

Experiencing Beauty



Workshop: Art

About this Rotation

Experiencing beauty as a faith practice enables us to encounter God through our senses and through the mysterious workings of God's Spirit. When we awaken to the diverse expressions of beauty, we deepen our connection to God, others, and ourselves. Through the beauty around us—in the universe and relationships, amid moments of both delight and brokenness—God communicates grace, healing, and comfort to us. We see anew, and we are moved to worship.

The focus story for this rotation is Luke 9:28–36. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures that help us understand the importance of experiencing beauty.

About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences, or the many individual ways learners apprehend and incorporate information into their own understandings and ways of being in the world.

For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Multiple intelligences*: ways of incorporating information, including Visual/Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Musical/Rhythmic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalist.
- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.
- *Workshop*: primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherd*: key relational components, these leaders travel with a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners in which faith is shared.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week: age ranges, learning styles, and experiences in previous workshops within this rotation.

About this Workshop

Art can become a window to God for us. Art can disturb preconceived ideas about beauty, and it can deepen our awareness of beauty. When we make our own art, we connect with our divine Creator and honor God's image within us. Art can also be a wonderful way to engage children. Since their verbal skills are still developing, art helps them express emotion or complex thoughts more directly. Since God is the ultimate source of beauty, when we wonder about beauty together we also deepen our understanding of God within us and around us.

BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

Luke 9:28–36

SUPPLEMENTAL STORIES:

Exodus 35:20–29

Acts 9:17–20

Leader Preparation

Consider where and when art has influenced your life: through magazines, on television, or in museums, public buildings, parks, your workplace, church, or home. Art has the power to create lasting impressions for good or ill. Experiencing beauty challenges Christians to use artistic expression to share God's righteousness with the world.

Prayer: Holy God, our Creator, help me to see your amazing artistic beauty in everything around me. As I seek to guide these learners, open my eyes to new expressions of your love in our world. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Holy Linens (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Paraments are the cloths that cover the pulpit, Bible, and communion table or altar. Make sure that either the sanctuary or storage area where the paraments or banners are kept is available for participants to explore. Centering Prayer: *Artful Weaver, help me feel your delight at all of the brightly colored threads that pattern your world. Help me trust in your vision for beautiful designs that are unfolding. Where threads have broken, guide all your people toward healing practices that honor the hurt places and that open our eyes to new beauty that may emerge from them. Amen.*

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) someone in your church who helps care for the paraments and can answer the group's questions
- (optional) a collection of yarn that includes the colors blue, purple, and red

Ask the group to listen closely to the scripture reading, paying special attention to what men and women both brought and what the women donated on their own. Read Exodus 35:20–29.

If available, spread out a variety of yarn, and have the children pick out the colors of yarn the women spun. Talk about how these colors are used in your own church in different seasons of the church year, such as Advent, Lent, Easter and Pentecost. Typically, blue and purple are the "getting ready" colors used during Lent and Advent in anticipation of Easter and Christmas. White symbolizes the new life of Jesus' resurrection. Red symbolizes the fire of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost. Green symbolizes the Ordinary Time of daily ministry.

Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

How do the colors we see in the sanctuary help us worship God? Take a field trip to the sanctuary to view all the beautiful linens used during worship. These may be cloths that cover the pulpit or communion table, banners that hang on walls, choir robes and stoles, or the minister’s robe and stole. Make sure that participants have washed their hands before inviting them to look at the cloths and to gently touch them. What do they notice about the materials used? What symbols are embroidered on them?

As you look at the paraments, talk about the times of the church year when each one is used. To extend this activity, ask a member of your worship committee or someone who helps care for the paraments to meet you in the sanctuary or in the area where paraments are stored and answer any questions the group may have. As participants look at the banners, wonder together why each one was made. Which designs and colors are participants’ favorites? Talk about the people who make banners in your church. How might these people be like the skilled women described in Exodus?



2 On Our Way to Meet Jesus

Leader preparation: Look at the artwork “Journey of the Magi.” Imagine yourself on the road to meet Jesus. Where would you be on the trail? What are you experiencing on the way? Is the road dusty and the sun hot? Have you found places of shade? Do you walk mostly in the valley or on the ridgeline?

Centering prayer: God of All, the journey to meet you stretches back in time and space, connecting travelers then and now. We are all on our way. When our eyes focus on the rocks and the dust, lift them to the hills. Open my ears to beautiful sounds like those of the bells that circle the camels’ heads. Guide our feet and fill our hearts with anticipation as we continually seek you. Amen.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Journey of the Magi” by James Tissot, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1004323110?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401
- mat board or cardboard, one for each child
- craft glue
- variety of textured fabric scraps such as burlap, felt, cotton, or faux fur
- selection of buttons, bottle caps, pom-poms, and pieces of yarn
- scissors for cutting fabric and yarn

Gather around the artwork “Journey of the Magi” by James Tissot. Before you share the name of this painting with participants, ask them to pretend that they are time-traveling detectives. They will look for clues about who is in the painting, where the people and animals have come from, and where the group is going.

Remind participants that detectives use all of their senses to gather clues. What do they smell? How does the camel fur smell? How do the turbans feel on the travelers’ heads? For fun, set a time limit for how long they can travel back in time. Explain that as time travelers they only have a few minutes to gather their clues.

After a minute or two, cover or turn over the artwork and ask participants to describe what they saw. What story did the clues tell? Finally, reveal the name of the painting and talk about why the travelers went to find baby Jesus. What did they

hope to find? Affirm that we are travelers who are also on our way to meet Jesus. *What do we hope to find? What beauty do we see along the way?* Remind your group that even Jesus walked his own road of faith. Along the way he encountered the startling beauty of the Holy Spirit in his Transfiguration (Luke 9:28–36) and more subtle beauty in the people and creatures he met. Jesus teaches us to always open our eyes, ears, noses, hands—our whole selves!—to the beauty God reveals all around us.

Move to a table set up with materials for each learner to create a tactile collage. Use a firm board as the base, such as mat board or cardboard. Provide scraps of material with a variety of textures such as burlap, felt, and fur as well as string, buttons, pom-poms, or any other materials that can be attached to the board using craft glue. Invite children to touch each of the materials and to make a collage using things that feel and look pleasing. Name the collage “On our way to meet Jesus.” Encourage children to interpret their collages in whatever way they like. When everyone has completed his or her projects or come to a stopping place, invite participants to share what they created.

③ Molded with Love

Leader preparation: Take a few moments before your group meets to mold your own piece of clay. Close your eyes. Welcome joy. Mold the clay until it feels right in your hand.

Centering prayer: *O God our Creator, when you molded the first humans from clay, your heart filled with delight. Thank you for seeing wonder in me. Open my heart to your presence and mold me in your way. Amen.*

Supplies:

- quick-drying modeling clay such as Crayola® Model Magic®
- Bible

Pass around modeling clay or another easily pliable material so that each participant has a piece about the size of a tennis ball. Tell the story of Jesus’ Transfiguration in Luke 9:28–36. Just as Jesus was transformed, we too are molded by the Holy Spirit moving within us and among us.

Invite group members to close their eyes and imagine God’s love filling them up. Imagine a smile that begins at their heads and spreads to the tips of their toes. With their eyes still closed, encourage participants to mold their clay in a pleasing way. They don’t need to worry about what the creation will look like, but may simply shape it in a way that feels beautiful.

After several minutes, ask participants to open their eyes. Laugh and wonder at the shapes they made. Talk about the beauty of things we offer God from our hearts. *What kinds of things do we create out of love? What makes these things special?* Reflect on how something can feel beautiful as well as look beautiful. How was the experience of working with clay different with their eyes closed? *Do our eyes ever get in the way of making something from our hearts?*

Conclude with the following or a similar prayer: *God of all beauty, you stir our hearts with love. Help us to always hold onto that love when we create. Let your love shine through everything we do. Help us to worship you with the gifts of our hearts as well as with the gifts of our hands. Amen.*

Discerning & Deciding Activities

**4 Scratch Art (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Recall the joy of coloring with crayons. Contemplate what emotions you associate with various colors: joy, sorrow, surprise, peace.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- brightly colored crayons
- black crayons, one for each participant
- toothpicks (or substitute coins, the handle of a child's paint brush, or another hard object for scraping)

Summarize the story of Paul's journey found in Acts 9:1–19. Saul (whose name was changed to Paul) had been persecuting men and women who “belonged to the Way.” This is what followers of Jesus called their faith. Saul bound these followers and dragged them to Jerusalem. A light from heaven flashed around Saul, and he heard a voice ask him why he persecuted Jesus. Saul fell to the ground and became blind. Then a disciple named Ananias received a vision from God that told him to lay hands on Saul so that Saul could see again. When he could see again, he changed his ways and became a leader of the Christian church. His name was changed from Saul to Paul (Acts 13:9).

Provide plenty of brightly colored crayons and sheets of white paper. Ask children to imagine what God's love feels like and to cover their papers with all the colors that come to mind. Encourage them to press hard so that the colors are bright and to cover every piece of white. If possible, create a sample for yourself so that you can later demonstrate doing scratch art for participants.

When children have completely covered their papers with crayon, admire them together. Talk about how God created beauty in each person. Wonder together what our spirits or souls might look like. What colors could they be? For each color, invite participants to name a good feeling, talent, or character trait that lives in people's hearts. For example, red might represent excitement. Yellow could be the ability to listen. Blue could be a feeling of peace. Green could be curiosity. As you name other colors, have the learners name a feeling.

Read Acts 9:1–9. Ask participants to describe what happened to Saul after the bright light from heaven flashed around him. Sometimes, even when our eyes are open, we do not see the good in other people. *How was Saul blind in the way he saw other people even before he lost his physical sight?* Encourage participants to name some different feelings or attitudes that make it hard to see the good in other people (such as jealousy, worry about what others think, mean words, anger, and so forth). Invite participants to color over the bright colors on their paper with a black crayon. Remind participants to press hard in order to form a thick top layer with no gaps of color showing. Notice that while the colors cannot be seen they are still present.

Read Acts 9:17–19, in which Ananias laid his hands on Saul and the Holy Spirit healed Saul so that he was no longer blind. The Holy Spirit helped open Saul's eyes so that he could see the beauty in himself and others. Wonder together how Saul felt when he could see color again. If you have a sample available, demonstrate how to use a toothpick, coin, or other hard object to scratch away the black crayon so that the bright colors shine through. If not, instruct participants to scratch through the black layer of crayon to create fun designs, shapes, or draw-

ings. The scratched designs can be as free form or representative as participants want them to be. Celebrate the good that God has created in each of us by admiring and enjoying the beautiful colors that emerge.

5 Beautiful Feet

Leader preparation: Pay attention to your feet this week. Where are they traveling? Where would they like to lead you? Think about pilgrims in ancient times that traveled dusty roads with bare feet in order to come close to Jesus. In what way are you a pilgrim? You may want to recruit additional help for this activity.

Centering prayer: *Merciful God, lead our feet on paths of peace. When necessary, let us put aside comfort in order to follow your way. Help us join with other travelers who seek to praise you in play, work, and worship. Amen.*

Supplies:

- artwork: “Journey of the Magi” by James Tissot, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1004323110?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401
- mural paper
- variety of water-soluble paints poured in shallow aluminum pie tins
- baby wipes or pan of water and paper towels
- tarp for protecting the floor (if doing this project indoors)

Gather around the artwork “Journey of the Magi” by James Tissot. Notice all the feet you see in this painting. Try and count the feet! *Can you tell if anyone is wearing shoes? Imagine what the road might have felt like on bare feet. When God brought rain, how would that feel to the travelers’ feet? How else might God have brought comfort to traveling feet?*

You may want to go outside for the rest of this activity. Roll out a large piece of paper, ideally a couple of feet wide and at least six feet long. Place different colored paints in shallow aluminum pie tins. One at a time, lift up each child so that he or she can dip his or her feet in one color of paint. Several colors can be used, but only one at a time. Be sure to wipe one color off before dipping feet in another. To simplify, you may want to assign one color to each participant. Once paint is on their feet, help children stand on the paper so that they can stamp out a design. Place baby wipes or a pan of water and towels by several chairs so that participants can wipe the paint off their feet once they are finished.

Once the mural is complete, reflect on the design the group created. *How do the colors complement one another? What patterns emerged from many stomping feet? Where do you see beauty in this image?*

In James Weldon Johnson’s poem *The Creation*, he used the phrases, “and God stepped out,” “God stepped down,” and “God walked around.” Notice the many footprints on the mural and reflect how we are created in the image of God.

6 Lavender Devotional Candles

Leader preparation: Practice lighting a candle during your devotion time this week. Ponder smells that you associate with worship or special seasons of the church year. These can be smells you associate either with corporate worship or personal quiet time.

Centering prayer: *God of all light, be with us as we open our whole selves to you. Help us to reach out to you with all of our senses, for you are God in all. Amen.*

Supplies:

- Bibles
- white 3" x 3" pillar candles, one for each child
- dried lavender buds, ½ cup per candle (can be purchased online; can also substitute cinnamon sticks or cloves)
- spray adhesive or craft glue
- paper plates, one for each child

Read Exodus 35:20–29. Wonder together what type of fragrant incense may have been given by God's people to honor God and help people come close to God. What are some of the participants' favorite smells? What smells remind them of a time that is set aside for worship of God?

Pass around a container of dried lavender buds. Talk about how they smell. Discuss how different smells make us feel. What makes a smell beautiful? Explain that lavender is often a scent used to help people feel calm. Light a sample candle. Talk about how candles are used to help people worship God. (You may point out that Jesus referred to himself as the light of the world; see John 8:12.) Name some ways that individuals, families, and churches can use candles to remind them that God is with them.

To make lavender scented candles, spread a layer of lavender buds on a paper plate or other protected surface. In a well-ventilated area, spray each candle with adhesive. Quickly roll the candle over the lavender buds until it is well-covered. Set aside to dry. If substituting cinnamon sticks, use heavier glue such as craft glue and apply with a craft stick.

While the candles are drying, invite participants to look closely at some leftover lavender buds or other scented materials. Talk about how the smell of the flower lingers. *How does the smell fill a room? How can our actions make the world more beautiful just as lovely scents leave a fragrance in a room?*

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Through Eyes of Love (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Print out the optical illusions noted below. Practice looking deeply at each optical illusion. Appreciate how you are able to see in a new way by shifting your focus. Reflect on a time when you were able to see a situation or relationship in a new way by shifting your focus. How might this idea take shape in your spiritual life?

Supplies:

- Bible
- “Optical Illusions,” Attachment: Activity 7a
- “Perspective,” Attachment: Activity 7b
- pencils
- paper
- ruler for each child or several to share

Read Acts 9:17–20. When Ananias laid his hands on Saul, Saul’s eyes changed. How did Saul see followers of Jesus before the Holy Spirit changed his heart? Introduce the concept of perspective. Perspective is the way people see something. When people look at artwork, what they see depends on their perspective.

Show the group the optical illusions on Attachment: Activity 7a. Notice the different images that appear depending on where you focus your eyes. Once group members have learned to refocus their eyes and see the different images, resume your discussion of Saul and Ananias.

How did the Holy Spirit change the way Saul saw followers of Jesus? When Ananias laid his hands on Saul’s eyes, how did Saul see differently? How does the Holy Spirit help us see one another? Ask participants to name some unhelpful ways people look at one another. Then ask them to name what people see when they look at one another through eyes of love.

Show participants how to create their own optical illusion that demonstrates two ways of seeing the same thing. Using a ruler, ask each child to draw a line 8” long. Then, ask everyone to draw a second line under the first, leaving a couple of inches between the lines. On the ends of the first line, draw two short lines that angle toward the center of the line. On the ends of the second line, draw two short lines that angle away from the line. For help in drawing these optical illusions, see Attachment: Activity 7b.

Ask group members which line looks longer. Encourage participants to measure the lines again. Discuss how one line looks bigger or smaller than the other. Along the line that appears longer, encourage each participant to write or draw something positive they notice about the person sitting on his or her right. One way to encourage comments about inner beauty is to invite children to complete the sentence, “[Name], I see [name a quality] in you.” Then, have the children give their drawings to whomever they wrote about.

8 **Wrapped Yarn Vases**

Leader preparation: Prepare recycled containers as needed so that they are clean and free of residue. Contemplate something in your life— a thing, an aspect of your work, or a spiritual practice—that no longer fits its original purpose or that has become worn or tired. How can you seek to make this feature of your life alive in a new way?

Centering prayer: *Holy God, open our eyes to hidden beauty. Reawaken desire in our hearts. Summon out new life. Amen.*

Supplies:

- Bibles
- brightly colored yarn, especially blue, purple, and crimson (or red)
- clean, recycled barbecue, soda, or hot sauce bottles with all labels and residue removed
- clear-drying glue mixed with a few drops of water to ease spreading
- foam brushes
- (optional) spray paint
- (optional) felt strips
- (optional) hot glue gun

Share with your group a collection of clean, old glass or plastic bottles. Make sure the labels have been removed. Old barbecue or hot sauce bottles are a good size for making a small bud vase. Pass around the bottles, and talk about their original function. Discuss what typically happens to old bottles. Then wonder together about what the bottle can become. Encourage participants to imagine how the bottles can become beautiful in a new way.

Read Exodus 35:20–29 and talk about how the people of God used their skills and creativity to share their joy for God. Lay brightly colored yarns on a table and invite participants to touch the yarn and choose their favorite colors. Provide bowls of clear-drying glue and foam brushes. Add just enough water to the glue to ease spreading.

In order to transform old bottles into beautiful bud vases, instruct participants to spread a layer of glue around the top section of the bottle. Tie the yarn around the top of the bottle, and begin wrapping yarn around its neck so that it is completely covered. Help children maintain tension on the yarn in order to create a tight wrap. Spread glue on the next section of bottle, working with about two inches at a time. Continue wrapping yarn around the bottle, periodically pushing together the yarn so that the strands lie next to each other. If older children want to create patterns with multiple colors, simply tie a new color to the old and trim the excess yarn from the knot. Continue to wrap the bottle in the same manner. When the bottle is completely wrapped, trim any excess yarn. To create a finished look, have an adult helper use a hot glue gun to attach a strip of felt to the bottle's neck.

Participants can also experiment with spiral patterns of yarn on an empty liter bottle of soda. If parts of the bottle will be showing, paint the bottles first using a quick-drying paint such as spray paint. This part of the project will need to be done outside. Create the desired pattern with glue, and then cover with yarn.

