Opening Prayer
Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for joining us to Your Son in the waters of baptism, equipping us with Your Holy Spirit through Jesus who lives in us. Strengthen our faith, so we may always recognize we are connected to You. Help us point others toward You. In Your Son Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Opening Thoughts
How often do we think we can do things all on our own? We can raise the best children, create the best presentation at work, bake the best cookies, and the list could go on and on. We often take pride in our accomplishments and assume we do these things by our own abilities. But the only way we can do these things is through Jesus. This is because we are connected to Him in the waters of baptism, nourished and fed by Him in worship, and strengthened in Christian community. We are dependent on God.

Read Acts 8:26-40
• (v.29) Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit pushing you in a certain direction?

• If so, what happened? Did you do what He was telling you to do?

• (v.32) Think about the first sentence of this verse. Think about God’s plan and His timing. Have you ever felt God’s plan being revealed to you?

• (v.32-33) Reflect upon this Bible passage. How would you explain this passage to another person?

• (v.36-38) How does this passage show the importance of baptism for all people, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities? (note: Some versions of the Bible include a verse 37, others do not.)

I am the vine. You are the branches. If anyone remains joined to me, and I to him, he will bear a lot of fruit. You can’t do anything without me.

—John 15:5 NIrV
Read John 15:5

**Baptism**

Through the gift of baptism, we are joined to God. In our baptism we are joined to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are connected to Him. In baptism, we join a multitude of believers from every nation, ability and walk of life in the family of God. This *Christ Connection* brings us forgiveness. This *Christ Connection* brings us eternal life in heaven. God knows our name and gives us each gifts and talents to use for His glory. He gives fruit to those works so others can see His goodness through each of His children. Without God, we can’t do anything.

Read Psalm 95:1-6

- (v.1-2) Sometimes it is difficult to thank God during times of trouble. What are some ways to approach this issue?

- (v.3-5) How does this passage support the fact that God is powerful?

- (v.6) Who is the psalmist speaking about in this verse?

- What does this passage say about all people of all nations and abilities?

- How do you feel about that?

**Worship**

As a family of God, we are fed through worship. We join together and study God’s Word; we sing praises to Him and receive His gifts. God strengthens us during worship so we can go out into the world and point others toward Him. This calling has no restrictions. Jesus wants everyone of all abilities in His family because without Him, we can do nothing.

Read Acts 16:13-15

- Why do you think this story of Lydia is in the Bible?

- (v.15) Lydia is only briefly mentioned in the Bible. It may appear as if she is not as important to God’s family and story as others in the Bible may have been. But Lydia had an a unique gift. What did Lydia do for the people who were preaching the Gospel?
• Think about members of your congregation or place of worship. Have you ever thought someone with disabilities was not as important to the function of your church?

Read Acts 16:35-40
• Has Lydia been welcomed into the Body of Christ?

• (v.40) Think about new Christians you know. What does this verse tell us about new Christians and community?

Community
Community is formed when a group of people join together for a common purpose. We join a community of people when we come together for worship. We also join a world-wide group of Christians who are bonded together in brotherly and sisterly love for one another. God gives us other Christians for fellowship and support. This Christ Connection is a precious gift, especially for new Christians.

Closing Thoughts
In our world, we try to do things on our own. But as Christians we know we can only bear fruit through Jesus because we are connected to Him in the waters of baptism, nourished and fed by Him in worship, and strengthened by Him through our Christian community. We are dependent on God; we are gifted with the Christ Connection.

Closing Prayer
Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son to take away all our sins. Help us remember all good things come through You. Strengthen our faith, so we may always see the Christ Connection and point others toward You. Forgive us when we see others as not important to Your family and Your story. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.