

Worship Brainstorming “Faith in Film 2023”

An Epiphany series that explores spiritual themes in recent films

Wed., Dec. 14, 2022 at LHUMC

12:00 p.m. Potluck

12:30-3:00 p.m. Brainstorming for Worship

January 8-29, 2023 (4 Sundays)

The worship brainstorming for this series will be held at LHUMC in the Lounge. Members of all ages and backgrounds are invited to participate in the one-time commitment. The ideas generated at the brainstorming are used in worship.

We will have a potluck at 12:00 p.m. Please bring a dish to share. Brainstorming is from 12:30-3:00 p.m.

More information is available at church and on our website.

RSVPs are helpful but not mandatory. Sign up at church or contact the church office (213-798-2181 or Office@LakeHarborUMC.org) or Karen Booth (231-798-8431 or 231-557-1069 or kwbooth@comcast.net). Please read the Scripture and message synopses and preview the videos before we gather if at all possible.

2023 theme connection: Faith and pop culture already coexist in the lives of many Christians. We recognize that we sometimes see glimpses of God’s truth in unlikely places, even characters from four different films who are searching for hope and meaning in their perfectly messy lives.

2023 Theme: Jesus is Our Past, Present, and Future Hope

2023 key Scripture verses: ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8: 38-39 (NIV)*

Major spoken/unspoken needs:

- It is so easy to not attend church when I can watch it online. Worship is for God, not us. Convenience vs. sacrifice. Logistics vs. routine.
- Pastoral care, especially around losses: Grief. Family. Division. Addiction. Unrealized dreams. Financial woes. Abortion. Marriage and divorce.
- Relationships. Reconciliation.
- Fear and regret

Notes on Epiphany:

Epiphany is a word derived from the Greek for “manifestation” and is usually used as a reminder that Jesus is God’s revelation for the whole world. But we also use

“epiphany” to describe those moments of deeper understanding and insight – like an “a-ha!” moment. Though our faith in Jesus Christ is grounded in Scripture, the arts, including literature and films, profoundly influence how we think about and understand God.

When characters long for something or yearn for something, when they celebrate, all of these moments can be viewed through a lens of prayer even though the character may not address God directly. (Larsen) Stories connect to the human experience and help us to grow in our faith. We’ll look at four films with the **overall themes of building relationships, community, and leadership.**

Resources:

- [Movies Are Prayer: How Films Voice Our Deepest Longings](#) by Josh Larsen. "Movies are our way of telling God what we think about this world and our place in it. . . Movies can be many things: escapist experiences, historical artifacts, business ventures, and artistic expressions, to name a few. I'd like to suggest that they can also be prayers." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78Vq6aZeWrM> (A good series intro)

Visuals:

- Movie reels (Mary Scott), Oscar, Posters
- Director’s clapboard and chair
- Popcorn and popcorn maker (Mary Scott, Myke’s church, Jack Heethouse). Boxes of candy.
- Tickets
- Marquee (chalkboard with string of 25 globe lights)
- Big display: “Now Showing” and “Coming Attractions”
- Video previews
- Movie countdowns
- Specific items for each movie - costumes, props, etc.

Publicity: “See You on Sunday!” and January Harbor Light

Social Justice Issue for January 2023: Human Trafficking

Noisy offering: Hope Project/Lakeshore Human Trafficking task force

January 8, 2023: “Called to Community”

Marcel the Shell with Shoes On (PG, 2022)

Epiphany/Baptism of the Lord

Film synopsis: Marcel is an adorable one-inch-tall shell who ekes out a colorful existence with his grandmother, Connie, and their pet lint, Alan. Once part of a sprawling community of shells, they now live alone as the sole survivors of a mysterious tragedy. However, when a documentary filmmaker discovers them, the short film he posts online brings Marcel millions of passionate fans, as well as unprecedented dangers and a new hope of finding his long-lost family.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k98Afd7Nf3Y>



Scripture: I Thessalonians 5: 8-24 (NIV)

⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Final Instructions

¹² Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil.

²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

Synopsis: From the beginning, we're called into relationship - with God and each other. Baptism calls us into deeper community with others who seek to follow Jesus and whose hope is in him. In a time when the nature of community is changing, when we connect in many different ways, reaching out to one another is vital as a part of our call to be disciples and make disciples.