Once the yarn bottles are complete, wonder together how their beauty can be used to share God's love. *Where might they be placed? To whom might they be given?*

9 Prayer Flags

Leader preparation: When have you felt the Holy Spirit like a gentle wind that barely caresses you or provides a refreshing breeze? When has the Holy Spirit blown with such mighty power that you were completely surprised or overwhelmed?

You can purchase prayer flags that come attached to a rope from a website such as "West Wind Flags," http://www.westwindcollection.com/home/ww1/page_60_52/blank_5_flag_set_primary.html.

Centering prayer: *Awesome God, you move throughout creation in subtle and powerful ways. Open us to both ways of experiencing your presence. Empower us to be embodied prayers to one another, extending welcome, peace, and compassion. Amen.*

Supplies:

- fabric paint or permanent markers
- blank prayer flags or white cotton or silk material approximately 8" square, one for each participant
- sketch paper and pencils

In the Tibetan tradition, small colorful prayer flags bear ancient words and symbols so that the prayers can be carried on the wind. Remind participants that the Hebrew word for God's Spirit, *ruach*, can be interpreted as breath or wind. In Genesis 1 the Holy Spirit blew like a mighty wind over creation, and in the story of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came like a great wind to fill the house where Jesus' followers were sitting. In Exodus 35:20–29, God's Holy Spirit stirs the people to creative giving. Ask group members to imagine God's Holy Spirit as wind that is sometimes gentle and sometimes strong. *How might this wind carry our prayers?*

Any cotton or silk material approximately 8" square can be transformed into prayer flags and then sewn or pinned to a rope that can be hung indoors. Silk material can be dyed using paint brushes and silk dyes for a beautiful watercolor effect. Consider using the colors of the church calendar for the flags: green, white, red, purple or blue.

When designing prayer flags, encourage participants to use simple words, symbols, and designs. Make a list of potential prayer words together that children can copy onto their flags. One-word prayers such as joy, peace, and healing work well.

Talk about how different colors make us feel. What color represents peace to the learners? What color denotes joy? Give participants sheets of paper to draw a practice design for their prayer flags. Once they have selected a word, they may choose to write it in an artful way and then add one simple image or color wash. Once children are satisfied with their designs, invite them to use permanent markers, fabric paint, or fabric dye to make their fabric flags. Dyes provide beautiful rich background colors, but will bleed. Markers or fabric paint work best for writing words.

Reflect

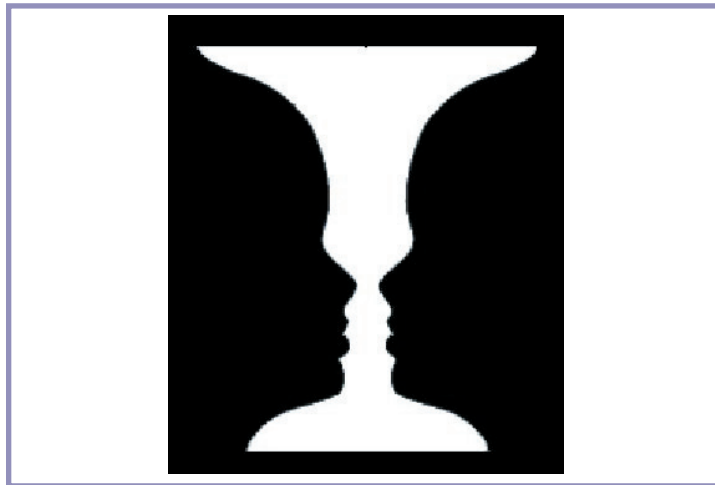
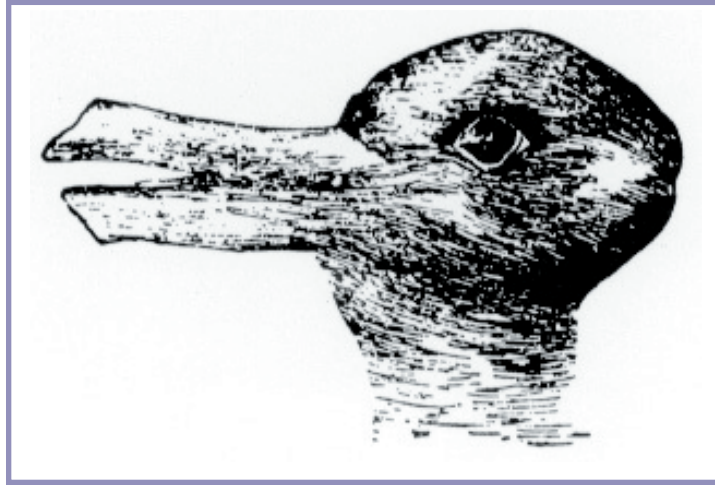
Which activities worked best for the dynamics and ages of your group? Take note of times when you felt anxious. How did your goals coincide with the experience of group members? What happened in your time together that best helped children connect to one another or to experience God in a new way? Give thanks for moments of joy, laughter, or understanding that occurred in your group this day. While these moments may be small, they serve as stepping stones for our journeys of faith. Allow yourself to receive both the gifts and frustrations of your role as leader and guide. Both experiences help us grow in our relationships with one another and with our God.

As a group, determine where to hang the flags. Talk about the purpose of the flags. *Who will use them as prayers? For whom are the prayers intended? How might the flags welcome people who visit your church?*

Conclude with the following or a similar blessing: *Holy God, whose Spirit blows over creation and stirs our hearts with wonder, joy, and awe, please bless these flags. May the wind carry our prayers to all who need their comfort, hope and peace. Amen.*

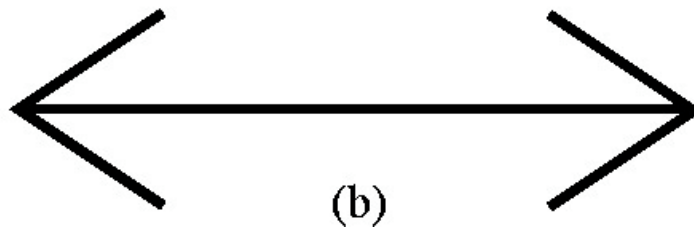
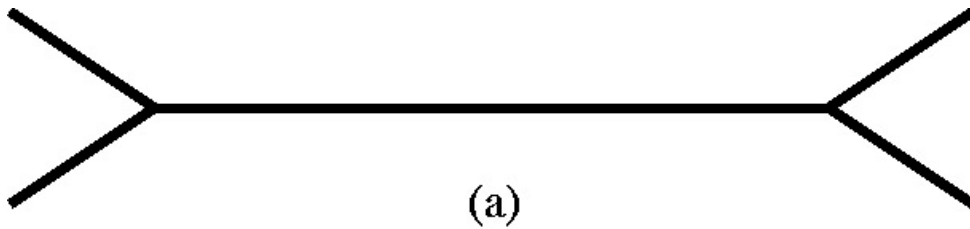
Attachment: Activity 7a

Optical Illusions



Attachment: Activity 7b

Perspective



Experiencing Beauty



Workshop: Computer

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About this Workshop

The Internet enables children to connect their faith with people and information around the world. By encountering other cultures online, children experience the many faces of God. They can become virtual pilgrims who can travel to sacred sites and experience the wondrous beauty of creation. Children can access beauty previously only known to God, such as the furthest reaches of outer space and the depths of our oceans. Computers function like kaleidoscopes that reveal the multifaceted beauty of God's people and our earth.

The focus story for this rotation is Luke 9:28–36. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures that help us understand the importance of experiencing beauty.

FOCUS STORY:

Luke 9:28–36

SUPPLEMENTAL STORIES

Job 38:1–11

Revelation 21:2–5

Leader Preparation

Be sure to preview all sites and Internet searches before introducing them to your group. Web searches can sometimes lead to unpredictable results. Have an adult closely monitor all computer activity to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for group members. Previewing sites also enables leaders to better assist children with navigation so that they can locate correct information and images quickly.

Prayer: God of all creation, you span the depths and heights of our universe. Expand

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Beautiful Earth (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: A couple of minutes before children arrive, click on the Images tab of your Internet search engine. Now all searches will bring up images instead of text. Decide whether your group will use the option to print found images for a group collage. If you wish to do this part of the activity, prepare the necessary materials.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- computer with Internet access
- (optional) printer with colored ink
- (optional) printer paper
- (optional) scissors
- (optional) glue

Read Job 38:1–11 together. In this passage, God describes the beauty of the earth as a way of sharing with Job the awesomeness of who God is. God gives Job a tour of the earth through words. Imagine together what Job would see if God gave Job an actual tour of the earth.

Gather your group around a computer. In the top left corner of Google's homepage, click on the Images tab. A new search screen will appear that will allow you to search for specific images. One at a time, do image searches for earth, ocean, mountains, desert, and clouds. Be careful about doing additional searches without previewing them because results with inappropriate content sometimes appear. Wonder together where you see God in these images of earth. *How do these images stretch your image of God?* Ask the group to imagine God creating all of the

our vision to match the grandeur of your passion for all life. Move our hearts to compassion as we encounter others' stories and relate them to our own. Amen.

Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

elements of our world. If they wanted to show Job the wonders of creation, what else might they pick? A redwood tree? A calla lily? A golden retriever? How does seeing these images move us to praise God? If you have time, print the images you find and create a group collage entitled “God’s Beauty Surrounds Us.”

2 Cosmic Creator

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the Hubble Telescope website and locate a gallery of images easy for participants to explore. Wonder at the similarities in color and movement between microscopic matter and images from outer space.

Supplies:

- magnifying glass
- natural objects such as a flower, seashell, leaf, and insect
- computer with Internet access
- Daily Motion Video, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xhqam9_particle-physics-and-structure_tech
- Hubble Telescope website, <http://hubblesite.org/>

Sometimes when we imagine the awesomeness of God, we think of God creating things very, very big, such as the universe! We can also experience the wonder of who God is by contemplating things that are very, very small. Show a magnifying glass to your group. Ask what a magnifying glass helps us see. Invite each child to examine a piece of clothing, skin, or a natural object you have brought in, such as a flower or seashell, with the magnifying glass. Then, wonder together how what learners see would change if they used an even more powerful microscope.

Gather around a computer screen. Introduce the concept of an atom as a particle so small that only the most powerful microscopes can see it. Scientists believe that atoms contain even smaller particles, named quarks, but these particles are so small that not even the most powerful microscopes have been able to see them. Gather around a computer and watch this video on “Particle Physics and Structure” from http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xhqam9_particle-physics-and-structure_tech.

Scientists created this video to help people imagine what the world inside an atom looks like. Focus on the images rather than on the technical information given. Wonder together what memories are sparked by the colors and patterns you see.

Now go to the Hubble Space Telescope site and look at pictures from outer space. How do pictures of the smallest things on earth compare with pictures of the largest things people have discovered? God’s beauty is in the very smallest and very largest parts of our universe. People need special microscopes or telescopes to see the beauty of distant stars and hidden atoms, but God sees their beauty. Call out words that describe how you feel when you see these images. Then imagine together what beauty God sees in each of you that may at first seem hidden.

3 Beauty in the Extreme

Leader preparation: Make sure you have enough adults to assist and monitor navigation of the website Extreme Science. Decide how to divide group members so that each person has a role or can take a turn accessing information.

Supplies:

- Bible
- computer with Internet access
- website: “Extreme Science Earth Records,” <http://www.extremescience.com/earth-records.htm>
- pencils

In Job 38:1–11 God tells Job that God created the measurements of our world. God made the highest mountains and deepest seas. If you have access to multiple computers, divide your participants into groups of two or three. Otherwise, explore the records together on one computer. Create a bookmark on each computer for “Earth Records” found under the Earth tab at the site Extreme Science, the specific link for which is in the preceding supply list. Assign three to four earth records for each group to research. Children can take turns navigating, reading, and recording information. Ask each group to write down basic information about the earth record, such as the name of the highest mountain and its location or the size of the largest ruby. Point out that many of the earth records have a video link or map located in the top right corner of the page. Click on the Play button to view these videos. Ask an adult helper to assist younger children. Younger children can still control the mouse, but may need help reading and navigating the site.

When everyone has collected her or his information, invite all to share results with the group. Synonyms for the word “magnificent” include the words “beautiful,” “excellent,” and “striking.” *What other words describe the records each group viewed? How do these amazing places and things help you experience God?* Using these earth records as inspiration, complete the following sentence. God is . . .

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Musical Designs (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: While this is a simple activity, children can become quite engrossed in listening to music and gazing at the moving lines and colors. Select music that will appeal to children in tone and content. You can create a folder in iTunes for the songs selected.

Supplies:

- iTunes music library
- computer
- paper
- markers or crayons

Describe a time when you looked at something so beautiful that you did not want to talk and just sat quietly to enjoy it. Invite participants to share a time when they lost track of time while watching something beautiful. How did that experience make them feel?

Open iTunes on a computer so that the whole group can see the screen. Select and play appropriate music for your age group from the iTunes library. While still in iTunes, go to the View menu tab at the top of the screen. Scroll down to Visualizer and select one of the options such as Classic Visualizer. Return to the View Menu and select Show Visualizer. Abstract images will begin moving across the screen. The frequency and style of the designs change with the type of music be-

ing played. Experiment with using Visualizer for various types of music. Enjoy watching the emerging designs for several minutes.

Distribute paper and markers or crayons and encourage group members to create their own designs to the music being played. Invite participants to share their designs. Wonder together how their experience gazing at the abstract images and then creating their own can be a type of prayer. *How can gazing at something beautiful help people come close to God? What does prayer that uses no words feel like?*

5 Beautiful Cities

Leader preparation: Read the Forbes' article and become comfortable navigating it. Make a plan for viewing the article so that all group members will have an opportunity to see the images and read the text (older children).

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- "The World's Most Beautiful Cities," http://www.forbes.com/2010/01/22/paris-london-travel-lifestyle-travel-tourism-new-york-top-ten-cities_slide.html
- Bibles

Before your group meets, bookmark the link to the Forbes article "The World's Most Beautiful Cities." If you are unable to access this link, do a general Web search for the same topic. Print the article and highlight simple, interesting facts about why each city was picked. Highlighting simple facts will help young readers more confidently participate. Within the article, click on the link that says "In Pictures: The World's Most Beautiful Cities." As much as possible involve children in reading the article and scrolling through the pictures. Group members can take turns reading facts about a particular city. For simplicity, ask one person to control the computer's mouse. Encourage the rest of the group to comment on what they notice about each city. What do they think makes a city beautiful? Rate the cities according to the images and facts about them.

Then read Revelation 21:2–5. How does the author of Revelation describe the holy city? How do these criteria for what makes a city beautiful compared to the Forbes article? The holy city described in Revelation can only occur in God's future at the end of time, but this vision of the future can inspire people now. Make a list of things that would make a city beautiful if it was transformed by God's love. Decide on your own criteria for the world's most beautiful cities. Conclude by imagining a city near you. Name parts of the city that help people experience God's beauty. Name parts of the city that cry for healing. Say a group prayer for this city. Remember to include plants and animals that also inhabit cities.

6 Virtual Pilgrims

Leader preparation: Exploring Google Earth can be very fun and time consuming! Decide ahead of time which sites will be most exciting for your group to explore. Finding the panoramic spheres also takes practice. Doing your own search ahead of time will help you be a better tour guide!

Supplies:

- computer(s) with Internet access
- website: "Sacred Destinations in Jerusalem," <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/jerusalem-christian-sites>
- copy of Google Earth downloaded and installed on your computer

In Revelation 21:2–5, the author describes a new Jerusalem that is as beautiful as a new bride. A pilgrim is someone who visits a holy place in order to feel God’s presence in a deep way. Every year, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim pilgrims go to Jerusalem to experience the beauty of its sacred sites. The “Sacred Destinations” website describes fourteen sites particularly meaningful to Christians. View pictures and information about these sites by exploring the link in the supply list. Then use Google Earth to make your own virtual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. You must download and install a free version of Google Earth onto your computer before completing this activity. Begin by entering your church’s address in Google Earth. Zoom in as far as you can go and view the street level picture of your church. Then, enter “Jerusalem” in the search engine. Once Google has transported you to Jerusalem, enter the names of the sacred sites you researched earlier into Google Earth’s search box.

An exciting feature of Google Earth allows you to enter into pictures people have taken of these holy sites and experience a 360-degree view of the church or place. These panoramic images appear as bubbles or spheres when you zoom in to street level on Google Earth. By entering the name of a sacred site, Google Earth will take you to the address in Jerusalem. Slowly zoom into the location and look for bubble-like spheres that appear close to the earth’s surface. Once you see a sphere, click on it once in order to view the name of the building or place. Then, click on it again in order to enter the sphere and receive a panoramic tour of the building or place. When you scroll over the sphere, it will say, “click to fly into spherical panorama.”

Here is a list of several spheres that can be found in Jerusalem: Church of the Nations on Mount Olive; the Basilica of the Agony of the Garden of Gethsemane; Tomb of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Church of Mary Magdalene; the Western Wall; Chapel of St. Helen, Church of the Holy Sepulcher; Rock of Golgotha, Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Via Dolorosa; and Migdal David, view to Old City Jerusalem.

How did you feel exploring these holy places where millions of people have come to worship God and come close to Jesus? What beauty did you see? Jerusalem is a beautiful place, but it is also a place of great conflict. There is much fighting about who can live and worship in Jerusalem. What is God’s hope for this beautiful city? How can Christians treat people of other faiths in a way that can help Jerusalem be peaceful and beautiful?

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Gates of Hope and Joy (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Evaluate how to adjust this activity for children who need help reading and writing by providing sufficient adult helpers or exploring The Gates project as a large group. You may also want to decide how much to reveal about the timing of this project in relation to 9/11.

Supplies:

- “The Gates,” Attachment: Activity 7
- computer with Internet access
- “The Gates project,” <http://www.nyc.gov/html/thegates/home.html>

The Gates project by artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude transformed twenty-three miles of walkways through Central Park in New York City. Jesus was transfigured in Luke 9 by the light of God’s love. The author of Revelation 21:2–5 dreamed

about how a city could be transformed by God's love. Using the NYC.gov link above, research how Christo and Jeanne-Claude used bolts of brightly colored fabric (saffron color) to bring hope and joy to a city. Older children can complete this project on their own while younger children can look at the images and research the site with the help of an adult. Use Attachment: Activity 7 as a guide for exploring The Gates project. When group members have completed their research, gather as a large group, review the worksheet, and take turns sharing what everyone learned. Then, wonder together what kinds of simple things could bring hope and joy to your city or town.



