# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 4

Foreword 5

Introduction 6

What Happens in Each Week’s Small Group Session 7

- Week One: A River to Carry 9
  - Small Group Agreement 14

- Week Two: A Flame to Reveal 17

- Week Three: A Staff to Invite 21

- Week Four: A Lamb to Rescue 25

- Week Five: A Bread to Build 29

Special Activity: Seder Meal 33
  - Haroses Recipe 36
  - *A Passover Haggadah for Christians* 37

- Week Six: A Trumpet to Send 53

Preview of Coming Attractions 58

Week Seven: Group Celebration 59

Evaluation Form 62
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank those who generously contributed their time, talent, and service to this Lenten study guide. Thank you to the Lent Lead Team for their commitment and passion in assisting our community to be a church of small groups: LuAnn Carlson, Sonjia Gavin, Gretchen Harrell, Helen Holter, Philip Lu, Julie Parnell, and Tim Parnell. I would also like to thank Sarah Campbell, Associate Director of Small Groups, for her tireless devotion, and the Small Group Support Team for their wisdom and care: Sandi Bishop, Frank Lewis, Philip Lu, Linda Whittlesey and Peter Wilson.

Our Lent Study Guide and Video Production Team is a very talented group and I thank them: Jeff Blackburn, Lindsey Burgess, Joel Clare, Brian Glassco, Helen Holter, Tracy Maycock, Janet Moneymaker, Tim and Julie Parnell, Carl Pearson, Wesley Slover, and Linda Whittlesey. A special thanks to Karen and Richal Smith for the use of their home for the video shoot; and to Connie Jacobsen, Art Kopicky, and the leaders of Teleios for providing a wonderful Bible study template. Gratitude to Rev. Dr. Stephen Hayner for his gracious permission to reprint *A Passover Haggadah for Christians*.

Thank you to Rev. Dave Rohrer, Scott Burnett, Kyle Turver and their teams for enriching the Lent experience with their gifts for worship. Thank you to Rev. George Hinman for his leadership and biblical teaching. I’m grateful to Rev. Tim Snow, Kate Mitchum, Cathy Thwing, and Dale Whitney for their commitment to facilitating community at our church. Ken Kierstead’s vital leadership in coordinating post-Lenten outreach will help launch us as a congregation to new heights of service and love. Thanks to Rev. Bruce Baker for his support and the rest of the pastoral staff for their dedication to significant discipleship experiences at UPC. A special thanks to Session for their leadership and to the deacons for their participation in caring regional communities.

Most of all, I want to thank our area coordinators, small group facilitators and hosts for your leadership and for providing a space for us to experience life-changing community. You make a significant contribution in helping us “mark” our way to a home in Jesus Christ.

Renée Sundberg
Pastor of Community Life
University Presbyterian Church
Foreword

As we begin our second year of church-wide Lenten small groups, we thank you for taking part in this experience with us! We love better, understand more deeply, and more enjoy life in community because God meets us as we journey with others.

Are you joining or facilitating a small group for the first time? Remember that a small group is simply a gathering of six to ten people who come together to share, learn, pray, serve, and have fun. You’ll meet some new people and will find that UPC feels more like home. Some groups will continue after Easter, if that is the group’s desire. Others will disband, glad for a brief season of reflecting and sharing during Lent. In either case, it is our sincere hope that you remain vigilant in pursuing a smaller community within our church body.

We encourage you to jump into the experience and give it your all. Participate in the conversation. Engage the text. Be open to what might happen. Our study of Exodus follows the story of the Israelites as they are released from Egyptian slavery into God’s freedom. God wants us to experience freedom, freedom we find as we recognize that we, too, are God’s children. We are eager to see how God will take us further into life, set free by grace. We hope you are, too.

We are particularly excited for your group to experience the Seder meal together in Holy Week. This group activity, along with the opportunity to take communion together on Maundy Thursday, will bring depth and richness to your faith and group life.

We are praying for you. Small groups are rewarding, but not always easy. As with all relationships, it takes effort to build community. We encourage you to address concerns as they come up within the group. Or talk to your facilitator. He or she wants to assist your group in any way possible.

God’s delight in us is reflected in our relationships with one another. During this season of preparation, leading to the celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord, may you discover some “markers” that point you to God’s grace, truth, love, friendship, and joy.

Yours,

George Hinman
Senior Pastor
University Presbyterian Church

Renée Sundberg
Pastor of Community Life
University Presbyterian Church
Introduction

Dear Friend,

Thank you for joining us in this 2011 Lenten study of the Book of Exodus. It is our intent that this study guide will help you in the following ways:

- To learn about the book of Exodus
- To provide a simple template for future Bible studies
- To better know the members of your small group
- To discover special markers in Exodus to strengthen your faith in Christ
- To share the love of God in and through your small group
- To enrich your Lenten experience leading up to Holy Week and Resurrection Sunday

We hope that the information provided is helpful, that the questions stimulate good discussion, the prayers resonate with your hearts, and that your time together in God's word “builds you up on your most holy faith” (Jude 1:20) and touches the world around you with the love and truth of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

Tim & Julie Parnell, on behalf of the Lent Study Guide Team
What Happens in Each Week’s Small Group Session

Opening Prayer
A written prayer is provided for the facilitator as an option to open the session.

What’s Happening in the Small Group?
The questions in this section are intended to help group members get to know each other better. Relationships are as important as content—take time to get to know one another and hear each other’s stories.

What’s Happening in the Word?
This is the heart of the Bible study. Some context for the passage is provided to be followed by a reading of the Scripture aloud. The questions in the study are centered around three sections: what does it say (observations of the text), what does it mean (gaining a better understanding of the passage), and what does it mean to me (applying the text to our lives). The questions are based on the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Be sure to bring your Bibles each week to see the passage in context. Most likely, you will not get through all the questions in each session. The facilitator will want to determine prior to the meeting which questions in the study seem most relevant to the group.

The DVD is a five-minute dialogue between Pastor George Hinman and Pastor Renée Sundberg about the text and how it is relevant to us today.

What’s Happening in the Next Week?
This section is designed to provide a tangible take-away, inviting us to consider how to apply the study to our lives in the week to come. Allow time to share these take-aways with one another.

Looking Ahead
The following week’s passage is noted. Group members are encouraged to read the passage on their own to prepare for the following session. Other forward-looking items are also noted for the group to consider.

Prayer Time
A closing prayer is included for groups to use as they desire. Take some time to share prayer requests with one another each week. Discuss and decide as a group how you will approach prayer—it might evolve as your group meets over the weeks.
Week One:
A River to Carry
Exodus 1:22 - 2:10

Opening Prayer

God, you are amazing. We thank you for bringing us together to study and encourage one another. We ask that you would open our hearts and minds; that you would teach us, and help us to be teachable; that you would do a great work in and through us. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What’s Happening in the Small Group?

If you are a new group or are welcoming new group members:

- Take a few moments to introduce yourself to the group.
- Have you ever been part of a small group before? What was it like?
- What is one thing you hope to experience in this small group?

If you are an established group, catch up on the latest happenings in each other’s lives.

Whether you are a new or established group, after everyone has had an opportunity to introduce themselves or catch up, take the next ten minutes to work through the “Small Group Agreement” on pages 14-15.

Show DVD: Introduction & Welcome

What’s Happening in the Word?

The apostle Paul instructs us how to read the stories of the Old Testament.

He writes in I Corinthians 10:11:

“These things happened to [the Israelites] to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come.”
We come to our study in Exodus knowing that Scripture will inspire and inform us as we grow in Christ Jesus.

The book of Exodus is about God, through Moses, leading the nation of Israel from Egypt into the desert of Sinai, toward the Promised Land. At the end of Genesis, the Israelites were a blessing and benefit to Egypt, through Joseph's favorable relationship with Pharaoh. This is a stark contrast to Exodus, as the Israelites experience oppression and bondage at the hand of a new Pharaoh.

