

Prepare the Way

Faith Partner's Guide

(A Handbook for Mentors and Candidates)

by Kim Blakley Rea and Edwin Linberg

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Prepare the Way: Faith Partner's Guide is part of *Prepare the Way*, a series of resources to prepare people for baptism and membership in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This series is published by Christian Board of Publication, 1221 Locust Street, Suite 670, St. Louis, MO 63103. Printed in the U.S.A.

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Getting Acquainted

Session 1

Your first meeting may be very informal. Meet for a soda pop or eat out together. You may want to go to a sports event or some other event in town.

Getting to know one another:

Some mentors and baptism candidates know very little about each other and have difficulty getting started. A good way to get to know each other is to choose several pictures of yourselves from infancy to the present, and bring them to your first meeting. Tell each other about the events taking place, where you were, where you lived at the time, and whatever other memories or ideas the pictures bring up.

You may find this takes an entire session. That's okay! Getting to know each other lays the foundation for a growing and lasting friendship. If it doesn't take the entire time or you choose not to do this activity, move on to the next.

Jot down a few notes to remember the stories told today:

Getting to know our heritage:

Walter Scott was one of the first Disciples leaders. He was an evangelist in the 1800s and developed a five-finger exercise to convey his understanding of salvation. He wrote in *The Evangelist* in 1883:

*“faith is to destroy the love of sin,
repentance to destroy the practice of it, baptism the state of it,
pardon to destroy the guilt,
the spirit to destroy the power
and the resurrection to destroy the punishment of sin!”*

Our sessions together will be organized around this five-finger exercise.

Trace your hands on a piece of paper. On separate fingers write: faith, repentance, baptism, forgiveness, Holy Spirit. Put these up in your home to remind you of the journey of faith you have begun together.

Drawing a life map:

On a separate piece of paper, draw or write important events in your life on a time line. Describe the events to each other. Write the good times above the line and difficult times below the line. Then discuss where you think God was during those different times. How did they shape what you believe about God? (Note to the adult: This may be more appropriate for youth than for children. However, if you adapt the wording for older children, you may be surprised at their depth of insight.)

birth _____ today

Praying together:

Use this suggested prayer or one of your own.

Dear God, please lead us through our time together. Help us to become closer friends with each other and with you. Thank you for sending us friends for life's journey. Amen.

Following through:

Covenant to pray for each other throughout the mentoring process.

Drawing a picture:

Draw a picture that best describes your understanding of God. (Feel free to use a separate piece of paper.)

Studying the Bible:

Look up some of the following scriptures. What do they say about God? What image do they use for God? Make notes on a separate piece of paper about those that you like the best, along with any questions that you have.

Genesis 1:27–31

Psalm 23:1,4; 8:9; 80:1

Psalm 5:2; 24:9; 29:10

Psalm 7:8, 11; 50:6; 82:8

Psalm 131:2

Psalm 68:5; 89:26; 103:13; 27:10

Jeremiah 49:19; 50:44

Psalm 17:8–9; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4

Psalm 103

Psalm 104; 136:5–9

Psalm 18:2, 31, 46; 19:14; 28:1; 31:2, 3; 42:9

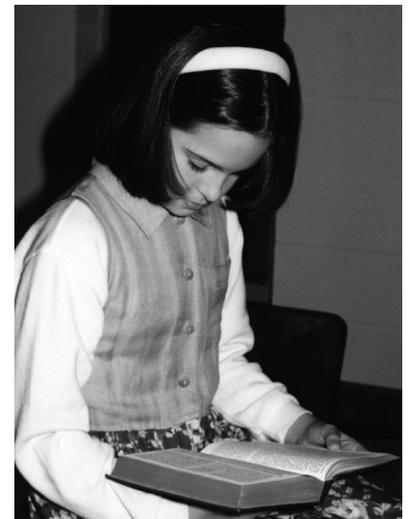
Naming our feelings about God:

- When is a time you felt close to God?

- Have you ever been angry at God? When?

- Have you ever felt that God was not with you? When?