8 Beauty Helps Us Worship

Leader preparation: In order to get ready for the elaborate parades of Christian pilgrims through the streets during Holy Week, people in Guatemala create elaborate floral designs, or carpets called *alfrombas*, on the streets. As pilgrims walk through the flowers, the designs disappear as faithful feet scatter them. Imagine what it would be like to walk over beautiful *alfrombas* in celebration of Holy Week.

How do these temporary expressions of beauty that instantly get swept away affect your understanding of beauty? Reflect on the desire to preserve beauty versus the experience of beauty in a moment. Become familiar with the artwork "Guatemala Procession" and the link to Guatemalan *alfrombas* found in the supply list so that you can lead your group in appreciating the beauty in both.

Supplies:

- artwork: "Guatemala: Procession" by Betty LaDuke, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1004323110?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401
- computer with Internet access
- website: "Mayan Holy Week Carpets," http://www.travelyucatan.com/maya/mayan_holy_week_carpets.php

Share the artwork "Guatemala: Procession" by Betty LaDuke with your group. Betty LaDuke's paintings are inspired by her travels throughout the world, where she saw many different ways to worship God using beautiful designs and objects. In her description of this painting, Betty LaDuke says that the faces represent masks used in Holy Week processions in the Mayan village Chichicastenango, in Guatemala. If this painting is based on the stories of Holy Week, wonder together who is riding the donkey into the city. Why do the learners think the artist chose the colors, animals, and people that they see in this painting? Ask participants to name acts of worship they notice. Which acts look familiar? Discuss special ways that your church celebrates Palm Sunday. *How does your church use beautiful objects in worship to tell the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week?*

One way the Mayan people of Guatemala re-tell the story of Holy Week is by creating *alfrombas*, or carpets, that line the streets before worshipers walk over them in elaborate processions. These carpets help people remember how Jesus entered Jerusalem. Gather around a computer and view the link listed in the supply list about *alfrombas* created during Holy Week in Guatemala. Discover what kinds of materials people use to make *alfrombas*. Absorb the beauty of the many different types of carpets created. Note what happens to the carpets when the large Holy Week processions walk through the streets. Under "History," read about the biblical origins of this tradition.

Compare the alfrombas to palm fronds, banners, or other ways that your church uses beautiful objects to tell the story of Holy Week. *If you were to create carpets in your church, what materials would you use? Where would you put them? Who would walk over them?* Have participants write a brief summary about the alfrombas they have researched and a proposal for how they might be used in the church and share it with the church's worship committee.

9 Dancing Saints

Leader preparation: What appeals to you about St. Gregory's worship service? Notice all of the different senses involved in worship. Reflect on your own worship experiences and the sights and smells that linger in your memory.

Supplies:

- website "St. Gregory's of Nyssa Episcopal Church," <http://www.saintgregorys.org/>
- stamp that represents God's love, such as a cross, dove, or heart
- stamp pad

St. Gregory's of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco, California, is sometimes called the church of the dancing saints. This church is known for its creative worship and beautiful music. Visit their website and learn more about how this church uses beauty to enhance their worship.

Under the Worship tab explore the "Art of St. Gregory's" and take a virtual tour of the church. Have one group of participants pay attention to all the beauty they see in the video. Ask another group to notice all the different objects used to help people celebrate worship. The people of St. Gregory's dance and carry umbrellas, crosses, and other objects during parts of their worship service. *How many items can you identify and name? What do you notice about the space in St. Gregory's? What do these spaces tell you about the ways the people worship in this place?*

Also under the "Art of St. Gregory's" learn about the dancing saints painted in St. Gregory's rotunda. In his article on this site, Rector Richard Fabian describes a saint as anyone who has the "stamp of God" on him or her. As participants get ready to leave, stamp a sign of God's love on the back of their hands (such as a cross, dove or heart), and say, "You have the stamp of God on you. You are God's beloved child. Go in peace."

Reflect

Ponder the use of technology in this workshop, especially in relation to participants' access to the computers and ability to navigate. Work as a team to ensure that each child has an opportunity to take an active role. Receive the gifts of understanding and joy that may have happened today, and ask for God's help in processing any challenges.

Attachment: Activity 7

The Gates

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/thegates/home.html>

1. Click on "About the Gates" and find answers to the following questions.
 - When did The Gates appear in Central Park?
 - How many gates did Christo and Jeanne-Claude create?
 - How tall were The Gates?
 - What happened to the material when they took down The Gates?
2. Click on "Christo and Jeanne-Claude in Their Own Words".
 - When did Christo and Jeanne-Claude first think of this project?
 - How long did it take for the project to be approved and made?
 - Something very sad happened in New York City in 2001 on 9/11. Many people got hurt and lost people they loved. How do you think The Gates helped people in the city feel hopeful again?
 - Why did they choose Central Park?
 - What do Christo and Jeanne-Claude never do together?
 - The artists talk about their artwork always being temporary. This means that all of their hard work to make this project happen could only be enjoyed for a short time. When they took down The Gates, their artwork disappeared, except in the memories of people who walked under them and in pictures that were taken of The Gates. What other beautiful things last for a short time? How does getting to enjoy something for a short time make it valuable to us?
3. Click on "Images from The Gates."
 - Notice the color of the fabric the artists chose. Why do you think they chose this color?
 - Imagine walking under The Gates through Central Park. The artists hoped that the fabric would look like an orange river flowing through the park. What do you think The Gates look like?
 - How do you think people felt when they walked under The Gates?

Experiencing Beauty



Workshop: Drama

About this Rotation

Experiencing beauty as a faith practice enables us to encounter God through our senses and through the mysterious workings of God's Spirit. When we awaken to the diverse expressions of beauty, we deepen our connection to God, others, and ourselves. Through the beauty around us—in the universe and relationships, amid moments of both delight and brokenness—God communicates grace, healing, and comfort to us. We see anew, and we are moved to worship.

About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences, or the many individual ways learners apprehend and incorporate information into their own understandings and ways of being in the world.

For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Multiple intelligences*: ways of incorporating information, including Visual/Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Musical/Rhythmic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalist.
- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.

- *Workshop*: primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherd*: key relational components, these leaders travel with a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners in which faith is shared.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week: age ranges, learning styles, and experiences in previous workshops within this rotation.

About this Workshop

Dramatic play helps children integrate their personal stories with the larger story of God and God's people. Drama also helps bridge the gap between everyday life and the amazing promises of God that span all time and all places. Children can learn to work together, resolve conflicts, and express their emotions. Children experience beauty as their trust in themselves and in each other grows and as they are truly able to enter into the world of God's hope and love through their imaginations.

The focus story for this rotation is the Transfiguration story in Luke 9:28–36. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures that help us understand the importance of experiencing beauty.

BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

Luke 9:28–36

SUPPLEMENTAL STORIES:

Ecclesiastes 3:1–13
2 Corinthians 5:16–20

Leader Preparation

While many children enjoy imaginary play, they sometimes freeze when acting in a group setting. Props and guiding questions can help prime the pump so that children can enter into the beauty of using their imaginations. As you read through these activities, think about the comfort level of the participants and how to encourage them if they feel intimidated or need help getting started. Remember that there are many levels of success for dramatic play. For some children, speaking or doing motions in front of others may in itself build confidence. Others will

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 What Could It Be? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Recall how God's light transformed Jesus in the Transfiguration story. Imagine how the disciples felt when they saw Jesus become illumined. Allow the beauty and wonder of this story to fill you so that when you share it with your group the children may experience these emotions as well. Become familiar with the basic elements of the Transfiguration story as it is told in Luke 9:28–36 so that you can share the story with your group.

Supplies:

- Bible
- a bowl, scarf, or other simple object that might be used in multiple ways

Select a simple object such as a bowl or scarf. God's people experience beauty when the Holy Spirit helps them see something old with fresh eyes. Tell Luke's version of the Transfiguration story, Luke 9:28–36, and wonder together how the Holy Spirit helped the disciples see familiar people and objects in new ways. Show the object you have selected and encourage participants to imagine various creative uses for it. For instance, the bowl could become a turtle shell, a crash helmet, or a river rock. Gather in a circle, pass around the prop, and invite each child to use it to create a new perspective. If a child gets stuck, prompt him or her by offering suggestions. For example, what could a bowl be if turned upside down on the floor? As much as possible, ask questions that draw out the child's imagination instead of telling him or her what the object could be.

enjoy acting out more complex scenes. Celebrate whatever level of participation is possible for each child.

Prayer: God of light and Source for all life, you love us as we are, and you invite us to be transformed. Open our eyes to new possibilities for renewal in ourselves, one another, and our world. May I be present to each child this week. Help the leaders to create a safe environment for children practicing new skills. Amen.

Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

2 Find Your Match

Leader preparation: Read Ecclesiastes 3:1–13. Contemplate how the happiness and joy mentioned in verse 12 relates to all of the events in verses 1–8. Read again verses 12–13 and allow God’s desire for all people to fill you.

Select a pair of phrases from Ecclesiastes 3:1–13 for every two participants in your group. Write one-half of the verse on one slip of paper and the other half on another. For example, “A time to be born” would be on one slip and “A time to die” on another.

Supplies:

- slips of paper with one half of each verse from Ecclesiastes 3:2–8 written on them

Read aloud Ecclesiastes 3:1–13, enjoying the rhythm and beauty of the poetry. Shuffle the pieces of paper, and then randomly hand one to each child. Give each person a few minutes to imagine how he or she might act out the phrase without using words. Then invite the children to wander throughout the room acting out their phrases while seeking their pair. “A time to be born” will seek “a time to die,” “a time to plant” will seek “a time to pluck up” and so on.

When the partners have found one another, ask the pairs to come up with a new way to act out their phrases as a pair. They must do a different pantomime than the first time. Encourage participants to think about how the two phrases are connected. To help the children empathize with these events, ask them to imagine details such as the age and location of their characters. *Do these scenes occur at different times in the same creature’s life?* To broaden participant’s thinking, wonder together about the variety of things that can live, die, or be born.

After each pair has acted out its verse, gather everyone into a circle. Reflect together on the difference between acting out the “a time to” phrase alone and then as part of a pair. How does being born look or feel different when paired with a time to die? What did they change when they acted out the phrases together?

3 Interpretive Movement

Leader preparation: Do a meditative reading of Luke 9:28–36. As you read, stop at verses that particularly speak to you. Re-read these verses slowly and allow an image of the scene to fill your mind. Focus on the emotions of the characters. Pose your body, face, and hands to express the verse that is most meaningful to you. Then reflect on how your movement helped you relate to the story in a deeper way.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- Bible
- (optional) sample emoticons, http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images?adv_prop=image&fr=yfp-t-701&va=emoticon

Exploring the meaning of scripture through movement can help children relate to God’s stories on an emotional and spiritual level. Movement helps us engage our hearts as well as our minds. Read the Transfiguration story in Luke 9:28–36. Ask participants to listen for emotions the characters experience. On a large piece of newsprint or a whiteboard, draw a series of circles that represent faces. Draw simple facial expressions such as frowns, smiles, and arched eyebrows to represent the emotions participants identify. Examples may be joy, confusion, surprise, fear, or worry. For examples of emoticons, see the website listed above. Using

simple drawings will help all ages relate to the emotions and can jump-start ideas about how to act out the emotions; however, if you feel uncomfortable drawing, you may also list emotions.

Once the group has several emotions from which to choose, brainstorm together gestures or movements that express each one. Then call out one emotion at a time and ask participants to strike a pose that represents that emotion. Encourage big gestures and exaggerated facial expressions. Thinking about whether hands are clenched or open and arms are drawn into the body or stretched upward are also good prompts. When the group has finished acting out several emotions, reflect together on how this process helped them relate to the characters in the story. Did acting out parts of this story change the participants' understanding of what happened? Whom could they relate to in the story?

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 A Beautiful Machine (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Contemplate the beauty of doing the same job again and again. Often our culture reveres unique or rare expressions of beauty, but beauty also exists in the dependable small acts of care and devotion that take place every day. Bring to mind some of the repetitive acts of caring that occur in your church every week, and give thanks for those who do them.

Supplies: None

Explain to participants that they are going to make an imaginary machine that makes something beautiful. As a group, imagine beautiful tastes, sounds, or objects that your machine could create. Possibilities may be a machine that makes a favorite food or a machine that makes an exotic bird! Each participant will become a part of the machine by performing a repetitive motion. Brainstorm together what each part of the machine will do. For example, in a pizza machine, one part could roll dough, another might stamp out pepperoni, another could spread sauce, and so on. For variety, each machine part can also make a different sound.

Once everyone is familiar with his or her job, start the machine by pressing an imaginary button. After a few minutes, stop the machine. Explain that the machine needs more fuel. As you pretend to pour oil into the machine, express your dismay that the oil is old and very thick. Wonder together how the bad oil will affect how the machine works. Then, restart the machine. After a few minutes, stop the machine again. This time, pour in good, clean oil. Discuss how the machine will work now. Restart the machine a final time.

Explore together the idea that churches can work like machines. Wonder together what kinds of things a church machine might make. Review the effects of good and bad oil on the group's machine. Discuss what good fuel can be poured into a church to make it work well. Talk about what makes a machine beautiful. Some possibilities may be how the parts work together, what the machine produces, or the type of fuel that makes the machine run.



5 Life of a Young Tree

Leader preparation: Read the story of the apple tree for yourself. With what part of the tree's life do you identify? How does the image of God as gardener comfort you? Read through the story again and this time imagine any simple props that might enrich its telling.

Supplies:

- "The Life of a Young Tree," Attachment: Activity 5
- (optional) props such as a basket and colorful scarves

To help children understand the relationships between events described in Ecclesiastes 3:1–13, explore the life cycle of a young tree through drama. Read the story of the young apple tree. Then assign roles, and invite children to act out the story through movement as you read it again. For example, some children may be the sun and some the rain while all the others are seeds that grow into trees. Children may enjoy acting out the story multiple times until they are satisfied with the telling or until everyone has sampled different roles.

When the drama is complete, review each stage of the tree's life and explore together the beauty the children saw or experienced in each stage. Wonder together what would happen if a seed always remained a seed, or if the tree didn't want to give up its apples. Discuss how the end of one thing is connected to the beginning of another. As you conclude, say the following or a similar prayer: *Our loving Creator, when we were even smaller than the apple seed, you saw the beautiful people we would become. You planted hope and joy in us, and you are with us as we change and grow. When we are sad that something in our life comes to an end, help us trust that a new good thing will begin. Amen.*



6 Through the Looking Glass

Leader preparation: If drawing an imaginary window feels awkward to you at first, practice doing so ahead of time so that you will feel more comfortable when you lead. Also practice helpful phrases to engage children in the experience.

Supplies:

- artwork: "Wind from the Sea" by Andrew Wyeth, <http://www.art.com/products/p15524076-sa-i3804653/andrew-wyeth-wind-from-the-sea.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=dfff3132492f45b38c1f69b8ff1b86c1&searchstring=wind+from+the+sea>

Gather around the image of Andrew Wyeth's painting, "Wind from the Sea." Invite participants to look closely at the image. Begin discussion with a general question such as, "What do you notice when you look at this print?" Then encourage children to imagine a story that fits this image. *Who might be looking out the window? How old do you think the house is? Why is the window open?* Once children have begun to imagine a particular story, further explore the purpose of windows in houses. *What do windows let in? What does a window allow someone on the inside to do?*

In scripture people sometimes experience God with them as light. Other times, the people of God experience the Holy Spirit as a great wind. Ask what windows have to do with light and wind. Slowly draw an imaginary window in front of you. Hold onto the edges and peer out. Explain that this is a special window that allows us to see what a world transformed by God's light and love looks like. Name some things you see through this special window. Examples might be

people sharing or being fair or showing kindness. Then invite the children, one or two at a time, to come and look through the window. Encourage them to name what they imagine. *What are people doing? What do they notice about the animals?* For variety, explain that you can move the special window to look out on any part of the world. Invite children to call out locations they would like to visit. By moving the imaginary window around the room, pretend you are traveling to different places in the world. Imagine together how each one could be transformed by God's light.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 **Illumine Me (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Read through this activity in light of the age of the participants who will be present in the workshop this week. Think through the needs of the age group. Younger children will need more direction for how to act out an emotion. Older children may enjoy acting out an emotion together as part of a short scene. Edit and adapt the activity as needed.

Supplies:

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Post a list of the following words for all to see: sleepy, sad, hurt, lonely, lost, frustrated, angry, hungry, sick. For younger children, you may want to edit the list and include only the emotions easiest for them to portray. Ask the group to imagine simple scenarios that represent each emotion. Examples may be "a boy who is sick with the flu" or "a girl who has lost her dog." Write these examples under the list of emotions for later reference. Talk together about how the light of God's love can help people who are experiencing the emotions listed. Feel free to add to the list any emotions that emerge during discussion. Wonder about how people can be the light of God to one another.

Ask for a volunteer to help you demonstrate how a person can be transformed by the light of God. Encourage the volunteer to use facial expressions and body language to act out one of the scenarios that the group imagined. Touch the volunteer lightly on the shoulder and explain that this touch represents the light of God. Have the rest of the group call out ways that the light of God can transform the person in need. For example, a child who is asleep becomes awake. Someone who hurts feels better. Someone lonely finds a friend.

Make sure everyone understands how he or she can be changed by receiving God's light. Then, ask children to scatter throughout the room. Assign one or more participants to roam the room as the light of God, and ask the remaining participants to act out the emotions you are going to call out.

Refer back to the scenarios the group created, and call out one at a time by saying, "Form the shape of . . . [for example, a boy sick with the flu]." Children portraying the light of God will gently touch a person in need on the shoulder. The child who receives the comforting touch becomes transformed by God's light. Repeat until participants have acted out all the scenarios listed. Take turns, allowing children to both experience being a person in need and acting as the light of God.

When the drama concludes, end with the following group prayer. Before you begin, make sure that everyone knows the name of the person to his or her right. Explain that during the prayer participants will pass the light of God's blessing

around the circle by squeezing the hand of the person on the right and saying, “[Name], you are the light of God.”

God of all beauty, thank you for shining the light of your love in our hearts. Open our eyes to ways we can share your light this week. Begin passing the light of God around the circle while saying, “[Name], you are the light of God.”



8 Friendship Charades

Leader preparation: Read through the scenes from “Friendship Charades,” Attachment: Activity 8. Evaluate the maturity of the participants in your group. Decide which charades will work best, and edit as needed.

Supplies:

- Bible
- two containers for holding five slips of paper each
- “Friendship Charades,” Attachment: Activity 8 with the scenes cut into strips

Sometimes the people of God experience beauty when something broken has been healed. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and 20. Explain that reconciliation is needed after a relationship becomes broken. Print out a copy of “Friendship Charades” and cut the scenes into strips. Place the examples of broken friendships in one container and tools for healing friendships in another. Remind participants to act out the scenes silently. For younger children, you may need to brainstorm other ways of telling a story, such as using their hands or making exaggerated facial expressions.

