



Be a Bible Scribe!

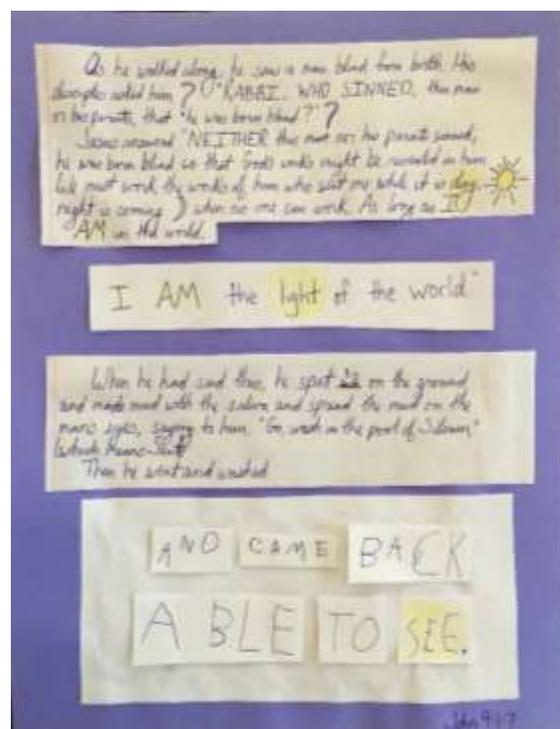
Wanda Stopher

Recently I came across an article that resonated deeply with me and that sparked a good deal of creative energy among a number of people with whom I've shared it. The article written by Heidi Haverkamp, published in *Christian Century* describes a Bible illumination project. In it Haverkamp talks about how scriptures for centuries were painstakingly copied by hand. She goes on to say, "Copying holy texts may no longer be a necessity, but it is a spiritual discipline that invites the scribe to deeper engagement with God and scripture. It's an old way of praying, like *lectio divina*, that has found new life during the pandemic." Then she tells the stories of a number of congregations around the world that have taken on large and small projects to create completely handwritten and illustrated Bibles or portions of the Bible.

The common purpose in the stories Haverkamp tells, and the purpose of our own Bible Scribe Project is "to gather people into community during this crisis and to encourage them to experience the healing, comforting power of God's word." See

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/first-person/i-was-scribe-chicago-illuminated-scripture-project> for the entire article. You might also find inspiration by googling "St. John's Bible."

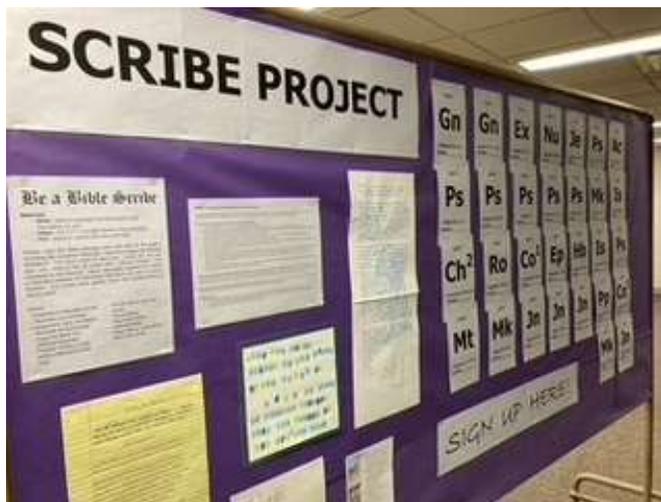
As sometimes happens and seems like a coordination of the Spirit at work among us, the theme for our upcoming season of Lent is *Deep Calls to Deep*. The theme invites the congregation to use this pandemic time to deepen our life with God and each other through spiritual practices and worship rituals. In a conjunction of the spiritual practice of handwriting scripture and this Lent theme, we as a congregation are being invited to a Bible Scribe project.



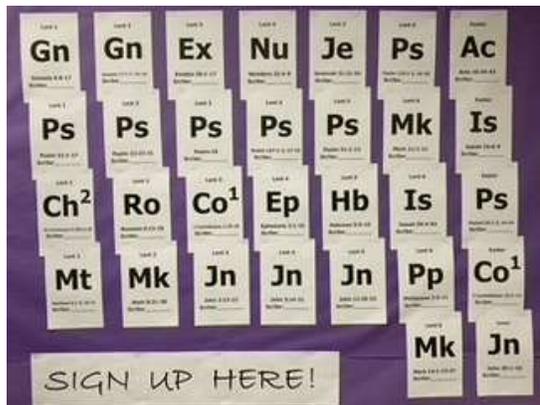
The scope of our Bible Scribe project will include handwriting all the texts for our upcoming Lent worship and the entire Gospel of John. Remember, the purpose is to gather people together in a shared project that encourages us all to experience the healing, comforting power of God's word. The invitation, then, is to all! It is not only for the artists and those with perfect penmanship. That said, the invitation also extends to calligraphers and artists. The handwritten texts may also be illuminated: embellished, illustrated, or decorated. You choose the passage, great or small, and you can decide whether it is your solo project, a family project, something accomplished by a couple of friends, or some other arrangement you imagine. Everyone, join together with your faith family, in this project.