- What questions would you like to ask God?



Praying together:

Pray for each other to remember that God will be with you.

Dear God, you are so great that a single word cannot describe your glory. Thank you for the scriptures that give us many words to help us begin to understand who you are and what you are like. Please help us remember you are with us in good times and in difficult times. Thank you for (mentor/baptism candidate) who helps show your loving presence. Amen.



Jesus Christ

Session 3

For this session, be sure to have a Bible with headings. Ask your pastor which Gospel your church will be using the most this year. For the section on scripture, you will read this Gospel together. Today, you will scan the Gospel and list the actions of Jesus.

Describing Jesus:

If Jesus were to ask you, "Who do you say I am?" what would you tell him? Write down all the words you can think of to describe Jesus.

Describing Jesus' actions:

Scan the Gospel you have chosen, or at least several chapters of one. (If you're not sure, use Mark since it's relatively short.) Divide a separate sheet of paper into three columns and write the following headings at the top of the page:
(Example from Mark 1)

Action	Done to or for whom	Results
was baptized	Jesus	He received God's blessing
preached at Galilee	sinners	They heard good news
called people to follow him	Simon, Andrew, James, John	They followed Jesus

(Examples and idea adapted from *Questions and Beliefs* from the *Faith for Life Curriculum* of the Logos System Associates by Joyce MacKichan Walker.)

- When you have finished, tell which of Jesus' actions made the biggest impression on you.

- If Jesus reveals God to us, what does Jesus tell you about God?

- What questions do you have about Jesus?



Session 3

Thinking about the resurrection:

Read together the resurrection story from the Gospel you plan to read for Session 5.
Matthew 28:1–8, Mark 16:1–8, Luke 24:1–12, or John 20:1–13

■ What does the resurrection tell you about Jesus?

■ Where have you seen signs of new life (resurrection)?

■ Pray for each other that you might come to better know the risen Christ and through him see how much God loves you.



Worship

Session 4

God created the world, established the people of Israel to be a light to the nations, led them out of slavery in Egypt and to the promised land, was with them in exile and persecution, forgave them when they made mistakes, and offered them new opportunities for life with God. From the nation of Israel came the light Jesus Christ, who shows us God's amazing love and grace. Through Jesus Christ, we know God's healing and compassion, God's power and love and forgiveness. We also know God is aware of and understands our pain and that God is with us through all of life.

God has done many things for us. We worship God to show our gratitude and harmony with God. Worship is an act of praise and thanksgiving that God's people do for God.

Expressing thanks:

Name one way you have seen God working in your life this week. Share your answers with each other and offer a prayer of thanksgiving. (This is an act of worship!)

Attending worship together:

Make plans to worship together in your congregation. You may want to eat together afterward and reflect on the service.

1. During worship, draw your sanctuary and any symbols that are used.
2. In your bulletin, circle your favorite parts of the service.
3. Make question marks by the parts you don't understand.
4. Discuss your responses to the first three questions after worship. Tell each other what is most meaningful about worship for you. How do you think God felt about your congregation's offering of worship today? (Note: Sometimes we talk about the "worship experience," as if worship were centered around us and our moods. Worship is really centered around God, and is something we offer to God.)

Visiting other worship services:

Make plans to attend together at least one or two other churches in your community. (If you do not want to miss your own church service, find a congregation that offers services on Saturday, Sunday, or Wednesday evenings. It can be fun to eat out before you go to worship or to discuss the service over ice cream afterward.)

1. Draw a picture of the sanctuary and symbols.
2. Circle your favorite parts of worship in the bulletin if they have one.

-
3. Write a question mark by the parts of worship about which you have questions.

 4. After worship discuss questions 1–3 and compare your responses to those about your own church.

 5. What was similar and what was different about this church’s worship and your own?

Making commitments:

Make a commitment to watch for God’s presence working all around you and in your life. When you get together, tell where you have seen God working!