Select one scene from a container, and ask either two or three volunteers at a time to act it out. Alternate selecting scenes from the two containers. Invite the rest of the group to guess how a friendship is being broken or how it is being healed. Before participants leave, encourage them to use one of the tools from healing friendships during the week. Explain that these tools can also strengthen friendships and build trust.

9 Two Buckets and a Stick

Leader preparation: Read through the details of this scenario several times so that you are comfortable explaining each person’s role. Then, read 2 Corinthians 5:16–20 and contemplate the word “reconciliation.” What does this word mean to you? What images of brokenness and healing come to mind when you read this passage?

Supplies:

- a long stick such as a yardstick or broom handle
- two buckets
- Bible

The following is a scenario designed to create initial chaos that will require cooperation and compromise to restore harmony. Ask participants to imagine that they live in a village where all water must be carried from the river every day. People walk from their homes to get water to cook, wash, and drink. Along the edge of the imaginary river place three props: a stick and two buckets.

Assign three participants secret roles, and instruct them not to talk while acting out their parts.

Secret role one: Bring water home so that Mother can cook dinner. However, this person has hurt his or her hand on the way to the river and cannot carry a full bucket of water without help.

Secret role two: This person has strong arms and can carry a bucket just fine, but has a limp and needs a stick to walk.

Secret role three: This person has been sent to the river to get people to help put out a house fire.

Make sure children understand their roles and then send them to the imaginary river to do their tasks. Remind everyone not to speak. Allow confusion and frustration to build, and then stop the action. Instruct the participants that they can now speak. Restart the action. If the actors continue to have difficulty finding a solution to each of their problems, stop the action again and invite the rest of the group to offer hints about how each of the participants can help one another. Explain that the scene is not over until everyone's needs are met.

After the problems have found resolution, read 2 Corinthians 5:17–18. Explain that reconciliation means learning to work together for good. Often, people in need of reconciliation disagree strongly with each other. Reflect together on why the actors initially worked against each other. *What had to happen for them to work together? What might a ministry of reconciliation, or working together, be?* If there is a ministry of reconciliation at your church, share that ministry with your group.

Reflect

How did the children respond to the different activities you chose for this session? Where did they experience the most joy? What caused confusion? When did they respond well to challenges, and when were they intimidated? Ponder what changes need to be made in order for the group to have an affirming and safe experience together.

Attachment: Activity 5

The Life of a Young Tree

A loving gardener gently plants a seed into good, rich soil. This tiny seed, no bigger than a baby's fingernail, lays quietly in the soil waiting for the rain to come. The rain comes, and the rain stops. The sun shines, and the sun sets.

After awhile the tiny seed begins to wiggle, and then it begins to change. A small, green shoot grows out of a crack in the seed. The shoot slowly reaches taller and taller until it becomes a slender stick with a few leaves sprouting from its tip. The sun shines, and the sun sets. The rain comes, and the rain stops.

Very slowly, the tiny seedling grows tall and its trunk thick. More and more leaves sprout from its branches. The sun shines, and the sun sets. The rain comes, and the rain stops.

Flowers begin to bud on the young tree and the bees come. The sun shines, and the sun sets. The rain comes, and the rain stops.

Finally, a small fruit grows out of the bud on the apple tree. At first the fruit is green and so tiny that it's hard to see. But it grows bigger and rounder until the tree's branches begin to sag from all the weight of the good fruit. The sun shines, and the sun sets. The rain comes, and the rain stops.

A delighted gardener comes and picks a full basket of apples from the tree. One by one, the rest of the apples drop to the ground and begin to decay. As the apples fall, so do the leaves until the young tree stands again with only its bare branches. The sun shines, and the sun sets. The rain comes, and the rain stops.

A cold frost covers the land, and the roots of the tree grow deeper and deeper. The branches remain bare for a long time. The sun shines, and the sun sets. The rain comes, and the rain stops.

Finally, warmth tells the tree to sprout new leaves. The sun shines, and the sun sets. The rain comes, and the rain stops.

Attachment: Activity 8

Friendship Charades

(Perform Silently)

Examples of Broken Relationships

Pretend to have an angry argument with one another.

Without touching one another, act out a slow motion fistfight.

(Three people needed.) Two friends pretend to gossip about the third friend.

(Three people needed.) Two friends pretend to toss a ball. Then one friend drops the ball, turns, and leaves to play with someone else.

Pretend to steal something special *(like a favorite pencil)* from your friend. When that person searches for the object and asks if the friend has it, lie.

Tools for Healing (Perform Silently)

Show good listening by looking your friend in the eye and nodding your head as he or she pretends to talk.

Pretend to say you are sorry while putting both hands over your heart and then moving them out toward your friend.

Hug a friend.

Pretend to laugh together.

(Three people needed.) Two people who know each other stand together. They notice a third person standing alone and ask that person to join them.

Experiencing Beauty



Workshop: Food

About this Rotation

Experiencing beauty as a faith practice enables us to encounter God through our senses and through the mysterious workings of God's Spirit. When we awaken to the diverse expressions of beauty, we deepen our connection to God, others, and ourselves. Through the beauty around us—in the universe and relationships, amid moments of both delight and brokenness—God communicates grace, healing, and comfort to us. We see anew, and we are moved to worship.

About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences, or the many individual ways learners apprehend and incorporate information into their own understandings and ways of being in the world.

For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Multiple intelligences*: ways of incorporating information, including Visual/Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Musical/Rhythmic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalist.
- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.

- *Workshop*: primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherd*: key relational components, these leaders travel with a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners in which faith is shared.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week: age ranges, learning styles, and experiences in previous workshops within this rotation.

About this Workshop

God cares for our most basic needs. In scripture we see Jesus giving people food to eat. When Jesus shared bread with his followers, he modeled the beauty of caring for one another. The rich colors, textures, and smells of food also remind us of God's delight in creation and invite us to give thanks for such bounty.

The focus story for this rotation is Luke 9:28–36. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures that help us understand the importance of experiencing beauty.

BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

Luke 9:28–36

SUPPLEMENTAL STORY:

Nehemiah 8

Leader Preparation

On a practical note, be sure that you have all the supplies you need for the activities where you are preparing food. It is always advisable to test-run a food activity to be sure you are comfortable with all the steps. Encourage good hygiene when children are working with food. Wash hands frequently. Provide plastic gloves if available. Always check about food allergies and have an alternative food item if necessary.

On a spiritual note, take time in your preparation to incorporate prayer into your mealtime ritual. Think about all the people who have helped make

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Blessing the Making of Our Food (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: As you prepare a meal this week, bless each ingredient. Notice how blessing a meal's components affects your experience.

Supplies:

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Do you think that food tastes better when it is prepared with love? How might the way you wash the fruit or cut it affect how it tastes or looks? Name some ways that God can be with us as we prepare our food. You might encourage participants to remember a meal they especially enjoyed and why they liked it.

We often bless food before we eat it as a way to thank God for the plants, people, and animals that helped bring it to our table. Invite the participants to bless the making of our food. Each participant will have a part in preparing the food today, and each act adds to the final beauty of what the group will eat. Read the following blessing together as a group. (You may wish to write out the blessing for the group or have everyone repeat it after you, line for line.):

A Blessing for the Making of Our Food

Bless the hands that wash our fruit.
Bless the water with which we wash.
Bless the eyes that arrange in beauty.
Bless the setting of our table.
Bless the hands that clear and clean.
Bless our eating.
Bless our sharing.

possible the food that is on your table: growers and producers, pickers and packers, deliverers and service people, clerks, and so forth. Let this practice of praying enrich your prayer life.

Prayer: *O God of all, great and small, please bless the work of my hands. Thank you for enriching our food with each seed that was tended, each harvest that was gathered, each grain that was sorted. Bless its journey to my table, and bless the service I can give once I prepare and enjoy it. Amen.*

Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

If you have time, read the first two lines of the blessing, and then ask the group to name other acts to bless. Encourage everyone to visualize each step of getting the food and table ready, no matter how small. You can then adapt the final prayer to the blessing your group creates.

2 Staying Awake to Beauty

Leader preparation: Practice looking at familiar food with eyes that notice texture, color, and shape. Instead of looking for signs of ripeness or blemish, appreciate it as is. What other things in your life can you see with new eyes?

Supplies:

- several fruits with interesting textures or shapes such as oranges, kiwi, pineapple, and banana (you may cut them up in a later activity)
- bowl with a towel or napkin to cover it
- Bible
- hand sanitizer to clean hands before you begin

Read Luke 9:32. Imagine together why Peter, James, and John were so weighed down with sleep. *Have you ever had your eyes open, but not noticed what is around you?*

Select several of the fruits that your group will cut up later in this workshop. Have the children clean their hands with hand sanitizer. Keep the fruits covered in a bowl until you ask the children to close their eyes. Pass around the fruit and encourage each child to use their fingers to “see” what he or she is holding. Do this until each child has had an opportunity to feel each fruit. Invite all to open their eyes. Now pass the fruit around again, and encourage the group to look closely at the fruit. *How do you see differently after first exploring the fruit with your hands? Are you awake to things you might not have noticed before? What keeps us from seeing beauty around us? How can we practice seeing beauty in a deeper way?*

3 Inside/Outside

Leader preparation: Is it only Jesus who can be transfigured? When do you hear God calling, “My Beloved, you are mine”? What do you yearn to hear so that your inside and outside both shine?

Supplies:

- Bible
- kiwi fruit, enough for each participant to sample a slice
- knife and cutting board or plate

Ask the children to look at the kiwi fruit. Ask them to imagine that they have never seen one. Looking at its outside, what do they think it might taste like? How would they describe the way this fruit looks? Peel the kiwi and cut it into slices. Ask the children to describe the fruit now. Let them taste the fruit.

Read Luke 9:28–29. When Jesus prayed, the Holy Spirit filled him so that his outside became as beautiful as his inside.

Make the following “I wonder” statements pausing between each one. Moving at a slow pace can emphasize the sacredness of a discussion and give the children time to observe.

- I wonder what Jesus heard in his prayer that made him shine.
- I wonder what could be so powerful that it turned his clothes white like pure light.
- I wonder if that light was always on his inside.
- I wonder what we are really like on the inside.
- I wonder how the Holy Spirit can change our outside to match our inside.

Invite the children to offer their own “I wonder” statements.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Mystery Guest (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Choose simple place setting materials appropriate to the food participants will sample during this workshop.

Supplies:

- simple place-setting utensils, or cups
- one sheet of card stock (typing paper or construction paper may be substituted) and markers
- Bible

Before you begin your main food preparation, gather at a table where you will eat your final creations. Provide the materials for a basic place setting. The place setting materials do not need to be elaborate. The intent is to mark an empty space at the table using typical materials participants use when they eat together. A simple napkin and cup can suffice. Discuss as a group what people do at home to prepare for a guest who joins them for a meal. How do they get ready? What kinds of foods do they choose to serve? How does having a guest change their typical meal routine?

Read Nehemiah 8:9–12. The priest Ezra encouraged the people of Israel to rejoice after hearing and being moved by God’s word. How does verse 10 describe how the people were to celebrate? Who is included? Wonder together about the importance of sharing in this story. How does sharing increase the people’s joy? Talk together about what it feels like to be invited to a party. What does it feel like to not be included? Beauty can describe the way something looks, and it can also refer to the way something feels. Name some ways people can feel beauty, such as feeling welcomed, feeling noticed, feeling cared for. How might the different people in this story feel beauty?

Pass out place setting materials. Include one extra place setting. Ask participants to work together to set the table. When they are finished, count the number of places. Invite the group to imagine a mystery guest. Who would they like to join them for their snack? How would we act if Jesus joined us at the table? How might we get ready for a special guest?

Create a place card for your mystery guest using a piece of card stock folded in half. Write the guest’s name on the front of the card, and then invite each participant to add a welcoming word or picture to the card. Place the finished card at the empty seat.

Encourage the children to keep this mystery guest in mind as they prepare their food today. Prompt them to imagine a variety of steps needed to get ready, such

as washing food, cutting, mixing, and stirring. How might they do these simple tasks in a different way if they were preparing a meal as a special gift for their guest?

Read Nehemiah 8:10 once more. Imagine together how each participant might share the beauty of friendship. *How does sharing make us more joyful? Who might enjoy being included for a special celebration?* Explain that we can treat any guest as if he or she is Jesus visiting with us. Read the following Moravian blessing to conclude the activity: “Come, Lord Jesus, our Guest to be, and bless these gifts bestowed by Thee.”

5 Play with Your Food!

Leader preparation: Decide whether pancakes will be purchased, made during the activity, or made ahead of time. Prepare supplies accordingly. If you will be cooking pancakes, recruit adequate adult helpers to ensure safety and to assist children in following directions. Lay out all needed materials to help children prepare, decorate, and eat their pancakes. Think through how to maximize participation for each stage of the activity.

Supplies:

- Bible
- for making pancakes: large bowl, mix or other ingredients, griddle or large pan, nonstick spray, spatulas (or bring pancakes made at home or purchased ahead of time from the frozen foods area; microwave or toaster for warming)
- toppings in a variety of colors and shapes, such as bananas, strawberries, blueberries, chocolate chips, cans of whipped cream, and maraschino cherries
- bowls and utensils for distributing toppings
- plates, napkins, and eating utensils

Have you ever been told, “Don’t play with your food?” People eat food for many reasons. *What does eating have to do with our bodies? What does eating have to do with other people? What do you enjoy about eating?* All of our senses help us really enjoy the beauty of food and eating together. Name different body parts related to their senses (such as eyes and sight), and invite children to name how each sense adds to the beauty of a meal.

Invite children to experiment with the beauty of food by decorating their own pancakes. Depending on time and facilities available, the group may choose to make pancakes together before decorating them. If you choose to make pancakes, make sure that each participant has an opportunity to measure, pour, stir, or flip. Remind participants how to remain safe around hot surfaces. For safety, only allow adults to adjust the heat on the stove; monitor the proximity of children to cooking surfaces. Alternatively, purchase or bring from home pre-made pancakes that may be warmed in a microwave or toaster. Children can still help with food preparation by using safe knives to cut up soft fruit such as bananas or strawberries. Including children in food preparation increases their self-confidence and builds relationships among group members as they work together.

For decorating the pancakes, provide a variety of toppings including cut-up fruit, miniature chocolate chips, maraschino cherries, and whipped cream arranged in small bowls with serving spoons so that children can easily share. Before they begin, wonder together what designs or shapes could be made (such as faces, flowers, or interesting patterns). Then invite children to “play” with their food

by adding toppings to their pancakes in any way that looks pleasing and beautiful to them. Remind children that play in this context means experimenting and having fun with colors, textures, and patterns while remaining respectful of the materials and other people. Prompt younger children to name ways to be respectful with their food and friends (such as keeping food on your plate and taking turns with the toppings).

As children eat their creations, read Nehemiah 8:10. Talk about how joy can be a source of strength. How does experiencing joy help us feel good about ourselves? How does feeling joy help us be better friends? When did participants feel joy as they prepared, decorated, and ate their food? When did participants experience beauty?

Instead of blessing the pancakes before participants eat, say words of thanks after the snack. To encourage thanks for all parts of the experience, consider using the following prayer: *Thank you, God, for the hands that prepared our food.* [Invite individual responses.] *Thank you, God, for the beauty of our food.* [Pause for responses.] *Thank you, God, for the joy of eating our food.* [Pause for responses.] *Amen.*

6 Fruit Mandala

Leader preparation: Decide whether your group will create a group mandala or individual mandalas, and arrange supplies accordingly. Cover fruit with a cloth while you introduce the concept of a mandala to your group so that the children will be better able to focus. Consider printing one of the mandala designs and coloring it as part of your personal devotion during the week so that you have firsthand experience of using a mandala as a prayer tool. Mandalas can serve as containers for our emotions. Coloring the repetitive patterns can sooth us or help us celebrate thoughts and feelings that surface during the process. You may also allow yourself to simply have fun creating a beautiful design.

Supplies:

- round plates, one per person, or one large pizza pan for creating a group mandala
- toothpicks or forks for spearing fruit
- bowls filled with a variety of cut-up fruit, such as strawberries, kiwi, blueberries, and banana. Look for a variety of colors and shapes. (You may want to substitute raisins and mandarin oranges for some of the fresh fruit. Non-fruit items such as seeds or pretzels may also stretch your supply.) Make sure you provide at least one cup of fruit per learner of ONE of the fruits. This fruit will form the base of each person's mandala pattern. More fruit will enable learners to make more complex and interesting patterns.
- (optional) markers and "Mandala Coloring Pages" http://www.coloringcastle.com/mandala_coloring_pages02.html

A mandala is an ancient prayer tool. Mandalas can be used to focus our thoughts, to center ourselves, or to experience beauty that draws us closer to God. A typical mandala is a circle that contains a harmonious and often repetitive pattern. If you would like to show a sample mandala to your group, you can download and print mandala coloring pages. (See the supply list for a sample.) These pages can also be handed out to learners as they finish their individual or group fruit mandalas so that they can have an activity to work on while being respectful of those still in prayer.

Creating a fruit mandala reminds us that making food can be prayerful. When we enjoy the colors and take time to arrange the fruit into a pleasing pattern, we remember God's gift of food to us. Important parts of worship are experiencing joy and giving thanks. Often, when we think of reverent prayer we imagine solemn words, but reverence can also be playful. Our play is worshipful when we keep our hearts open to God and act with a spirit of gratitude. Create a sample fruit mandala for your group so that they can observe a prayerful process. You may want to encourage them to think of one "thank you" to God for each piece of fruit they work with. Before you begin, center yourself. Move slowly and model a contemplative and joyful spirit.

Set out bowls of cut-up fruit. Make sure you have enough of at least one type of fruit so that each participant can create an overall pattern. You can provide lesser amounts of highlighting fruits. For example, you may have a large bowl of mandarin oranges and smaller bowls of raisins, strawberries, and blueberries. Feel free to provide non-fruit options such as sunflower seeds or pretzels if your fruit supply is limited. Give each child a round plate. The edge of the plate forms the border of the mandala. Provide toothpicks so that children may spear the fruit and transfer it to their plates.

Encourage everyone to experiment with different patterns. Remind the children that this is a prayerful process and to remain quiet in case someone may be talking with God. For economy, you may choose to create a group mandala in place of individual ones. If creating a group mandala, encourage children to talk with one another about the overall design before beginning. To encourage cooperation, each participant may take turns being the designer for each ring of the mandala. Begin at the outer edge and work inward. Children who create a group mandala may still enjoy an individual experience by coloring one of the mandala pages.