The Exodus story presents a tumultuous deliverance, a hard-hearted Pharaoh, amazing miracles, provision, and the giving of Ten Commandments. The story is honest about the rebellion, impatience and doubt of the Israelites. But it also tells of God's continued reaching out to us. Among the great themes in Exodus are the significant **markers** of God's providence, power, patience, provision, and presence.

**By the term markers, we refer to concrete and sensory experiences and symbols in your life that point you toward God.**

In the exodus, God points the way to a new beginning, to a new home. “Exodus” is a compound of the Greek word for “road” or “way.” God frees the descendants of Jacob from slavery in Egypt, and returns them toward the land of promise—their home. And God **marks** the road. Again and again, we read of “signs” that testify to the trustworthy care of their guide and the nature of their journey.

In chapter 1, God-fearing Hebrew midwives thwart the evil plans of Pharaoh to drown the Hebrew male newborns. In our passage, baby Moses is spared through God's hand expressed in the risk and love of his mother, sister, and the daughter of Pharaoh. Moses' extraordinary escape on the river was the work of God's unseen hand.

**Marker for our lives: The River**

*God's unseen hand is active in our life circumstances before we are even aware of it.*
Read Exodus 1:22 - 2:10 together.

What does it say?

- What words or phrases jump out to you?
- What questions do you have about the text?
- What emotions are present in this passage?

What does it mean?

- Re-read Exodus 2:4—How did God use other people to look after baby Moses?
- Interestingly, in a culture of male dominance, God chose to work through the lives of females to save Moses. What do you make of this?
- In biographies, birth stories often play an important role. How do you think the story of Moses’ beginning has influenced the way people think about Moses?

Show DVD: Week One: A River to Carry

What does it mean to me?

- There are many characters in this account. Who do you identify with and why?
- How has God used people in your life, like God used Miriam in this passage?
- God is active in our lives and in the lives of others before we are aware of it. As you reflect upon a moment or season of your life, how has God shown up (possibly undetected at the time) at just the right moment?

What’s Happening in the Next Week?

- Take time this week to thank God for the markers in your life. Consider how God has used other people, symbols, and experiences in your life over the years. If you are keeping a journal, take time to note these markers.
• There are many UPC small groups meeting during Lent. Take a moment to pray for other groups—especially those in your neighborhood or connected to you in other ways.

• Take time this week to pray and consider how God might use you in the lives of others. It won’t be rescuing a baby in a basket from the Nile, but what might it be?

Looking Ahead

Next Week’s Passage: Exodus 3:1-15

Note: Our study will highlight various significant portions of the story of Exodus. You may benefit from reading the whole book of Exodus during Lent.

Prayer Time

Lord God, the birth and preservation of Moses was remarkable and we are in awe of your work. We are amazed at how you led his mother to take such a risk; how you put it on the heart of Pharaoh’s daughter to have compassion upon Moses; and how you led Moses to be raised in Pharaoh’s household. Help us to be more aware of your work in our own lives and in the lives of others so that we may join you in your renewing and redeeming work in this world. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Important Prayer Note: Over the next several weeks, you may want to pray for one another and each other’s prayer requests. Remember that your small group prayer times should be confidential. You may want to have a group member take brief notes of these prayers so you can follow up each session.
Our Small Group Agreement

For new groups and groups welcoming new members
Creating agreements together is one of the most helpful steps to ensure a healthy small group and to stay focused on its intent. Take a few minutes to review and complete this agreement as a group.

The purpose of our small group is to follow Christ together. As George Hinman has talked about, we are to live out the Five Purposes of Life-Changing Small Groups:

- **Study the Word**—We are transformed as we reflect and respond to the Scriptures together. God’s Word prunes us and shapes us into people who will bear fruit.

- **Worship the Lord**—Worship is our grateful response to God’s relationship with us. In small groups, we can worship by sharing how God is working in our lives, praying together, even singing together.

- **Care for Each Other**—By caring we can be a healing agent of the Lord. Listen with love. Pray for each other. Bring soup when someone is sick. Call folks who miss a meeting and check in.

- **Love Our Neighbors**—“...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me...” Matthew 25:35. God invites us to work by serving and loving people beyond our group.

- **Relate as Friends**—Celebrate birthdays and anniversaries, attend church together, have a barbeque—celebrate life together and God’s gift of brothers and sisters in our lives.

We agree to commit to attending the next five meetings and our Group Celebration after Easter (see page 59).

**Facilitator(s)** lead the meeting, draw the others into the discussion by asking questions (rather than teaching), listening (rather than providing answers), and keep the meeting moving and ending on time. Often groups rotate this role each week. Make a note here of those who would be willing to facilitate:

_________________________________________________________________________________________.

**Host(s)** provide the house where your small group will meet. Groups can have one host, or rotate hosting responsibilities. The host can provide snacks and beverages, or another member can help with refreshments. These members would like to host:

_________________________________________________________________________________________.

Week One: A River to Carry
Meeting Schedule

Day of week ________________________ from ________ am/pm to ___________ am/pm

We will honor our fellow group members by arriving on time. We will spend:

____ minutes gathering, talking, getting food and beverages.
____ minutes doing the study.
____ minutes sharing what’s going on in the faith journeys and lives of each member.
____ minutes in prayer.

Our celebration meeting will be on ____________________ (date/time), hosted by ________________________.

We agree to create a welcoming, safe atmosphere for fellowship by...

...maintaining confidentiality.
...listening well to one another giving everyone an opportunity to speak and be heard.
...speaking respectfully of others.
...providing gentle accountability or advice only if invited to do so.
Week Two:
A Flame to Reveal
Opening Prayer

Dear God, thank you for bringing us together again. As we come to study and share, help us to sense your love, your truth and your presence. May we find our identity in you. This we pray in the name of Jesus, amen.

What's Happening in the Small Group?

- Last week we talked about the concept of markers, especially the marker of the river as an indicator of God's unseen hand at work in your life and in the lives of others. What markers have you thought about since our last meeting?

- OR, If there is someone new to your group, take a minute to introduce them and review what happened during your first meeting.

What's Happening in the Word?

In our first session, we saw God's unseen hand at work—Moses was “drawn out of the waters” before he was aware of God. From the whole of Scripture, we know that God's unseen hand is also at work in our lives. In this week's passage, we discover God is revealed personally to Moses through a flame. God wants to be known.

This passage is one of the most profound in all of Scripture. As Moses shepherds in the desert, God miraculously appears in a burning bush. God has heard the cries of the Israelite people for deliverance. God asks Moses to take on the formidable task of leading the Israelites out of Egypt. God and Moses dialogue back and forth about God's identity and the task at hand, forming an intimate relationship. When Moses asks the name of God (Ex. 3:14), God replies, “I Am” (Yahweh). God's disclosure of a personal name reassures Moses that God will be with Moses as he accepts a calling to serve and lead in union with God.

Marker for our lives: The Flame

God wants to speak to us. To hear God, we need to open our hearts and minds.
Read Exodus 3:1-15 together.

What does it say?

- What seem to be the most important words in this text?
- There are plenty of unusual happenings in this passage. What questions do you have about the story?
- If you’ve seen Cecil B. DeMille’s movie “The Ten Commandments,” how does the actual passage differ from how the movie depicts this famous scene?

What does it mean?

- **Re-read Exodus 3:11-15.** Why do you think Moses posed all these questions of Yahweh? What does it mean for God to take the name “I Am”?
- In verse 2, the flame is symbolic of God’s holy presence. What other examples of fire can you think of in Scripture (e.g. Ex. 13:21, I Kings 18:38, Acts 2:3)? Do you think fire is always symbolic of God’s holy presence?
- In the Gospel of John, Jesus made a number of “I Am” statements (e.g. John 4:26, 6:35, 8:12, 8:58, 10:7, 10:14). How might this passage relate to those statements by Jesus?

Show DVD: Week Two: A Flame to Reveal

What does it mean to me?