The Bible

Session 5

The Bible bears witness to God's redemptive acts throughout history. Together, you will read one of the Gospels that bears witness to God's act of love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Setting a schedule:

Set up a time line for reading the Gospel so you read at the same pace (e.g., two chapters a week, one chapter a day, or, if you're meeting over the course of a year and this is your fifth meeting, even one or two chapters a week). As you meet to discuss other sessions in this book, be sure to touch base on your Gospel reading. Tell your favorite parts and discuss those passages that raise questions.

Introducing a Gospel:

Some churches provide mentors with a brief commentary on the Gospel they are reading. If you do not have this, ask your pastor for suggestions and read a brief introduction to your Gospel with the baptism candidate. A suggested commentary is the *Cokesbury Basic Bible Commentary* published by Cokesbury. Or use the introduction to a Gospel in a study Bible.

Read a brief introduction to the Gospel together, and answer the following questions:

- What was happening in the church when this Gospel was written?
- What are some of the problems this church was facing?

Reading a Gospel:

As you read through the Gospel, make notes as you go along. Write down what you like, questions you have, stories and sayings you want to remember, and things you want to talk about in your next meeting time. (You may want to read the first chapter together and make a few notes to discuss.)

Background, birth, and childhood of Jesus

Beginning of ministry



Session 5

Events

What Jesus taught



Session 5

From Palm Sunday to the Cross

Jesus is raised from the dead!

Comparing resurrection stories:

After you have read the entire Gospel, look up the resurrection stories in all four Gospels and compare the stories. They can be found in Matthew 28:1–8, Mark 16:1–8, Luke 24:1–12, or John 20:1–13.

- What is different in the four stories?

- What are the similarities in the four resurrection accounts?

- What is the main point of all the stories of the resurrection?

Comparing translations:

Now, read the resurrection story from your Gospel in several different translations (e.g., New Revised Standard Version [NRSV], Contemporary English Version [CEV], New International Version [NIV], King James Version, etc.).

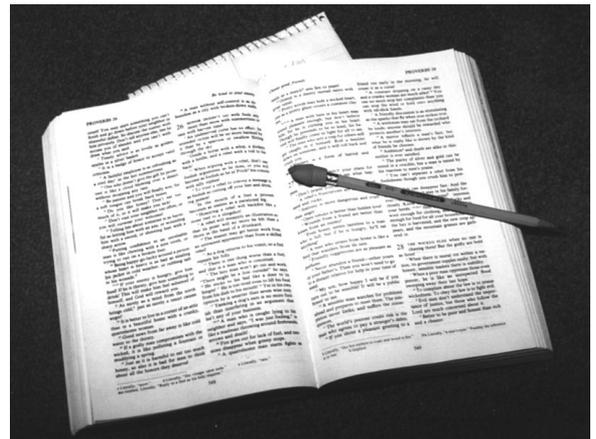
- Which version do you like the best? Why?

- Why do you think there are different translations of the Bible?

■ What is your favorite story or part from the Gospel you read? Why?

■ What surprised you when you read it?

■ What questions do you have?





Session 5

■ What did you learn about God from reading this Gospel?

■ What did you learn about Jesus?

■ What did you learn about human beings?



Repentance



Session 6

It's easy to think of sin as just doing bad things. There's more to it than that. Sin is whatever separates us from God's love, and causes us to hurt ourselves or others. It can be in our attitude or outlook even more than in the things we do. The good news is that God doesn't want to be separated from us, and God wants to forgive us and give us a fresh start! When we tell God that we're sorry and try to change, God does forgive. God does give a fresh start. To *repent* means to change our course—to try and go the way that God wants us to.

Reading the Big Ten:

Read Exodus 20:1–21. These are the commandments that God gave to Moses so Israel would know what was right and what was wrong.

List the Ten Commandments

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

- Why do you think these ten commandments are important?

- Put a “G” by the commandments that emphasize love for God.

- Put an “N” by those that emphasize love for neighbor.

Thinking about the Great Commandment:

Read Matthew 22:36–40.

- What are ways you can show love for God?

- What are ways you can show love for your “neighbor”?