When people are satisfied with the pattern they have created, invite them to eat their fruit. If you like, conclude with the following prayer: *Thank you, God, for food that delights our eyes while it nourishes us. You fill us and help us feel whole. We praise you for the beauty we see and the beauty we create and the beauty we eat. Amen.*

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Hidden Ingredients (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Give thanks for the person who prepares most of your meals, even if that person is yourself. Acknowledge the good gifts that bring a meal to your table.

Supplies:

- recipe or box with a list of ingredients
- (optional) paper or board for recording answers

Every meal we prepare includes ingredients we can see and touch as well as those that are unseen, but still real. Ask your group what an ingredient is. If you have prepared a meal earlier in the workshop, you can use it as an example. Alternatively, share a favorite recipe or grab a box from the kitchen that lists ingredients on the back. Now ask everyone to imagine unseen items that we add to our food. Prompt thoughtful answers by asking how people might feel while preparing food. Invite children to act out different "hidden ingredients" such as hurry, anger, peace, or joy and add these hidden ingredients to your list. Reflect

together on whether or not it makes a difference when people smile or frown as they work. *Can people taste these hidden ingredients?* Remember a time when someone prepared a favorite food. *What secret unseen things were added?* Encourage learners to show thanks to the person who makes them their next meal for both the visible and unseen things that are given.



8 Blessing Mix

Leader preparation: Bring to mind the people who will receive these blessing mixes. Hold them in the light of God's love.

Supplies:

- pretzels, dried fruit, sunflower seeds, M&M's, nuts (if no known allergies)
- zip-lock sandwich bags or small paper lunch sacks
- "Blessing Mix," Attachment: Activity 8
- Bible

These blessing mix kits can be given to people in need who stop by your church or to home-bound folks your pastoral team visits. They also may be given to any church members or staff with whom the learners would like to share. If possible, talk with your pastor ahead of time about an appropriate use for the mix and enclosed blessing.

Read Nehemiah 8:9–12. After God's people heard God's word they were filled with emotion. *How did the priest respond? What did Ezra tell the people to do?* Wonder together why Ezra told the people to provide food for people who did not have any. *How does sharing increase everyone's joy? How can sharing be a way to experience beauty?*

Invite learners to honor the beauty of God's creation by enjoying a fun blessing mix and making kits to share. Before reading the blessing to the children, encourage them to guess what each item may represent.

Print copies of the blessing, and include them in each bag. Zip-lock bags help keep snacks fresh longer and are useful for this activity. However, if the mix will be consumed quickly, consider using small paper lunch sacks instead to model good stewardship of our earth.

If you assemble these bags for others, provide plastic gloves for all who help.

9 "Orange" You Awake?

Leader preparation: Cloves are dried flower buds. Hold some cloves in your hand, and imagine the promise of life and beauty contained within them. Name one promise that God has put inside of you that is beginning to bloom.

Supplies:

- oranges, one for each participant
- whole cloves for decorating
- bowl
- Bible

The smell of citrus fruits awakens us and gives us a feeling of new energy. At Christmas time, it's a Scandinavian tradition to decorate oranges with whole cloves. The smell fills a room with a rich, invigorating aroma.

Read Luke 9:28–32, focusing on verse 32. Make fragrant orange balls to remind learners to stay awake to beauty around them. Reflect on the workshop and name simple things they saw or did that were beautiful.

Set out a large bowl of whole cloves, and set out an orange for every participant. Show learners how to pierce the orange with a whole clove. Then invite them to create patterns or shapes with the cloves. The final product is visually and aromatically pleasing! These oranges can be placed in a common area of the home or in another special place as a reminder that God's beauty surrounds us—if we stay awake for it!

Reflect

Which workshop activities worked best for the dynamics and ages of your group? Take note of times when you felt anxious. How did your goals coincide with the experience of group members? What happened in your time together that best helped children connect to one another or to experience God in a new way?

Blessing Mix

Blessing Mix

- Pretzels:** Arms enfolding you in love.
- Sunflower seeds:** The promise God sees in you.
- Dried fruit:** Gifts of the spirit, such as love, patience, kindness, and generosity.
- M&M's:** Memories you treasure or need to let go.
- Nuts:** Strength for what you face today.

Please enjoy this snack mix we have made for you. We share it with you as a blessing. May this food give you strength, courage, and hope. God be with you.

(sign your group's name here)

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Experiencing Beauty



Workshop: Games

About this Rotation

Experiencing beauty as a faith practice enables us to encounter God through our senses and through the mysterious workings of God's Spirit. When we awaken to the diverse expressions of beauty, we deepen our connection to God, others, and ourselves. Through the beauty around us—in the universe and relationships, amid moments of both delight and brokenness—God communicates grace, healing, and comfort to us. We see anew, and we are moved to worship.

About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences, or the many individual ways learners apprehend and incorporate information into their own understandings and ways of being in the world.

For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Multiple intelligences*: ways of incorporating information, including Visual/Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Musical/Rhythmic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalist.
- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.

- *Workshop*: primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherd*: key relational components, these leaders travel with a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners in which faith is shared.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week: age ranges, learning styles, and experiences in previous workshops within this rotation.

About this Workshop

As adults, we often have a serious view of faith and a weighted image of God. Perhaps because children spend a lot more time playing, they often have a much more joyful understanding of God. Play invites us to experience joy. It reminds us that beauty is as irrepressible as laughter, dancing, running, and jumping. When we play together we also practice respect, forgiveness, and care for one another.

The focus story for this rotation is Luke 9:28–36. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures that help us understand the importance of experiencing beauty.

BIBLE FOCUS STORIES:

Luke 9:28–36

SUPPLEMENTAL STORIES:

Genesis 28:10–19a

Matthew 6:24–34

Leader Preparation

Note that each of the following activities includes a spiritual exercise for you to practice on your own. One of the most effective ways to guide children in their spiritual practices is to model our own authentic connection to God. More than materials, knowledge, or organization, the depth of your connection to your faith journey—as well as your ability to truly be present to the children—will make a lasting impact.

Prayer: Holy and loving God, as I walk through my days this week, let your beauty come alive to me in the people I meet and in the things I touch, see, and hear. I pray for each child who will be with me in the workshop this week. Sustain them through

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Transfigure Me (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Ahead of time identify a space for playing tag and check for availability. Recall a personal experience of being transformed by an act of love or understanding. What subtle or major shift occurred inside you?

Supplies:

- large, safe space for running and playing tag

This game is a version of tag except that when the chaser tags other participants, he or she transfigures them into different animals. The chaser (or “It”) transfigures other children by calling out the name of an animal when he or she tags them. The person who has been tagged then has to act like that animal by making the appropriate sounds and motions. Encourage “It” to name a variety of animals when tagging players. The last person to become transfigured becomes the new “It.” When everyone has had a chance to be “It” or the group collapses with exhaustion, gather together in a circle and talk about the ways people can be transformed by God’s love.



2 Hug, Share, Care

Leader preparation: Locate a copy of the Cassatt artwork and spend time gazing at it. What God images do you see in this painting? Reflect on the relationship between shared tenderness and beauty.

Experiencing Beauty

their challenges. May they too experience your joy and peace and comfort. Help all of us to rest in the knowledge that you call us your beloved. Amen.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Caresse Maternelle (Mother and Child)” by Mary Stevenson Cassatt, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1004323110?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37961&store_id=1401
- one ball for every two players
- (optional) computer with Internet access and projection capability

Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Display the artwork “Caresse Maternelle (Mother and Child)” by Mary Stevenson Cassatt for the whole group to see. Ask group members what this painting shows us about experiencing beauty. Encourage participants to name something beautiful they see in this painting. Summarize the group’s observations by noting that people can practice giving and receiving beauty by the ways they care for one another. Play the following game to affirm ways the children in your group give and receive care.

Ask participants to form two lines so that pairs of participants are facing each other. To play the game, a leader randomly calls out “hug,” “share,” or “care.” Players begin standing as far back as they can while still being able to throw and catch a ball. When the leader calls out a category, the person holding the ball must throw it right away. His or her partner must then shout out a response before catching the ball. Responses include people or things that you can hug, things you can share, and ways to show care. For example, if the leader calls out “Hug!” one person throws the ball and the other may quickly answer, “My dog!” before catching it. If the player cannot think of an appropriate answer, the team must sit down.

For added challenge, team members must move a step closer to one another with each throw. If younger players have difficulty throwing and catching the ball, play the game with everyone sitting down and rolling it back and forth. The last pair standing or passing the ball wins.

③ Oh, The Beauty I’ve Sensed!

Leader preparation: As you prepare for this activity, reflect on the ways you have experienced beauty through your senses this week. Be prepared to share some concrete examples with your group. A multisided die with letters on each side can be borrowed from a board game to add fun to this activity.

Supplies:

- paper for each player
- writing utensils

In this game, group members name beauty experienced with their senses during the week. Give everyone a sheet of paper and ask participants to write the words “saw,” “heard,” “touched,” “tasted,” and “smelled” across the top so that they create five columns.

For round one, the leader chooses a random letter. Once the leader announces this letter, participants have two minutes (adjust this time to suit your group) to list beauty they saw during the week that begins with that letter. It is okay to list phrases such as “trees blowing in the wind.” Stop the timer at two minutes, and call for people to put down their pencils.

For round two, the leader chooses a new letter. This time when the letter is announced, participants have two minutes to list beauty they heard during the week that begins with the new letter. Repeat this process until players have listed beauty experienced by all five senses.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

 **4 Inner Beauty Hopscotch (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Identify a safe, appropriate place where children can draw with chalk. Bring to mind a person who exemplifies a gift of the spirit, and give thanks for that person.

Supplies:

- Bible
- chalk for each participant
- small found objects to use as markers for each person

This game takes place outside in a safe area with a hard surface. First, gather together and read Matthew 6:24–34. *What pictures come to mind when you hear the word “beauty”?* Notice together which images have to do with inner beauty and which have to do with the way something looks on the outside. *What does this passage from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount tell us about beauty?* Together, name gifts of the spirit or character traits that make up inner beauty. (See Galatians 5:22–23)

Give each child a piece of chalk with which to draw a hopscotch board. In each square, invite children to write an inner quality that makes someone they know beautiful. Provide a pile of small objects to use as place markers in the game. (These can be any small natural objects, such as pebbles, acorns, twigs, and so forth.) Invite participants to switch boards and play hopscotch on another person’s creation.

5 Filled with Beauty

Leader preparation: Take a moment to imagine what kinds of objects inspire beauty for you. Think about your different senses, and choose items that delight each one.

Supplies:

- attractive box filled with a flower, orange, crayons, a scarf or other similar objects that may be used to experience beauty
- vase or basket
- tissue paper

Before you begin, place in a box several common objects that can be used to experience beauty. Some suggestions are a flower, an orange, a box of crayons, a picture of a pet, or a colorful scarf. Remind people that we can experience beauty in many ways. We can see beauty. We can feel a beautiful feeling. We can make something beautiful.

One at a time, begin passing around one object from the box. Invite group members to name a way they can experience beauty with that object. Pass around more items when more or different responses are needed. Remind participants to speak only when holding the object.

Every time someone names a way to experience beauty, that person may crumple up a piece of tissue paper and place it in the vase or basket. The game ends when the container is full.



6 Clothed in Glory

Leader preparation: Search through your closets for winter gear or eccentric items that could make fun dress-up clothing. Clothes both reveal and conceal things about us. Read Matthew 6:24–34 and reflect on your own feeling toward clothes. What do they project to others? What inner qualities do you value that you want reflected in your appearance?

Supplies:

- Bible
- clothes and accessories for dress-up, enough for each participant to wear several pieces
- two large bags
- “Acts of Kindness,” Attachment: Activity 6

Read Matthew 6:24–34. Ask participants how long it takes them (or their parents!) to choose which clothes to wear. Then wonder together how much time we spend thinking up kind things to do for our family, friends, or even strangers. Read Colossians 3:12–17. Reflect together on what harmony between people looks and sounds like. Harmony means working together in a pleasing way. *What are some ways that people show care to one another? What does it look like when people cooperate with one another? What words or sounds make you feel good when you hear people say them to you?*

Divide the group into two teams. Provide each team with a large bag of dress-up clothes and accessories such as hats, socks, scarves, gloves, jewelry, and tutus!

Print out the list of acts of kindness from the attachment. The first seven items refer to acts performed in the past week. The last seven items can be acts performed in the last year. As you call out acts of kindness from the first list, every player who qualifies can put on one article of clothing or accessory. Tally the number of items worn by each team.

Bonus Round: For each act performed from the second list, team members can put on two pieces of clothing or accessories. Compare final results. The team wearing the most items wins. Everyone take a bow! You are all clothed in glory!

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Catch and Release (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Note that a simple game of catch or Frisbee is impossible to play alone! It requires shared fun. Identify something in your life you would like to release and something you would like to receive.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) Frisbee(s), soft balls, bean bags, balls of yarn, or any small soft item that can be tossed

Have children pair up or form small groups and pretend to throw a ball or Frisbee to each other. (Even better, if possible, play with the actual items.) Then gather in a circle. Read Matthew 6:25–34 together. Ask participants what Jesus encourages his followers not to do. Introduce the concept of letting go of things that weigh us down, such as worry, by reviewing the game of Frisbee just played.

Ask participants to describe how Frisbee is played. Suggest that throwing a Frisbee can also be described as letting it go. We have to let it go in order to catch it again. The same idea is true for our hearts. We must let go of some feelings in order to make space in our hearts for the good things God offers us. Discuss what God might fill our hearts with if we make space to receive it. Ask participants to name feelings that are good to catch, such as enthusiasm or feeling welcome.

Conclude with a time of prayer. Invite group members to share joys and concerns. Then ask them to think about the following two questions. Explain that they might want to ponder these questions throughout the coming week:

- What feeling would you like to let go of?
- What would you like to receive from God?

Invite anyone who wishes to answer out loud to do so, but also respect silence. Then say a prayer on behalf of your group that lifts up to God the joys and concerns mentioned during your time together, as well as those that have been spoken silently.

8 Stone Altars

Leader preparation: Become familiar enough with the story of Jacob's dream (Genesis 28:10–15) so that you can tell it to your group in a heartfelt way. Adjust the required measurements for the finished altars to fit the rocks you have collected or purchased.

Supplies:

- Bible
- enough rocks to create two altars 10" square and 3' tall (small enough to use during the relay race yet large enough on which to write "Genesis 28:15")
- two rulers
- permanent markers, enough for both teams to share

Tell the story of Jacob's dream from Genesis 28:10–15. Then, if a participant is able to do so, ask him or her to read verses 16–18 aloud.

Sometimes people feel so close to God in a place that they feel moved to mark it. Ask participants to name the materials Jacob used to remember the place where he felt close to God. Explain that oil was used to consecrate, or mark, a person or thing as set apart for God. The following game uses stones for making altars and water in place of oil.

Divide the group into two teams. Set up two altar-building areas. Provide each team with a pile of small rocks (or alternate building material). Place an 8 oz. cup of water and a ruler near the site. Establish a starting line for team members at least 10 feet away.

When you signal the teams to begin, they will run to the building site and work to build an altar that measures at least 10 inches on each side and 3 feet tall. Every team member must help build the altar. Teams may not use any other materials to create length or height, but may use found natural objects to help stabilize walls if necessary.

When a team believes it has met the criteria, it calls for a check. A designated judge measures the altar and declares it “beautiful.” Then the team can consecrate the altar with water, allowing each team member an opportunity to sprinkle a little water.

When both teams have finished their separate altars, dismantle both and use those stones to build a single altar with the requirement that everyone must place at least one stone. When the altar is completed, each member sprinkles a small amount of water over the altar. If this game is played inside, substitute a spray bottle for the cup of water. After a prayer, dismantle the altar and give each participant one of the rocks. Invite all group members to write Genesis 28:15 on a rock as a reminder that any place can become holy if God is with you.



9 Beloved Children of God

Leader preparation: Talk with a worship leader who can help you choose appropriate items that can be used in this activity. Ensure that the bread is safe for any children with food allergies. Read again God’s words of affirmation to Jesus, and then imagine God saying these words to you. Absorb the love expressed by these intimate words.

Supplies:

- “Scripture Clues,” Attachment: Activity 9, cut into strips, and folded in half with clue number written on the outside
- beautiful box filled with three small objects used in your church’s worship service that represent the Holy Spirit, baptism, and communion

In a beautiful box or basket, place three small objects that represent the Holy Spirit, baptism, and Holy Communion. If possible, for the first two items, use actual things used in your worship service such as a cloth or stole with an embroidered dove on it and a portion of water from the baptismal font or baptistry. The last object needs to be bread to share. Cover these symbols with a cloth so that you can easily remove one object at a time while keeping the others hidden. In a separate basket, place scripture verses from the supply list that you printed and cut into strips. Fold each scripture verse in half so that the writing is concealed, and write the clue number on the outside. There are two clues for each object that match the Holy Spirit, baptism, and communion.

In the story of Jesus’ Transfiguration, God reveals who Jesus really is by saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved, listen to him!” All of us discover who we truly are when we also hear God’s voice saying, “You are my child, my beloved.”

Every week in worship we see symbols that remind us that we are beautiful because God loves us. Say to your group: I wonder what these symbols could be. Invite a group member to read clue number one. The rest of the group may then ask questions that have yes or no answers to try and determine what the object may be. Clue one is purposefully ambiguous. If needed, invite another participant to read clue number two. When they group guesses correctly, reveal the object from the basket, and invite participants to examine it closely. Continue this pattern for each object.

If children need help asking appropriate questions, direct them toward questions about who uses the object in worship, where it’s located, and how it’s used. After you have revealed the bread, invite each child to break off a portion to eat. As you share the loaf, talk freely about other things they see or hear in worship that remind them that God loves them.

Reflect

How smoothly did the games flow today? What adjustments need to be made for different ages or ability levels? Seek collaboration to improve the experience of this workshop for participants and leaders.

Attachment: Activity 6

Acts of Kindness

This week: (one item)

Shared your lunch with someone who did not have one.

Stood up for someone who was being picked on.

Shared a hug.

Shared a toy.

Stopped doing something you enjoyed in order to help a person in need.
(Chores don't count☺)

Helped someone new feel welcome.

Picked up litter.

This year: (two items each)

Provided food for hungry people.

Made a card to tell someone you cared.

Volunteered to clean up a public park or garden.

