

This curriculum frees people to live their Reformed faith by

REMEMBERING • RECLAIMING • REARTICULATING

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT WHO GOD IS AND WHO WE ARE

SO THE PATTERNS OF OUR LIVES EMBODY THE

LIBERATING LOVE AND GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST.



TESTIMONY

VOCABULARY OF FAITH

• A SIX-WEEK CURRICULUM •

WHO IS GOD 1 *ALMIGHTY*
WHO ARE WE 2 *IMAGO DEI*
GOD IN RELATIONSHIP 3 *COVENANT*
GOD WHO SAVES 4 *GRACE*
GOD OF ACTION 5 *LOVE*
GOD OF BELONGING 6 *CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY*

The Presbyterian
OUTLOOK

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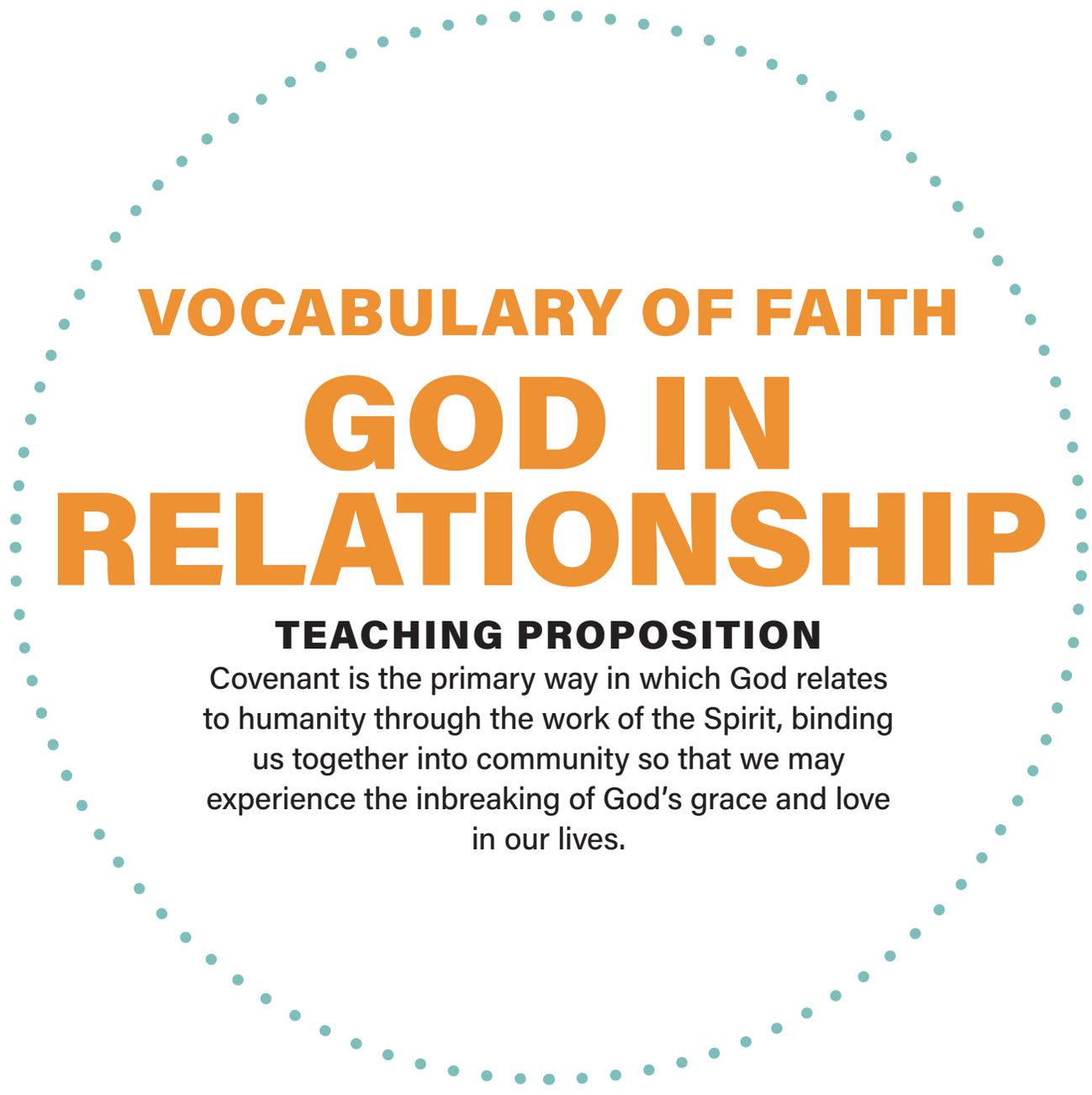
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VOCABULARY OF FAITH

**GOD IN
RELATIONSHIP**

TEACHING PROPOSITION

Covenant is the primary way in which God relates to humanity through the work of the Spirit, binding us together into community so that we may experience the inbreaking of God's grace and love in our lives.