Session 6

Thinking about repentance:

Read Matthew 3:1–12, Mark 1:1–8, Luke 3:1–20, or John 1:19–28.

- Who was John the Baptist? Why did he tell people they should repent? How did people show their repentance?

- Look up “repent” in a dictionary and in a Bible dictionary. Write a brief definition here:

- John baptized for repentance, calling people to turn around. If our goal is to turn to God, what are some things in your life that you need to turn away from? (You may choose to keep some of this confidential. Other things you may want to share. The important thing is that you know what you need to change and that you tell God.)

- Is it hard for you to say “I’m sorry”? What makes it difficult at times? Why is it important?

- Is there someone that you need to tell “I’m sorry”? Take a moment to write a note to that person, or do this later if time does not allow. Now or later, be sure to do this.

Praying together:

Pray together a prayer of confession, telling God you are sorry for the times you have hurt God and hurt others. Ask for God’s strength for you both to keep turning toward God and acting in loving ways.

Baptism



Session 7

If possible, you may want to go to a nearby stream, lake, river, or fountain at a park to discuss baptism. You might even take along a picnic or snack.

Remembering baptism:

- Describe a service of baptism that you have attended.
- Ask your mentor to describe his or her baptism and what it meant to him or her.

Checking what the Bible has to say:

Look up these verses about baptism. What do they say about baptism? Make notes by each verse.

Galatians 4:4–7

Romans 8:14–17

1 Peter 2:9–10

Mark 1:9–11

Acts 2:37–47

Matthew 28:18–20

Thinking about baptism and you:

- What does baptism mean to you?
- Do you think that you would like to be baptized? Why or why not?
- What questions do you have about being baptized?





Communion

Session 8

Plan to share a meal together and discuss the meaning of the Lord's supper.

Picturing communion:

Draw a picture of the celebration of the Lord's supper in your church's worship service. (You can use a separate piece of paper if you like.)

Seeing what the Bible has to say:

Read the words of institution in scripture:

Matthew 26:26–30

Mark 14:22–25

Luke 22:14–23

Luke 24:13–35

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

Reflecting on the Lord's supper:

- What does communion mean to you?

- How does the Lord's supper remind us that Christ is alive today and with us always?

- How does the Lord's supper remind us of Christ's love and forgiveness?

- (You may wish to bake bread together and make arrangements with your pastor or worship team to provide bread for the communion table one week.)

The Gift of the Holy Spirit



Session 9

Talk about a gift that keeps on giving! God's Spirit is always with us.

Reading about the Spirit:

Read the story of Pentecost in Acts 2:1–13.

Flying with the Spirit:

Fly a kite together. Kite flying is great fun with a friend! (You may even want to make a kite together.)

- Afterward, or during your kite flying, talk about how wind is like the Holy Spirit.
- You can't see the wind, but you can see the results of the wind! Kite, wind chimes, trees blowing, waves, etc. We can't see the Spirit but we can see results when the Spirit is present!

Considering the fruit of the Spirit:

Read Galatians 5:22–26. Why do you think Paul calls these “fruit”?

- List the fruits of the Spirit:

Making a poster:

Each of you make a kite-shaped poster with a list of the fruits of the Spirit to hang up at home to remind you of your time flying kites and what results the Spirit can have when the Spirit is working in your life.

Celebrating gifts:

Each of us has gifts of the Spirit as well. Read the following and list the gifts named in the scripture:

Romans 12:1–8

1 Corinthians 12:1–27

1 Corinthians 14:1–5

Ephesians 4:1–7, 11–16

1 Peter 4:8–11



Session 9

-
- What do these scriptures say about the importance of each person's gifts?

 - What do they say about how to treat others with different gifts?

 - What do you like to do? (interests, hobbies, favorite subject in school, activities, etc.)

 - What do you do well?

 - How can you use your gifts and interests as part of the church?

 - How can you use these to show God's love to others outside the church?

Praying together:

Say prayers of thanksgiving for the gifts God has given you. Ask God's help in developing your gifts and in developing the fruit of the Spirit as well.