Helped care for a hurt animal.

Voluntarily did a chore for a person unable to do it on her or his own.

Participated in a mission project.

Attachment: Activity 9

Scripture Clues

Clue 1

Genesis 28:15 "Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go."

Clue 2

John 8:12 "Again Jesus spoke to them saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'"

Clue 3

Mark 1:10-11 "And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'"

Clue 4

John 7:38 "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water."

Clue 5

Matthew 6:25b "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Clue 6

John 6:33 "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Experiencing Beauty



Workshop: Music

About this Rotation

Experiencing beauty as a faith practice enables us to encounter God through our senses and through the mysterious workings of God’s Spirit. When we awaken to the diverse expressions of beauty, we deepen our connection to God, others, and ourselves. Through the beauty around us—in the universe and relationships, amid moments of both delight and brokenness—God communicates grace, healing, and comfort to us. We see anew, and we are moved to worship.

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Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week: age ranges, learning styles, and experiences in previous workshops within this rotation.

About this Workshop

Throughout the history of the church, God's people have voiced their prayers, hopes, and sorrows through music. When we sing we praise God and participate in the beauty of giving thanks. Children relate to music in different ways. Some find joy through singing while others respond better to "making a joyful noise" by using a variety of instruments. In this context, the experience of praising God through sound is more important than the quality of what the group produces.

The focus story for this rotation is Luke 9:28–36. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures that help us understand the importance of encountering scripture.

BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

Luke 9:28–36

SUPPLEMENTAL STORIES:

Psalms 8

John 12:1–8

Leader Preparation

Embody a spirit of joy and thanksgiving as you get ready to lead the activities in this workshop. Children experience welcome and love from your presence and engagement. The practice of singing and making music affirms children's voices as part of the larger community. Wonder how they might experience beauty and joy in the practice of making music.

Prayer: Wonderful God, we are moved to praise you with singing and dance, just as your people have always done when touched by the deep beauty of your presence. Please help the children feel affirmed when they lift their voices in song or make joyful noises in your name. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Walking with Beauty (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Notice the ways that you walk this week. How does the pattern and tempo of your steps reflect your inner climate? Practice walking in a way that represents beauty to you, and notice how it affects your relationship with others and the world.

Supplies: None

In the Navajo tradition, Holyway ceremonies are performed to bless a home or a person needing healing. The following verses are from the song "House of Dawn," which concludes the Navajo Night Chant ceremony. When participants in the ceremony sing these words, they believe that harmony has been restored. Read the words of this song together.

In beauty I walk.
With beauty before me, I walk.
With beauty behind me, I walk.
With beauty below me, I walk.
With beauty above and about me, I walk.
It is finished in beauty,
It is finished in beauty.

In the Navajo tradition beauty is closely related to harmony. Harmony is similar to the idea of shalom, or God's peace. Harmony happens when different parts are joined together in a pleasing way. These parts can be animals, people, or things. Talk together about examples of harmony. Webster's Dictionary lists unity, peace, and friendship as synonyms of harmony. In general, things in harmony get along even when they may be very different. *What are some examples of animals living in harmony? People?*

Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

The Navajo people believe that when we walk in beauty, we experience peace. The words from the “House of Dawn” song are part of a chant. Read the words of the song again. Repeat them several times until the group has found a pleasing rhythm. Clapping as you speak may help. When the group has developed a comfortable rhythm to the words, invite everyone to stand up and walk around the room.

Ask the children to continue chanting the words of the song as they walk. Encourage them to lift their arms, turn, crouch, and move in any way that expresses what it means to walk with beauty all around them. After participants have moved around the room for a while on their own, take the hand of someone in the group, and quietly encourage him or her to take the hand of another person until everyone is joined in a moving line while the chanting continues. Conclude by making the line into a circle and saying the words from the song one more time.

2 Unique and Harmonious Sounds

Leader preparation: Notice all of the sounds you encounter this week. Which ones are pleasing and which jarring? Practice listening for how something sounds on its own and how it sounds in harmony.

Supplies:

- a variety of simple musical instruments, one for each child

Gather in a circle with your group. Bring with you a basket of simple musical instruments such as shakers, cymbals, a tambourine, drum, rhythm sticks, and so forth. Explain that each instrument has its own sound. Pass out the instruments to each participant. One at a time, ask each child to play the instrument for a few moments until he or she has discovered a pleasing sound to share. Invite everyone to notice the unique sound of each instrument. Remind participants that in order to listen well, all instruments except the one being played must remain quiet.

Explain that instruments have many sounds they can play, some that immediately sound pleasant to our ears and some that might seem jarring. Encourage participants to experiment with making different sounds all at the same time. Most likely, each child will focus on making his or her own sound without trying to blend with others. After a short time, pause the group. Talk about how everyone might work together to create a harmonious sound. Sometimes it is easier to do this when one sound is added at a time until all work together. Lead the group in gradually playing their instruments together. Then collect the instruments.

Discuss the two ways of making music: everyone making sounds on their own and everyone working together. When did they hear beauty? What was beautiful about everyone playing in his or her own way? What was beautiful about everyone working together? Conclude by discussing how God’s people are like the musical instruments. *How are people beautiful on their own? How are they beautiful together?*



3 Crowned with Glory and Honor

Leader preparation: Gather child-friendly magazines that contain pictures of people, nature, and, if possible, night skies. Read the words from the hymn “For the Beauty of the Earth,” and contemplate for yourself what it means to be crowned with glory. Identify ways that God has adorned you that make you beautiful.

Supplies:

- paper crowns (found at a party or craft store), one for each participant
- magazines with images of people, animals, nature, and, if possible, outer space
- scissors
- glue
- Bibles
- hymn: “For the Beauty of the Earth” by Folliot S. Pierpoint (tune: Dix), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHOMXiOKEDQ>
- “For the Beauty of the Earth,” Attachment: Activity 3

Before children enter the room, lay out paper crowns on a table along with magazines, scissors, and glue. When children enter, gather in a circle in a different part of the room, and read Psalm 8 together. Focus on verse 5. Talk about the appearance and materials of a typical crown. Wonder what the psalmist meant by saying that God crowned people with glory and honor. Explore the meaning of these words together. One definition for glory is resplendent beauty or magnificence. Glory often describes something that is royal, grand, or truly awesome! You might discuss the ideas of respect, value, and preciousness to God. Suggest that people can show glory and honor by how they reflect God’s love.

Provide copies of the hymn “For the Beauty of the Earth” for each person from Attachment: Activity 3, and then sing or read the verses. Talk about how the first two verses describe the glory God gave the earth. Name some of the ways God crowned the earth with glory. Then explore how verses 3 and 4 describe ways people are crowned with glory. Name examples from the hymn such as “the joy of human love,” “the good that love inspires,” “faith that never tires,” “gentle thoughts,” being friends, and including everyone.

When children have a basic understanding of how people and creation are crowned with glory, ask them to move to the table to decorate their own crowns. Ask participants to look for images in the magazines that illustrate the words from “For the Beauty of the Earth.” You may want to provide copies of the hymn or post phrases from it for reference. Then encourage children to decorate their crowns with words from “For the Beauty of the Earth” or images they have cut out of the magazines.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 We All Stand As One (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the tune for “Hi Ho the Dairy-O,” also known as “The Farmer in the Dell.” Practice singing the tune with the words provided in the attachment so that you feel comfortable leading the group.

Supplies:

- “God Gifts Us Life,” Attachment: Activity 4, posted for all to see

Psalm 8 vividly depicts the beauty of God’s creation. One way to honor this beauty is to remember how each part is dependent on another to preserve the whole. The sun and the moon complement the fish and the sea while people and animals fill the earth.

The children’s song “Hi Ho the Dairy-O” illustrates how each part of a farm is dependent on another part. Sing this altered version to emphasize the harmony of creation, in which all parts recognize the value of one another. Instead of ending with one person standing alone, the song ends with all standing as one. Post the words of this song and practice singing it several times before acting it out.

Begin with everyone standing in a circle. When you sing, “God gifts us life,” open your hands in front of you in a gesture that depicts giving or receiving. Ask participants to act out each verse as they are picked. The leader points to a farmer who then stands in the middle of the circle and plants a seed. The farmer picks the soil that helps the seed grow and then stands in the circle. This process repeats until the verse “friends share a loaf.” At this time, the children already in the middle holding hands reach out to anyone who is left and pull them into the center as well. Conclude by joining hands and singing “we all stand as one.” If time allows, have the group write and sing their own version of this song.



5 How Majestic Is God’s Name

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the list of names for God found in the Bible. What other images or names come to mind? Which of the names speaks to you most strongly? If children will be looking up biblical verses, review their locations. You may want to provide a list of Bible books to aid their searching.

Supplies:

- Bible(s)
- hymn: “Over My Head” African-American traditional), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2>
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- “Biblical Names for God,” Attachment: Activity 5

Read Psalm 8:1 to your group. Wonder together how the psalmist felt when he or she sang these words long, long ago. Explain that God is so big and wonderful that scripture uses many names for God. On newsprint or a whiteboard where everyone can see, build a list of names people have used to call on God. Begin with those already familiar to your group, and then use “Biblical Names for God,” Attachment: Activity 5, to broaden the list. For older children, this is a great time to practice looking up scripture passages. Call out passages from the handout, and ask for volunteers to read the name for God found in the verse.

Once everyone is familiar with a broad list of names for God, introduce the hymn “Over My Head.” Read Psalm 8:1 again. Wonder what it means for God’s name to be “in all the earth.” Like the psalmist’s song of praise, the hymn “Over My Head” also describes joy so big and full that God’s people feel God all around them.

Sing this hymn together. Add a verse that repeats, “Over my head, I hear God’s name in the air,” but pause the singing/music after each repetition and invite participants to shout out names for God before singing the next phrase. In other

words, verse five would go like this, “Over my head, I hear God’s name in the air.” (Pause while children shout out names for God.) Repeat three times. You may need to do a practice round to warm up to the pattern before singing with increased energy and enthusiasm.

6 Transfigured by the Light of God

Leader preparation: If you decide to sing the Zulu version of this hymn, practice saying the words ahead of time. They do not have to be exact to help children feel a global connection to others who worship God in South Africa.

Supplies:

- hymn: “Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kewnkhos’ (We Are Marching in the Light of God),” South African freedom song (tune: Siyahamba), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1KZbMprW8U&feature=related> Mwamba Children’s Choir; lyrics <http://bussongs.com/songs/siyahamba.php>
- (optional) computer with Internet access

God’s words in the Transfiguration story—“This is my Son, my Beloved, listen to him!”—invite us all to walk in the light of God’s love. The word “transfigure” means that the way we look and move changes. This means that everything we do is inspired by God’s love.

Discuss how the way we walk reveals the way we feel on the inside. Invite participants to call out different emotions. Then ask for volunteers to model what walking looks like when someone is sad, worried, angry, calm, serious, joyful, and so on. Explore the idea of marching as a way to introduce the hymn “We Are Marching in the Light of God.” *When do people typically march? How is typical marching transformed by marching in the light of God?*

Conclude by singing “We Are Marching in the Light of God.” In many hymnals, this hymn is listed by its South African Zulu name, “Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos’.” Consider singing the South African version of this hymn as well as the English. It is okay if the children have difficulty with the words. The goal is to practice one way of marching in the light of God by practicing solidarity with all God’s people. You may also wish to view the YouTube clip of the Mwamba Children’s Choir singing the Zulu version of this hymn before singing.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 In Harmony (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Select a song that lends itself to singing in a round. Several suggestions are given below. Remember that the goal of this activity is to experience the difference between singing alone and singing together. If harmony does not occur, that, too, can be a topic for reflection.

Supplies:

- (optional) hymn: “Seek Ye First” by Karen Lafferty (tune: Seek Ye First), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1Y8Naj3RFk>
- (optional) hymn: “Go Now in Peace” by Natalie Sleeth (tune: Go in Peace), <http://www.rockhay.org/worship/music/gonowinpeace.htm>
- (optional) hymn: “Praise Ye the Lord,” http://www.makingmusicfun.net/html/f_printit_free_printable_sheet_music/hallelu-hallelu-piano.htm

When people sing together and the sounds blend in a pleasing way, we call it singing in harmony. Harmony adds beauty to sound, and it also adds beauty to life. To be in harmony means that several parts are joined together in a way that increases delight and joy. These parts can be anything: people, parts of a worship service, people in a dance, neighbors, parts of nature, or even the church. In order to experience the contrast between singing alone and singing in harmony, practice singing a familiar song in several ways. “Seek Ye First,” “Go Now in Peace,” and “Praise Ye the Lord” are all songs easily sung in rounds.

First, sing the song as a group all at one time. Then, ask for a volunteer to sing it alone. Finally, divide the group into three parts, and sing the song in a round. Reflect on how it felt to sing in unison, alone, and in harmony. Explore the idea of harmony in a deeper way by asking how beautiful sounds were created by many different voices singing different notes at the same time. *When did harmony happen? How is singing in harmony different than talking all at once?* There are no right answers for this discussion. Part of the goal is to reveal the mysterious nature of harmony.

Conclude by asking how the Holy Spirit moves the world toward harmony. As a group, name examples of different people, animals, and things that the Holy Spirit brings together in joyful and pleasing ways.

8 Cosmic Light

Leader preparation: Sometimes nursery rhymes become so familiar that we no longer hear them. Focus on the words of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” and hear them again as if for the first time. Imagine God investing people with the same energy as the stars. Wonder at God’s delight in creation.

Supplies:

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

“You yourself are even another little world and have within you the sun and the moon and also the stars.” —Origen

Origen, an African scholar and theologian, wrote these words in the second century. Read this quote to your group. Help participants connect these words to their own experience by asking what the sun and moon and stars all have in common. Explore what it means to radiate God’s love.

Then create your own version of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” The simple, rhyming nature of this song provides a helpful framework for children to write their own verses. Keep the bracketing verse, “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, how I wonder what you are,” and only lead the group in writing two middle rhyming verses that describe how we shine with God’s spirit. Here is one example:

Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are . . .
Sharing God’s light everywhere,
Always doing acts of care,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are.

For younger children suggest one verse and ask participants to create a second rhyming verse. For example, offer the phrase, “sharing God’s light everywhere” and then together think of words that rhyme with “everywhere” and build a second verse. Here are some additional phrases to jump start the group’s brainstorming: “in the morning, noon and night,” “all God’s children shining bright,”

“filled with love so deep and wide.” The final version of your song could be shared with the church community in a worship service, Vacation Bible School, or other shared venue.

9 Fragrant Presence

Leader preparation: Locate a pleasing essential oil such as lavender, lilac, or jasmine that reminds you of Mary’s anointing in John 12:1–8. What makes a smell sacred? What makes it beautiful? Reflect on a smell that brings you joy or that invites you to come into God’s presence.

Supplies:

- Bible
- an essential oil with a pleasing yet strong fragrance
- quiet, soothing music and music player
- (optional) Bible dictionary

Read aloud the story of Mary anointing Jesus with oil in John 12:1–8. Begin by quietly playing some beautiful, soothing music. As the group listens, ask participants to imagine the scene at Lazarus’ house. What do they see, hear, and smell?

Read again verse 3. Wonder what the oil may have smelled like. Pass around an open container of a pleasing essential oil like lavender, lilac, or jasmine. Choose something with a lingering fragrance that easily fills a space. Aromatherapy oils work well for this purpose. Notice how the quietly playing music and smell of the oil fill the room. How do the sounds and smells make participants feel?

Ask participants how people fill a room—by our choices, mood, and appearance. Often, people use music or smells to help them feel excited, happy, or calm. *What kinds of things can we say or do to fill a room with beauty?*

Discuss the word “anoint.” If you have a Bible dictionary, read the uses of anointing in the Bible. The word anoint has many meanings in scripture. After Jacob’s dream, he anointed a rock at Bethel to mark it as a holy place. In Jesus’ time, kings were anointed with oil as a way to mark them as powerful leaders. Often covering a person or thing with oil meant that God had set them apart for a holy purpose. Being anointed with oil means that you are able to take a little bit of the beauty that is in this room with you when you go.

Move around the room to each child, crouch to his or her level, and give each child a blessing. Share something you have observed about that child that is special or thoughtful. This observation can be general such as, “You light up when you smile,” or can be something specific he or she did that day. Then say, “May God’s love, light, and presence fill you this day, and may the Holy Spirit go with you as you fill our world with beauty.” Ask if it is okay to put some of the essential oil on the back of the child’s hand or wrist as a reminder of the blessing you said and the blessing the child is to others. If a child requests not to accept the oil, you can still make a gentle motion of blessing by lightly touching the child’s head or shoulder.

Reflect

Which activities ran smoothly, and which needed adjustment? What elements did the children respond to the most strongly? What evoked the most positive interaction? Pause for a few moments to recall the beauty you witnessed during this session.

Attachment: Activity 3

For the Beauty of the Earth

(words by Folliot S. Pierpoint)

For the beauty of the earth,
For the glory of the skies;
For the love which from our birth,
Over and around us lies;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This, our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour,
Of the day and of the night;
Hill and vale and tree and flow'r,
Sun and moon, and stars of light;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This, our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of ear and eye,
For the heart and mind's delight;
For the mystic harmony,
Linking sense to sound and sight;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This, our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child;
Friends on Earth and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This, our hymn of grateful praise.

Attachment: Activity 4

God Gifts Us Life

*(sung to the tune of
"The Farmer in the Dell")*

God gifts us life (sing twice).

All-e-e-lu-u-ia, God gifts us life.

A farmer plants a seed.

The soil helps it grow.

Bees spread the pollen.

Threshers cut the grain.

Bakers bake the bread.

Friends share a loaf.

We all stand as one.

Attachment: Activity 5

Biblical Names for God

Scripture	Name
Mark 14:61	The Blessed One
Mark 14:62	The Power
2 Peter 1 :17	The Majestic Glory
Mark 14:36	Abba
James 1:17	Father of Lights
Luke 4:34	The Holy One
Genesis 4:26	Yahweh (I Am Who I Am)
Deuteronomy 6:4-6	Adonai (my great Lord)
Isaiah 54:5	Lord of Hosts
Genesis 17	Elohim (plural form of God)
Exodus 6:3	El Shaddai (God of the Mountains or God Almighty)
Psalms 47:2-3	God Most High
Genesis 21:33	El Olam (God of Eternity)
Judges 9:46	God of the covenant
Genesis 16:13-14	El Roi (God of Seeing, named by Hagar)
Psalms 19:14	Redeemer
Matthew 23:37	Mother hen
Numbers 11:12	Mother
Deuteronomy 32:18	Rock that bore you and God who gave you birth
Psalms 22:9-10	Midwife
Judges 6:24	Lord is Peace
Psalms 23:1	Lord is my Shepherd
Isaiah 25:4	Our Refuge
Deuteronomy 32:4	The Rock
Deuteronomy 32:18	Rock who bore you/gave you birth

Experiencing Beauty



Workshop: Science

About this Rotation

Experiencing beauty as a faith practice enables us to encounter God through our senses and through the mysterious workings of God's Spirit. When we awaken to the diverse expressions of beauty, we deepen our connection to God, others, and ourselves. Through the beauty around us—in the universe and relationships, amid moments of both delight and brokenness—God communicates grace, healing, and comfort to us. We see anew, and we are moved to worship.

