The Story
Chapter 15: God’s Messengers
January 3-9

Opening Questions
1. A well-placed clearly written sign can keep you safe and even save your life. Tell about a time you saw a sign, followed what it said and were glad you did. Or, tell about a time you missed or ignored a posted sign and suffered for it.
2. Tell of a similar experience with a phone call you received or ignored and were glad you answered or glad you ignored it.

Opening Prayer
Let us pray. Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Worship Readings and Questions
1 Kings 17:8-16; Luke 9:18-20

Read both of Sunday’s texts and answer these initial questions:
1. If someone were to ask you, “Who do you say that Jesus is?” What would be your answer?
2. Does the answer to this question come quickly or is it hard to keep succinct?
3. In the story of Elijah and the widow, what aspects of the character of the widow do you most identify with as you hear the story?
   a. Her fear at going hungry?
   b. Her concern for her son?
   c. Her surprise at the request?
   d. Her blessing that resulted from trusting in the Lord to provide?
   e. Or something else that you notice about the widow?

Watch “The Story” Video
Chapter 15

Video and Sermon Based Questions
1. Remind each other why God divided the nation of Israel. Have you ever had to make a decision to divide a group of people or children into different groups for a specific purpose? What was the situation and what was the result of the division?
2. What is the purpose of a Prophet?
3. Through the prophets Amos and Hosea, God pointed out the people's sin and actions of rebellion (The Story, pp 213-217). What were some of Israel's sins and why do you think God was being so severe with them? What do you think of Hosea's story and marriage?
4. It is clear that if God's people will repent (turn from their sin and return to him) God is ready to embrace them with love and grace. How is God still offering this same invitation through Jesus today? What does true repentance look like, in light of the cross of Jesus?
5. When Israel walked closely with God they were joy-filled and fruitful. When they were distracted by other pursuits (including false gods and idols), their whole community life went sour. How does your life, including your attitude and general disposition, change when you are not walking closely with Jesus?
Prayer Requests

Pause as a group to gather prayer requests from one another and write them here so that you may not only include them in your closing prayer but also in your prayers throughout the week.

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Closing Prayer and Blessing

Gracious God,
At the start of this new year we are filled with expectations as to what the days and months will bring. Help us to place our hope in you first, centering our days in your Word, and then help us to be of service to our neighbor. By tuning into your calling through scripture and the sacraments, may we be ready and willing to go where you lead us. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

Bless each other with these words:
The Lord will provide what you need for this day. Trust in his promises. Amen

Service Project/Planning Idea

This week is the celebration of Epiphany on Wednesday, January 6th. You are welcome to attend an Epiphany Day worship service at Bethel in the chapel at 7pm. Since it is a celebration centered in “light,” consider bringing a candle on Wednesday to someone whom you know is in need of a little sign of hope. You could include a card that says, “Happy Epiphany Day! The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. Jesus is the Light of the World.”