

LIFE Meeting

Embrace Your Individuality

January 16, 2019

1. Opening Prayer

Allison

2. Icebreaker: Mail Call

3. Transition to Small Groups

4. 1st Small Group: Strengths finder and Thumbbody

5. Large Group: Witness Talk

Mrs. Jackson-York

6. Transition Video to Small Groups

7. 2nd Small Group: Meditation and Flower Activity

8. Closing Prayer

Ethan

- **Next Meeting: February 20th — Relationships**
- **Planning Meeting: Wednesday January 23rd**
 - **Food: Nyarok, Faith, Kaden, Maggie H**

- Opening Prayer

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- Indian politician B. R. Ambedkar once said, "Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self."
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- As teenagers, many of us struggle often with self-identity and knowing who we are and where we belong in this world. Sometimes we even try to pretend to be someone we're not to feel accepted, like this poem by Charles Finn describes:
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- Don't be fooled by me. Don't be fooled by the face I wear for I wear a mask, a thousand masks, masks that I'm afraid to take off, and none of them is me. Pretending is an art that's second nature with me, but don't be fooled, for God's sake don't be fooled.
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- I give you the impression that I'm secure, that all is sunny and unruffled with me, within as well as without, that confidence is my name and coolness my game, that the water's calm and I'm in command and that I need no one, but don't believe me.
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- My surface may seem smooth but my surface is my mask, ever-varying and ever-concealing.
- Beneath lies no complacency. Beneath lies confusion, and fear, and aloneness.
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- But I hide this. I don't want anybody to know it. I panic at the thought of my weakness exposed. That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind, a nonchalant sophisticated facade, to help me pretend, to shield me from the glance that knows.
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- But such a glance is precisely my salvation, my only hope, and I know it. That is, if it's followed by acceptance, if it's followed by love. It's the only thing that can liberate me from myself, from my own self-built prison walls, from the barriers I so painstakingly erect. It's the only thing that will assure me of what I can't assure myself, that I'm really worth something.
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- But I don't tell you this. I don't dare to, I'm afraid to. I'm afraid your glance will not be followed by acceptance, will not be followed by love. I'm afraid you'll think less of me, that you'll laugh, and your laugh would kill me. I'm afraid that deep-down I'm nothing and that you will see this and reject me.
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- So I play my game, my desperate pretending game, with a facade of assurance without and a trembling child within. So begins the glittering but empty parade of masks, and my life becomes a front.
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- I idly chatter to you in the suave tones of surface talk. I tell you everything that's really nothing, and nothing of what's everything, of what's crying within me.
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- So when I'm going through my routine do not be fooled by what I'm saying. Please listen carefully and try to hear what I'm **not** saying, what I'd like to be able to say, what for survival I need to say, but what I can't say.
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- I don't like hiding. I don't like playing superficial phony games. I want to stop playing them. I want to be genuine and spontaneous and me but you've got to help me.
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- You've got to hold out your hand even when that's the last thing I seem to want. Only you can wipe away from my eyes the blank stare of the breathing dead. Only you can call me into aliveness.
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- Each time you're kind, and gentle, and encouraging, each time you try to understand because you really care, my heart begins to grow wings--very small wings, very feeble wings, but wings!
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- With your power to touch me into feeling you can breathe life into me. I want you to know that. I want you to know how important you are to me, how you can be a creator--an honest-to-God creator-- of the person that is me if you choose to.
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- You alone can break down the wall behind which I tremble, you alone can remove my mask, you alone can release me from my shadow-world of panic, from my lonely prison, if you choose to.
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- Please choose to. Do not pass me by. It will not be easy for you. A long conviction of worthlessness builds strong walls.
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- The nearer you approach to me the blinder I may strike back. It's irrational, but despite what the books say about man often I am irrational. I fight against the very thing I cry out for. But I am told that love is stronger than strong walls and in this lies my hope.
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- Please try to beat down those walls with firm hands but with gentle hands for a child is very sensitive. Who am I, you may wonder? I am someone you know very well. For I am every man you meet and I am every woman you meet.
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- This poem may sound dark and you may not relate to it completely, but it makes some good points. It can be scary to feel alone or unaccepted. It's important in those moments to know that God is always with us, and that we can trust in Him to be there to give us strength and courage. God created each of us in His own image and likeness, and He accepts each of us for who we really are, so why shouldn't we accept ourselves? We also all have the power within us to really make a difference in other people's lives as well. There are so many times in life where others tend to push people away in fear of others discovering their true selves. We can help others by paying attention to how people are feeling and accepting them for who they really are and helping them see that they don't have to pretend to be someone that they are not. We all have our own unique gifts and talents and embracing our individuality is something that we should not be afraid to do. As your people let us joyfully proclaim: May the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be glorified in all places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary Amen.

