



A Four Week Worship Series for CDC Congregations

This resource is intended for use within Central District Conference congregations. Please contact CDC Conference Minister, Doug Luginbill, for permission to use this resource beyond CDC congregations.

Meet the Creators

-Introduction and Sermon Seeds: **Joel Miller** is lead pastor with Columbus Mennonite Church and is the president elect of CDC board of directors. Joel and his wife Abbie have three daughters and seven backyard chickens.

- Children's Stories: **Anne Marie Hardy Spelman** is a member of First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio. She is a spiritual director, and homeschooler in Bluffton. She believes in the power of music and stories to help us slow down and connect in the midst of daily life. You can find her at EverySeasonSpiritualDirection.com.

-Words for Worship: **Jan Luginbill** is a member of Chicago Community Mennonite Church. She is the president of the CDC board of directors. Jan is busy in retirement as a spiritual director and with volunteer activities.

-Hymn Selections and Editing: **Doug Luginbill** is a member of First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, OH and the CDC Conference Minister. He loves gathering wisdom from across the conference. In his spare times he enjoys tending to the rich variety of berries that grow in his backyard.

Introduction and Origin Story

"Wisdom from on high is dawning."

It was August 2023 and the CDC board was gathered for our annual visioning retreat. After generating a range of ideas for the next biennial theme, displayed on multiple large post-it notes around the room, informed by our recent listening sessions with congregations, we paused for a time of worshipful re-centering. Into the silence, our Conference Minister, Doug Luginbill, sang through Voices Together 238 as the rest of us listened:

*Wisdom from on high is dawning. Even now a golden ray
shines into a world of shadows from the realms of endless day.
Hidden womb who birthed the heavens
in the womb now hides away.*

From this and the following verses of this Advent hymn, the ideas scattered about the room coalesced around a single theme large enough to hold them all within its wide embrace: “Listen! Wisdom is Calling.”

That’s one way of telling the origin story of our Wisdom theme.

Wisdom itself is intertwined with the great origin story of our scriptures. Proverbs chapter 8 celebrates Wisdom as the first of Creator’s acts. Wisdom, it declares, was there from the beginning, “rejoicing in God’s inhabited world and delighting in the human race” (Proverbs 8:31). Wisdom is displayed in the calls for justice from the Hebrew prophets and the writings of the sages. Jesus becomes the embodiment of Wisdom in his ministry. Out of resurrection life comes the call of the church to be a manifestation of God’s Wisdom, all the while remembering that we are first and foremost listeners to that which long precedes us.

Listen! Wisdom is Calling.

This worship series is an invitation to enter into the delights of Wisdom. Wisdom dawns not just from on high, and not just at the beginning of time, but all around and within us, in the air we breathe and in the soil that sustains all life. It blooms not just out of the pages of our scriptures, but from the collective wisdom of varied cultures around the world.

These four weeks of worship traverse the full arc of the biblical story: Creation, Justice, Jesus, and the Church. They draw equally from both Testaments. Congregations are encouraged to adopt what is useful, adapt to your context, and add what enhances. It is our prayer that in entering more deeply into the ways of Wisdom, we will live more fully into the Way of Jesus.

Introduction to the Children’s Stories

- Children respond to stories. Jesus used storytelling (parables) as a central tool in his teaching. We invite you to consider telling stories for children’s time these four weeks. You can use the scripts as they are or change according to your own liking and context.
- If this feels a bit outside of your comfort zone (or if it’s in your “Growth Zone,” as you’ll see in the Week 3 story), here are some tips to consider:
 - Children respond well to storytellers who are grounded and present to them. Your presence with the children in front of you might be the most important aspect of what you do up there on Sunday morning.
 - Before Sunday, get familiar with the story and read it out loud several times. Practice where to pause to let things sink in. If you want, choose a few simple gestures throughout the story to aid the telling. No need to rush the story or develop dramatic voices.
 - On Sunday morning at children’s time, take a deep breath before you begin. Silently invite the Holy Spirit to create a canopy of divine presence around you and the kids during this time. Imagine the Holy Spirit holding the story, you, and the kids together in the palm of God’s hand.

- Tune out the rest of the congregation during children’s time. Focus on your connection with the children. Make eye contact with each child as you speak.
- Imagine the posture and attitude of Jesus sharing a parable with his followers. Adopt a posture of love, quiet confidence, and acceptance. Or imagine yourself with the engaged, grounded, caring presence of Mr. Rogers.
- If things end up as pure chaos up there for a children’s time, as sometimes happens, that’s OK too! The children will still feel your presence. The important thing is that they feel part of their church family during this time.
- There are Possible Takeaways listed for each story. If some of these feel pertinent, feel free to use them. But you may also choose to let the story stand on its own. The kids are just going to enjoy the story and, when lovingly told, stories will linger in their hearts and minds in mysterious ways.
- If you enjoy this, try creating your own story for the children of your congregation in the future! Let your inner child guide you. Everyone can tell stories.

Week 1: Wisdom and Creation

Texts: [Proverbs 8:1-4,22-31](#); [Psalm 104:24-30](#); [Sirach 24:1-12](#); [Romans 8:19-27](#)

Sermon Seeds

Proverbs 8 contains something of a pre-creation story, told in the first person. It’s the voice of Wisdom, claiming her place as the first of God’s creations (v. 22). Before the explosion of light and energy we call the Big Bang, before this world we live in came to be, “I was there,” Wisdom declares. Wisdom rejoices in the material world and delights in humankind (v. 31).

This opening sermon connecting Wisdom and Creation can go any number of directions:

As an agent of creation, Wisdom is everywhere in the human and more-than-human world. What creatures and plants, what storylines of this evolutionary unfolding demonstrate Wisdom?

As a feminine character, Wisdom offers a needed counterbalance to our predominantly male images for God, in tune with the more common notion of the earth as our mother. How does heightened awareness of this all-pervasive feminine presence change our way of being?

In our highly individualized culture, where each person is encouraged to have a self-created, highly curated persona, these texts remind us that we are Wisdom-created. How does Wisdom’s delight in our unearned, unadorned, and non-monetized existence alter our sense of self-in-community?

Hymns: VT 44 *We Long to Know Her*; VT 176 *O God, Great Womb*; VT 179 *At the Dawn of Your Creation*; VT 180 *This Is God’s Wondrous World*; VT 181 *Creation Is a Song/Howe enemeohe*; 182 *I Sing the Mighty Power of God*; VT 197 *God’s Glory Fills the Heavens*; VT 376 *O Holy Spirit, Root of Life*; VT 663 *I Am That Great and Fiery Force*

Children's Story

Week 1: Wisdom and Creation

Hello! I am going to tell you a story today. This is a make-believe story, but even though it didn't actually happen, I hope it helps us understand something true.

Sorrel the squirrel hid in a nook of a great oak tree, with one perfect acorn in her arms. Her classmates had already run off. She could see them at work, digging safe spaces for the nuts and seeds they held.

But Sorrel sat still. Not ready yet. Watching.

Sorrel lives with her large squirrel community in the woods at a very special place that we humans call Camp Friedenswald.

Sorrel loved her life in the trees there. The games, the songs, the late-night stories. As a baby she had stayed in her nest, snuggled with her siblings and mother, quiet and protected. But now she was growing up. Sorrel no longer drank her mother's milk. She now ate sweet, crunchy nuts and seeds.

At school that day, her teacher had made an announcement. He said that they were ready to join in the work of the squirrels. The *Great Work* that made them who they were, the work of burying nuts and seeds so they could dig them up later and feed the community all winter long.

Sorrel felt her heart pound as her teacher spoke. This was a responsibility! She knew how to find her own food but had never thought she would help the community so soon.

Her teacher taught the three principles of burying and hiding until the students could repeat them perfectly. He explained and showed them what to do. Sorrel had thought she understood.

But now, she hid in a nook of a tree, clutching an acorn. She watched her classmates scurry about, digging and hiding. Could she really do that too? Her stomach churned with a terrible question. *What if she made a mistake?*

A kind voice made Sorrel look up.

"You have a question, don't you, young one?" It was a very old squirrel, a member of the Squirrel Council, in the tree above her.

"Yes, Councilor, I guess I do."

"You may ask, child. You may always ask for wisdom."

"I am supposed to join the *Great Work*, Councilor. It is what we do as squirrels. But ... what if I don't know how yet? What if I ... mess it up?"

"Hmmm ... yes. You *will* make mistakes, child. But haven't you heard the ancient squirrel wisdom, passed from generation to generation?"

*"Bury the nuts where you will. Bury as deep as you bury.
Remember the places that you can and dig up the nuts you will.
But do not remember every nut.
Do not retrieve every pile.
For in forgetting, we give our great gift.
We give forest, and trees, and life."*

Sorrel listened with wide eyes, but not quite understanding. The old squirrel went on.

"My great-great-great-great-great grandmother was scared, too. Legend says that *she* worried about where to bury her nuts, and worried she would forget. Well, she did forget some. She forgot an acorn long ago in the very ground below us. She forgot it ... and it sprouted and grew into a little sapling oak tree, which grew, and grew into this majestic oak in which we now stand.

"So, Sorrell, you won't remember every place you bury your nuts and seeds. But when we forget, *we plant*. Hear the wisdom of our ancestors:

*"We are the tree planters.
We are the buriers.
Squirrels of the forest,
Maintaining the land."*

Sorrel felt stronger after hearing that. She closed her front paws in a gesture of respect for her elder. "Thank you, wise Councilor," she said. And with joy in her heart, she started down the tree to bury her first nut.

The End

Possible Takeaways:

- Sorrel learned that she doesn't have to figure everything out on her own. She heard wisdom from her teacher, from her elder, and from the wisdom tradition of squirrels passed down from generation to generation.
- Did you know that you also have teachers and elders to share the wisdom of living with you? [Gesture around to the congregation.]
- You also have wisdom passed down from many generations. [Pick up a Bible to show.]
- You also have access to newer wisdom and learning. [Pick up a copy of your hymnal, or another recent important text.]

- Just like Sorrel, you are not alone in this life, and you don't have to find your way all by yourself.

Words for Worship

Call to Worship:

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling

All: Let us come together to worship
in the variety of her wonder.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling

All: The Wisdom that was created before the earth began.
The earth is filled with her creativity.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling

The whole creation waits breathless for Her.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling

All: Let us come together for worship this day, Wisdom-created,
listening for Wisdom's call.

Prayer

Holy Wisdom,

We come before you, grateful for the evidence of your presence in the created world and everything in it. You were there before the world came to be and nothing would exist without you. You continue to rejoice in the world and everything that fills it. We wait with breathless anticipation for you to reveal yourself to us. Even when we don't know how to pray, we are confident that you are calling us. Give us listening ears and open hearts. Amen

Benediction:

Now we leave this place rejoicing and delighting in humankind. May we walk this week in God's presence, with Wisdom beside us and may we find a resting place in Her.

Week 2: Wisdom and Justice

Texts: [Daniel 1](#); [Esther 1](#); [Proverbs 1:1-3](#); [Psalm 37:28-31](#); [Isaiah 11:1-9](#)

Sermon Seeds

Wisdom may have been present at creation (Week 1), but ironically, Wisdom is a late bloomer in the biblical canon. The scholarly consensus is that Wisdom literature came to prominence in the post-exilic period. At a time when Judeans were separated from their land and temple, their sages began extolling the virtues of Wisdom, a reality that has no geographic or cultic limitations. And while we don't often think of Wisdom and justice together, there is much to be gained from this pairing.

Set in Babylon but likely written under Greek rule, Daniel and his friends are remembered for their wisdom. They become insiders in a powerful empire but resist its violence peacefully - like in chapter 1 when they relinquish royal privilege of rich foods and instead fill themselves with wisdom (v. 17). In Esther chapter 1, Vashti takes a more direct form of resistance, this time to the Persian King. She disturbs an unjust peace by not complying with the king's commands, for which she is banished from the empire. Proverbs 1:3 lists "justice and equity" among the things Wisdom has to teach.

Wisdom is practical and practice-able. Wisdom is the practice we undertake to achieve just relationships. In the very long arc of our planet, there is perhaps a natural justice that occurs on the species level through the survival of the wisest. Social insects like ants and bees, trees and other plants forming mutually beneficial networks of relationships, pass on an inheritance of wisdom that has much to teach us about human justice - especially during this current era of exile and displacement, when the perennial questions of power and equity continue to press for better practices.

Hymns: VT 196 *Come and Seek the Ways of Wisdom*; VT 198 *Restore Our Faith, O Saving God*; VT 201 *Hear the Turmoil of the Nations*; VT 206 *Seek the Peace of the City*; VT 209 *We Dream of a Turning*; VT 210 *O Come, O Come, Immanuel* (esp. verses 5-7);

Children's Story

Week 2: Wisdom and Justice

Hello! I am going to tell you another make-believe story that I hope will help us understand something true. We are headed back to Camp Friedenswald to visit our squirrel friends there.

One Sunday evening, at the squirrel community's weekly gathering, Sorrel the squirrel could tell the adults were nervous about something. The meal was over, and the singing had started, when a most extraordinary thing happened.

A *chipmunk* walked into the middle of their meeting. Everything went quiet. And the tiny creature said in a high, clear voice, "Wise Tree Squirrel Council, I represent the Chipmunk Confederation of the Forest Floor. I am coming today to ask for your advice. As I'm sure you know, the acorns are disappearing. We cannot find enough. Do you know why? Do you know what we should do?"

The chief squirrel bowed in respect and said, "Thank you, brave chipmunk. I wish I knew the answer. But we don't know either. Our ancient wisdom says that in years with fewer acorns, we must save what we have, eat only what we need, and share with all. But it says nothing of when the nuts simply disappear from the land."

She continued, "I have heard the chipmunks have ancient wisdom, too. Friend Chipmunk ... do you know what we should do?"

The chipmunk looked surprised to be asked but said, "Let me think. ... well, there is an old saying: *When the old ways fail, you must try something new.*"

"*Try something new.*" The chief squirrel repeated. "That is wise. Does anyone have ideas?"

Someone gave a radical suggestion: to ask *other animals* if they knew where the acorns were.

So, the next day, the squirrels and chipmunks alike gathered their courage and went out. They asked robins and cardinals, garter snakes and goldfinches, toads and painted turtles. At last, a shy striped skunk gave them the news: A new groundhog had moved in. For some reason he had carried load after load of acorns into his new den. He must have thousands in there.

Now, they all knew that groundhogs don't even eat acorns! So, a large group of squirrels and chipmunks found the spot the skunk had described. With courage, they called into the burrow, "Hello! Friend Groundhog?"

"Yeah?" answered a big voice. "What do you want?" A huge creature emerged from underground.

A squirrel, shaking, explained why they had come and then asked, "Um, why ... why do you need so many acorns?"

"My name's Big Fur," he said. "And I like acorns. They make my house look cool. I'm a grown up now, and I need to make my way in the world. Well, now I have the most impressive house in the forest. Now I'll have friends, and ... and other groundhogs will like me."

"May we see this impressive house, Big Fur," a chipmunk asked?

"Well, yeah! Come inside, I'll show you!" the groundhog said with delight.

The squirrels and chipmunks walked in and gasped. In the very large den, each wall was covered with acorns, pressed in like tiles along the walls. Hundreds, thousands of acorns in swirling patterns.

“Wow!” They all said. It really did look cool.

Then a brave chipmunk said, “Do you know ... I wonder, perhaps you don’t ... do you know that we chipmunks and squirrels eat acorns to survive the long winter? Do you know we give them to our children, so they survive? And the ones we forget, they grow into trees and maintain the forest. This den is stunning. But ... it upsets the balance of the forest. It isn’t just.”

The groundhog looked angry, and then sad. “Well ... I guess I didn’t know that” he said. “Um, would you each like to take an acorn home?”

“Thank you, but we need far more than that.”

Then a squirrel shared an idea with Big Fur, of how to cover the walls with braided grass and reeds instead of acorns. He and the groundhog got quite excited thinking of different ways to decorate. In the end, the groundhog apologized, and gave permission for the squirrels and chipmunks to come remove the acorns from his walls to hide for the winter.

And from that day on, Big Fur the Groundhog did indeed have friends. He forged a quite remarkable friendship with those small squirrels and chipmunks. And balance was preserved in the forest.

The End

Possible Takeaways:

- The Scripture passages for today say that Wisdom is for the sake of Justice. We can seek wisdom to help create a more just world. Justice can look like balance – with everyone and all creation getting what they need.
- In our story today, the balance was threatened. It wasn’t fair for the groundhog to decorate his house with the very acorns the squirrels and chipmunks needed to survive. The squirrels and chipmunks sought wisdom from each other and other animals, and then used that wisdom to restore balance and take care of everyone.
- We want to live with wisdom not so we can have the fanciest houses or get really rich, but in order to help others have what they need, in order to help restore balance in the world.

Words for Worship

Call to Worship

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling.

All: Let us come together to worship
in our thirst for justice.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling.

All: The lion will lie down with the lamb
and a little child will lead.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling.

All: We come today proclaiming that the Lord loves justice
and the faithful will never be left alone

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling

All: Let us come together on this day, Wisdom-empowered,
listening for Wisdom's call.

Prayer

Holy Wisdom,

We are a people who seek justice and love peace. We look to you for examples of actions we might take to embody these things on earth. The powers around us seem mighty and insurmountable sometimes and we long to be as wise as Daniel and as cunning as Vashti. We pray for your Wisdom and the grace to act as though we believe you will guide us and empower us to keep moving forward in our search for justice. We dare to ask to see the day the promises of Isaiah come to fruition. Give us strength, give us courage, give us Wisdom. Amen

Benediction

As we leave this space to go into a world where all too often Wisdom seems in short supply, may we carry in our hearts the peaceful resistance of Daniel, the cunning and strength of Vashti, and the hope in our God who seeks justice above all things.

Week 3: Wisdom and Jesus

Texts: [Matthew 11:28-30](#), [7:24-27](#); [John 1](#); [Luke 2:39-52](#); [I Corinthians 1:18-31](#)

Sermon Seeds

Matthew and John's gospels both make a direct connection between Jesus and Wisdom. In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus' words about himself echo the voice of Wisdom in Sirach 24:19, "Come to me..." John begins his gospel by speaking of the creative role of the Logos, the Word, in a manner similar to Wisdom in Proverbs 8. John soon goes on to say that the Word became flesh and made its home among us (1:14).

More than just a doctrinal confession, Jesus as the embodiment, enfleshment, of Wisdom continues to fill out and focus the many ways Wisdom manifests. Jesus refines Wisdom in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry. He demonstrates Wisdom through parable-telling and parable-like actions that produce abundance from scarcity, restore the outcast into community, and disturb the unjust status quo. Jesus amplifies a Wisdom present since creation, one we already know but can't easily access.

Or, as Paul says in his words to the Corinthians, the Wisdom demonstrated on the cross registers as nothing but a stumbling block and foolishness to us. Maybe we've never known what Wisdom is. What *is* wisdom again? How does Jesus both reveal its depths and challenge our widely affirmed yet misguided notions of Wisdom?

The sermon this week could play with this dichotomy or highlight any number of ways Jesus embodies Wisdom.

Hymns: VT 200 *Darkness is not Dark to You, God*; VT 308 *How Can We Worship Caesar's Cross*; VT 23 *Hamba nathi (Come, Walk with Us)*; VT 157 *Come to Me, O Weary Traveler*; VT 536 *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*; VT 547 *How Clear Is Our Vocation*; VT 570 *When We Walk with the Lord*; VT 628 *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*; VT 643 *Come, Ye Disconsolate*; VT 679 *Woza nomthwalo wakho (Come, Bring Your Burdens to God)*; VT 735 *When We Must Bear Persistent Pain*

Children's Story

Week 3: Wisdom and Jesus

Welcome! It's so good to see each of you. Today, we're returning to our make-believe world of our squirrel friends at Camp Friedenswald. Are you ready?

"Come on, jump!"

"Yeah, it's fun! Don't be scared!"

"You can do it, Sorrel!"

Sorrel the squirrel's friends shouted encouragement. But she just stared at the leap ahead of her.

"It's too far." She thought. *"I'm going to fall."*

"I'm scared, too," her brother Landy said. "But I know I can make it. Isn't it exciting?"

And with that, he ran, leapt, and screamed "wa-hooo!" He flew over to the next tree and caught the branch, which bounced up and down with his weight. "That was incredible!" he yelled back.

The young squirrels of the woods in the land we call Camp Friedenswald were growing up. Getting bigger, stronger, faster. They had started to leap from tree branch to tree branch, as squirrels often do.

The young squirrels had seen the grownup squirrels make this leap often. But it was the biggest leap *they* had ever tried.

Sorrel noticed the feeling inside her as she looked across. She felt all squirmy ... which reminded her of a lesson at squirrel school about Zones. Her teacher had learned it from the humans at Camp Friedenswald. It goes like this:

When you're trying out activities, you might be in one of three zones. The Comfort Zone includes things that feel totally OK to you. Totally comfortable. Maybe things like walking, eating a snack, or playing a favorite game with a friend.

Another Zone is the Panic Zone. This is when you think about trying an activity and your body says, "Absolutely not." Your heart might start to race, you might feel like you're going to throw up, everything inside you is saying "This is NOT for me." This is a kind of wisdom we have in

ourselves. We don't need to do things in our Panic Zone. And when others are in their Panic Zone, we don't push them to do what is making them panic.

But in between the Comfort Zone and the Panic Zone, you have the Growth Zone. In the Growth Zone, things feel a little new and uneasy, but still safe. Maybe you're trying something new, and you feel a bit nervous, but you know it's a good idea. This is a great place to be for learning new things. Maybe playing a new game at recess, inviting a new friend to play with you, or trying a pedal bike without training wheels.

Well, clearly, this leap was in Landy's Growth Zone. A little scary, but worth a try. He knew it was safe. (Squirrels, unlike humans, can survive almost any fall safely.) For Landy, the leap was thrilling, and a good choice.

But for Sorrel ... well, for Sorrel it was different. This was what a little panic felt like.

But ... this was the problem: everyone else expected her to do it. They thought it was good for her. They said it was part of growing up.

Sorrel scooped back toward the trunk and took a moment to look inside herself. She felt her body, she took a deep breath, and asked, "Is this the right decision for me?"

In her body she felt a very firm, "No."

And so, Sorrel did a very brave thing indeed. She said, "Hey everyone, I don't want to do this leap today. I'm glad you're having fun. But it's a no for me. I'll just stay here and watch."

Some of her friends looked surprised at first, but then said, "Oh ... okay. That's fine!" And the young squirrels of the woods continued their jumping games and the forest continued to ring with their shouts of glee.

Two weeks later, Sorrel came back to that branch with her brother and a friend. She felt stronger now and had practiced more with smaller leaps. She checked in with how her body felt. Yes, this leap was in her Growth Zone now. She knew it was safe. She knew she was capable. So, she gathered her courage and with a mighty run and a jump, she soared through the air.

"Wa-hooo!!!" she shouted, laughing as she caught the branch on the other side, swinging up and down, on her way to growing up.

The End

Possible Takeaways:

- We can find wisdom from many sources – from adults we trust, from ancient and new writing, from our community, and, a very important source: from inside ourselves.
- You have a knowing inside you that only you know. No one else could have known whether that leap was right for Sorrel. If it had been too dangerous for young squirrels, that would be another thing. But since it was safe enough, she had to tune into her knowing, be still for a moment, and see what she felt.
- Whether it's deciding to jump off the diving board, or deciding if you're going to join in with some unkind jokes your friends are telling ... you can tune in and pay attention to what you know inside.
- We grownups can't teach you everything you need to know before you grow up. Not a chance. But we can help you learn wisdom from outside, and help you learn to notice your wisdom inside so that you can make your own wise choices in your life.
- Jesus showed us with his life what it looks like to take all this wisdom, let it steep inside yourself, and live from your inner wisdom. Sometimes we say Jesus embodied Wisdom. We have Christ's spirit in us, and we can seek that wisdom, too.

Words for Worship

Call to Worship

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling.

All: Let us come together to worship
the Wisdom that was with God in the beginning.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling.

All: In the beginning Wisdom was the Word
and was the light of all people.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling.

All: The Word became flesh and dwells among us.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling

All: Let us come together on this day, Wisdom-guided,
listening for Wisdom's call.

Prayer

Jesus, bearer of Wisdom, may we be wise builders. May we choose you as our foundation and demonstrate in our living that you are the life-giving Word. Give us the Wisdom to recognize your light in ourselves and each other and the courage to spread that light to all around us. Help us to set aside the foolishness of the world so that the light will never be extinguished. Amen

Benediction

As we leave this place, may we move this week in companionship with the embodied Word and Wisdom, committed to shine as a people bringing light in the darkness.

Week 4: Wisdom and the Church

Text: [Ephesians 3:7-13](#); [Acts 6:1-6](#); [Colossians 1:9-13](#); [James 3:13-18](#)

Sermon Seeds

There are myriad examples across the history of the church doing harm to its members and others. But the writer of Ephesians holds out a bold possibility for what the church might be: “Through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known...” (3:10). The writer was especially speaking to the way the church enabled non-insiders (Gentiles) to become insiders in such a way that removed the line separating inside and outside. Taking the place of this age-old dynamic was simply “rich variety,” a reflection of the Wisdom of God.

A fruitful path for this week’s sermon could be to re-trace some lines already laid out and consider how the church has something to do with each of the previous themes: Jesus, Justice, and Creation. How do these come together in the church in a way that reveals the wisdom of God in its rich variety?

This could also be a good week to tell good news stories of how you see Wisdom being made known in your congregation and other parts of the church. How is the line between inside and outside being challenged? How is justice being practiced? How is the rich variety of creation being honored? Perhaps in place of a sermon several members would wish to give brief reflections about why they have joined or stuck with the church. How has the church displayed the Wisdom of God in their lives and what rich variety would be lacking in your setting if your congregation didn’t exist?

Hymns: VT 57 *Holy Spirit, Come with Power (Ven, Espiritu, cual viento)*; VT 144 *God, Give Me Time*; VT 390 *In Christ There Is No East or West*; VT 392 *The Church of Christ Cannot Be Bound*; VT 393 *Build Your Kingdom Here*; VT 397 *The Church’s One Foundation*; VT 716 *God of Grace and God of Glory*; VT 758 *Who Will Speak a Word of Warning*; VT 770 *God Is Working This Purpose Out*; VT 774 *Lord, You Give the Great Commission*

Children’s Story

Week 4: Wisdom and the Church

Hello! Today we are checking in again with our squirrel friends at Camp Friedenswald to see what they’re up to. I hope this make-believe story helps us understand something true.

The squirrels and chipmunks of Camp Friedenswald used to pretty much ignore each other. But recently, they had solved a mystery together. They met Big Fur the Groundhog and found their missing acorns. The squirrels and chipmunks discovered something through that adventure: they kind of liked each other!

Now of course you know that the humans at Camp Friedenswald love to play games. Steal the balls, ultimate frisbee, carpetball, freeze tag, you name it. But they aren't the only ones with a fun side at camp. Hidden away in the forest, the squirrel children play many games in the trees. And the chipmunk kids play many games on the ground.

If you're lucky, you might see squirrels playing tag through the trees. You might see chipmunks darting faster than you can imagine from one fallen log to another, kicking an acorn between them as they go.

Well, one day, a group of squirrel friends was playing tag, when they ran right through a group of chipmunks also playing tag. Sorrel the squirrel collided with a young chipmunk named Mia. When they stood up and found they were playing the same game, they said, "Let's play it together!"

The squirrels invited the chipmunks to play their racing tree tag. "No way," the chipmunks said, "we only go into trees if we really must. Or if there are berries. But we don't really like it. Why don't you play on the ground with us?"

So the squirrels tried. And do you know what? Those chipmunks were all SO much faster than the squirrels ... it wasn't very fun. The squirrels just got tagged right away and then had to sit out to watch the rest of the game. Over and over.

"Well, this isn't fun," Mia the chipmunk sighed. "We don't like your tag, and our tag isn't very fair for you. Hmm, I wonder what we can do. What would you say squirrels are good at?"

"Well, climbing trees, throwing acorns, jumping from branch to branch, digging fast. What are *you* good at?"

"Oh, dashing super-fast, racing through narrow tunnels in fallen logs, changing directions, kicking acorns into goals, carrying things in our mouths and ... somersaults."

"Whoa. That's cool," Sorrel said. "Can you kick that acorn to me?"

So, Mia launched the acorn straight into Sorrel's arms.

Sorrel said, "Now I'll take it up this tree and shoot it into the hole."

The whole group played around with that for a while, trying new things. The forest echoed with the sounds of squirrels and chipmunks giving ideas, suggesting rules, saying “No, that won’t work,” and “Whoa, that’s cool!” and “Hey, try this!”

An hour later, they were playing a brand-new game. They called it Acorn KickThrow. Each team had squirrels *and* chipmunks on it, and each team tried to kick, carry and throw the acorn down the field and into the hole in their team’s tree. And everyone did a somersault when they crossed the center line. Laughter and squeals rang out.

At dinner time, the squirrel parents and the chipmunk parents came looking for their kids. When they saw what they were playing, they clapped their hands and laughed.

“Time for dinner!” Sorrel’s mom called. “But tomorrow ... do you think you all could teach us your game? I’d like to learn. It looks like fun!”

And then, tired but happy, the chipmunks and the squirrels of the forest went home to eat and dream of more happy days with their new friends.

The End

Possible Takeaways:

- We’ve been talking about Wisdom these past four weeks. Do you remember some of the places where we can find wisdom?
 - [Possible answers: elders/teachers/adults we trust, ancient writing, new writing, inside ourselves, in our communities]
 - [Additional possible answers: nature, art, songs, etc.]
- Did one squirrel or chipmunk come up with the idea on their own for Acorn KickThrow? [No.] They all made it up together. Their ideas built on each other, and as they tried them out, they came up with even better ideas. This shows us a great source of wisdom – our communities!
- The squirrel and chipmunk kids faced a problem that no one had tried to solve before: what game could they play together that was fun for most of them? When they worked together, they could come up with new solutions! We can do that in our communities as well.
- [Option: You might mention a specific problem that your congregation has solved or started to address as a community. Or some problems you might think about seeking some collective wisdom to address.]
- [Note: If you’d like to be inclusive of squirrels and chipmunks who may not be able bodied, feel free to substitute another problem-solving scenario in the story. Or you could add a sentence such as: “Of course, there were some squirrels and chipmunks who didn’t like active games or whose bodies were made differently so they didn’t play running games like that. They started to brainstorm more ways for squirrels and chipmunks to play together.”]

Words for Worship

Call to Worship

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling.

All: Let us come together to worship
as the church God dreamed of before the beginning.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling.

All: Let us come together to as a church seeking to
share the varieties of God's wisdom.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling.

All: Let us come together to give thanks with joy
for the light we've been granted.

One: Listen! Wisdom is calling

All: Let us come together on this day, Wisdom-embodied
listening for Wisdom's call.

Prayer

God of Wisdom and grace, we thank you for all you have given us. We're grateful that you called us together to form this congregation as one manifestation of your church. We pray that our actions may be humble, and our lives will be pleasing to you. Wisdom, be our guide as we move through our lives together. Shape us into the church you want us to be. Amen.

Benediction

Let us go into the world peaceful, gentle, obedient, filled with mercy and good actions, fair and genuine, empowered by this Wise body of Christ to sow seeds of justice and make peace.