- God, on this one occasion, spoke to Moses through a flame. How does God speak to you?
- Imagine you were in Moses’ shoes—what would your dialogue have been like?
- In this passage God spoke to Moses and revealed a special mission for Moses; God promised to be with Moses throughout the mission. What might be a mission that God is unfolding in your life, or what would you like it to be?
What's Happening in the Next Week?

- If you are keeping a journal, take note this week of Scripture passages in which God has spoken to you.
- What action could you take this week to develop a more intimate relationship with God?
- Think about the “holy ground” on which you live. God is with you there. Pray for your neighborhoods and/or community and what God is doing there.

Looking Ahead

Next Week’s Passage: Exodus 7:8-25

Prayer Time

“I Am,” thank you for time to reflect on this remarkable story. Thank you for calling Moses and revealing yourself to him. Thank you for calling us and revealing yourself to us in Jesus Christ—a light to our path, a flame, your Word. Thank you for the promise of your presence. Help us to be more aware of your presence, and how you are asking us to follow, obey, and enjoy you. In your Son’s precious name, amen.

Take time to pray for one another and for your community.
Week Three:
A Staff to Invite
Opening Prayer

Lord God, as we join together, we come with gratitude. Lord, would you open our ears and eyes, and our minds and hearts to your word? Meet each of us in this room at our unique points of need. In Christ’s name, amen.

What’s Happening in the Small Group?

- Get to know each other a little better. Have everyone write down one fact about themselves that no one else in the group knows about them. Put these into a bowl or hat and draw one at a time and have the group guess the author.

- OR, In the past, when you’ve had important decisions to make, what has been your process for making your final decision?

What’s Happening in the Word?

Exodus 1-2 shows us how God can be at work in what seems to be a Godless time. And the river we see as a marker of God’s unseen hand reminding us that God works in our lives before we’re aware of it. In chapter 3, we observed God speaking to Moses from the flame, which is a marker of God’s yearning to be known and speak to us. Exodus 3-7 recounts the first steps of Moses’ leadership and how that was reinforced, rebuffed, and bolstered.

Judgment, power, and salvation are revealed through a series of plagues in chapters 7-11. The interaction between Moses and Pharaoh intensifies as one grows in faith and the other allows his heart to be hardened.

This week’s text shows the initial encounter between Moses and Pharaoh. Notice the contrast between the two characters—especially in whom they put their trust. Notice, too, how difficult it is for people to change. We will see the characters are invited to respond to God through the marker of a staff.

Marker for our lives: The Staff

We are invited to trust God.
Read Exodus 7:8 - 25 together.

What does it say?

- Compare Moses and Pharaoh: What were key similarities and key contrasts?
- Put yourself in Pharaoh's shoes. How would you be experiencing this series of events? What would you learn about the Israelites' God?

What does it mean?

- Re-read Exodus 7:8-9. Why do you think Pharaoh demanded a miracle?
- Why did Pharaoh doubt that Moses and Aaron represented God?
- What is revealed about how Pharaoh's heart became hardened?

Show DVD: Week Three: A Staff to Invite

What does it mean to me?

- What does it mean to have a “hard heart”?
- The staff is a marker inviting us to make a decision for God. What things, places, and/or people have helped you “decide” about God?
- How have you grappled with your faith (i.e., mind/heart decisions)?

What’s Happening in the Next Week?

- Continue to pray for your neighborhood as well as other groups in your area. Begin to discuss the opportunities for connecting with other groups and reaching out to the community following Easter by participating in *Love Your Neighbor(hood)* (see pg. 58). If not already designated, appoint someone in the group who will help facilitate outreach for your group.
Looking Ahead

Next Week’s Passage: Exodus 12:1-15

Plan and talk about the upcoming Seder meal (to take place, ideally, during your sixth meeting during Holy Week). Identify a date, time and location. You might want to choose one or two members to make sure the preparations are made and responsibilities are divvied up. See page 34.

Prayer Time

Father in Heaven, your power and connection to Moses and Aaron were great. Somehow, Pharaoh didn’t “get it.” Help us to “get it.” Help us to have hearts that, like a deer panting for water, seek after you. Guide us and protect us in this next week. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Take time to pray for one another and for your community.
Week Four: 
A Lamb to Rescue
Exodus 12:1-13

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you that we can come together again. We are continually in awe of how you pursue each one of us. Help us in this time to set aside the cares of our day and to sit at your feet to receive your great, great love. Bless our time together. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What’s Happening in the Small Group?

- What are some of the traditional celebrations your family observes? Describe one of them.

- OR, We have looked at the river, the flame, and the staff as markers in Exodus. Describe how any one of these has stood out to you so far.

What’s Happening in the Word?

So far, we’ve reflected on three markers given to us in the Exodus story. The river points to the awareness of God’s unseen hand in our lives. The flame represents God’s yearning to be disclosed to us. And the staff invites us into partnership responding to God’s love.

In Exodus 12, the marker of a lamb brings us to the culmination of the ten plagues. We read about the Passover: The festival of unleavened bread and the Passover are institutionalized as a memorial for generations that follow. As biblical scholar Peter Enns comments, “The purpose of these celebrations is clearly for the benefit of those generations who did not participate in the Exodus itself.”

The Haggadah is a foundational celebration for both Jews and Christians. It commemorates the release of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. But it also has profound meaning for us since it commemorates our release from slavery to sin because of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Definition of Terms

Haggadah (“telling”)—The Hebrew religious text explaining the order for a Passover Seder.
Passover—The Jewish springtime holy day commemorating the freedom of the ancient Israelites from bondage as slaves in Egypt. The Hebrew people were given instructions to mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb. This mark signaled the Lord God to “Passover” their homes when firstborn Egyptians were killed as a sign to Pharaoh.

Seder—The commemorative meal, which Hebrew families put on each year near the Passover.

Feast of Unleavened Bread—The festival surrounding Passover commemorating when Pharaoh finally let the Israelites go free; when they left, it was in such a hurry, they did not have time for their bread to rise. It was unleavened (Matzo).

Marker for our lives: The Lamb

We are rescued by the blood of the lamb.

Read Exodus 12:1-13 together.

What does it say?

- What strikes you about the steps ordered for the Israelites to follow?
- What did it finally take to convince Pharaoh into letting God’s people go?

What does it mean?

- Re-read Exodus 12:13. Why did God require blood as a sign for the Passover?
- Discuss how John the Baptist used this Exodus text in John 1:29.

Show DVD: Week Four: A Lamb to Rescue

What does it mean to me?

- Judgment is present in this passage. How would you define the judgment of God?
- Deliverance is present in this passage. How would you describe deliverance?
The exodus is a story, amongst many other things, about God redeeming and calling out a community. What does this story imply for us?

What’s Happening in the Next Week?

- We just studied the Passover. In the next couple of weeks we encourage your group to share together a Christ-centered Seder meal. In this meal, you will experience an adapted traditional Passover feast, which is still celebrated in many Jewish homes. We hope your group will enjoy the fellowship of a meal together and the experience of the rich prophetic imagery that is a part of the Seder. If you have not done so already, your group should decide together whether and how you would like to participate in this experience.

You will likely want to enjoy the Seder meal during Holy Week (April 17-24) which coincides with Week Six: A Trumpet to Send. Some groups will choose to do both the Seder meal and the lesson in the same evening. Others will choose to meet twice during Holy Week to share the Seder meal on a separate evening than the study. Still others will share the Seder meal during Holy Week but will choose to defer the study until the following week. We encourage you to choose the best option for your group schedule.

- Also, remember the Maundy Thursday Communion service at UPC on April 21; your group is encouraged to attend together. There you will have the opportunity to experience Communion as a group. The Sanctuary was full last year, and some reported it was the highlight of their church year.

Looking Ahead

Next Week’s Passage: Exodus 16:1-8

Prayer Time

Father God, we are undeserving of your amazing love. You gave your one and only son for us. Our words are inadequate in telling you how deeply we thank you for giving your life for us as the lamb of God. Holy Spirit, continually soften our hearts and guide us into the truth of God’s love. Help us to become more and more aware of our great deliverance in Christ Jesus, amen.

