheet in your New Member folder entitled, “New Member Covenant Card.” It’s two pages long and stapled. At the top of the card, you will see a box with instructions and below it, a place to fill in your contact information and your financial pledge for the rest of this year. On the second page, you will see two sets of columns that list opportunities for you to receive and share at <insert church name>. There are two sets of columns so that couples may individually make their covenant.

Please fill out the appropriate places on the card based on your prayerful reflection and consideration. Then place the New Member Covenant Card (both pages!) in the envelope that is provided. Please drop off this envelope at the Church office before New member Sunday.

--Q: What happens after we make/renew our commitment to the Body of Christ?

--A: We seek to live into our commitment! For you, this could mean reading your Bible every day. It could mean attending the prayer group or the yoga class or another group that you feel called to attend. For the Abundant Life Ministry (a team of people who help with this part of the church life), it will mean equipping and supporting you in the ways you have chosen to live into your New Member Covenant. They will do this by matching the opportunities you chose on the second page of the New Member Covenant Card with the ministries of the church. If you marked anything on page two of the Covenant Card, the Abundant Life Ministry will follow up with you. Also, you will receive envelopes to assist you in the giving of your financial commitment.