Life in the Spirit



Session 10

Making plans:

Make arrangements to visit an older member of your church, perhaps one who is homebound or who resides at a nursing home. Choose someone who will enjoy your visit and who is willing and able to talk about his or her faith.

■ Before you go, read Hebrews 11:1—12:1 and answer the following:

1. List names of those who have influenced and strengthened your faith.
2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:1–9. Who is a saint? (Reread 1 Corinthians 1:2b.)

■ Make a list of questions to ask the “saint” you will be visiting in the nursing home or in his or her own home. They might include:

1. Who has been important in your faith development?
2. What does baptism mean to you?
3. What does communion mean to you?
4. What helps you get closer to God?
5. *Other questions:*

Visiting:

Pray together before the visit and pray when the visit is finished.

Discussing the visit:

Following your visit, discuss the time with this saint.

- What did you like about the visit?
- What did you learn about this person?
- What did you learn from this person?
- What can you do in your life to grow closer to God?



Session 10

Agreeing to Pray:

- Make a commitment to each other to pray each day for a set period of time.

- Tell each other when you will pray.

- Here is a suggestion for your prayer time:
 1. Begin by reading from a psalm or your Gospel.
 2. Think about the passage as you pray—what is God telling you? What questions would you like to ask God?
 3. Tell God thank you—and tell what you are thankful for today.
 4. Ask God to forgive you where you have fallen short and to help you be able to forgive others.
 5. Ask God to help you share God’s love in word and deed.
 6. Ask God’s help in your daily life.
 7. Pray for two or more other people.
 8. Listen in silence—God may have something to say to you.



- Begin a prayer list below. You can find topics by using your church prayer list or a newspaper. Remember also the people and challenges in your life.

Ministry



Session 11

All who confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are saints and ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, welcome to the ministry, saint!

Thinking about discipleship:

Choose one set of the following scriptures to read:

Matthew 4:18–22

Matthew 10:1–4

Mark 1:16–20

Mark 3:16–19

Mark 6:7–13

Luke 5:1–11

Luke 6:12–16

Luke 9:1–6

Acts 1:12–14

- Refer to your session on Jesus and your reading of the Gospel and list ways Jesus ministered to people:

- Name the disciples:

- How did Jesus call them to ministry?

- What did Jesus give them authority to do?

Discovering how we can minister:

- List hurts and needs in your town and in the world that need the healing touch of Christ:

- List ways your church ministers to its members:

- List ways your church ministers to those outside the church:



Session 11

-
- How do you minister to people?
 - What are other ways you could minister to people in and outside of the church?

Engaging in ministry:

Make plans to do a service project together in your community (serve meals on wheels, volunteer at a food pantry, visit a nursing home, etc.).

Evaluating your project:

After you have completed the project you chose, answer the following questions to reflect on your experience.

- How did you feel about this project?
- If you worked with an organization, describe the ministry or service they provide:
- Is this something you would like to help with on a regular basis? If so, what would you need to do to continue?
- If not, what are some other ministries in which you would like to participate?

The Church as the Body of Christ



Session 12

The church, the body of Christ, is the witness to Jesus Christ's presence in the world. We are Christ's light shining in the world.

Reading together from the Bible:

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. Read aloud and alternate parts to make it more interesting and easier to understand.

- In light of this scripture, what do you like about your congregation?
- How is your congregation doing at shining Christ's light? How do its members work together, build up each other, and prepare the members for ministry?

Attending a board or committee meeting:

Plan to attend a meeting of the board, a committee, or another ministry team at your church. After the meeting, answer the following:

- What items of business interested you the most?
- What questions do you have?
- What did they spend the most time discussing?
- In what ways did or didn't they work well together, building up one another and supporting one another?
- List ways they worked together as the body of Christ.

Developing your gifts:

Refer to your session on Gifts of the Spirit. What gifts for ministry would you like to develop in the life of your local congregation? How might God be calling you to use these gifts throughout your life? Tell your pastor!