Take time to pray for one another and for your community.
Week Five:
A Bread to Build
Exodus 16:1-18

Opening Prayer

Lord God, thank you for bringing us together again. You said wherever two or more are gathered in your name, that you will be there. Here we are and we gather in your name. Help us clear out the busyness of our days and to sense your presence in this time. Help us listen to your word. Open our hearts and souls. Build us up, Lord. We pray this in the name of Jesus, amen.

What’s Happening in the Small Group?

- Over the past few weeks we’ve been encouraged to have a more intimate relationship with God. We’ve been prompted to listen to God. We’ve been challenged to sense God’s calling. Take a few moments to share with your group a revelation you’ve experienced, some of the changes you’ve made (or tried to make), and what you have discovered during this process.

What’s Happening in the Word?

After the dramatic departure from Egypt (Ch. 12) and the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea (Ch. 14), and an emotive song of praise to Yahweh (Ch. 15), the Israelites go into the desert and soon run out of fresh water. God works another miracle and provides fresh water (Ch. 15). Next, the people grumble because of their lack of food. God hears their grumbling and meets their needs, but there’s much more to this story than complaining, bread, and birds.

Marker for our lives: The Bread

God builds us up to send us out.

Read Exodus 16:1-18 together.

What does it say?

- What happened in the text just before the provision of bread and quail?

- If convenient, look at an atlas and/or a biblical map and see if you can find the wilderness in which this account is set.
How might the number of days between the crossing of the Red Sea and this experience with manna and quail have affected the Israelite’s response? (Ch. 16:1)

What were the rules God set out for harvesting the manna?

What does it mean?

What might it mean that God “tested” the Israelites in verse 4?

Jesus said, “I am the Bread of Life” (John 6:32-59). Discuss how these words might relate to the provision of the bread as we see it in Exodus.

The bread and quail were important in building up the Israelites. Why did God use the provision of food to “test” the Israelites?

Show DVD: Week Five: A Bread to Build

What does it mean to me?

In this passage, George and Renée saw the provision of bread as an important marker about God building us up. How are you “built up” (Col. 2:7) in your faith?

From Exodus, the desert became symbolic of many experiences in life. Have you ever had a desert experience? How did you respond to it?

We are built up and gathered together in order to be sent out—to be the love of God in the world. How has this process been tangible in your life?

What’s Happening in the Next Week?

One antidote for grumbling and complaining is to foster gratitude. If you’ve been keeping a journal, take time to express gratitude for the people and experiences or things in your life that are markers of God’s sustaining work.

Next time you read the Bible, think of it as bread for you—God’s word to you.

Next time you eat a meal, think of it as God’s provision to build you up in order to send you out.
Looking Ahead

The next session is our last study in Exodus. The following week we hope you'll enjoy a celebration on the heels of Easter. This might be a good time to discuss the plans for your group moving forward. Will you continue meeting beyond this season? What will that look like?

Also, check in on the plans for your area to join other small groups in our Love Your Neighbor(hood) outreach effort following Easter (see pg. 58).

Finally, we encourage your group to come to the Maundy Thursday service at UPC on April 21 at 7:30 pm. Together we will share Communion in small groups and with the wider church community.

Next Week’s Passage: Exodus 19:1-25

Prayer Time

Lord, thank you for the word tonight. Thank you for being our provider. Thank you for building us up. Thank you for sending us out to do your will. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Take time to pray for one another and for your community.
Special Activity:
Seder Meal
Seder

We invite your Lenten small group to host your own Christian Seder. You may consider doing this during Holy Week and moving your Week Six session to the week after Easter. The Seder is a richly hospitable event. When making plans for the Seder, it is important to understand the full extent of this tradition. The Seder ritual and meal typically last three to four hours making this holiday feast a memorable occasion (although your group can modify it to shorten the celebration).

The Seder ritual has very specific elements including table settings, a Seder plate and specific foods that are shared along with the spoken readings. The details for what you will need for the Seder ritual are outlined on the following pages.

The Seder meal is a full meal shared by the guests just over half way through the Seder ritual. The Seder meal is a *literal* feast. Your group may want to handle the meal potluck style. Traditionally, lamb is served but chicken, fish or other options are great. We are confident you will be blessed as your group fully engages in this festive meal!

In the pages that follow you will find a *Haggadah* (which means “the telling”). A *Haggadah* is a guide to celebrating Seder and will walk you and your group through the meal and the various spoken parts. The following is specifically a Christian *Haggadah*, which builds upon all the traditional elements of the Passover Seder and also calls attention to Jesus the Messiah.

Seder Preparation

*The following is a guide to help your group prepare for the Seder meal.*

Ritual Table

The Seder meal is a festive time. The table may be decorated with symbols such as a lamb, bricks, unleavened bread, cup, cross, or representations of the plagues. Candles and matches should be on the table, but should not be lit until indicated at the beginning of the Seder.

Include:

- Passover Haggadah for each person (make sure to bring Lent Study Guides)
- Goblet for wine or grape juice at each place
- Side plate, silverware and napkin at each place
- Candles, matches on the table
The ritual foods available for each person

- One hard-boiled egg
- Salt water (in small bowls around the table)
- Some bitter herbs (horseradish dyed red)
- Some greens (parsley)
- Some haroses (see next page for recipe)

Ritual Materials—available at the head of the table for the leader

- Crumbs, feather, an ashtray and matches
- A pitcher filled with wine or grape juice
- Large bowl, small pitcher of water, towel for the ritual washing
- Matzah plate with three matzahs hidden in the folds of a folded napkin
- An extra napkin and a pillow (for hiding the Afikoman)
- A ritual Seder plate with the following:
  - a hard-boiled egg
  - a shankbone
  - a small cup of saltwater
  - some bitter herbs (prepared horseradish dyed red)
  - some greens (parsley)
  - some haroses (see next page for recipe)

The Meal

The Seder meal is to be simple since it represents a meal eaten in a hurry as the Israelites were preparing to leave Egypt. In modern times, chicken is usually used rather than lamb because of availability. The menu might include hard-boiled eggs as an appetizer (dipped in salt water symbolizing the bitter, tearful life of bondage), soup, chicken, rice or noodles, peas or other vegetable, simple salad and matzah. No dessert is served though extra haroses on matzah makes a nice final course.
Haroses

This is a basic recipe and can be increased according to the number of participants in the Seder.

1 apple, cored and finely chopped (may leave skin on)
¼ cup finely chopped walnuts, almonds or pecans
1 tsp. honey
1 tsp. cinnamon
2 tbsp. grape juice or cooking wine
Grated rind of ½ of a lemon

Mix all ingredients. Add enough grape juice or wine to blend the mixture (should be somewhat like paste). Approximate yield: 1 tablespoon serving for 8 persons.

Some Words to Remember

Haggadah—Haggadah means “narration” and is the name given to the text which is used to retell the Exodus story during the Seder meal.

Kiddush or Blessing—Kiddush is the word for consecration. The Seder begins with the traditional blessing using wine which is a symbol of the joy which is ours in salvation (Ps. 104:15).

Karpas or Green Herb—This consists of parsley which each person will dip in salt water and eat. It symbolizes the marking of each house with lamb's blood as well as the fact that God brought the people across the Red Sea (salt water) and made them a new nation (green herb).

Betzah or Hard-Boiled Egg—The egg was used by the Rabbis to symbolize the “voluntary peace offering” made on the second day of Passover. For us it symbolizes Christ who voluntarily offered himself, making peace for us with God. It may also represent the hardness of Pharoah's heart and may be dipped in salt water symbolizing the tears of the Hebrew slaves. It can be eaten at the beginning of the actual meal while the rest of the food is being served.

Shankbone—The shankbone (or sometimes a joint bone from whatever is being served for the meal) is placed on the Seder plate as a symbol of the Passover lamb. In modern times Jews have usually not followed the tradition of preparing and eating an entire lamb for the Passover meal.

