

## Brainstorming Summary February 9 - April 6, 2014

January 13, 2014

**Members present:** Karen Booth, David Booth, Diane Thompson, Brad Dean, Barb Gripton, Ron Zuker, Vicki Zuker, Annette Erbes, Mark Erbes (and Lynne Richmond via her notes to Karen)

The message series, **"Blessed!"** is based on the Beatitudes. The series will run for nine weeks.

**General discussion points:** 1) Mark is reading What Jesus Meant:

The Beatitudes and a Meaningful Life by Erik Kolbell as he researches this series. The author is a pastor from New York who takes a strong stand on social justice. *Synopsis from Amazon:* Challenging our expectations and forcing us to look anew at our reality, Erik Kolbell demonstrates how the eight pillars of the Beatitudes--meekness, empathy, righteousness, peace, persecution, purity, poverty, and simplicity--are still valuable codes of conduct for our individual and collective lives. In this engaging book, he masterfully shows the timeless value in these poetic and paradoxical words from Jesus and how they offer relief and direction in our all-too-confusing world. 2) Use different translations to convey the meaning of the original text. Mark will read both passages one after the other at both services. 3) Our culture has an upside down definition of blessed. 4) Being blessed comes down to our attitude during times of trouble.

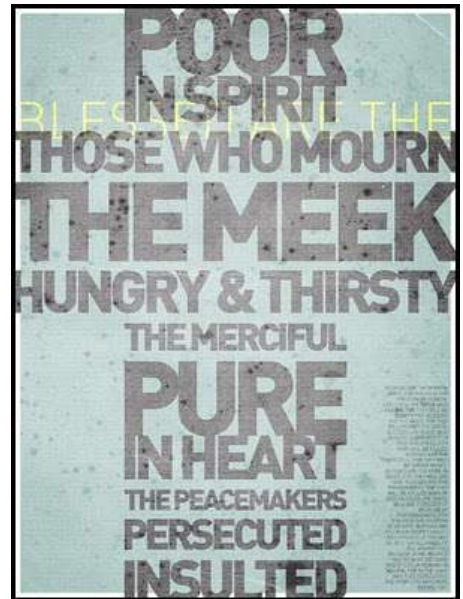
**Series visuals:** Create a large banner based on the image above.

Display it on the wall behind the altar. If it is large enough, think about moving the altar off to the side. Use it after the series is over; there will probably be wall space in the Celebration space. *Points to ponder:* Can we use graphics within the text (example shown at right) to illustrate the meaning of each Beatitude? How can we highlight the text of the week? Make sure the "Blessed are the" is visible.

**Music suggestions after the meeting:** "When Love See You" sung by Mac Powell

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4DK7arkztw>) and "City on a Hill" by The City Harmonic

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEnlxRsE2-U>)



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**February 9, 2014: "Blessed!"**

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

**Synopsis:** An overview of the Beatitudes reminds us that they are not prescribed behaviors that we are to have in order to be blessed, but that through grace, God blessed us at those times when we feel anything but blessed!

**Metaphor/visuals:** Cross (above).

**Media possibilities to begin the series:**

- "Matthew 5" by Smirk. Length: 1:38. Cost: \$17.00. Synopsis: The Sermon on the Mount is the summary of the OT and all that Christ stood for. It is an excellent summary of the Kingdom of God ethics he practiced. Preview it at <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/14183/matthew-5>. **Discussion:** Good use of type.

The driving music and harsh black, white, and red graphics don't convey the feeling of being blessed. **Decision:** We probably won't use it.

- "Matthew 5:3-12" by Visual Scripture. Length: 1:23. Cost: \$15. Synopsis: Visual liturgy. Preview it at <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/4341/matthew-53-12>. **Discussion:** While many of the underlying images are good, their treated "look" is too 1960s psychedelic to be comforting. **Decision:** We probably won't use it.
- "The Beatitudes" by Quaddot Productions. Length: 2:19. Cost \$15. Synopsis: Contemplative presentation of the scripture reading using images and piano music. Preview it at <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/23321/the-beatitudes>. **Discussion:** We like that the words remain on the screen long enough to ponder. Good images. Contemplative music. **Decision:** Use to open the series. Could be shown later in the series before worship (with the music) or during the prelude (without the music).
- "Blessed" by Centerline. Length: 1:45. Cost: \$18.00. Synopsis: The world tells us one thing about being blessed, yet the Word tells us something very different. Based on the Beatitudes. Preview it at <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/55767/blessed>. **Discussion:** Good, but it would be better if it went slower. Note: Karen can slow it down if we decide later to use it.
- "Blessed" by S. H. Redwine. Length: 1:25. Cost: \$20.00. Synopsis: Visual liturgy. Preview it at <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/43318/blessed>. **Discussion:** Goes too quickly. Too much going on.