- **Icebreaker**

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- **Ice Breaker:** Mail Call
- Everyone sits in a circle.

- One person starts in the middle and says "I've got mail for anyone who..." then says a fun fact about themselves (ex: I've got mail for anyone who likes one direction, has had surgery, likes giraffes, etc)
- Everyone who that applies to switches spots with someone at least 2 seats away. The last person left who can't find a spot is in the middle.

Transition to Small Group

We as followers of Christ all make up the body of Christ. As it says in 1 Corinthians 12:14-20, "For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. "

When you were created, you were created with a specific purpose, a specific design but you were not meant to be like anybody else. No matter your gender, race, religion, or any quality that makes you an individual you are still called to live with and as Christ would. We are all called to serve Christ and bring Christ to others as our own individual selves and not as a replica of someone else. When each of us bring our own unique gifts and talents to the table we can truly be the body of Christ.

1st Small Group

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Lord as each one of us comes together today, help us to see the value of one another. Help us to see how different each one of us is. Help us to understand that it is okay to be different and that You want us live in harmony and peace despite these differences. Help us to realize how important it is to see our own dignity and the dignity of others. Colossians 3:12-14 "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other;

as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." As your people let us joyfully proclaim: May the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be Glorified in all places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Thumbbody

Someone will be around with the tree picture so everyone can put their thumbprint on the tree. Have each student print his thumb print on a sheet of paper. Across the top of the paper write "I Am Thumbbody!" Explain that each person has a unique thumbprint that distinguishes him from all other people. Ask each person to make a list of abilities and qualities that make him/her unique in life.

Once everyone in the small group has put their thumbprint on the picture, then read the following reflection:

You are a unique, gifted, and special individual. That is a fact. Now let that be your starting point *and* your living point. You are truly one of a kind. We all know that we, as humans, share the usual bits and pieces that most of us have in common, such as certain essential body parts — a head, a heart, a brain, and so on. But the similarity ends there. Your life experiences thus far have made you the person you are today. The way you were brought up by your parents and the things that you learned in your childhood have come together to make you different from everyone else. Others may share some of your talents and abilities, but there is no one who is *identical* to you. It is rather like an artist painting a picture; even if another artist were to copy the picture as closely as possible it would never be identical. Different brush strokes or combinations of paint would have been used, and each masterpiece is its own. So since you are unique, why not celebrate that fact? Dare to be your own person and disregard what others may think. Feel free to live your life in the best manner as you can. But in that pursuit, be a true, authentic, and real individual. You only have one life. Provided that the way you live it doesn't harm anyone, you have the opportunity – one might even say the duty – to live it the way you see fit. So, what bold things are you going to decide to do today, this week, this month, this year?

Multiple Intelligence Checklist

Give everyone the Checklist only and have them complete it. After everyone is done then hand out the Results sheet and discuss people thoughts about it.

Questions for discussion starters

Do you see these strengths in your life?

What strengths do you think you have that you didn't get on the test?

How can knowing your strengths help you in your life?

Large Group

Introducing Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Mrs. Jackson-York

The gifts of the Holy Spirit build us up, make us whole and help us mature in Jesus Christ, so his light can shine brightly through us in the world. There are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. They include wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, piety, fortitude, and fear of the lord. Wisdom helps us recognize the importance of others and keeping God central in our lives. The gift of understanding helps us to know and understand the mysteries of our faith more clearly. Knowledge lets us see the world as it really is and helps us to explore God's revelation. Counsel gives us the ability to most closely follow God's plan. Fortitude gives us the courage to do what we know is right. Piety helps us pray to God with true praise. Fear of the Lord is amazement before God. God gives his gifts to all of us. It is only when people – who are all totally different and are used in different ways by God – start serving each other with their gifts, that the fullness of God's power and love will become visible. That is why love and unity amongst Christians is so important. Through these gifts we are each called to live out our lives praising the Lord in our own unique ways and journeys. Now Mrs. Jackson is going to share some more insight about embracing those gifts and our individuality.