Maggid or Questions—The four questions which are traditionally asked by the youngest at the meal during the retelling of the “Story of Deliverance” are not the only questions which might be asked by the children during the meal. What should be stressed is the fact that God has accomplished our redemption and has set us free. Therefore we celebrate this special meal.
Haroses (sometimes seen as Charoses)—This is a mixture of coarsely chopped fruit, nuts and spices which is meant to resemble in color and texture the rough mortar that the Israelites made in Egypt.

Maror or Bitter Herbs—Prepared horseradish which is dyed red with food color is usually used to represent the slavery and misery of Egypt and the bitter cup which our Lord drank on our behalf.

Matzah or Unleavened Bread—The unleavened bread is made out of pure flour and water without yeast or ferment. Yeast symbolizes what sin does to a life. All yeast (even the last crumb) is removed from the house at the time of Passover.

A napkin is folded into quarters and the three loaves of unleavened bread (matzahs) are placed into the folds. A separate napkin is also placed on the table to receive half of the middle matzah during the Seder. This broken piece is symbolic of Christ’s body which is broken for us. It is wrapped in a napkin and hidden during the opening part of the Seder to dramatize Jesus’ burial.

Afikoman—The word means dessert and is the last thing which is eaten at the Seder meal. It consists of the matzah which was hidden at the beginning of the meal. When the broken and wrapped bread was put under the pillow (or hidden somewhere in the house), it symbolized the burial of Jesus in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60). At the end of the meal it is removed from under the pillow (or found) symbolizing the removal of the stone from the tomb. Then the matzah is unwrapped symbolizing the resurrection. Every member of the family takes a piece and eats signifying our feeding on the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

A Passover Haggadah

(From A Passover Haggadah for Christians, written by Rev. Dr. Steve Hayner)

The Shema

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.
Shema Yisrael Adonai elohenu Adonai echad.

Call to Observe the Seder

Leader: We are in a land which is not our own. Even as the Israelites were Pharoah’s slaves in Egypt, we have found ourselves in bondage to sin. Even as the Israelites called to the Lord to deliver them, we have called to the Lord to deliver us. He has heard our cry! He has saved us!

Throughout all ages, Jews have symbolically reenacted their salvation from Egypt through the eating of the Seder meal. Jesus Christ on the night before his death celebrated the Seder with his disciples.
All: As Christians, the Seder has meaning for us, not only because it helps us to understand the original context of the first Lord's Supper, but because it symbolically reflects so much of our experience of God's grace.

Leader: During the celebration tonight we will remember that the original Passover meal was prepared in haste in Egypt as the people waited expectantly to follow God out to the wilderness. This reminds us that we must at every moment be waiting and watching to follow Christ into our own world.

All: We will eat bitter herbs which reminded the Jews of the bitterness of their bondage and which will remind us of how bitter has been our own bondage to sin. And we will break bread and drink the cup which reminded the Jews of God's provision and salvation in their affliction and reminds us of God's provision of Christ whose broken body and shed blood has set us free.

The Search for Leaven

Leader: We are commanded to remove all leaven from our houses. As it is written: “For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel.” (Exodus 12:15)

Since leaven or yeast in scripture often symbolizes the sin in our lives, this is the time to cleanse our hearts from sin in order that we may be worthy partakers of the Lord's feast. Let us be as careful in the cleansing of our own hearts as we are in the cleansing of our houses of leaven during this festival.

(Crumbs on the tables are dusted into an ashtray or wooden spoon with a feather.)

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has commanded us concerning the removal of leaven. Let us silently confess our sins to the Lord, and be assured that the Lord will forgive them just as thoroughly as if they were burned with this leaven.

All: (Pray silently)

Leader: (Lights feather and crumbs on fire and destroys them.)

Lighting the Candles

Leader: According to an ancient Jewish custom, it is the task of the mother to light the festival candles in every service which takes place in the Jewish home. It was the woman in the garden of Eden who first put out the light of God in the heart of all people, but it was also a woman through whom God brought His light back into the world. Because of Mary's obedience, we too can praise God in the words of Simeon:
All: “For my eyes have seen your salvation,
Which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
A Light for revelation to the Gentiles
And for glory to your people Israel.” (Luke 2:30-32)

Woman: *(Lights the candles.)* Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has set us apart by your commandments and commanded us to kindle the festival lights. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has given us your son, Jesus, in whom is the light of life. We thank you that the light of the Messiah has come into the world and into our lives.

All: Help us to let the light of Christ so shine through us that our world might be set aglow and that everyone everywhere might give praise to you, O Lord. Amen!

**The Blessing of the Feast**

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has given us Sabbaths for rest and anniversaries for rejoicing; festivals and seasons for gladness; and has commanded us through Moses to keep this feast-day of Passover, the celebration of our freedom through your love. And Moses said to the people:

All: “Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand.” “Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.” (Exodus 13:3, 12:7)

Leader: That day in Egypt was the day when the Lord God passed over all the houses which were marked with the blood of an unblemished lamb. May the Lord be praised.

All: “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the festival.” (I Corinthians 5:7, 8)

Leader: *(Pour the first cup of wine, the CUP OF THANKSGIVING, for each person from a common bowl or pitcher.)* Four times during the Passover meal the wine is passed. The act of distributing the wine from a common bowl to all present is a symbol of our unity.

“When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And Jesus said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.’ After taking the cup he gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’” (Luke 22:14-18)

Leader: *Raise the cup and say:* Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.
All:  *(Drink the CUP OF THANKSGIVING)*.

The Washing

Leader: *(Pour a little water into a bowl and wash hands. Then dry hands on a small towel.)* It is customary at this point in the feast that the leader wash his hands symbolizing the interior cleansing necessary for those partaking in the meal. Rather than washing his own hands, Jesus “. . . got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.” *(John 13:4, 5)*

All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has cleansed us by your Word, and has come among us as one who serves. Grant that we might learn to truly serve one another.

The Green Herb

Leader: *Take some green herb, dip it in salt water and say: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.*

All: *(Take some of the green herb and dip it in salt water and eat.)* By eating this green herb we recall the marking of each house with blood that the angel of death might see the blood and pass over.

The Breaking of the Middle Matzah

Leader: *(Take the plate on which the three matzahs are wrapped in a napkin. Uncover the upper piece and show it to the others at the table.)* Unleavened bread was prescribed for the eight days of the Passover because during the first Passover and the flight from Egypt there was no time to make leavened bread. Behold! This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat.

All: Let all who are in want come and celebrate the Passover with us. May it be God’s will to redeem us from all evil and from all servitude.

*(At this point a door may be opened as a symbol of hospitality.)*

Leader: *Remove the middle matzah and say: There are several traditional interpretations of the meaning of the three matzahs, but one of the most common is that the upper one stands for God, the bottom one for the people and the middle one for the priest-mediator between God and the people. “There is one God, and there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human.” (I Timothy 2:5)*
Even as this bread is broken (*break the matzah in half*) Jesus, our Passover lamb was broken for us. Even as this bread is wrapped in a cloth (wrap half of the matzah in a separate cloth and put the other half back on the matzah plate), so was he wrapped in linen cloth for burial. Even as this wrapped matzah is hidden from our sight, so was his body hidden in the tomb and protected by the watchful eye of the Father so that it could not be stolen.

(*At this point the wrapped piece of matzah is either placed aside under a pillow for use later or, if children are present, it may be hidden and a little reward offered to the children for its discovery later.*)

All: “How great is your goodness which you have hidden for those who fear you.” (Psalm 31:19)

**The Story of Deliverance**

Leader: God has commanded us that the story of the Passover should be retold for our instruction and encouragement. Exodus 12:26 says, that when “. . . your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ then tell them, “It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when the Lord struck down the Egyptians.’”

Had not the Holy One, blessed be he, brought forth our fathers from Egypt, we, our children and our children’s children would have remained Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt. Therefore, each of us should respond to the story as if we ourselves had been brought out of Egypt.