TEXTS

- » Noah Covenant — Genesis 6:5-22, 9:17
- » Abrahamic Covenant — Genesis 12:1-9, 15:1-6, 17:1-2
- » Mosaic Covenant — Exodus 2:23-25, 6:2-8, 19:3-8; Joshua 23:11-16
- » Davidic Covenant — 2 Samuel 7:4-17; 1 Chronicles 17:7-14
- » New Covenant — Jeremiah 31:31-34; Isaiah 42:1-9; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Ephesians 2:4-10; Hebrews 9:15

LEADER PREPARATION

- » Make copies of texts from Appendix A (if you are not using class or personal Bibles).
- » Write key points from Appendix B on whiteboard/newsprint or create PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi presentation.
- » Make copies of Appendix C.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Bibles or copies of the texts from Appendix A
- » Dry-erase board and markers or newsprint and markers
- » AV equipment if you are using the video as a part of the session

TEACHING OUTLINE

- » 5 min Welcome and Opening Prayer
- » 5 min Brainstorming current covenants
- » 15 min Remembering and exploring biblical covenants
- » 15 min Rearticulating covenant relationships
- » 15 min Reclaiming covenantal living
- » 5 min Closing psalm

ARRIVE EARLY TO SET OUT BIBLES AND ARRANGE THE SEATS IN A WAY THAT IS CONDUCIVE TO TODAY'S LESSON, YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLES.

GATHERING RITUAL

WELCOME PEOPLE AS THEY ARRIVE. WHEN IT IS TIME TO BEGIN THE SESSION, INVITE EVERYONE TO JOIN YOU IN PRAYER OR YOUR REGULAR OPENING RITUAL. YOU MAY USE THIS PRAYER, OR INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE THEIR JOYS AND CONCERNS AND THEN LEAD THEM IN PRAYER.

God of the ages and God of today, to our utter amazement you yearn to be in relationship with us. Your continuing and amazing grace beckons us to greater faithfulness, and for that and so many other things we are deeply grateful. Open us to the presence of your Spirit in this moment

that we may hear and understand your wisdom in new and renewing ways. Then, Holy One, quicken within us a desire to live in ways that reflect the gift of your grace, your amazing love and our continuing covenantal relationship. Amen.

IF THERE ARE NEW PEOPLE IN THE GROUP, INVITE ALL PARTICIPANTS TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES.

• REMEMBERING •

COVENANT IS THE PRIMARY WAY IN WHICH GOD RELATES TO HUMANITY

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHAT DO YOU WANT PARTICIPANTS TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT COVENANT?" THE SCRIPTURE EXPLORATION AND THE TEACHING POINTS IN THIS SECTION WILL HELP PARTICIPANTS SEE THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD RELATES TO HUMANITY THROUGH COVENANTS.



ASK

- » What comes to mind when we say the word covenant? (possible answers include marriage, baptism, employment or land contracts, peace or trade treaties)
- » What is a covenant? (Webster's Dictionary: a formal and binding promise)

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION OF THE SESSION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



TEACHING POINTS

- » Formal agreements existed between governments, kings and people before Scripture was written.
- » The word covenant takes on a whole new understanding and significance when God is at the center.
- » A careful look at the five major biblical covenants will bring insight as to the nature and character of God.

DIVIDE PARTICIPANTS INTO FIVE GROUPS AND ASSIGN EACH GROUP A SET OF TEXTS. IN APPENDIX A AT THE END OF THIS SESSION YOU WILL FIND HANDOUTS, ONE FOR EACH GROUP, WITH THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS ON THEM. YOU MAY ALSO CHOOSE TO HAVE THE PARTICIPANTS USE THEIR OWN BIBLES OR THE BIBLES IN YOUR MEETING SPACE. ASK EACH GROUP TO READ THE SCRIPTURES, DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND BE PREPARED TO SHARE THEIR RESPONSES WITH THE WHOLE GROUP.



REFLECT

- » Who initiates the covenant?
- » What is promised and/or expected of each party?
- » What are the characteristics of God in these texts?
- » What are the characteristics of people in these texts?
- » How would you characterize this covenant?

INVITE EACH GROUP TO SHARE THEIR RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS. MAKE NOTE OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE COVENANTS AS GROUPS SHARE THEIR FINDINGS.

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION OF THE SESSION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



TEACHING POINTS

- » What we learn from an exploration of Scripture is that covenants are the primary way in which God establishes relationships with creature and creation — with us and with the world.
- » Covenants tell us about who God is, who we are and the faithfulness to which we are called in daily living.