Felt need: To find community and be encouraged by one another

Visuals:

Hands-on item: Small shells

Activity:

Media possibilities: Trailer – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k98Afd7Nf3Y>

Music:

Children’s Time:

Social media:

Related articles:

- <https://thinkchristian.net/marcel-the-early-church-member>
- <https://screenfish.net/marcel-the-shell-with-shoes-on/>
- <https://sojo.net/articles/i-needed-tiny-shell-play-me-amazing-grace-curly-pasta?fbclid=IwAR2flGxtcB7lxjEZ1zK9Kr2GbR2kM0jjoLSAbcyeE8A9utxcaYvCrm73DI8>
- <https://rabbitroom.com/2022/08/marcel-the-shells-movie-is-good-medicine-for-our-pandemic-recovery/>
- <https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/movies-tv/jenny-slate-shares-the-origin-story-of-marcel-the-shell-it-felt-refreshing-and-affirming>

Discussion points:

January 15, 2023: “Spirit Given”

Encanto (PG, 2021)

2nd Sunday after the Epiphany, Human Relations Day

Film synopsis: Encanto tells the tale of the Madrigals, an extraordinary family who live in a wondrous, charmed place called an Encanto. Each child has been blessed with a magic gift unique to them—each child except Mirabel. But when the family’s home is threatened, Mirabel may be their only hope. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaimKeDcudo>



Scripture: I Corinthians 1: 1-9, 12: 1-11 (NIV)

¹ Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

² To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

³ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

⁴ I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— ⁶ God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord

Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸ He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

12 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Synopsis: The church is the Body of Christ, and we celebrate God’s presence with us in him. As followers of Jesus and leaders, each one of us an important part of the whole. Even when we don’t feel that our part is vital, God is using each of us and our gifts to make a difference for good in the world.

Felt need: To claim the gift of Jesus and to claim our spiritual gifts and recognize them in one another

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities: Trailer- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaimKeDcudo>

Music:

Children’s Time:

Social media:

Related articles:

- <https://www.umc.org/en/content/stop-teaching-spiritual-gifts-watch-encanto-instead>
- [“Encanto’s Ode to Mental Health”](#) from “Think Christian” Jan. 26, 2022

Discussion points:

January 22, 2023: “Living a ‘No Fear’ Faith”

Top Gun: Maverick (PG-13, 2022)

3rd Sunday after the Epiphany

Film synopsis: After more than thirty years of service as one of the Navy’s top aviators, Pete Mitchell is where he belongs, pushing the envelope as a courageous test pilot and dodging the advancement in rank that would ground him.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSqVVswa420>



Scripture: Ephesians 4: 1-16

Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ

⁴ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Synopsis: The goal of our spiritual lives is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ so that the world is transformed. It requires us to live with courage and confidence in God’s

grace, honesty and humility in our struggles and joys, and trust in God and each other.

Felt need: To be followers who lead with faith, courage, and a willingness to risk for the greater good – and do it together

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities: Trailer – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSgVVswa420>

Music:

Children’s Time:

Social media:

Related articles:

- [“Minister Maverick”](#) from “Think Christian,” June 16, 2022
- <https://thefulcrum.us/Pop-Culture/Dance-Theatre--Film/top-gun-maverick>

January 29, 2023: “God’s Greater Love”

Avengers: Endgame (PG-13, 2019)

4th Sunday after the Epiphany

Film synopsis: Adrift in space with no food or water, Tony Stark sends a message to Pepper Potts as his oxygen supply starts to dwindle. Meanwhile, the remaining Avengers -- Thor, Black Widow, Captain America and Bruce Banner – must figure out a way to bring back their vanquished allies for an epic showdown with Thanos -- the evil demigod who decimated the planet and the universe.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcMBFSGVi1c>

The culmination of all the groundwork laid by the 21 films that came before it, *Avengers: Endgame* features all the favorites in an inter-galactic, time jumping battle to save the world after "The Snap."

Scripture: John 15: 1-17

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you

are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

Synopsis: The struggle to love as God loves is real, yet we know the power of that love in moments when we experience it from others. To be a friend of Jesus is to be connected to him and know that we're able to love as he loves, but it takes intentional community with others who are pursuing the same goal.

Felt need: To pursue God's agape love and be willing to sacrifice for others in Jesus' name

Visuals:

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities: Trailer - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcMBFSGVi1c>

Music:

Social media:

Related articles:

- <https://thinkchristian.net/soul-stones-and-sacrifice-in-avengers-endgame>
- <https://intervarsity.org/blog/avengers-endgame-christianity>
- <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2019/05/the-gifts-of-discipleship-in-avengers-endgame/>
- <https://media.pauline.org/reviews/ArticleID/896/Avengers-Endgame-The-Value-of-Sacrifice>
- <https://chaplainsreport.com/2019/05/14/the-art-of-ending-well-grief-grieving-and-avengers-endgame/>
- <https://rootedministry.com/talking-to-students-about-avengers-endgame/>