The youngest person present at the Seder asks the four traditional questions. At the Last Supper this was probably the apostle John.

(*Pour the second cup, the CUP OF PROMISE. Ask the youngest one present to ask the questions.*)

The Youngest: Why is this night different from all other nights?

- On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread. Why on this night do we eat only unleavened bread?
- On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs. Why on this night do we eat especially bitter herbs?
- On all other nights we do not dip herbs in anything. Why on this night do we dip them in salt water and haroses?
- On all other nights we eat without special festivities. Why on this night do we hold this Passover service?

All: It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.
Consecutively: *(Each one at the table in turn reads a paragraph.)*

In the beginning our ancestors were worshippers of strange gods; but now the Almighty has brought us into his service. As it is said: “And Joshua said to all the people, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, “Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and gave him many descendants.’”” (Joshua 24:2, 3)

Blessed be he who always keeps his promises to Israel. Blessed be he! For God told Abraham our father, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and that they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.” (Genesis 15:13b)

All: *(Raise the second cup, the CUP OF PROMISE.)* And it is the promise which has been the encouragement for our ancestors and for ourselves; for it was not only the Egyptians who rose up against us, but in every generation some have risen against us to destroy us. But the Lord, blessed be he, delivers us from their hands. *(Put cup down.)*

Consecutively:

And Jacob went down into Egypt and sojourned there with his family. Joseph and his brothers said to Pharoah, “We have come to live here awhile because the famine is severe in Canaan and your servants’ flocks have no pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen.” (Genesis 47:4)

Few in number when they went, they soon became a great nation. As it says, “The Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them.” (Exodus 1:7)

Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came into power in Egypt. “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave our country.” (Exodus 1:8-10)

“So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharoah. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.” (Exodus 1:11-14)

“The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.” (Exodus 2:23-24)
Sing: “Let My People Go!”

When Israel was in Egypt's land, let my people go.  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand, let my people go.

No more shall they in bondage toil, let my people go.  
Let them come out with Egypt's soil, let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land. Tell old Pharoah to let my people go.

The Lord told Moses what to do, let my people go.  
To lead the Hebrew children through, let my people go.

O let us all from bondage flee, let my people go.  
And let us all in Christ be free, let my people go.

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land. Tell old Pharoah to let my people go!

Consecutively:

“And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and miraculous signs and wonders.” (Deuteronomy 26:8) As it is written, “I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, BLOOD and FIRE and BILLOWS OF SMOKE.” (Joel 2:30)

(As the leader names each of the plagues, each person jerks a drop of wine with his little finger from his goblet onto his plate.)

Leader: BLOOD; FROGS; LICE; FLIES; BLIGHT; BOILS; HAIL; LOCUSTS; DARKNESS; SLAYINGS OF THE FIRSTBORN.

All: Each drop of wine which we spill is a hope that God will cast out every plague that threatens others and every plague of our own hearts.

Leader: For the plagues “...of our own sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.” (Galatians 5:19-21)

For the Lord our God has redeemed us from the plagues!

All: Who is like you, O God, among the mighty?  
Who is like you, glorious in holiness,  
Awesome in praise, working wonders?  
The Lord shall reign forever and ever.


All: *(Participate in the following reading:)*

**It Would Have Been Enough**

All: How many are the good deeds the Eternal has done for us!

Leader: Had God brought us out of Egypt, and had not executed judgment upon the Egyptians,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God executed judgment upon the Egyptians, and not upon their gods,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God executed judgment upon their gods, and had not slain their firstborn,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God slain their firstborn, and had not given us their wealth,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God given us their wealth, and had not divided the sea for us,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God divided the sea for us, and had not permitted us to cross to dry land,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God permitted us to cross on dry land, and had not drowned our oppressors,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God drowned our oppressors, and had not provided for us in the wilderness forty years,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God provided for us in the wilderness forty years, and had not fed us with manna,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God fed us with manna, and had not ordained the Sabbath,

All: It would have been enough for us.
Leader: Had God ordained the Sabbath, and had not brought us to Mount Sinai,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God brought us to Mount Sinai, and had not given us the Torah,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God given us the Torah, and had not led us into the land of Israel,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: Had God not brought us into the land of Israel, and had not built for us the Temple,

All: It would have been enough for us.

Leader: How much more then are we to be grateful for the manifold favors the Eternal has bestowed upon us?

**Consecutively:**
- God brought us out of Egypt.
- God executed judgment upon the Egyptians and upon their gods,
- God slew their firstborn,
- God gave us their wealth,
- God divided the sea for us,
- God permitted us to cross on dry land,
- God provided for us in the wilderness forty years,
- God fed us with manna,
- God ordained the Sabbath,
- God brought us to Mount Sinai,
- God gave us the Torah,
- God led us into the land of Israel,
- God built for us the Temple to make atonement for our sins.

Leader: Let us make clear the meaning of the symbols which are part of this Passover meal. This was the high point of the celebration for the Jews of old; it is likewise a high point for us, the new Israelites, for the lamb is full of prophetic significance.

It must be an unblemished, male lamb. The lamb was brought into the home where it lived among the children for four days. Just when the children had come to love the lamb and when it had almost become a part of the family, it was taken and slaughtered. It was roasted
on a cross-like spit, one branch penetrating its length and the other separating the front feet. No bone of it could be broken. The blood was taken and put on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses and all the firstborn knew that they were alive only because of the blood of the lamb.

(Leader lifts the shank bone.)

All: What is the meaning of the Passover sacrifice?

Leader: Our ancestors ate the Passover lamb because God passed over their houses in Egypt. As it is written: “It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.” (Exodus 12:27)

All: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (Revelation 5:12, 13)

Leader: (Uncovers the upper piece of matzah and holds it up.)

All: What is the meaning of the unleavened bread?

Leader: Matzah reminds us that the dough of our ancestors had not had time to rise before God revealed himself to them and redeemed them.

Leaven is a product of fermentation and is a symbol of sin or corruption. As it is written: “Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without years—as you really are.

All: For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.” (I Corinthians 5:6-8)

(Leader lifts up the bitter herb.)

All: What is the meaning of the bitter herb?

Leader: We eat the bitter herb to recall that the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors. As it is written: “They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.” (Exodus 1:14)

But the Lord God brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Therefore, it is our duty to regard ourselves as though we personally had come out of Egypt. As it is written: “On that day tell your son or daughter, ‘I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’” (Exodus 13:8)
All: It was not only our ancestors whom God freed from slavery. Along with them, he freed us. Therefore, it is our duty to thank, praise, laud, glorify, extol, bless, exalt, and adore him who did all of these miracles for our ancestors and for us. God has brought us from slavery to freedom, from darkness to a great light, and from subjection to redemption.

Leader: Let us then recite before him a new song.

Consecutively:
“Give thanks to the Lord; call on his name;
Make known among the nations what God has done.
Tell of all his wonderful acts.
Glory in his holy name.
Remember the wonders God has done.
He sent darkness and made the land dark.
He turned their waters into blood.
Their land teemed with frogs and swarms of lice.
He turned their rain into hail.
He spoke, and grasshoppers came; locusts without number.
He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold, and from among their tribes no one faltered.
He spread out a cloud as a covering, and a fire to give them light at night.
He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led them through the depths as through a desert.
He saved them from the hand of the foe; from the hand of the enemy he redeemed them.
He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy!” (from Psalms 105-106)

All: PRAISE THE LORD!

Leader: Raise the cup and say: With this cup we recall the promise of deliverance. As it is written: “I will free you from being slaves to them and will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.” (Exodus 6:6, 7)

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

All: (Drink the second cup, the CUP OF PROMISE.)
The Solemn Blessing of the Food

Leader: *Break pieces from the upper matzah and the matzah half and give to all present and say:* Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has set us apart by your commandments and has commanded us to eat matzah.

All: *(Eat the matzah.)*

Leader: *Leader places a piece of bitter herb and some haroses between two pieces of matzah and says:* Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has set us apart by your commandments and has commanded us to eat the bitter herb.