About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences, or the many individual ways learners apprehend and incorporate information into their own understandings and ways of being in the world.

For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Multiple intelligences*: ways of incorporating information, including Visual/Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Musical/Rhythmic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalist.
- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.

- *Workshop*: primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherd*: key relational components, these leaders travel with a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners in which faith is shared.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week: age ranges, learning styles, and experiences in previous workshops within this rotation.

About this Workshop

We experience beauty in God's creation every day. Whether we find it in a walk in the woods, a canoe trip down a river, or watching the expression on a child's face while creating a baking soda/vinegar volcanic explosion, the beauty of science and nature abound. In this workshop the natural world and all its beauty will be the setting for experiencing God's love.

The focus story for this rotation is Luke 9:28–36. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures that help us understand the importance of experiencing beauty.

BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

Luke 9:28–36

SUPPLEMENTAL STORIES:

Genesis 28:10–19a

Matthew 6:24–34

Leader Preparation

Matthew 6:24–34 warns against striving for and worrying about accumulating security through things. For much of human history, people have appropriated science and nature for their own gain without regard to the needs of the whole. When we practice seeing nature as a gift, we lose the need to hoard and experience an invitation to share the joy we have encountered.

Prayer: God of all, you created us as one of many species, one of many living things on earth. Open our eyes to how all of creation

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 The Creator's Clothes (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Ahead of time, select a place around the church where children can observe many different colors and textures within nature. If weather does not permit the group to gather outside, find a window or covered area where children can observe how nature clothes itself to protect from rain and cold. During the week, observe animals, insects, and plants and appreciate their beauty.

Supplies:

- Bible

In the Transfiguration story, Luke 9:28–36, God's awesome love clothes Jesus in white light. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus compares the beauty of a lily to the clothes of King Solomon. Gather your group outside in a place where they can observe "the clothes" worn by the natural world.

Discuss together why people choose the clothes they wear. Reflect on why Jesus' clothes appeared beautiful to the disciples in the Transfiguration story. Read Matthew 6:28–30. Explain that just as people are beautiful because God lives inside them, God's beauty can be seen in nature as well. Look around the area in which the group is sitting, and ask children to describe the "clothes" worn by the trees, plants, animals, and insects they see. Wonder together about how the beautiful colors in nature reflect God. Invite participants to name the colors and textures they see. Incorporate their comments into the following group prayer: *God of all, you colored our world with [invite responses]. Sometimes people worry that they cannot be beautiful without certain types of clothes. But trees are beautiful wearing their bark.*

Experiencing Beauty

works together. Awaken us to beauty that lasts but a moment. Help us to receive its gifts and to let go without the temptation to hoard or spoil it. Amen.

The ground is beautiful with its covering of grass, clover, and ivy. Birds proudly wear their feathers that warm them and help them to fly. Help us to remember that it is your love for us that makes us shine. Like this amazing world, you have made us beautiful just as we are. Amen.

WORKSHOP ROTATION

Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.



2 Adjusting Our Focus

Leader preparation: Practice using a paper towel tube as a way of capturing a detail of a larger object. Notice how looking at the object in different ways enables you to look at it deeply and see with new eyes.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Red Canna” by Georgia O’Keefe, <http://www.art.com/products/p10032683-sa-i674918/georgia-okeeffe-red-canna.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&ui=4FA2E7AB9F664A828CD2028E434AEDC4>
- magnifying glass
- natural object such as a flower or pine cone
- paper towel tubes, one for each child

Bethel became a holy place to Jacob after God came close to him in a dream. Bethel began as a resting place on Jacob’s journey. But after his dream, Jacob would always remember Bethel as a holy place that reminded him of God’s love and promise to always be with him. When Jacob awoke, he saw the rock he had used for a pillow that night with new eyes. It became a special rock that would always remind him how close to God Jacob felt.

Gather around the print of Georgia O’Keefe’s painting “Red Canna,” but conceal the name of the painting. Prepare children for gazing at the image in a contemplative way by saying the following or a similar prayer: *God of all, from the greatest mountains to the smallest of the small, help us to come to know you through the beauty we see. Amen.*

Then ask the group what colors and shapes they notice in this painting. Imagine together what the image could be. Ask children to talk about how the object might feel or smell. Conclude by discussing how the painting reminds participants of the Holy Spirit. Reveal the name of the painting and describe the size of a typical lily.

As a group, examine a flower, pine cone, or other natural object first on its own and then with a magnifying glass. Talk together about how a person’s perception changes when he or she looks at an object as a whole and then up close.

Pass out paper towel tubes to each participant. Invite children to use the tubes to focus their eyes on God’s world. They can use the tubes to frame a picture far away or to zoom in on a small detail. If weather allows, explore a section of the church grounds with your tubes. Alternatively, children can use the tubes to examine parts of natural objects indoors. The tubes can also function as telescopes through which children can observe parts of nature through a window. After children have had a chance to explore their world with the tubes, gather back together and discuss what everyone saw. How did the tubes help the children notice beauty in surprising ways? How did objects look different when framed far away and up close?

3 Habitats of Care

Leader preparation: Walk around the church grounds, and select a small area with a diverse habitat. Look for dirt in which it is okay for children to dig, and a variety of living organisms such as plants, insects, reptiles, and animals. These insects or animals do not need to be exotic. Even ants can be fascinating to watch. As you select a potential site, be mindful of things children need to do to remain safe as well as to preserve the habitat as much as possible. Be sure to observe any policies your church has for keeping children safe when leaving the building. For example, you may need to provide extra adult helpers. If necessary, adapt this activity for indoors by sharing a small creature's habitat with your group. A simple habitat includes a small animal, such as a gerbil, or even a fish in a fishbowl with its food and shelter.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) small shovels
- to adapt for indoors: a portable habitat such as a terrarium, fishbowl, or ant farm that includes a small animal or other creature, food, water, and shelter

Introduce the word “habitat” to your group. A habitat is the environment in which an organism, such as an insect or even a plant, lives. A habitat contains the water, food, and shelter needed for an organism to survive. Remind children to observe the plants, animals, and insects in their area with the same care and respect they would have when entering a person's home. This habitat is home to God's creatures. Children may dig and move parts of the habitat in order to see better, but encourage them to do so in a careful way. Instruct participants to look closely at their area of ground and search for all the elements of a habitat: a living organism, food, shelter, and water. For younger children, you may need to review examples of different living things and what they eat.

If you choose to adapt this activity for inside the church, share the small habitat with your group. Many children learn about habitats in school. Ask if they can name the different things your living organism needs to survive. Name ways people can care for the creature as it lives in the wild and as a pet. If appropriate, invite participants to hold the creature in a safe and careful way.

After children have had a chance to explore, gather together. Read Matthew 6:24–34. Invite children to name the ways they observed God providing for the creatures in their habitats. We can see beauty in the harmony of nature. *How does observing this small part of God's world remind us of God's care for us?* Matthew says that when we strive first for the kingdom, or realm, of God we, too, will receive all that we need. Encourage children to name some ways they can give to and receive care from each other. Remind them that caring for all creation is one way they help God's realm live on earth.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

**4 Beauty in Seed, Sapling, and Decay (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Decide whether your group will do this activity inside or out, and choose the appropriate activity described below. Practice looking at natural objects that represent growth and decay during the week. Contemplate the beauty of each stage, and note what touches you about both parts of the life cycle.

Supplies:

- “Life Stages Scavenger Hunt,” Attachment: Activity 4 (for groups able to go outdoors), one for each team of two or three children
- blank sheets of paper (for indoor groups)
- writing utensils
- (optional) hymn: “In the Bulb There Is a Flower” by Natalie Sleeth (tune: Promise), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkWYubdnc7o>

Beauty can be experienced in all stages of life. Divide participants into teams of two or three children. If your group is able to do this activity outdoors, invite each team to search the church grounds for plants that represent these life stages: seed; young plant or sapling that is just beginning to grow; a fully blooming plant; an older, well-established plant such as a tree or bush; and a decaying plant. Before children disperse for their hunt, point out some examples of plants, trees, and bushes in different stages of growth. Pass out the scavenger hunt handout and writing utensils.

When participants find plants that fit each category, ask them to draw a picture or write a description of their discovery. After about ten minutes, gather together for a time of sharing. Discuss where they saw beauty in each life stage. As children think about what makes something beautiful, focus on the value of the life stage as well as its appearance.

If weather or safety necessitates an indoor setting, pass out blank sheets of paper and writing utensils to each team of participants. (Teams can be larger for this activity.) Teams will compete with one another to name as many plants as they can (such as fruit, trees, or flowers) that begin with the letter you will randomly choose. For example, if you call out the letter “A,” teams may write down apple tree, apricot, azalea bush, ash tree, acorn, and so on. Parts of trees or plants count. Remind teams to work together as quietly as possible, because each team gets a point for unique answers (answers not on other team’s lists).

Then invite everyone to talk about how God uses each stage of a plant’s life to bless creation. Encourage participants to name as many parts of creation as they can that benefit from each stage. For example, an apple seed may not taste good to eat, but it can grow a new plant. An apple tree provides shade for people, a home for a bird, food for a bee, and clean air for everyone. Decaying leaves and branches make soil rich. Finally, ask participants to name the beauty they see or experience from each stage of a plant’s life.

Option: Listen to or sing “In the Bulb There Is a Flower.”

5 Creating Patterns from Nature

Leader preparation: Watch the video of children creating Andy Goldsworthy inspired art. Evaluate how much time your group has to complete this activity. If necessary, provide materials instead of having children find them. Depending on the size of the artwork being created and the number of materials used, this activity could take 30–45 minutes. Limit both size and materials to condense this activity. If weather necessitates, bring materials indoors so that participants can create patterns with them on tables or the floor. Select whatever is plentiful to your area. Dandelions and clover are often easy to find in the summer and pine needles and pinecones are often available year round. Bags of purchased shells and seeds may also be used.

Supplies:

- video: “Sixth Grade Goldsworthy Project,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HnrKiHqNvA&feature=related>
- access to small rocks, flowers, leaves, bark, and other natural objects children can gather, or a collection of small natural objects children can use to create beautiful designs
- (optional) bags of shells, seeds, or pebbles

The beauty of nature can be a window to God. By arranging natural objects into harmonious patterns, children become co-creators with God and practice restoring wholeness to themselves and all creation. Andy Goldsworthy is an artist who arranges natural objects into amazing and temporary art installations. Watch the video of his work and that of sixth grade students who have been inspired to create their own artwork.

Discuss how the students arranged flowers, leaves, and rocks into beautiful patterns. Notice how they used size and color to enhance their designs. Explain to your group that creating art can be a form of worship. While working, they may experience God’s peace or a greater sense of God’s love for all.

Begin by asking participants to gather up to three types of natural objects such as flowers, leaves, rocks, bark, seeds, or pinecones. Weeds such as dandelions and clover can substitute for more decorative plants.

To help participants focus their work in a limited amount of time, encourage them to arrange found objects in a circle, square, or line. For younger groups, it may be easier to create together. They can sort objects by size and color and then work together to create a pleasing pattern. Gently guide their creative process by asking questions about how they might arrange colors, sizes, and pieces in beautiful ways.

When participants have completed their designs or reached a designated stopping point, gather together. Talk about how creating art can be like prayer. Prayer is a way that we talk to God and listen for God. Similar to prayer, God can speak to us through artwork, perhaps through how we feel while creating it or enjoying it afterward. Reflect on how participants decided on their designs. Often, the beauty of a pattern or design comes as a surprise or gift to the artist similar to ideas that come to us from the Holy Spirit in prayer. Many people also feel a sense of peace, joy, or relief while creating art. How did participants feel while creating their designs? What beauty did they experience or see? How does the beauty of the designs help participants feel close to God? Conclude with the following prayer.

Holy God of Wonder and Delight, thank you for giving us eyes to see new patterns of possibility and hope in the world around us. Please bless the work of our hands. May our artwork be a source of light and love for those who see and experience it. Amen.

⑥ Nature Poetry

Leader preparation: Allow the examples of earth poems to become part of your centering time this week. Practice writing your own nature poetry. Notice how your writing inspires you to appreciate creation.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) examples of poems from “Kids Nature Poetry,” http://www.morning-earth.org/Kids_Poems_1.html
- paper
- writing surfaces
- pencils

Children of all ages can write simple poetry by naming what they see and hear. Writing encourages them to notice details and make connections between God and nature. Share examples of nature poetry from the morning earth site. Then read Genesis 28:10–19a and/or Matthew 6:24–34 as inspiration for the nature poetry participants will write. If possible, find a place outside to observe nature and ask children to use all their senses to describe what they see. Then encourage them to think about how they delight in nature through play or work. Use the current season as a starting point, and ask what they like to do or experience in that season.

To help jump start participants’ writing, provide starter phrases from the scripture passages, and invite participants to describe parts of nature that complete the phrase.

Some examples are:

- look at the birds
- consider the lilies (other flowers or objects can be substituted)
- surely God is in this place
- how awesome is this place
- all the families of the earth shall be blessed
- this is the gate of heaven
- do not worry about your life
- even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

Remind the children to be specific and to use their senses to describe what they see and how it makes them feel. Younger groups could create a group poem. It is okay if these poems become works in progress that children finish on their own. Typically, children are very proud of what they create. Consider sharing their poems with the congregation by posting them in a worship bulletin, in a newsletter, or on a bulletin board.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Meditating on Holy Spaces (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think of a place where you have felt especially close to God. Remember it in as much detail as you can so that you can share your memories with your group. Focus on a particular object in that place that helps you remember God's peace.

Supplies:

- Bible

Gather in a circle in a place where group members can sit comfortably. Read Genesis 28:10–19a. *Why did Jacob build an altar to God at Bethel? After Jacob's dream, imagine how Jacob saw the ground, rocks, and trees differently. What might Jacob hope to feel if he returned to Bethel later? As a group, name places where participants have felt close to God. What sights and sounds in that space mark it as special? Jacob marked Bethel as holy by pouring oil on a stone where he had dreamed of God. Later, other people stopped at Jacob's altar to pray and give thanks to God. Over time, all of the prayers offered to God at Bethel made it holy.*

Invite group members to cross their legs, fold their hands in their laps, and stretch their spines upward so that their lungs fill with air. Read the following meditation to your group.

Close your eyes and imagine a special place where you have felt close to God. It might be a place where you have experienced a strong sense of peace or where you feel really loved. It can be a place near your home. It could be a place in our church, inside or out. It could be a place you only visit once in a while, such as a camp or a retreat center. (Pause and quietly ask the following questions.) What do you see in this special place? Are you sitting? Walking? Swimming? What sounds fill your ears? What do you smell? What do you feel under your feet? How do you feel in this place? With your eyes still closed, look around this place where you feel close to God. Look for something beautiful that reminds you of how you feel here. Your object could be small like a leaf, a flower, a shell, a piece of bark, or it could be huge like the side of a mountain or a wave on the beach. (Pause for a few moments while participants select their objects. Then, ask group members to open their eyes.)

Invite participants to share about the places they envisioned. Ask them to pretend that the object they selected from their special place is really in the room with the group. As they describe their special places, invite them to pretend to show the object to the group. Encourage people to make the object come alive for the group by describing its size, color, weight, and feel. They can use words and gestures as needed. If participants are hesitant, begin by using your hands and your words to describe an object from your special place.

Conclude with this or a similar prayer: *Holy God of all places and all times, thank you for coming to us in these holy spaces that have become very special to us. Through our imaginations, you enable us to visit our places of safety and welcome and comfort when we need to feel especially close to you. Thank you for the gift of your peace. Thank you for the feel, touch, and smells that help us experience your love. Amen.*

8 An Altar for The Journey

Leader preparation: If you have a special rock that represents a place or experience, consider sharing it with your group. *The Memory Stone* by Anne Louise MacDonald is a lovely children's story about how to select a rock that helps a child remember the details of a very special day. Think about an object that feels sacred to you. What does that object evoke when you see or touch it?

Supplies:

- rocks about the size of a deck of cards, one for each child
- permanent markers
- (optional) book: *The Memory Stone* by Anne Louise MacDonald, <http://hugahorsefarm.com/picturebooks.html>

Either as a group or before you meet, collect rocks or stones large enough on which to write the following words from Genesis 28:15: "Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go." Jacob built an altar of stones at Bethel in order to remember God's promise of faithfulness and to mark the place as holy.

When Jacob had his dream at Bethel, he was on a journey. He had left his home and his family and was on his way to meet his wife, Rachel, whom he did not yet know. Invite participants to write Genesis 28:15a on one side of the rock and a phrase or image from the verse on the other side to help them remember God's promise to always be with them wherever they go. Examples may be "I am," "I am with you," or "I will keep you." A simple image could be a heart, an eye, or even a ladder that symbolizes Jacob's vision of angels coming down from heaven. Encourage group members to imagine a special place in or near their homes where they can place their rock and remember God's presence. This rock may become the first part of an altar the children build to mark this special place.

In the Old Testament, the word "holy" meant something that was set apart for God. Discuss how places can be set apart for God. As a group, imagine ways God's people can set a place apart as a holy place to talk to and listen to God. Invite children to name some ways they may add to their rocks and build their own altars at home. What special things might they add to remember God is with them?

9 Two Ways to Praise

Leader preparation: Before you gather with your group, practice the silent meditation in this activity for yourself. Allow God's quiet to fill you. As you listen to the sights and sounds around you, become aware of God's love for all creation. In order to lead the second part of this activity, practice singing the hymn "Over My Head."

Supplies:

- hymn: "Over My Head," African-American traditional, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6GVc0rFTFw&feature=related>
- (optional) natural noisemakers such as rocks, sticks, gourds, or shells

Gather in a place, inside or out, where participants can see and hear interesting sights and sounds. Invite children to listen quietly to the following meditation. Remind participants that meditation is a silent spiritual practice. When they hear questions, encourage them to answer only in their heads. Speak slowly and reverently as you lead your group. Once the silent meditation has ended, introduce a second way to worship God: joyful singing! By juxtaposing quiet with singing, children experience both in a deeper way.