**Music suggestions:** 2155 Blest are They; 467 Trust and Obey; 378 Amazing Grace; Leaving 99 by Audio Adrenaline (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYU3Gi4koJg>)

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:1-12 (CEV)

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the side of a mountain and sat down. Jesus' disciples gathered around him, <sup>2</sup>and he taught them:

<sup>3</sup>God blesses those people who depend only on him. They belong to the kingdom of heaven!

<sup>4</sup>God blesses those people who grieve. They will find comfort!

<sup>5</sup>God blesses those people who are humble. The earth will belong to them!

<sup>6</sup>God blesses those people who want to obey him more than to eat or drink. They will be given what they want!

<sup>7</sup>God blesses those people who are merciful. They will be treated with mercy!

<sup>8</sup>God blesses those people whose hearts are pure. They will see him!

<sup>9</sup>God blesses those people who make peace. They will be called his children!

<sup>10</sup>God blesses those people who are treated badly for doing right. They belong to the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you, and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in heaven. People did these same things to the prophets who lived long ago.

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**February 16, 2014: "Blessed are the Poor in Spirit"**

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

**Synopsis:** In what ways does a "poverty of spirit" affect our daily lives? What does it take to sense and accept God's blessings when we are feeling "poor in spirit"?

**Metaphor/visuals:** Sheep (Matt. 18). Person sitting on curb with head in hands (Beatitudes by Quaddot video). Homeless/broken people.

**Music suggestions:** 377 It Is Well with My Soul; 388 O Come and Dwell in Me; 2140 Since Jesus Came Into My Heart

**Discussion points:** 1) Jim Post posted a video on Facebook. It shows a man who, after putting on glasses, sees the world and people in it as God does. Karen is tracking down the video, but it is probably this one: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ea4jVBq0KfA>. 2) Most people can identify with this week's message as they have had times where they have been "poor in spirit." It is a universal message. 3) Thought after the meeting: See "Worn" by Tenth Avenue North at <http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=0FJC2JNU>.

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:3 (New International Version)

<sup>3</sup>"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:12-14 (New International Version)

<sup>12</sup>"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? <sup>13</sup>And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. <sup>14</sup>In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

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**February 23, 2014: "Blessed are Those Who Mourn"**

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

**Synopsis:** How can we sense God's comfort in our times of grief and loss? How can we be that source of comfort for others when that is our call?

**Metaphor/visuals:** Angel statue with tomb in background (Beatitudes video by Quaddot). Angel leaning over a gravestone weeping (Barb). Black and white.

**Music suggestions:** 526 What a Friend We Have in Jesus; 534 Be Still, My Soul; 2216 When We Are Called to Sing Your Praise

**Discussion points:** 1) Sad wedding stories. 2) Most people can identify with this week's message as they have had times where they have mourned.

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:4 (New International Version)

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

**Scripture:** Revelation 21:1-4 (Contemporary English Version)

<sup>1</sup>I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and so had the sea.

<sup>2</sup> Then I saw New Jerusalem, that holy city, coming down from God in heaven. It was like a bride dressed in her wedding gown and ready to meet her husband.

<sup>3</sup> I heard a loud voice shout from the throne:

God's home is now with his people. He will live with them, and they will be his own. Yes, God will make his home among his people. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe all tears from their eyes, and there will be no more death, suffering, crying, or pain. These things of the past are gone forever.

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**March 2, 2014: "Blessed are the Meek"**

Transfiguration Sunday

**Synopsis:** What does it really mean to be "meek" as the Bible defines it? Can we be assertive for Christ and still be "meek"?