All: *(Place a piece of bitter herb and some haroses between two pieces of matzah and eat.)*

Leader: For the householder during the Passover meal to dip a piece of matzah in haroses and give it to one of the guests was a customary token of affection. While he was at the table with his disciples, Jesus took a piece of matzah and, dipping it in the dish, gave it to Judas, perhaps as a last loving appeal. But as soon as Judas had taken the piece, he went out to betray Jesus. and Jesus said, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” (John 13:21-30)

The Seder Meal

*(The meal is now served and eaten by all. It is a simple meal and should be eaten with reflection. If you wish, this may be a good time for different ones to express something of the slavery which they have personally experienced and the means by which God has set them free.)*

The Afikoman

*(At the conclusion of the meal, the wrapped matzah which has been hidden under the pillow is removed or, if it has been hidden from the children, they may now search for it. When the children find it they may ask for a ransom. This is known as the Afikoman which is the only “dessert” eaten with the Passover meal.)*

Leader: Now the matzah which has been broken must be restored before the meal can continue. In many Jewish families the children hunt for the missing piece and, when it is found, they require that the father of the household pay a “ransom” to redeem the piece. The price had to be paid. The matzah symbolizes Christ’s body which was broken and laid away in the tomb. At the end of the Last Supper, Jesus took the hidden piece of matzah and symbolically showed his disciples that even as he must be broken, he would also be restored to wholeness! And then as Jesus took the restored matzah symbolizing his resurrected life, he broke it and gave it to his disciples symbolizing their participation in his life.
Unwrap the Afikoman, raise it up, and say: “Is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of one loaf.” (I Corinthians 10:16-17)

Christ took the bread, blessed it, and broke it and gave it to them saying, “This is my body, given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19) Let us bless the Lord.

All: May the name of the Lord be blessed both now and evermore.

Leader: (Break Afikoman and give a piece to all present.)

All: (Eat a piece of the Afikoman.)

Blessing After the Meal

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who feeds the entire world with your goodness, with grace, with loving kindness, and with mercy. God gives bread to all flesh for his loving kindness endures forever. And in his great goodness God has never failed us. You are the God who feeds and sustains all, and does good to all, and provides food for all creatures that you have created. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who gives food to all.

All: O God, our Father, sustain and protect us and grant us strength to bear our burdens. Let us not, O God, become dependent upon people, but let us rather depend upon your hand, which is ever open and gracious so that we may never be put to shame. Amen.

The Cup of Redemption

Leader: (Pour the third cup, the CUP OF REDEMPTION.) “In the same way, after the supper, Jesus took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” “Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.’ Every time we drink this cup, we are proclaiming Jesus’ death until he comes.” (Luke 22:20 and I Corinthians 11:25-26)

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

All: (Drink the third cup, the CUP OF REDEMPTION.)

Leader: Tonight is a night of watching because the Lord kept a watch over the Israelites to bring them out of the land of Egypt. As it is written: “Because the Lord kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the Lord for the generations to come.” (Exodus 12:42)
All: The Messiah came to deliver us from our own Egypt. Therefore, in the midst of trials and suffering, we can still say, “I believe”. When Jesus, our Messiah, comes again, he will reign over heaven and earth and bring true peace to all people. Jesus, our Lord, is coming soon.

Leader: Just as we look forward to our Lord’s coming again, the Jews look forward at this point in the Seder meal to the coming of Elijah, the prophet whom they believe will come on Passover and herald the coming of the Messiah. It is customary that the door is opened so that Elijah can enter and some even set an extra place at the table for him including a full cup of wine called the Cup of Elijah. We as believers do not open the door because Elijah the prophet has already come. As it is written: “For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John the Baptist. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.” (Matthew 11:13, 14)

All: (At this point in the Jewish Seder, “Ani Ma’amín” which means “I Believe” would be sung.) I believe with complete faith that the Messiah will come; and although he may tarry, yet each day I will wait for his coming.

Psalm of Praise

Consecutively:

I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.

Because the Lord turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow.

Then I called on the name of the Lord: “O Lord, save me!”

The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.

The Lord protects the simple hearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.

Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.

For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling,

That I might walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

I believed, therefore I said, “I am greatly afflicted.”

And in my dismay I said, “All people are liars.”

How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

O Lord, truly I am your servant; you have freed me from my chains.

I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the Lord.
I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. 
In the courts of the house of the Lord -- in your midst, O Jerusalem.

All: PRAISE THE LORD!

The Final Blessing

Leader: (Fill the fourth cup, the CUP OF MELCHIZEDECH.) Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

All: (Drink the fourth cup.)

Leader: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26)

— the Seder now ends according to custom and law —

All: Next year in Jerusalem!
    Next year in the new Jerusalem!

Leader: “After singing a hymn, Jesus and his disciples went out.” (Matthew 26:30)

— Let us sing a hymn of praise —

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but Thou are mighty; hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of Heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more, feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar; lead me all my journey through;
Strong Deliverer, Strong Deliverer, be Thou still my strength and shield,
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell’s destruction, land me safe on Canaan’s side;
Songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever give to Thee, I will ever give to Thee.
Week Six:
A Trumpet to Send
Week Six: A Trumpet to Send

Exodus 19:1-25

Opening Prayer

Lord God, it’s hard to believe that our study in Exodus is coming to a close. Thank you for bringing us together as a group. Continue to open our hearts and minds to your word in this time. Continue to bring us together. Help us to receive your love and then to allow that love to flow freely through our lives. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray, amen.

What’s Happening in the Small Group?

- What is your neighborhood like? (e.g. How many neighbors do you have? Where do you live? Describe some of your neighbors.)

- OR, During this study, we have prayed for one another. Share what God has done in and through your lives over the course of these past weeks.

What’s Happening in the Word?

In Exodus, the Israelites were called, delivered, led and cared for. They grumbled, doubted, and believed. They experienced times of equilibrium and chaos, stability and instability, supply and scarcity, faith and doubt.

Our text this week comes on the heels of Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, providing wise counsel to Moses for governing the Israelites as they journey in the desert. After several months traveling, they arrive at Mount Sinai—the very same mountain where God was revealed to Moses in a flame. Now the nation is at the base of the mountain. God prepares them to be a people who will live together in harmony and purpose. He desires that the nation of Israel will serve as priests to mediate God’s holy presence in the world. As it was with the Israelites, so it is with us: God’s holiness can terrify us even while it also draws us by its beauty. This powerful and amazing scene is marked by the sound of a loud trumpet.

Marker for our lives: The Trumpet

A holy and awesome God calls us into intimacy and sends us out to share this love.
Read Exodus 19:1-25 together.

What does it say?

- Summarize the remarkable events of this passage.

- In Exodus 3:12 God says to Moses, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.” How is Exodus 19 a fulfillment of Exodus 3:12 for Moses?

What does it mean?

- Re-read Exodus 19:5-6. According to this passage, what were the people supposed to do?

- Every nation had its holy people, its priests. In these verses, God calls the people to become “treasured possessions, a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation.” What does God have in mind? What does this look like?

- Trumpet sounds are not unique to this passage (i.e. Ex. 19:19). Choose a few other trumpet references in Scripture and talk about their meanings (e.g. Jdg. 7:19, Isa. 27:13, Eze. 33:5, Zec. 9:14, Mt. 24:31, I Cor. 14:8, 15:52, I Thess. 4:16, Rev. 8:2, 8:7).

- The Ten Commandments are recorded in Exodus 20, just after this passage. How might chapter 19 help us understand the role of the law for the Israelites?

Show DVD: Week Six: A Trumpet to Send

What does it mean to me?

- As you think back upon our study from Exodus 1 to 19, Moses has changed and Israel has changed. How has this inspired change in you?

- This text contained phenomena that made the people fearful of God. Read Hebrews 12:18-24, and discuss the differences between a faith centered on Mount Sinai (the law) and a faith centered on Mount Zion (Jesus Christ).