• RECLAIMING •

SO THAT WE MAY EXPERIENCE THE INBREAKING OF GOD'S GRACE AND LOVE IN OUR LIVES

HERE IS WHERE YOU, AS THE TEACHER, PROVIDE THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS ON COVENANT TO INCREASE PARTICIPANTS' VOCABULARY OF FAITH. THIS IS THE SECTION OF THE SESSION WHERE YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR OUR FAITH, OUR LIVES, OUR CHURCH, OUR COMMUNITY OR WORLD TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COVENANTS?" THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO DO THIS, AND THE DECISION WILL BE BASED ON YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES. WE HAVE PROVIDED TWO RESOURCES FOR YOU TO WORK WITH TO CRAFT THIS PART OF YOUR SESSION.



RESOURCES

- » **APPENDIX B** — At the end of this session you will find a page "Insights on Covenant" (Appendix B) that provides theological content for understanding and teaching covenants. You can use the material to create a PowerPoint, to craft a mini-lecture or to cull out particular points to share with the group. You may use this appendix to craft teaching points to weave into the discussion. Think of this as a "cheat sheet" that we have assembled so your research time is minimized.
- » **VIDEO** — A short 5-6-minute video is also provided for you to use. A professor, a pastor/educator and a lay leader each briefly share their thoughts on covenant. You can use this video to introduce the topic, to start the discussion or to reinforce the teaching points you developed from "Insights on Covenant" (Appendix B). You may also choose not to use the video.

• REARTICULATING •

THROUGH THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT BINDING US TOGETHER INTO COMMUNITY

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION EACH PARTICIPANT IS ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "HOW WILL I (MY FAMILY, THE CHURCH) LIVE DIFFERENTLY NOW THAT I UNDERSTAND COVENANTS AND WHY THEY ARE IMPORTANT?"

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



TEACHING POINTS

- » It is the Holy Spirit who binds our promises with God and one another in community.
- » It is the Spirit's ongoing work that keeps our covenant relationship vibrant and relevant still today.
- » Now that we have a better understanding of covenant, we must ask, "So what?"
- » Now that we have remembered and reclaimed covenant, let's consider how we will rearticulate it through the ways we live our faith in the world.

DISCERNMENT ABOUT FAITHFUL LIVING IS BEST DONE IN COMMUNITY. USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, OR THOSE OF YOUR OWN, TO PROMPT HONEST, VULNERABLE AND DEEP DISCUSSION ABOUT EMBODYING OUR FAITH IN THE WORLD. THIS CAN BE DONE AS A WHOLE GROUP, IN SMALL GROUPS OR IN PAIRS. IN THIS SESSION WE ARE CREATING SPACE FOR THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN WHAT WE BELIEVE AND HOW WE LIVE. BECAUSE DISCIPLESHIP IS A "TEAM SPORT," WE DO THIS TOGETHER, IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHER DISCIPLES WHO ARE ON THIS JOURNEY WITH US. THE KEY IS FOR EACH PERSON, IN COMMUNITY, TO WRESTLE WITH HOW THIS NEW UNDERSTANDING OF COVENANT WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK, THE WAY WE ACT AND WHO WE ARE AT THE CORE OF OUR BEING AS WE ALL SEEK TO LIVE INTO GREATER FAITHFULNESS.



GOING DEEPER

- » What difference does it make in your life/the church/the world that God seeks to be in relationship with us and will never walk away?
- » In what ways will you live differently because of God's grace and faithfulness?
- » Where do you see the inbreaking of God's grace in your life/the church/the world?
- » What are the challenges or impediments to living in covenant relationship with God and one another? What are the opportunities?

SENDING RITUAL

AS THE SESSION COMES TO AN END, MOVE INTO THE SENDING RITUAL OF A RESPONSIVE READING OF PSALM 136 (APPENDIX C).

YOU MAY WANT TO WEAVE THE FOLLOWING INTO YOUR TRANSITION:



TEACHING POINTS

- » In most versions of the Christian Bible, the refrain of Psalm 136 reads, "God's steadfast love endures forever."
- » The Hebrew word for "steadfast love" is hesed, which translates into English as "God's covenantal love."
- » Because it is a covenant, the relational love between God and humanity endures forever.
- » The psalm rehearses the mighty acts of the majestic Creator God, who redeems and sustains us through the ages. It reminds us that it is this sovereign and faithful God who reaches out to us through covenants and will not let us go.

THE LEADER WILL READ THE ITALICIZED PARTS OF THE PSALM AND THE PARTICIPANTS WILL READ THE BOLDED REFRAIN