

## **Autumn 2026 Small Group Materials**

Whether you are part of an existing small group that meets at regular intervals or a brand-new group just forming for this series, this discussion starter is for you. These materials have been produced, assuming that your group would meet weekly, beginning with the week of Sunday, September 13 and wrapping up with the week following Sunday October 18.

Each week has three discussion starting questions.

**Getting Started** These are questions that will really help new groups to get to know each other a little bit better. They may be either well-known information or a good discussion reminder for established groups.

**Wading In** These questions focus on the sermon that was preached the previous Sunday. This way there is no homework beyond attending worship or catching it online. This question is meant to get the conversation going on the topic for the day.

**Going Deeper** These questions use the Wading In prompt as a launch point to take the conversation further and to look forward to things to ponder or act upon in the week to come.

Finally, close with a prayer. This can be done in several ways.

1. Simply go around the circle and let each person add something or pass.
2. Have one person ask if there is anything we should include in the prayer and then that person leads the closing prayer.
3. Use the Lord's Prayer together.
4. Use some other previously written prayer.

### **The week following Sunday, September 13**

*Scripture and theme for the day: John 4:1-26 Love that Breaks Down Walls*

**Getting Started** Obviously, begin by sharing names. How did you come to be a part of Christ Lutheran Church?

**Wading In** Jesus meets the woman at the well. How many social/political/ gender/ religious/historical/other barriers can you count together that Jesus is coming up against? What do we learn about his ministry beyond the messages of his words?

**Going Deeper** What barriers are present in our church, neighborhoods, community, culture and even world? How do we lovingly move between and reach across these barriers?

### **The week following Sunday, September 20**

*Scripture and theme for the day: Luke 10:25-37 Love your Neighbor*

**Getting Started** What was your family of origin like? Parents? Siblings? Other family or friends? Where did you grow up?

**Wading In** Last week we discussed boundaries, barriers, and walls in our life. Today it gets more personal. Jesus tells a story of a personal encounter between people who ordinarily would be expected to be rivals. What are some of the dynamics in our own culture that create such personal divides?

**Going Deeper** Are there any willing to share examples where divides have been successfully crossed or where the divide was too great? How can we encourage each other to overcome those divides?

### **The week following Sunday September 27**

*Scripture and theme for the day: Matthew 25:31-40 Love for the stranger and creation*

**Getting Started** What is your family situation today? Some of you may have lots of family surrounding you. While others might be single and live alone, but have important family and friends in their lives.

**Wading In** Most of us have probably heard this passage before. Does anything strike you as new or different on this read through? Share some things that you have done through CLC or in other ways that help share God's hope, love, and joy.

**Going Deeper** What are ways that CLC or we as individuals might reach out that we are not currently doing? Share about ministries going on that you have found to be especially meaningful and helpful.

### **The week following Sunday October 4**

*Scripture and theme for the day: Mark 1:9-13 Love in the Wilderness*

**Getting Started** What Work/Career/Education/Life-Experience background do you have?

**Wading In** Mark's Gospel has the briefest description of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness. Both Matthew and Luke go into more detail. What does it mean to you that Jesus endured this time of hardship? What does it say about God's relationship with us?

**Going Deeper** This gets deep very quickly. Allow people to pass. Are any of you able to share about difficult times in your life? Are any of you able to name how God (or people God works through) showed up in your life in the midst of trauma, grief, mental health struggles, burnout or uncertainty? These are all topics that our culture tends to bury and not talk about.

### **The week following Sunday October 11**

*Scripture and theme for the day:*    *Luke 15:1-7*                      *Beloved without conditions*

**Getting Started** Share a favorite life experience. This can be a favorite vacation, special place, event, or even a recurring habit you practice keeping you balanced. Sharing more than one is always welcome.

**Wading In** The Song Amazing Grace sings "I once was lost, but now I'm found." All of us like sheep do go astray. Are you able to share a story of being lost but then found?

**Going Deeper** Here in Visalia the Pride festival is Saturday the 17th. Obviously many LGBTQIA+ folks have felt excluded by the church. Many different racial groups have suffered at the hands of the church throughout history. How might we be engaged in acts of healing today?

### **The week following Sunday October 18**

*Scripture and theme for the day:*    *Matthew 28:16-20*                      *Sent in Love*

**Getting Started** Share your favorite hobbies, crafts, movies, TV shows, sports or anything else you enjoy.

**Wading In** Matthew makes sure to point out that "some (many) doubted." Does this trouble you or bring you comfort? This Sunday is our special celebration for Patty's ministry here at CLC. Do you have a favorite Patty story to share?

**Going Deeper** How do you think that God is sending you out in Love? What message of grace, peace, hope, love or joy might you be able to share?