Small Group Week 1

**Opening Prayer**

*God who works wonders, we invite you into this place.*

*Jesus we light this candle as a sign of your presence.*

*Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten us.*

*We pray that we keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas and that we may grow in our understanding of your ways. Amen.*

“Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after.”

Henry David Thoreau

**Breaking the Ice**

* Have you ever gone fishing? Did you catch anything?
* Have you ever gotten into a routine of life and work like Simon?
* Who was the person who went out deeper to introduce you to Jesus?

**Wrestling with the Word**

*Read Luke 5:1-11.*

* What strikes you about this passage?
* Jesus asking the disciples to go deeper into the water was an unreasonable request. As fisherman, Simon would have known that the fish were closer to the shore. How do you think they felt when Jesus asked them to go deeper?
* Where have you found abundance in unexpected places?
* What are areas in your life where you hesitated to move out into deeper waters?
* The fisherman called their partners to help when the catch was so large. Then they left what may have been their largest catch ever on the beach. Is that surprising?
* What is the miracle in this story?

**Next Steps**

* How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week’s scripture, lesson and/or sermon?
* What is limiting your belief that Jesus has a large catch of fish planned for you and your congregation?
* We are asked to come and be a partner by sharing our gifts and abundance. Are you willing to go deeper?
* What are you asked to give away to live into the person God is calling you to be?

**Prayer for the Week**

*Dear Lord,*

*We thank you for those who have come alongside us to and shared your love. We trust that your Holy Spirit will help us to see the miracles you are working today. Give us the courage to listen to your directions to go deeper, so that more people will know your love. In the name of Jesus we pray.*

*Amen.*

Small Group Week 2

**Opening Prayer**

*God who works wonders, we invite you into this place.*

*Jesus we light this candle as a sign of your presence.*

*Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten us.*

*We pray that we keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas and that we may grow in our understanding of your ways. Amen.*

“Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts.”

Charles Dickens

**Breaking the Ice**

* What event in your life has affected your worldview?
* Have you ever seen or experienced a miracle?
* Do you remember a time when you lost power in a storm? Who helped?

**Wrestling with the Word**

 *Read John 11:17-44.*

* What strikes you about this passage?
* For Lazarus to live a full life, he not only needed to be resurrected, but also unbound. His hands, face and feet were tied by grave clothes. The community unbound him. Have you ever felt bound by a situation where you didn’t believe things could get better? Who helped?
* Lazarus is going to die again. Those who mourn him will mourn again. However, now they know the hope of resurrected life. How have you found hope in difficult times?
* Jesus commands Lazarus to come out. What would Jesus’ command be for us today?

**Next Steps**

* How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week’s scripture, lesson and/or sermon?
* Is there a miracle that you are still praying for?
* What is binding your church from living into its fullness? What is one step you can take to unbind hope?
* In 2017, hurricanes devastated Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico. People are still suffering and bound. How are you being called to unbind those who still need hope?

**Prayer for the Week**

*Dear Lord,*

*We thank you for those who have come alongside us in our difficult times. We ask for your help us to be the compassionate people who can be called on to offer hope in the midst of devastation. We trust in your resurrection power, and trust in miracles today. In Jesus’s name we pray.*

*Amen*

Small Group Week 3

**Opening Prayer**

*God who works wonders, we invite you into this place.*

*Jesus we light this candle as a sign of your presence.*

*Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten us.*

*We pray that we keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas and that we may grow in our understanding of your ways. Amen.*

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

Helen Keller

**Breaking the Ice**

* Have you ever been on a roof? What were you doing?
* Share a memory of a situation or event that happened with some friends.
* Name one person who has your back.

**Wrestling with the Word**

*Read Luke 5:17-26.*

* What strikes you about this passage?
* Do you identify more with the friends or the paralyzed man? Why?
* What is blocking the doors of our churches to people in our communities that need God?
* The friends were persistent and bold in faith. When they couldn’t get through the front door, they found another way. How does this experience change them?
* Has there been someone who has carried you?

 **Next Steps**

* How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week’s scripture, lesson and/or sermon?
* After the healing, the man goes home glorifying God. How will you celebrate the miracles in your midst?
* In Greater New Jersey, a Future With Hope raised over $17 million dollars and repaired more than 250 homes. This was only possible because communities came together. Where is hope alive in your community? How can you be a part of what God is already doing?
* This is the [Morristown Hope Center Video](https://www.gnjumc.org/resource/miracles-everywhere-letter-one-video-link-morristown-umc-hope-center/). Morristown UMC uses soccer and identification cards to carry their neighbors to Christ. What will you use?

**Prayer for the Week**

*Dear Lord,*

*We thank you for the friends who have carried us when we were unable to do so for ourselves. We ask for your help us to see the ways that people are being blocked from your presence today. Help us to be ones who are ready to carry others to you. When give us things seem impossible, holy persistence – so that we too can be a witness to your miracles. In Jesus’s name we pray.*

*Amen*

Small Group Week 4

**Opening Prayer**

*God who works wonders, we invite you into this place.*

*Jesus we light this candle as a sign of your presence.*

*Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten us.*

*We pray that we keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas and that we may grow in our understanding of your ways. Amen.*

When people were hungry, Jesus didn’t say, “Now is that political, or social?” He said, “I feed you.” Because the good news to a hungry person is bread.”

Desmond Tutu

**Breaking the Ice**

* What did you pack for lunch as a kid?
* Who are you a fan of (ie. Sports, music – something else?)? Where did you follow them to?

**Wrestling with the Word**

*Read John 6:1-14.*

* What strikes you about this passage?
* Has there been a time in your life when you gave up because the task seemed too big?
* Andrew continued to search for an answer. In the end, he spotted the boy in the crowd. What do you think Andrew expected Jesus to do?
* The people who were following Jesus were hungry. First he taught them and then he broke bread and fed them; Jesus provided for both spiritual and physical needs. What are people hungry for around us?
* Nothing is too little for God to use. What resources do we have to offer?
* What is the miracle in this story?

**Next Steps**

* How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week’s scripture, lesson and/or sermon?
* When the crowds see what United Methodists of Greater New Jersey have done through Miracles Everywhere, they will say, “Jesus is among us.” How will you participate in God’s miracles in your church and Greater New Jersey Annual Conference?
* In all miracles, we are active participants. In the first week, the fisherman went fishing for the miraculous catch. In week 2 the people unbound Lazarus. In week 3 the friends carried the paralyzed man to Jesus. This week the boy offers his lunch and there were leftovers. What gift can you offer in making miracles happen?

**Prayer for the Week**

*Dear Lord,*

*We thank you for all the times when you have feed us. For the people who opened their hearts and have shared when we have been in need. We pray for those who are hungry - for food, for shelter, for education, for healthcare and so much more. We ask for your help to see the gifts you have given us so that we could share with others. Gifts of time, talent and resources. We pray that we as individuals and as a congregation are generous. We thank you for the miracles. In Jesus’s name we pray.*

*Amen*

This week, it would be nice for a pastor to offer Holy Communion to the group. If this is not possible then a sharing of a Love Feast would tie in too.