Let us know what you choose to scribe! **This [link](#) is one way to sign up on a Google doc. You also have the option of signing up on a large bulletin board in the fellowship hall or emailing, texting, or calling Carrie Mast at 419.230.1568 or mastc@bluffton.edu to report your choice of scripture.**

If you have questions, please contact Carrie Mast, Carolyn Rich, Anne Marie Spelman, or Pastor Wanda.



One side of the Bible Scribe bulletin board in the fellowship hall



Ideas for copying/illuminating Scripture as a spiritual practice

Anne Marie Spelman

The main purpose of this practice is to engage with the living God and with Scripture, not to create a perfect or impressive product. Follow what is spiritually fruitful for you – if that means creating intricate and beautiful designs, simply writing, or something in between.

If you want some guidance, here's a simple method you could use:

1. Gather your supplies, then sit down and take a few deep breaths.
2. Turn your attention to God, who is already looking at you right now with love. God is with you always, even as you do this.
3. Read the passage slowly, letting the words wash over you. Read it again and notice what stands out to you. Is there a phrase or a word that resonates? Does something surprise you? Sit with that as long as you'd like.

4. Do any artistic planning that you want (or you can choose to simply write it). If you want, you can copy the passage several times for practice before you do your final draft, or you could just dive in and see what happens.
5. Let yourself be surprised with what you choose to do with the passage. Be playful with it. You can always change it later, do another draft, or cut and paste as needed, so let loose and see what happens. You can have fun with this!
6. Let the words sink in as you write.
7. After you finish writing, go back (in the same sitting or another day), and notice what stands out to you. The work might feel complete to you, or you might notice some words/phrases/concepts you want to bring attention to with additional colors or in another way. Do you want to add any doodles/designs/illustrations? If you notice a mistake, you can fix it in any creative way you choose (see the other guidelines for ideas).
8. To close a session, you could spend a few minutes in dialogue with God about what that experience was like for you, any prayers starting to take shape in your heart, or anything you'd like to share with God.

When you feel pressure/self-doubt/unhelpful critical voices, you can simply acknowledge the thought and let it go, as you might release a balloon and let it float away. For example, you could say to yourself, "I notice that I'm thinking *I'm not an artist, I shouldn't even try this.*" Then choose to let go of that thought. You could also imagine yourself turning down the volume knob on any critical/unhelpful voices in your head.

Remember that your contributions will add to the diversity of this work as they join many others from our church community. We all have a place in this family, and all of our handwriting and creativity (or straightforwardness) has a place as well.

Additional ideas:

1. If this feels like a meaningful practice for you, you can do it again! You could copy/illuminate Scripture as a regular practice.
2. If you've been wanting to memorize Scripture, use this as an aide. You could copy out the same passage every day until you memorize it, and hang the verses around the house to help you remember them.

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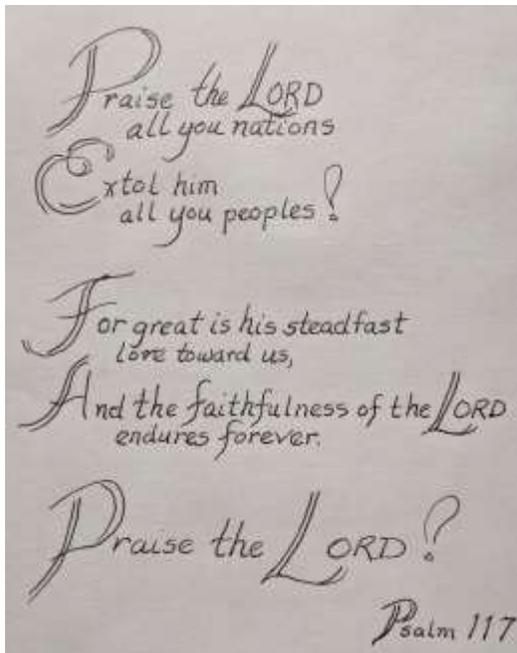
Materials:

- Bible – any translation; from the list, select a passage to copy
- Paper – 8½ x 11 inch or smaller sheets of any color/kind
- Pen – pencil or marker (fine tips work well)

Simply copy the Bible passage onto one side of the paper, including the scripture reference. Use more pages as needed. Mistakes? You don't need to start over. Cross out, cut out, glue over – just be creative. Your signature is not required. Paper clip pages together and return to Wanda's mailbox in the fellowship hall when you have a section finished. For Lenten texts, please return one Sunday before it will be used.

Ideas:

- Emphasize important words
- Illustrate your writings (using paint, pen, paper)
Illustrate an entire page
- Practice writing a page before making the final copy
- Put the text in your own words
- Use symbols
- Play music while writing/printing
- Enjoy silence; work alone or with others



Samples to help you begin illuminating scripture as part of the Bible Scribe project.