**Metaphor/visuals:** Little kid sitting against the wall (Beatitudes video by Quaddot). Dawn (Ps 37).

## Communion

**Media possibility:** "Meekness Horse." Length: 1:32. Cost: \$8.00. Synopsis: Meekness is not weakness, but power under control, as illustrated by the breaking/meeking of an animal. Preview it at <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/15506/meekness-horse>. **Discussion:** It shows how the spirit must be broken (or tamed) to be brought under control. Although it might be a better way of thinking about meekness, it was not very motivating nor did it feel quite right. **Decision:** If Mark were to use it, it would be within the message.

**Music suggestions:** 2176 Make Me a Servant; 533 We Shall Overcome

**Discussion points:** 1) Meek is not the best translation of the original text as it sounds as if it means we are to be weak, cowardly, fearful, or treated as a "doormat." The video's definition of "power under control" is better. 2) Jesus is quoting Psalm 37:11 in Matthew 5:5. 3) Does the image of a little kid convey meekness or innocence/shyness? 4) In equestrian therapy, they refer to "training" a horse rather than breaking it. We like the horse metaphor, but something about the way it is used in the video is not quite right. 5) People who learn the martial arts learn self-discipline. Is this a good way of thinking about meekness?

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:5 (New International Version)

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

**Scripture:** Psalm 37:1-11 (Today's New English Version)

<sup>1</sup>Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong; <sup>2</sup>for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.

<sup>3</sup>Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

<sup>4</sup>Take delight in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

<sup>5</sup>Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

<sup>6</sup>He will make your righteous reward **shine like the dawn**, your vindication like the noonday sun.

<sup>7</sup>Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

<sup>8</sup>Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.

<sup>9</sup>For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.

<sup>10</sup>A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found.

<sup>11</sup>But **the meek will inherit the land** and enjoy peace and prosperity.

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**March 9, 2014:** "Blessed are Those Who are Hungry and Thirsty" 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent

**Synopsis:** How does God fill us when we are hungry for a deeper relationship with Him? What is our responsibility for "feeding" others?

**Metaphor/visuals:** Desert (Beatitudes video by Quaddot). Woman at the well. Wooden bucket. Well. Pictures of people standing on street corners.

**Music suggestions:** 2132 You Who Are Thirsty; 641 Fill My Cup, Lord; 269 Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days; Gimme Your Eyes by Brandon Heath; Suggestion after the meeting - "Worn" by Tenth Avenue North.

**Discussion points:** 1) Jimmy has been building relationships with many homeless men in Muskegon through his ministry with Roots by offering lunches and prayer. He hopes to get them in to the Rescue Mission. Could we make a video with what he has learned? How about Michael Boersma's experience now that he is working at the Rescue Mission. 2) The Muskegon Chronicle

ran a series of articles on panhandling in Muskegon in November 2013. Follow this link, [http://www.mlive.com/news/muskegon/index.ssf/2013/11/panhandling\\_local\\_politicians.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/muskegon/index.ssf/2013/11/panhandling_local_politicians.html), for more information and pictures. 3) You can't feed people until you see them as God sees them. It is about building relationships. How we give is between us and God? What they do with what they are given is between them and God. 4) Activity: Hand out cups of water. The act of serving it is important.

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:6 (New International Version)

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

**Scripture:** John 4:7-15 (New Living Translation)

<sup>7</sup>Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink."

<sup>8</sup>He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

<sup>9</sup>The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"

<sup>10</sup>Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."

<sup>11</sup>"But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? <sup>12</sup>And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"

<sup>13</sup>Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. <sup>14</sup>But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."

<sup>15</sup>"Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

**March 16, 2014: "Blessed are the Merciful"**

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

**Synopsis:** How does the Bible define "mercy"? How do we share God's gift of mercy with the world?

**Metaphor/visuals:** Baby bird in hand (Beatitudes video by Quaddot)

**Media possibilities:**

- "Mercy Prelude." Length: 5:03. Cost: \$15.00. Synopsis: This scripture filled prelude about Mercy is great for any service, bible study or during the offering. Preview it at <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/10632/mercy-prelude>. **Discussion:** Good to use before worship begins.
- "Bless the Lord, O My Soul: Psalm 103." Length: 3:12. Cost: \$15.00. Synopsis: The primary purpose of Nature is to lead you worship Christ, the Creator. Your heart longs for the one to whom it belongs. We yearn to worship God. As the Psalmist cried to God, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name" this video helps you worship God with thankful hearts. Preview it at <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/21387/bless-the-lord-o-my-soul-psalm-103>. **Discussion:** Good beach shots. The translation uses the churchy word, "iniquities."