- I Peter 2:9 says: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” What might living “priestly” look like for us in modern-day Seattle?
What’s Happening in the Next Week?

- Describe how you have been encouraged and how you have been challenged by or during this study.

Looking Ahead

This is the last week of our Lenten study. Next week we will celebrate. And we will recount the ways that we have been taught, challenged and encouraged by God during our time together. You may want to look ahead at next week’s session, and plan how you want to meet together.

Talk as a group about how you want to reflect, mark, and continue your time as a small group. You may continue, or you may bring closure. In either instance, be sure to plan to participate in Love Your Neighbor(hood) between Easter and Pentecost. It will give you an experience of being a “sent” community, just like the Israelites, “proclaiming the acts of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.”

You may want to read Hosea 11:1-11 and Matthew 26 in preparation for Maundy Thursday in Holy Week.

Next Week’s Easter Passage: Matthew 28:16-20

Prayer Time

God, we’ve had a great time studying your Word together. Thank you for the book of Exodus and how you revealed yourself to Moses, to the children of Israel, and now to us. Thank you for letting us get to know each other in this study. Thank you for hearing and answering our prayers. Lord God, help your word sink deeply into our hearts and souls. Help us to be changed to reflect your glory and love. We pray for greater intimacy with you and for our eyes to be enlightened to see opportunities to express your love to others. Give us the courage to follow your lead with these opportunities. Bless each and everyone in this group. It is in Jesus’ name that we pray, amen.

Take time to pray for one another and for your community. You may want to conclude by praying the Lord’s Prayer together. (Matthew 6:9-13/Luke 11:2-4)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.
Notes:
Preview of Coming Attractions

Have you ever been in a situation where, just when you thought something was coming to an end, you realized it was actually just beginning? If you have a Bible handy, open it up to the Gospel of John, chapter 20. The events leading up to John 20 are these: Jesus has been murdered, the adventure is over. Outflanked by opposition, religious leaders, and crushed by the full power of the Empire, the disciples find themselves at the end of the line. After three years of life-transforming encounters with Jesus of Nazareth, they are reduced to a humble huddle wracked by fear and uncertainty. But wait—the tomb has been discovered empty; Mary comes to the disciples with a strange story of encountering Jesus (disguised as a gardener?); confusion ensues.

Into this fear and confusion, the risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ himself, makes an appearance (vs. 19-23). He speaks directly to their condition, “Peace be with you!” Immediately Jesus shifts from relating to their condition to call them dramatically into their future: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” Then he did something a bit strange. He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” And with those words the church was formed. Just when the disciples thought it was over, their life together was re-imagined and renewed.

At the end of our Lent small group season we’ll celebrate and reflect on the markers of this experience. But wait, there’s more. And perhaps for you and your group, it is really just beginning.

As we enter into this next season—the 40 days between Easter and Pentecost—you (meaning your entire small group) are being invited, strongly encouraged, inspired, and assisted to form a community with other small groups in your neighborhood to invest together in a day of service.

*Love Your Neighbor(hood),* a day of outreach, is an opportunity to re-imagine our life together as a congregation. It represents a new way of “being UPC.”

We hope that by serving alongside a community of your “neighbors,” you will:

1. Have a new experience, serving together as a small group with other UPC small groups.
2. Make new and sustainable connections with other small groups within your neighborhood, forming the beginning of a new sense of UPC community.
3. Re-imagine congregational life—from “church” being what happens when people gather at UPC, to the church being a community sent by Jesus to love and serve their neighbors.

Groups of “orchestrators” have been working behind the scenes for months developing community partnerships and designing meaningful service opportunities. I urge you to pray about your participation, for the continued growth of your small group, and for the neighborhoods where UPC will be serving. Something new is just beginning...

Stay tuned,

Ken Kierstead
Team Lead and Senior Director, Outreach
Week Seven:
Group Celebration
Congratulations on your journey together over these past seven weeks! It’s wonderful that you set this time apart to seek God with each other.

**Opening Prayer**

*Lord, you have been with us through the season of Lent, and you continue to be with us in this new season of Easter. Be with us as we reflect on our experience together and discuss the future. Guide our time, and may it be pleasing to you and toward the glory of your Kingdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

**What’s Happening in the Small Group?**

The format for this gathering is simple:

- Enjoy a meal together, perhaps a potluck, or prepared by the members of your group who love to cook.
- Enjoy time just talking together over the meal. Over dessert:

**Show DVD: Conclusion & Send-Off**

- Have each person share what they have enjoyed and/or learned in the group. For instance, you might want to reference a particular study, exercise, or Scripture that was meaningful. Or it might be something you learned from one another. Or you could take a moment to share something you appreciate about each member of the group.

**What’s Happening in the Next Week?**

- Confirm plans for your group’s participation in *Love Your Neighbor(hood)*, occurring between Easter and Pentecost. Even if your group isn’t continuing in its current form, you are encouraged to join in this all-church expression of engagement toward our community.

**Looking Ahead**

- If you are a new group, or a new member of a group, talk about whether you want to continue past Easter.
• If you wish to continue together, make plans for your next meeting.

• If your group (or some members of it) will not be continuing, pray for each person, commissioning them toward their next endeavors.

• What did you think? Please take some time to fill out the Evaluation Forms found at the end of the study guide. Your thoughts, reflections, and input on the Lenten experience are important to us. Please submit these to your small group leader or to Sarah Campbell, Associate Director of Small Groups at UPC.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we thank you for this day that you have made. Thank you for these people whom you have gathered together for these past weeks. We pray that the various things we have shared with each other, and discussed as a community, will continue to shape us into the people you have created us to become. We pray for our church as we gather neighborhood by neighborhood, and group by group, to reach out together and exercise our faith where we live. May we know your presence as we share your love. Go with us now in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.
Evaluation Form

Lent Small Groups - How did we do?

Each year we learn from feedback given by small group members about what went well and where we can make improvements.

Please complete this survey with your group at your 7th meeting.

Facilitators—Please take notes and fill out your group’s consensus and comments online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/churchonlysmaller (facilitators only, please) by May 8.

1. Please check one:
   - We are an existing group that kept its current membership.
   - We are an existing group that welcomed new members.
   - We started a new group.

2. Did you participate in a Lent small group last year? (Yes/No)

3. What encouraged you to participate this year? (Check as many as were significant)
   - Sunday witnesses in worship
   - Announcements/promotional video in worship
   - Sermon series prior to Lent: “Turning Tables”
   - Signs in the church
   - Larson Hall sign-up stations
   - Personal invitation from someone
   - Positive experience last year
   - Other ________________________________

4. What did you find most meaningful and/or valuable about the all-church Lent small groups experience? (Please share one or two of the most common sentiments from your group.)
Please circle a rating for questions 4 and 5 on a scale of 1-5.
1 = we strongly disagree, 3 = neutral, 5 = we strongly agree, or Not Applicable to you (N/A)

5. Did your group get the assistance you needed from staff and volunteers? 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
   Please explain:

6. Did we communicate effectively? Did you know what you needed to know about events, the
   purpose of the groups, how to sign up, how to get the study guide, etc.? 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
   Please explain:

7. Did your group experience the Seder meal together from the study guide? (Yes/No)
   • If yes, what did you think?
   • If no, why did you decide to skip it?

Please rate the Lent small group experience this year on a scale of 1-5.
1 = ineffective, 3 = neutral, 5 = very effective, or N/A

8. Lent Sermon series study: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
   Why:

9. Video DVD accompanying study: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
   Why:

10. Ease of online tool for someone looking for a group: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
    Why:
11. Helpfulness of Larson signup stations when looking for a group: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

12. Variety of groups offered: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

   Why:

13. Response when you contacted smallgroups@upc.org or x522 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

   Why:

For Facilitators Only

14. Facilitator orientation: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

   Why:

15. Getting new members for your group: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

   Why:

16. Ease of using online tool for a facilitator: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

   Why:

17. Helpfulness of Larson stations setting up or changing your group: 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Any other comments you or your group would like to share: