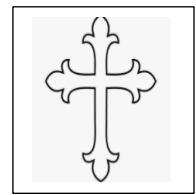


Perley Lutheran Parish
January 31st, 2021
Fourth Sunday of Epiphany



Gathering Hymn: Praise and Thanksgiving
Praise and thanksgiving, Father we offer
For all things living, Created good;
Harvest of sown fields, fruits of the orchard,
Hay from the mown fields, blossom and wood.

Then will your blessing reach every people
freely confessing your gracious hand.
Where all obey you, no one will hunger;
In your love's sway you nourish the land.

Welcome and Announcements

Newsletters went out this week – please read through carefully the guidelines for returning to in-person
Annual meetings – mark your calendars
Continue to reach out if you need something

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, +one God, whose voice is upon the waters, whose mercy is poured out upon all
people, whose goodness cascades over all creation. **Amen**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Holy God,

**You search us and know us. You are acquainted with all our ways. We confess that our hearts are burdened
by sin-our own sins and the broken systems that bind us. We turn inward, failing to follow your outward
way of love. We distrust those who are not like us. We exploit the earth and its resources and fail to
consider generations to come. Forgive us, gracious God, for all we have done and left undone. Even before
the words are on our tongues, you know them; receive them in your divine mercy. Amen.**

How vast is God's grace! Through the power and promise of +Christ Jesus, our sins are washed away and we
are claimed as God's own beloved. Indeed, we are forgiven. In the wake of God's forgiveness, we are called to
be the beloved community living out Christ's justice and the Spirit's reconciling peace. **Amen**

Prayer of the Day

**Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your
Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confession, that all
creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen**

Psalm 111 (Read Responsively)

Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the
congregation. **Great are the works of the LORD, STUDIED by all who delight in them.** Full of honor and majesty
is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. **He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the LORD is
gracious and merciful.** He provides food for those who fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant. **He has
shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.** The works of his hands
are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. **They are established forever and ever, to be performed**

with faithfulness and uprightness. He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name. **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever.**

First Reading Deuteronomy 18:15-20

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." Then the Lord replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die."

Holy Gospel according Mark 1:21-28, **Glory to you O Lord**

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

The Gospel of our Lord, **Praise to you, O Christ**

Children's Message

Do you know what this is? Sure you do. It is a remote control. Some of you may have a TV that has a remote control. When you are watching TV, you can turn the TV off or on, change channels, and adjust the volume.

Let's see how well you respond when I click one of these buttons on the remote. I will click it and call out what it is and you can act out what you think that would look like. Ready?

- Power On
- Play
- Changing channels
- Volume up
- Mute
- Fast forward
- Rewind
- Slow motion
- Power off

Wow, you all did a great job following the commands of the remote control.

Do you know what? There are some remote controls that can do much more than that. I have seen some remote controls that can control up to fifteen different things -- they are called universal remote controls. If you have a DVD player, it can control that too. You can go fast forward, slow motion, reverse, or pause a movie while you go and get a snack. When you have a universal remote control, you are in complete control. That's amazing, isn't it?

In our Bible lesson today, Jesus showed people His amazing control of everything around Him. It was on the Sabbath day and Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach. There was a man there who was possessed by an evil spirit. When

Jesus went near him, the man cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are; you are the holy one of God."

"Be quiet!" Jesus said. Then He spoke to the evil spirit, "Come out!" Do you know what happened? The evil spirit did exactly what Jesus commanded. It came out of the man.

The Bible tells us that the people were amazed. They looked at one another and asked, "What's going on here? Even evil spirits obey his orders." There was power in the words that Jesus spoke that day. On that day, Jesus came in and took control of the life of that man. His life would never be the same!

Jesus wants to be in control of your life, too. He wants to be in control of the plans you make, the words you say, the things you do, and the places you go. Why? Is He a control freak? No! He wants to be in control because He wants what is best for you. The Bible tells us that God has a plan for us. It is a good plan that will give us hope and a bright future, but we will never see that plan work unless we allow Jesus to be in control.

Dear God, we want Jesus to be in control of our life. We know that He wants what is best for us and that is what we want too. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Message

Grace and peace to you, from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Well, it's January 31st – end of the first month of 2021 and I know we had all hoped that the end of 2020 would bring a much better year to all of us. At this point – it's not happened quite yet has it?? Sure we have a vaccine – actually a handful of vaccines that are being administered or are coming down the pipeline. There seems to be a bit of a feeling of hope and promise that we are turning the corner in all that is going on. When I think about the Gospel this morning it makes me think of good news and I wonder what good news today would look like – right now – if we could see it in the news. Imagine the headlines read.....

Back to normal – we have conquered the pandemic! If only! Or maybe – ***Masks no longer needed!*** Won't that be nice?! Maybe headlines of good news would say that we have lessened the divide within our nation. I pray for this one daily. How about – ***Everyone is fed and there is no more hunger or thirst in this world?*** The list could go on and on of great news that we would LOVE to see in our lives and in our world. Our Gospel talks about the good news of "the time being fulfilled, and the kingdom being near. That we should repent and believe in the good news.

This good news this morning comes with the use of the word repent. Of course, we've talked about repentance many times. Most of the time we understand repentance to mean us "turning away from sin and turning towards God." The context in this passage however, may be more literal. The translation of the words repent in this passage mean "to change one's mind" or "to change one's perspective."

It's actually really only been just weeks since we celebrated Christmas and like many people, I'm sure you were flipping through the channels on TV during the holiday season and ran across the movie "A Christmas Carol". They play it over and over during the month of December, don't they? Scrooge has an idea of life and Christmas at the beginning of the movie that is not one of good, generosity, joy or care, is it?? It take him seeing Christmas past, present, and future through his own eyes to transform and "change his mind" about what Christmas is and how different it can be for him and others if he does so. Scrooge repented – he realized his initial understanding of things wasn't what he needed and wanted and "changed his mind" "changed his perspective" and Christmas became a much lovelier and loving time for everyone.

In our Gospel the kingdom of God has come and a new age is beginning with Jesus. He invites those who come to see him to live in this reality of the good news he is teaching. We however must change our perspective – our understanding of life and death. We need to understand that it is more than just this human body that we live in today – but rather we exist beyond the physical – we are also spiritual and eternal because of Jesus. We can feel and sense and even catch glimpses of God's movement in our world today if we have faith in him.

Think back to life in the time of Jesus – people really didn't have very much control of their lives. The rulers decide how people would live. Your social status meant everything. There wasn't the science and the medical understanding that we have today. Basically people were at the mercy of uncontrollable forces in that time. If they got sick or were hungry they really didn't have a lot they could do. Feast or famine, good luck or bad – they just were dealt it and had no defense or remedy against it. And then came Jesus.

Jesus comes into our world and he comes with authority and control. He reveals his authority in our passage today as he preaches to those gathered this day in the synagogue in Capernaum. The Bible tells us that as he spoke "people were amazed at the way he taught." They were amazed at how he taught with authority. Jesus comes to them with authority over the forces of evil and the dread of sickness. Again, we have all these modern, miraculous medical resources at our fingertips – I mean they have created many vaccines against COVID in just a matter of months for example. Or how about hunger and shelter and resources that we have today to keep us fed and keep us warm. All of those give us a perhaps false sense of control in our lives and our environments. These resources, amenities, can give us a perspective that WE are the ones pulling the strings and controlling our lives. And then tragedy strikes – we lose loved ones to illness, we experience tragedy in the form of natural disaster – something that wakes us up and helps us to remember that we aren't in control. It's a way for us to understand and to realize that we too have to repent – change our perspective, change our minds – see Jesus as the one true authority for us and our way to the kingdom of God.

We live in a world of uncontrollable forces – forces that affect and change our lives as we know them. These forces are beyond our control but we too can't let those forces drive us to live in fear of what might happen to us or worry day and night about what's to come. Sometimes those forces seem so big - like greed, prejudice, racism, sexism, hunger, poverty the list goes on and on and they seem so overwhelming. But guess what, they may be overwhelming to us but they are not greater or not bigger or stronger than our God.

Believing and understanding this can change our lives. We can see it. We can touch it. We can change our lives if we allow God to be the one in control. Jesus casts out those unclean spirits – the evil and the bad. Sure, we haven't been possessed like our Gospel tells us of the man in the synagogue. We can, however, understand and believe at times that we too are unclean and sometimes even unacceptable. That's where God comes in. God comes into our lives and forgives us. God give us grace and cleans us from our sinful self because of the sins that Jesus paid for us in death.

Maybe you know or have had times in your life when you feel sick – maybe not physically sick but emotionally or spiritually. Maybe you lost a loved one and you wonder how to go on, where God is in the pain and the loss, why your loved one was taken. Maybe you're dealing with an illness that just is taking over your thinking and sleeping and functioning because of the worry of what is to come. Maybe you just long for time where people love and care for each other rather than push people away or put down others because they aren't thinking or believing the same as you do. Maybe it's just a time in your life when you are tired of it all – tired of what's gone in this world and tired of knowing that you can't fix or help everyone. God brings life and wholeness into our lives. We know what it feels like – like this leper in our story – to be excluded, marginalized and maybe even ignored. God comes to us. Jesus proclaims to us that God accepts us **just as we are**. We are his – sick and broken. We are his and he loves us through it all.

God changes our lives and the lives of those around us. Changes that happen here and now – day in and day out. These changes aren't saved or reserved for us only in the life to come. Jesus gives us these changes now as the kingdom of God has come already. We are called to change our perspective. To see God's kingdom in our own world today. Knowing that God has done for us in our lives and seeing God's work in the lives of others we can follow the example of our gospel today. We can follow the leper's example to tell everyone what God has done.

Jesus' authority – his power and knowledge – extend far beyond our story today. His authority extends to us each and every day. He is completely in control and we, as believers, have nothing to fear. We can rest in the assurance that he will be there to help us through. That he will see us through it all and help us to enjoy the grace that only God can offer. Amen.

Hymn of the Day: It is Well – Bethel Music

Grander earth has quaked before
Moved by the sound of His voice
Seas that are shaken and stirred

Can be calmed and broken for my regard

Through it all, through it all
My eyes are on You
Through it all, through it all
It is well
Through it all, through it all
My eyes are on You
It is well with me

Far be it from me to not believe
Even when my eyes can't see
And this mountain that's in front of me
Will be thrown into the midst of the sea

So let go my soul and trust in Him
The waves and wind still know His name
The waves and wind still know His name

It is well with my soul
It is well with my soul
It is well with my soul
It is well with my soul

Apostles Creed

***I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian/catholic Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen***

Prayers of the people: (Let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**)

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

For all who share the gospel and proclaim freedom in Christ throughout the world; prophets, teachers, pastors, deacons and lay leaders, for the whole church and its ministries. Let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**

For government and leaders: cities and nations, elected officials and grassroots organizers' and for all responsible for the well-being of civil society. For our police officers, fire fighters, peace keepers and military personnel and for the leaders of our government, that they provide fair and constant protection to all people. Let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**

For all of those who have been in relationship with Kirkebo and Nora Lutheran churches in the past and those who are now in relationship with our congregations because of the pandemic and our streaming services, we rejoice in our relationships with them and You, Lord. Help us all to share the good news and love our neighbors as we would love you. Let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**

For those who walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfill your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are mourning as they deal with

tremendous loss, we ask that you continue to send healing to those dealing with illness and recovery. We lift up those within our congregation and those that have reached out to us for prayers, Sonya and Jeff, Kirk and Chad, Jim and all of those that we now name silently in our own hearts. Let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us and be with us now as we say that prayer that Jesus taught us

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.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever and ever. Amen

Blessing

God the creator strengthen you; Jesus the beloved fill you; and the Holy Spirit the comforter + keep you in peace. **Amen**

Sending Hymn: Amazing Grace

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind but now I see.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

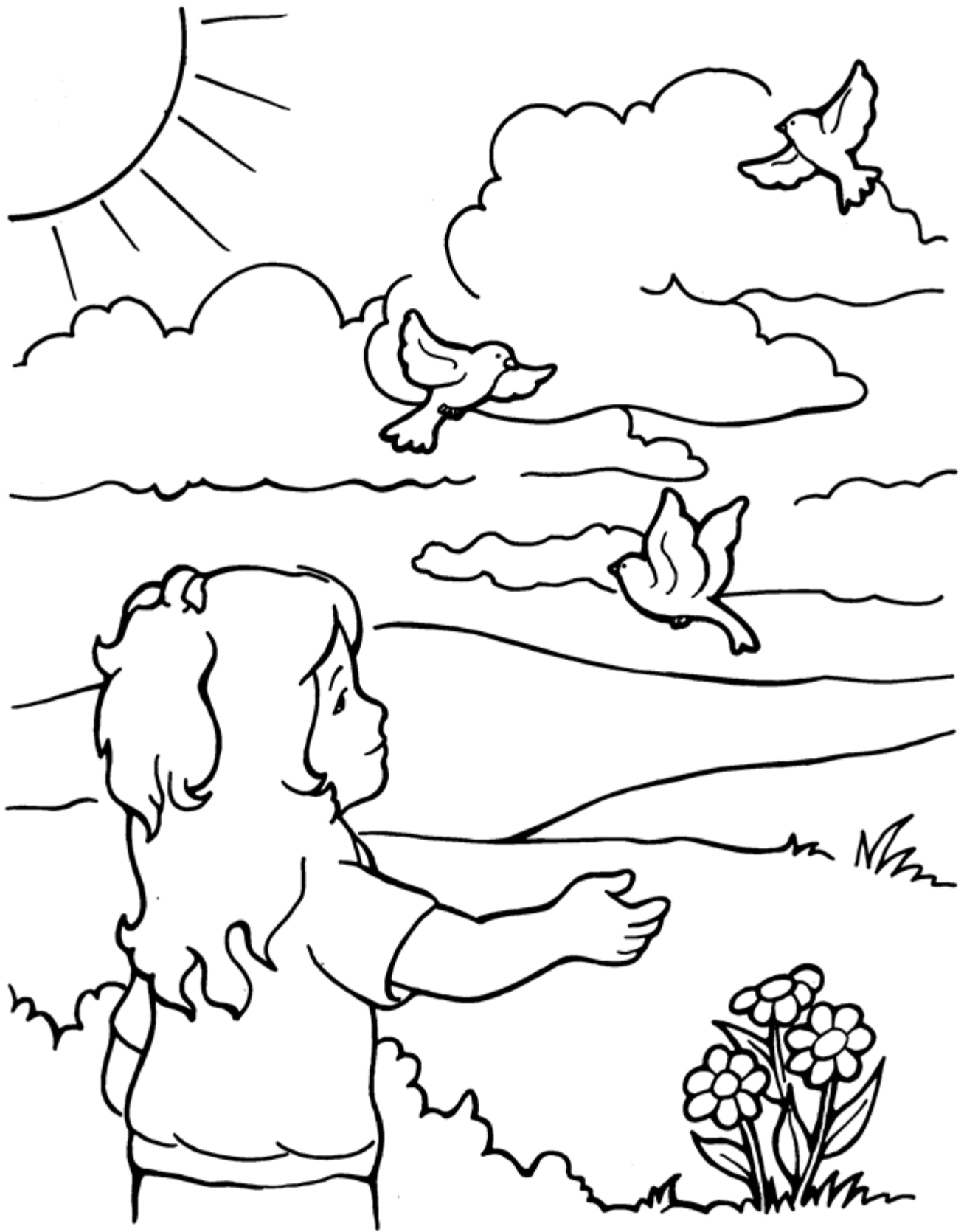
Dismissal – Go in peace. Be the light of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

Mark Your Calendars:

Sunday, February 7th – Services at 9am at Nora (live streamed and in-person)

Sunday, February 14th – Services at 9am at Kirkebo (live streamed and in -person)

Annual Meeting at 9:45



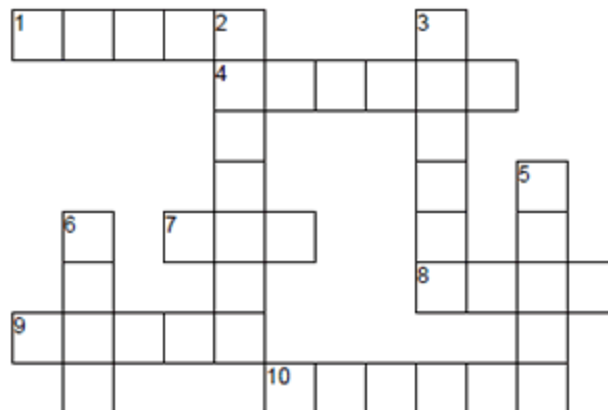
Jesus is more powerful than anything!

Jesus Drives Out an Unclean Spirit

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." Mark 1:27



The puzzle is based on Mark 1:21-28 (NIV)



HORIZONTAL

1. The Son of God
4. To be extremely surprised
7. An adult male human being
8. Immoral, bad, or wicked
9. To instruct or train someone
10. A supernatural being such as a demon

VERTICAL

2. The day of the week set aside by some religions as a day of rest and worship
3. Human beings; men, women and children
5. Making very little or no noise
6. To do what you are told or expected to do

TEACH	PEOPLE	SABBATH	EVIL	QUIET
JESUS	MAN	AMAZED	OBEY	SPIRIT

Jesus Drives Out an Unclean Spirit

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The puzzle is based on Mark 1:21-28 (NIV)

J N D Z J F M M Q R D H Q X G
F L A U T H O R I T Y I G L B
O I Q X J E S U S E C M D C J
B W U X Z Z N C P A P P T D D
E D I R S C B C R C J U D E L
Y F E U W P J I Q H W R I S D
S P T L L T R Z X Z I E O T N
Q H E A I S H E A E C C T R E
K Z O R Q T N Z A R W O Z O O
R I I O A Q U L A D H S D Y T
C P S B K O A M A Z E D E T Z
S K B N U S G F X S E X E Y Y
M A P E O P L E H M A K I Z W
S H N N E W S G O G Z W K Y Z
C R L M U Z G C J U H I L L Y

OBEY	SHOOK	SABBATH	AUTHORITY	AMAZED
IMPURE	SPREAD	DESTROY	SPIRIT	PEOPLE
QUIET	COME	JESUS	TEACH	NEWS