**Music suggestions:** 355 Depth of Mercy; 121 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy; 2113 Lamb of God

**Discussion points:** 1) The Bible talks about mercy repeatedly. 2) Use the video before worship begins. Turn the lights down to help people focus. 3) Would Sue Stamy of The Raptor Rehabilitation Center be able to bring in a baby bird? 4) Vital Church Initiative: The Church



Conference to vote on the VCI prescriptions is right after the Early Service. 5) On a loosely related note: How about running, “Be still and know I am God” on the sign. Use a nature scene in the background.

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:7 (New International Version)

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

**Scripture:** Psalm 103:1-13 (Contemporary English Version)

<sup>1</sup>With all my heart I praise the Lord, and with all that I am I praise his holy name!

<sup>2</sup>With all my heart I praise the Lord! I will never forget how kind he has been.

<sup>3</sup>The Lord forgives our sins, heals us when we are sick, <sup>4</sup>and protects us from death. His kindness and love are a crown on our heads.

<sup>5</sup>Each day that we live, he provides for our needs and gives us the strength of a young eagle.

<sup>6</sup>For all who are mistreated, the Lord brings justice.

<sup>7</sup>He taught his Law to Moses and showed all Israel what he could do.

<sup>8</sup>The Lord is merciful! He is kind and patient, and his love never fails.

<sup>9</sup>The Lord won't always be angry and point out our sins; <sup>10</sup>he doesn't punish us as our sins deserve.

<sup>11</sup>How great is God's love for all who worship him? Greater than the distance between heaven and earth!

<sup>12</sup>How far has the Lord taken our sins from us? Farther than the distance from east to west!

<sup>13</sup>Just as parents are kind to their children, the Lord is kind to all who worship him,

**March 23, 2014: “Blessed are the Pure in Heart”**

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

**Synopsis:** How do we seek purity of heart in such an “impure” culture? What are the rewards of having a pure heart?

**Metaphor/visuals:** Sun shining through the clouds (Beatitudes video by Quaddot). Newborn. Baptism. Clean water. Sun coming through the clouds. Communion.

**Music suggestions:** 2160 Into My Heart; 400 Come, Thou fount of Every Blessing; 2133 Give Me a Clean Heart

**Discussion points:** 1) Only Jesus is pure in heart. If we are not and cannot be pure in heart, will we ever see God? 2) Original sin suggests that even newborns are not pure in heart. The difference is that they have not yet experienced guilt. You can see the official Methodist position on this at <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=1389>. 3) One of Diane's earlier churches used to sing “Create in Me a Clean Heart” each week.

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:8 (New International Version)

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

**Scripture:** Hebrews 10:19-23, 35-36 (Contemporary English Version)

<sup>19</sup>My friends, the blood of Jesus gives us courage to enter the most holy place <sup>20</sup>by a new way that leads to life! And this way takes us through the curtain that is Christ himself.

<sup>21</sup>We have a great high priest who is in charge of God's house. <sup>22</sup>So let's come near God with pure hearts and a confidence that comes from having faith. Let's keep our hearts pure, our consciences free from evil, and our bodies washed with clean water. <sup>23</sup>We must hold tightly to the hope that we say is ours. After all, we can trust the one who made the agreement with us.

<sup>35</sup>Keep on being brave! It will bring you great rewards. <sup>36</sup>Learn to be patient, so that you will please God and be given what he has promised.

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**March 30, 2014: "Blessed are the Peacemakers"**

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

**Synopsis:** How do we live as peacemakers, not just at a personal level, but as citizens of a world that is often far from peaceful?