One way we get ready to talk with God and listen for God is to become quiet. Become quiet in your arms. Become quiet in your hands. Become quiet in your legs. Become quiet in your feet. As you feel God's quiet fill you, open your ears to the sounds around you. Where do you hear God? Delight in the sounds of God's creation. Once again, feel God's quiet fill you. Now, open your eyes to the colors, textures, and shapes around you. Where do you see God? Enjoy the sights of God's creation.

Another way we can talk with God and listen for God is through singing! First, we became filled with God's quiet, and now we are going to praise God with joyful noises!

“Over My Head” is an easily sung spiritual that invites spontaneous extra verses. Lead your group in singing the first and second verses of this hymn so that everyone becomes familiar with the tune. Then ask participants to call out things they see and hear and add these items to subsequent verses. By altering the hymn spontaneously, children experience worship as playful praise instead of as a careful performance. Simple noisemakers add another level of fun to singing this hymn. To remain in harmony with the outdoor setting, you might provide rocks or sticks for knocking together, and a gourd or bag of shells as shakers.

Reflect

How did the setting for today's activities enhance children's experience? What new discoveries did you make? How did the children respond to the information they received? What caused you to experience wonder or delight?

Attachment: Activity 4

Life Stages Scavenger Hunt

seed or bud

sapling or young plant

blooming plant

older tree or bush

decaying plant

Experiencing Beauty



Workshop: Video

About this Rotation

Experiencing beauty as a faith practice enables us to encounter God through our senses and through the mysterious workings of God's Spirit. When we awaken to the diverse expressions of beauty, we deepen our connection to God, others, and ourselves. Through the beauty around us—in the universe and relationships, amid moments of both delight and brokenness—God communicates grace, healing, and comfort to us. We see anew, and we are moved to worship.

About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences, or the many individual ways learners apprehend and incorporate information into their own understandings and ways of being in the world.

For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Multiple intelligences*: ways of incorporating information, including Visual/Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Musical/Rhythmic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalist.
- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.

- *Workshop*: primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherd*: key relational components, these leaders travel with a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners in which faith is shared.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week: age ranges, learning styles, and experiences in previous workshops within this rotation.

About this Workshop

Video is an exciting medium for engaging children with their faith. Video allows us to play with images, sound, and creative editing. A core part of experiencing beauty is learning to see with new eyes and allowing ourselves to be surprised by the gift of life. Children of all ages delight in seeing themselves and their world in a new way through recording. Creation comes alive for them when they view it through their own lens. If video cameras are not available, you can engage in a similar process by using cameras or interacting with film clips.

The focus story for this rotation is Luke 9:28–36. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures that help us understand the importance of experiencing beauty.

BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

Luke 9:28–36

SUPPLEMENTAL STORIES:

Job 38:1–11

Revelation 21:2–5

Leader Preparation

Evaluate how to make the best use of equipment you have available. Consider how to enable each child to participate in both active and passive ways. In your quiet time this week, hold up each child to God's light. Love them as they are even as you help them develop new skills and deepen their experience of God's beauty.

Prayer: Awesome God, come to us in alive and dynamic ways. Help us to respond to you with enthusiasm and a willingness to grow toward your light. Through the gifts of video, open our eyes to new ways of seeing that reveal the multiple faces and forms of beauty. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



① Seeing Two Ways (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the basic storyline of the movie *Patch Adams*, a true story of a doctor who uses humor to aid healing. Decide how children will view this clip. It can be played from any device connected to the Internet or by locating this scene, which occurs toward the beginning of a full-length version of the movie.

Supplies:

- video: "What Do You See" from the movie *Patch Adams*, <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/patch-adams/what-do-you-see?play=1>
- computer with Internet access and projection capability

Watch the video, "What Do You See?" from the movie *Patch Adams*. The clip is only 2:30 minutes long. Patch Adams is a doctor who believes that caring for a person's spirit is part of treating physical illness. He uses humor and compassion as part of his healing. Patch Adams learns this way of practicing medicine while he is a patient in a mental health hospital. In this scene he visits a friend, looking for encouragement.

Before viewing this scene, tell your group to view it through the eyes of the man seated at the desk named "Fingers." This character has a reputation for holding up four fingers and then asking other patients how many fingers they see. When they respond, "four," he gets angry and tells them that they are wrong. *How did Fingers see Patch Adams at the beginning of the scene?* Ask learners to describe the desk, cup, room, and Patch from Fingers' perspective when Patch first enters the room.

Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

What does Patch Adams do to the cup that changes his friend's attitude? When he looked at the cup, what do you think Patch saw?

Now replay the clip, but this time ask learners to pretend they are seeing and hearing it from Patch's perspective. Ask them to describe in detail the room, the desk, and Fingers.

All the other patients ignored Fingers because he was cranky a lot of the time. *What did Patch choose to see that no one else did? What was he able to learn from Fingers?*

If we believe that all people have the light of God inside, how might we see Fingers?



2 Floating World of Navaro Rapids

Leader preparation: Spend time gazing at Hiroshige's painting “Navaro Rapids.” Contemplate its beauty on its own and then in light of the 2011 tsunami in Japan. How does this painting speak to the fragility and strength of God's creation?

Supplies:

- artwork: “Navaro Rapids” by Ando Hiroshige, <http://www.art.com/products/p10023130-sa-i802528/ando-hiroshige-navaro-rapids-c1855.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=ab4fda6b36f84ed3b285828650303e96&searchstring=navaro+rapids>
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard
- (optional) video camera
- (optional) computer with Internet access and projection capability

Show the artwork “Navaro Rapids” by Ando Hiroshige. Japanese artist Hiroshige made woodblock prints in a style called Ukiyo. The Japanese word *Ukiyo* literally means “floating world.” It refers to beauty that is temporary. We might see a glimpse of a beautiful “other world” that takes us away from everyday work and worry. Hiroshige made this woodblock of the Navaro Rapids in 1855, before movies were made. Ask the group how movies “take us away” to other worlds. How do they help us imagine how real life could be?

Invite learners to imagine this art print as a scene from a movie. What sounds would they hear? What would be the tone of the music (scary, soft, loud)? As an option, invite participants to make sounds to accompany the images they see; you could film the painting with the background noise. Replay for the group to view before continuing.

This image includes a lot of contrast. Have learners list the pairs of opposites they see in this print. Point out lines and shading in the painting to help them name contrasts. Ask them to find long lines and short lines, places of light and dark, and areas that are smooth and areas that are rough. Ask how these different elements make them feel.

Where do they see beauty in this print? Review the list of opposites. Do they see beauty in both sides of the list? If so, invite them to describe these different types of beauty.

Create a prayer from the things the group named in the list. Begin with “Awesome God” and then use the beauty described to complete the following phrases.

*Awesome God,
We see beauty in . . .
Sometimes, we are scared by . . .
Help us to trust you to . . .
Amen.*

③ You Are My Beloved

Leader preparation: Locate the full version of Marianne Williamson’s meditation on our deepest fears from her book *Return to Love*. In what ways do her words resonate with you? Use these words as a lens to hear the story of Jesus’ Transfiguration in a new way. Ponder the ways in which each of us are invited to grow into our identity as God’s beloved children.

Supplies:

- Bible
- video: “Deepest Fear” from *Akeelah and the Bee*, <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/akeelah-and-the-bee/deepest-fear>

Explain to your group that you are going to watch a scene from a movie about a girl’s deepest fear. Ask your group to name some things that they are afraid of.

Watch the brief video “Deepest Fear” from *Akeelah and the Bee*. Akeelah has just won her school’s spelling bee. In this scene, her mentor, Dr. Larabee, questions Akeelah about her confidence and hopes for her future. Play the video until just after Akeelah reads the quote on the wall by Marianne Williamson. Pause the video right after Dr. Larabee asks, “What does it mean to you?” Invite your group to respond. Then play the rest of the video.

Encourage participants to listen intently to the quote Akeelah reads and then replay this section of the clip. What did they hear? Some important phrases are: “Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure”; “We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us”; and “as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.” These phrases are part of a much longer paragraph that can be found in Marianne Williamson’s book *Return to Love*.

How does Akeelah answer the question about what not to fear? What does she mean? Read the story of Jesus’ Transfiguration in Luke 9:28–36. How does Jesus change in this story? How does his outer appearance help the disciples understand who Jesus is on the inside? How might Akeelah act if she really believes she is God’s beloved?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ Beauty in Opposites (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Evaluate the maturity of your group and the safest way for children to operate a video camera. Create specific guidelines for how they can explore the church on their own or with a chaperone. Then challenge yourself throughout the week to notice beauty in unusual places. What discoveries surprised you? Where did you feel challenged?

Supplies:

- camera or video camera
- “Beauty in Opposites Scavenger Hunt,” Attachment: Activity 4

When we think something is beautiful, we care for it. Practicing beauty involves training ourselves how to look. Sometimes we get stuck thinking that only pretty things are beautiful. Stretch your imaginations by looking for beauty in opposites. Do a group scavenger hunt in your immediate meeting area or around your church and search for beauty in these different categories: fragile, strong, broken, whole, messy, neat, well used, and new (also listed on the attachment). Be sure to follow your church’s safe spaces policies and recruit extra adult chaperones if needed. Film a short video of each object, scene, or creature you find. As you walk along with your group, ask them to find other opposites where beauty shines. Older children may like to take turns filming. Younger children can be scouts who search out things that are fragile, strong, broken, and so forth.

If exploring the church together is not an option, do a virtual scavenger hunt by having participants act out examples of each category and video record their improvisations. If selecting this option, encourage children to work in groups of three or more, and ask each group to perform a pair of opposites, such as one scene of something that is fragile and one scene of something that is strong. When recording is complete, play back scenes for the group to enjoy. How did recording these scenes stretch everyone’s ideas of what is beautiful? What does the group see in a new way?



5 God’s Dream for Our City

Leader preparation: Review the space the group has in which to work and plan the logistics for arranging interviews. A children’s book by Lois Rock entitled *I Wish Tonight* may inspire some deep thinking about what a community renewed by God may look like from a child’s perspective. As you guide children in dreaming of a future inspired by God’s love, allow images to speak as strongly as words.

Supplies:

- Bible
- video camera
- “God’s Dream for Our Community,” Attachment: Activity 5
- poster board
- markers
- way to play back video recording for the whole group

Read Revelation 21:2–5. In this passage, the author dreams of what Jerusalem would be like at the end of time when God transforms all creation into something new and beautiful. What is missing in this holy city? Describe God in this city. Invite your learners to close their eyes and imagine the beauty of this place. What do they see, smell, and taste?

God has filled our world with beauty that gives us a glimpse of what everlasting life with God will be like. Through visions, God also helps us imagine what life on earth will be like at the end of time. Sometimes visions or dreams of the future can inspire how we live now.

Choose an area for participants to interview one another that can be separate from the rest of the group so that all the responses will not be revealed until the end of the activity. Pair them into interview teams. You will also need an adult or mature group member to operate the video camera.

Give each team a copy of the interview questions on Attachment: Activity 5. Let each team take turns asking questions, responding, and recording (if applicable). While part of the group is interviewing, have the rest of the group work on a poster themed “God’s Dream for Our Community.” Encourage children to draw pictures and write words that describe a city filled with God’s presence, beauty, and love. When everyone has been interviewed, gather again as a large group. Record the entire group holding the poster and saying “God’s Dream for our Community.” Then play back the interview responses for everyone to enjoy. Talk with church leaders about a time and place to share this video with the congregation.

⑥ Don’t Be a Shrinking Violet!

Leader preparation: This activity can be completed at any time of year. If it is cold, consider watering an evergreen or an indoor plant and discuss how God is present in growing things at all times. If it is warm outside, flowering plants may visibly “perk up” when watered.

Supplies:

- watering can(s) or a hose (can substitute a cup or other simple container if needed)
- video: “Deepest Fear” from *Akeelah and the Bee*, <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/akeelah-and-the-bee/deepest-fear>
- copy of the prayer in this activity to take with you

Plants can wilt, and so can people. Every kind of tree, shrub, and flower needs water and good soil to grow tall and bloom. Sometimes people wilt when they don’t believe in themselves and lose courage. Watch the video “Deepest Fear.” *How is Akeelah like a wilting plant? How does Dr. Larabee “water” Akeelah with his words? God says that each of us is beautiful. God calls each of us beloved, but sometimes we forget how much God loves us, and we wilt. What happened this week to make you feel loved (or watered)? What are some things we can do to help other people know that they are God’s beloved children?*

Find a place around your church with plants that need watering. Observe the plants. How do they look? Allow participants to take turns watering the plants. Gather together and say this prayer.

Loving God, thank you for watering us with your love. Thank you for calling us your beloved. When we forget and start thinking that we’re not smart enough or not good enough, help us remember that you see who we really are and who we really can be. And when we feel tempted to look down on each other, remind us that the other person is beloved too. Amen.

If it is warm outside, gather around the plants you watered and see if they look taller and stronger after being cared for.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Who Do You Dare to Be? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: If you do not have access to a full-size video camera, children will be delighted by any means you have for capturing and playing back their responses. Contemplate how to create a fun and playful atmosphere that will encourage all children to debut as confident children of light.

Supplies:

- video camera
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard
- (optional) props such as a fun hat, a boa, a scarf, a book, a small barbell

Read Job 38:1–11. Focus on the description of stars and sea being born in verses 7 and 8. *What did the stars do when God created them? Wonder for a moment what this scene looked like. How do you picture God lighting the sky? How did the sea act when God created it? If God created the stars to sing and shout and the sea to burst with strength, I wonder what God created us to do. How do we show our love for life and our delight in being God’s creations?*

If you are able, provide your group with a series of props that prompt participants to feel and act fabulous. (You might also have the children simply imagine such props and describe them to the rest of the group.) Show the objects to your group. List stellar words where everyone can see them, such as fabulous, creative, peacemaker, strong, and so forth. Then ask the children, “Who do you dare to be?” Encourage answers that describe how people feel and act as well as specific stellar acts of kindness or courage. Add their responses to your list of character traits.

Next, invite children to strike a pose while completing the phrase, “I dare to be . . .” Give everyone a few minutes to play and practice, and then video record the results.

8 Making Space for Beauty

Leader preparation: Scout the church in advance for some potential sites that can be organized or cleaned in a relatively short amount of time. Secure permission to straighten the area. While children may balk at the idea of cleaning, they often gain great satisfaction and pride from accomplishing a helpful task. Set the tone for this activity by focusing on the joy of making something new again instead of the drudgery of cleaning up a mess.

Supplies:

- video camera
- Bible
- necessary cleaning or gardening tools

In John’s vision of the earth at the end of time, God says, “See, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5). Part of God’s dream for us will happen in the future, but part of God’s dream happens now when we allow God to help us make something new.

We make something new by seeing beauty in it and by helping that beauty shine for all to see. Read Revelation 21:5 and discuss how we can work with God to see the potential for beauty in things that need to be made new. Walk around

the church and look for something beautiful that is partially hidden by clutter, dirt, or debris. Talk with your group about what makes something beautiful to us. Emphasize how value and care influence our ideas of what makes something beautiful. A library, worship closet, or garden may offer good possibilities.

When you find a beautiful object that is partially hidden, use a video camera to record the area as you find it. Then record participants cleaning up the area or object so that its beauty shines through. When the group is finished, record what it made new. The completed video may be used later in a worship service to accompany a scripture reading of Revelation 21:5.



9 Seeds of Hope

Leader preparation: Center yourself during the week by holding small seeds that represent the children in your group. Pray for their growth and for how to nurture the potential God has instilled within them.

Supplies:

- seed packets of a flower such as a forget-me-not or sunflower, enough for each participant plus one
- “Seeds of Hope,” Attachment: Activity 9, for each child
- pencils
- magnifying glass
- hymn: “In the Bulb There Is a Flower” by Natalie Sleeth (tune: Promise), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkWYubdnc7o>
- computer with Internet access

Open one of the seed packets, and pour the seeds onto a plate or piece of paper so everyone can see them. If the seeds are small, provide a magnifying glass. Invite children to pick up the seeds and notice the color, size, and feel of the seeds. Wonder together what kind of flower is inside the seed waiting to grow. Encourage your group to use their hands to guess the size the flower will become.

Help your participants make connections between a gardener who plants a seed with the hope that it will grow into a flower and God who plants seeds of hope and possibility in us. Pose wondering statements such as the following and invite response:

- If you found this seed and had no idea what it might become, I wonder what you would do.
- When God looks at us, I wonder what God sees.
- I wonder what God believes we will become.

Reflect

How did the use of technology fit with the theme of experiencing beauty? How was each child able to experience beauty through video? Evaluate what needs to be altered to enhance group participation. Receive the gifts of joy and understanding that occurred today. Celebrate the seeds of hope quietly planted. Seek help in processing any challenges.

Invite the participants to add their own “I wonder” statements. There doesn’t have to be any response to their statements, but encourage them to wonder. The person who wrote the hymn “In the Bulb There Is a Flower” wondered these questions as well. Watch the video of the hymn “In the Bulb There Is a Flower.”

Give a seed packet, pencils, and a copy “Seeds of Hope,” Attachment: Activity 9, to each child. Read the prayer together and invite each participant to complete the prayer. Younger children may need help writing their responses. Tape the finished prayers to the seed packets, and invite children to take them home and plant their seeds of hope.

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Attachment: Activity 4

Beauty in Opposites Scavenger Hunt

Search for objects or scenes that represent each category and capture them on video. Note the location of each shot.

Fragile

Strong

Broken

Whole

Messy

Neat

Well used or worn

New

Attachment: Activity 5

God's Dream for Our City

(Record someone reading the question as well as someone answering.)

Beauty can be anything that reminds us of God's love for people or God's love for creatures, plants, and even rocks!

Where did you see beauty this week?

Imagine a holy city filled with God's beauty.
(Invite responses to the following prompts.)

In a holy city, I see people who . . .

In a holy city, no one . . .

In a holy city everyone . . .

In a holy city, I see the color . . .

In a holy city, animals . . .

In a holy city, plants . . .

In a holy city, even the rocks . . .

Attachment: Activity 9

Seeds of Hope

Dear God, You are like a gardener who looks at a seed and sees a beautiful flower or a tall tree with wide branches and lots of fruit. Thank you for seeing beauty in me. Thank you for planting hope in all of us. Help me to see good things in myself and in everyone. Because you love me, I trust you with my hopes.

I hope for

I hope people in my church

I hope people in my community

Amen.