

Getting Ready lesson: February 2009

Jesus Justice Jazz

Prior to today's lesson, you will need to gather some materials: a candle, a map of New Orleans, *Jesus Justice Jazz* logos, drawing paper, markers, crayons, this month's video, and Bibles.

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will understand the meaning behind the theme *Jesus Justice Jazz*.
 2. Participants will be able to identify their own gifts and how they might be used to serve the neighbor.
 3. Participants will have a deeper desire for justice for God's people.
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Ritual

Begin today's lesson by preparing your group's altar in the center of your room. The altar can be a small table or simply the floor. It should be in the center of your group. Place the map of New Orleans upon the altar and the candle. You might also want to add a cross or other symbols that have become important to your group. Add the *Jesus Justice Jazz* logo to your altar (http://archive.elca.org/youth/gathering_graphics.html).

Explain to your group that the candle in the center of the group will serve as a reminder that God is present and active among them. The map will serve as a reminder that Jesus Christ is present and active in the city of New Orleans. The logo will serve as a reminder of why you are heading down to New Orleans. Maybe this preparation of the altar can be your group's ritual, or maybe you have a different ritual you use to begin your time together. Regardless, it is important to find some way to begin your time together so your entire group recognizes the importance of what is about to happen.

Check-in

Ask your group members to check in by sharing one way they think they've seen Christ at work since your group's last meeting.

Introduction

This lesson will introduce us to the theme, Jesus Justice Jazz. Jesus sets us free to serve our neighbor through acts of compassionate justice that are often spontaneous and improvised, much like jazz.

(The following idea is also available on the Youth Gathering's Web site as a way of describing and discussing this year's logo. http://archive.elca.org/youth/gathering_logo_description.html)

Give each student a printed version of this year's logo (http://archive.elca.org/youth/gathering_graphics.html). Then discuss:

1. What is your first impression of what you see here? What draws your attention, bothers you, or seems interesting?
2. What do you think each of the three words -- *Jesus Justice Jazz* -- mean when you think about it in the context of your faith and life? How are these words connected and related?
3. So what do think is going to happen in New Orleans? What does this logo suggest or tell you about the experience and program?

Show the first part of this month's video; start at the beginning and stop after Ashley Teamer is finished describing Hurricane Katrina as “the monster that already happened”. Then have a volunteer read the following description as your group looks at the logo for this year's Gathering.

The chaotic, dark, swirling on the left of the graphic reminds us of the darkness and confusion that we sometimes experience in the world. You can almost feel the powerful wind and destruction of a hurricane.

And in the midst of the chaos, confusion, and mess is the cross, drawing our vision to the light and hope of Jesus. It is Jesus who draws us into a life of compassionate justice wherever we are and whomever we're with. It is Jesus who sets us free into the world jazzed for justice, for kindness, and for humble walking with God.

***Jesus Justice Jazz** stands bold and connected to what seems confusing and disconnected. Our faith and our baptismal call to be bold, compassionate witnesses in the world are always connected and relevant to whatever is swirling around us.*

Lastly, ask the group to draw connections between what they heard on the video, what they see in the logo, and what they heard in the description of the logo.

Jesus and hurricanes

Jesus enters the chaotic storms of our lives and offers us hope and life. How has this happened in your lives?

1. Give students time to reflect on a “personal hurricane” (something that is causing them stress and fear).
2. Have them draw a picture or write a brief reflection on that “personal hurricane” they are currently experiencing.
3. Share these with one another.
4. Now, have a volunteer read [Luke 4:16-21](#). Generate a list of the things Jesus says he will do (i.e., bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, give sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free).
5. Ask your group to explain how their personal hurricanes are similar to being “poor,” “captive,” “blind,” or “oppressed”? Help them think metaphorically and not just literally.
6. Ask the group to add to their drawing or written reflection something that represents how Christ enters into their own personal hurricane to offer good news, release, sight, or freedom.
7. Share these with one another.
8. Ask your group members to share what they've learned about Christ and about one another.

Free for justice

Christ enters our personal hurricanes. He brings good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed through our humble acts of compassionate justice.

1. Read [Micah 6:8](#).
2. Ask your group to identify what God requires of Israel according to this text (i.e., do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with God)? *Be sure to tell your group that Christ requires nothing of us, yet draws us into justice, kindness, and humility as we cling to Christ in faith.*
3. Depending on the size of your group, break your group up into three groups and assign each group one of these tasks: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly.
4. Have each group create a short skit that will demonstrate how your group might do these things while in New Orleans.

5. Reflect as a group on the skits. What did you see in the skits that excites you? Makes you anxious? What seems realistic? What might be difficult?

Jazz and improvisation

Our humble acts of compassionate justice are rarely planned out in advance. Quite often we have to improvise when serving our neighbor, much like a jazz musician. Christ enables us to play off one another, support one another, accompany one another, and seek harmony with one another on the spur of the moment.

1. Have a volunteer read [1 Corinthians 12:4-7](#).
2. Have each group member share one gift he or she has.
3. Play the rest of the video for this month from where the youth worker is talking about God as the restorer of the breach until the end of the video.
4. Rev. Sean Ewbank says in the video, "If you're going to come to New Orleans, make sure that the reason you want to come is to have a real encounter with the Holy Spirit, alive and kicking. If you don't want that, then don't come." Ask your group members to describe how they feel about encountering the Holy Spirit in New Orleans? What might that look like?
5. Rev. Patrick Keen says in the video, "It may not occur to you that you are being empowered to resurrect lives, but this is what you are being empowered to do as ambassadors of Christ." Ask your group members to describe how they feel about being "empowered to resurrect life" in New Orleans? What might that look like?
6. Ask your group to consider how their gifts might be used in New Orleans and in your hometown upon your return.

Wrap up

Remind your group that **Jesus** sets us free to love one another through acts of compassionate **Justice** and often this happens as the Holy Spirit calls us to improvise as in **Jazz**.

Prayer

As a closing prayer, have each person approach the altar one-by-one and proclaim:

"Jesus I offer up [individual names his or her gift] for the people of New Orleans and for [individual names his or her hometown]." Amen.