**Metaphor/visuals:** Person in profile (Beatitudes video by Quaddot). People shaking hands. Dove.

**Fifth Sunday**

**Skit:** Mark will see if he can find a skit.

**Music suggestions:** 431 Let There Be Peace on Earth; 2145 I've Got Peace Like a River; 437 This Is My Song

**Discussion points:** 1) The United Methodist Church has long been an instrument of peace. This was true in the 1960s during Viet Nam. 2) Benton Heisler's father, who grew up Mennonite, served in World War II in the medical field in lieu of fighting. Mennonites are pacifists. 3) Peace marches during the Viet Nam War. 4) James equates peace with justice. He lists the personal qualities of peacemakers. They are the same qualities we need to promote in our families and communities in order to have world peace. 5) Boy and starfish story: While it is easy be overwhelmed by the scope of the world's problems, helping does make a difference for those we touch. 6) Smith and Wesson's "Peacemaker." 7) What does this pet ownership data suggest about Chicago neighborhoods? In the northern part of the city, 90% of dogs are labs. In the southern part of the city, 90% are pit bulls.

**Activity:** Connect with the peacemakers of the world. Options: 1) Make cards, pack care packages, or collect socks for active duty military. 2) Support UMCOR; it spends wisely and takes care of the world. 3) Habitat for Humanity helps one family at a time. 4) Community Encompass. 5) Is there a way to reach out to people in Central Africa who are experiencing turmoil?

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:9 (New International Version)

<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

**Scripture:** James 3:13, 17-18 (Contemporary English Version)

<sup>13</sup>Are any of you wise or sensible? Then show it by living right and by being humble and wise in everything you do.

<sup>17</sup>But the wisdom that comes from above leads us to be pure, friendly, gentle, sensible, kind, helpful, genuine, and sincere. <sup>18</sup>When peacemakers plant seeds of peace, they will harvest justice.

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**April 6, 2014: "Blessed are the Persecuted"**

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

**Synopsis:** In what ways are we persecuted as Christians? How can we see those situations as blessings so that we might "rejoice and be glad" in them?

**Metaphor/visuals:** Man walking alone (Beatitudes video by Quaddot). Clay pot (2 Cor). Fish on a bumper (Thoughts on Persecution video).

**Communion**

**Media possibilities:**

- "Thoughts on Persecution." Length: 0:58. Cost: \$20. Synopsis: This video describes persecution from the view of a shallow Christian. Preview it at

<http://www.sermonspice.com/product/29903/thoughts-on-persecution>. **Discussion:** Good way to introduce a serious topic. **Decision:** Use it.

- “Dear God PERSECUTION.” Length: 0:59. Cost: \$20.00. Synopsis: This video is a letter to God asking Him if He wants us to be persecuted. Preview it at <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/38251/dear-god-persecution>. **Discussion:** Also a good way to introduce the topic. Especially “I need to make sure you don’t want me to be bolder in my faith.” We liked the first one a little more.

**Music suggestions:** Trading My Sorrows; 534 Be Still, My Soul; 295 In the Cross of Christ I Glory;

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:10-12 (New International Version)

<sup>10</sup>Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 (The Message)

<sup>7</sup>If you only look at *us*, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the **unadorned clay pots** of our ordinary lives. That’s to prevent anyone from confusing God’s incomparable power with us.

<sup>8</sup>As it is, there’s not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we’re not much to look at. We’ve been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we’re not demoralized; we’re not sure what to do, <sup>9</sup>but we know that God knows what to do; we’ve been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn’t left our side; we’ve been thrown down, but we haven’t broken. <sup>10</sup>What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us—he lives! <sup>11</sup>Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus’ sake, which makes Jesus’ life all the more evident in us. <sup>12</sup>While we’re going through the worst, you’re getting in on the best!

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### **Holy Week/Easter:**

Mark is looking at doing a series that focuses on places, similar to the “Stations of the Birth”:

*April 13 (Palm Sunday):* Jerusalem

*April 17 (Maundy Thursday):* The Garden of Gethsemane or Last Supper

*April 20 (Easter):* Tomb

*April 27 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter):* Road to Emmaus

**Holy Week Communion Idea from Brad:** Place a large wooden cross in the middle of the sanctuary (plastic underneath it). Shape barbed wire into a very large crown of thorns. Immerse the crown in grape juice and freeze it. Place the crown on the cross and bread at the base of the cross. The grape juice will thaw and drip onto the bread during worship.