Witness Talk: Mrs. Jackson-York

TRANSITION VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikGVWEvUzNM>

2nd Small Group

Meditation

Take a few deep breaths and allow your body to take in all the air that it needs. Imagine your entire body softening.

Begin by thanking God for all the gifts in your life right now. Appreciating where we have been is a magical key to moving forward. Every situation and relationship from your past has taught you something useful, and has made you who you are today.

Now notice those things that have outlived their usefulness. What keeps you stuck? What stops you from living your deepest dreams? Recognize the obstacles to achieving the changes that you choose for your life. Begin to make mental notes of all of those things that you are ready to release.

Where are you still holding resentment toward another? Towards yourself?

Let all your fears, worries, doubts, disappointments, and anger surface in your mind... envision them as a muddy stream which flows out of you as you breathe. See yourself releasing old hurts, sadness, imbalance, and injustice in your life from the past and present. Feel them dissolving, pouring out of your body.

Just let them go. Release all the "should haves," "could haves," "if onlys." There are many layers to let go of, so for now, let go of those things that you are able to. Just let them go.

Now see what items, relationships or situations you have outgrown or that need to shift in some way. Take the time to express gratitude for the lessons learned, and then visualize them gently leaving or changing to promote your new reality.

As you free yourself from the past you open up space for fresh, honest relationships and exciting new opportunities to come into your life.

As the old energy flows out, experience a new lightness, feel a new power and vitality entering into your mind and body opening up space for compassion, for forgiveness, for health, for prosperity and success. Invite in those people who are able to respect and honor your growth and change.

Dwell in this new space for a short time, opening your heart and expressing gratitude for the opportunity to grow and move forward. Honor and acknowledge yourself for the courage to clear house and let go.

Now imagine that you can breathe in the qualities that you need for this new part of your life. Breathe in courage to be true to yourself. Just breathe it in. Breathe in patience, discipline, spontaneity, anything that you feel would assist you in this new beginning. See yourself as strong and positive.

In your mind's eye, picture what you would like to receive in your life and imagine yourself easily receiving these gifts. Feel yourself radiating with positive energy as you attract new people, ideas and situations.

See yourself joyful and content with this new reality.

Slowly begin to deepen your breaths. Gently move your fingers and toes. Gently begin to turn your head from side to side. Keeping your eyes closed, take three final deep breaths.

When you are ready, you may open your eyes. Say a quick prayer of thanks to God for helping you embrace your individuality.

Flower Activity

Have everyone write a quality about themselves that is positive or a gift that they have that they want to appreciate more on a little paper flower and put them on the cross in the LIFE room among the gravestones.

Closing Prayer

Long Live by For King And Country

<https://youtu.be/lGqGNXi-EI>

If you're playing that drum
But you got no rhythm
If you're a little out of key
But you're always singing

If you're so carefree
But so not careless
Such a wreck
But ain't love wreck-less
Oh, if you're listening I hope you hear this

**Long live the young at heart
You know who you are
With your spirit burning
Take a risk and take a chance
Carry on
Long live the soul set free
Don't be afraid to dream
While the world's still turning
Every moment, make it happen
With two left feet
Keep on dancing**

**Beat by beat
Breath by breath
Walking hand in hand
Step by step**

With drop of faith
And childlike wonder
You can weather the lightning
You can brave the thunder

No road map
But keep on running
No parachute
But keep on jumping
Oh, I think you might be onto something

Won't let this memory slip away

Every moment, make it happen
With two left feet
Keep on dancing

Showing people who you are and being able to express that matter is difficult for many reasons. Maybe your trying to put on a persona that's not you and you want people to believe that is who you are. But it's not. Taking a chance, and being your true self can be difficult. People may know you only one way. But showing other parts of you is taking that chance and proving that your not afraid to be who you are. Showing the parts of you that usually aren't seen is different yes, but it's a good difference. All of us have the potential to show all of our different traits and personalities, and most importantly our gifts. God didn't make everyone the same, he made each one of us the way he wanted to: different. With all this in mind, we should do a better job of embracing our individuality and not hiding from it.

Father,

You are full of grace and complete forgiveness. Help me to walk forward from this day. Thank you that right now I can enter into a new dawn, a fresh start, and a new freedom.

You turn the pages of my life and wash each day clean. Help me to feel that I can learn from the past in your safe arms and move on. Thank you that I can write a new story on a fresh page. With you I find vision and hope again.

Thank you for the price that you paid that I always have a chance to begin again with you. As your people let us joyfully proclaim: May the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be Glorified in all places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Amen.