

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Older children are concrete thinkers. They have vivid imaginations and are beginning to make meaning from concrete images and experiences. As their reading skills grow stronger, they can read longer passages of scripture. Socially, older elementary children are developing new skills and abilities, and are likely to be involved in different activities at school and in their communities. Peer relationships become more important to their development of self-esteem. They are beginning to be self-reflective and to make connections between what they enjoy and what they are good at doing. All of these developmental factors bode well for a discovery of one's God-given gifts and an understanding of the older child's place and value in God's family of faith.

In these Discovery activities, children are encouraged to name and claim their labels and roles and to begin to see the things they enjoy and the things they do well as clues to the gifts God gives. They may practice listening to God with their ears, their head, and their hearts, and to get a glimpse of the different ways God called people in the Old and New Testaments. They have opportunities to work with both art and music that tap a child's imagination to envision how or to what God may call us. Finally, the importance of peer relationships is employed with affirmation activities to give children an opportunity to affirm gifts they see in themselves, in their peers, and in the whole group.

About this Exploration

Throughout our whole lives we have the opportunity to discover our gifts of ministry. As we listen attentively to God’s call and affirmation, identify our own passions, gifts, and skills, and participate in community where gifts are celebrated and shared, our gifts shape the unique ministry we have as we serve God and God’s people. The process of discovery may involve prayer, community, scripture, nature, solitude, silence, and openness to the gentle nudging of the Spirit. We may be surprised by the Spirit, as well, and discover new and unexpected gifts along our journey.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Ezekiel 2:1–5
1 Corinthians 1:1–9

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Called by Name (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Prepare an example of this activity by writing your name vertically down the center of a sheet of paper. Think of names or labels that describe you, and write one word or phrase for each letter in your name. The words you choose don’t have to begin with a letter in your name, but they should contain one of the letters in your name.

Supplies:

- colored paper for each child
- markers
- prepared sample of your name

Give each child a sheet of colored paper and a marker. Tell each to write his or her first name in capital letters vertically down the middle of the paper. Invite the children to think of names, labels, or gifts that describe themselves, and to write one label using each letter of the name. The words they select should contain one of the letters in the name, but it does not have to be the first letter. You may make word suggestions such as: teammate, choir member, soccer player, helper, sister, pitcher, student, artist, and so on. Show the example of your name that you prepared.

When the project is completed, talk with the children about their different names, labels, and gifts. Explain that the activities we do and the things we enjoy doing help us to discover and try out our gifts. Each person has gifts, but not everyone identifies them as gifts. Invite everyone to share his or her name and labels with the entire group as a way to claim each person’s own name and gifts. As they share, encourage discussion by asking the children what they enjoy about their labels and activities. For example: *What do you enjoy about being a sister?* or *What do you enjoy about singing in the children’s choir?*

Leader Preparation

Throughout our lives we are in the process of discovering the gifts God gives us and calls us to use in ministry. As you prepare to help older children practice activities of discovery, be open to what you might discover about yourself. Trust that God uses your leadership not only to help children encounter God, but as a means for you to encounter God as well.

Prayer: Open my eyes, O God, that I may see you with new insight, and serve you with willing hands and heart. May the time I spend with your children be a time of discovery of the many gifts you give to each of us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Session Development

For each session 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

2 Listen

Leader preparation: If you can take the children outdoors, lead them to a place where they can spread out and sit quietly. If you choose to remain indoors, make sure you are in a room where children can sit quietly and have a sense of their own space. Gather blankets or pillows on which the children will sit. Put a marker at 1 Kings 19:11–13 (hearing God in the silence) in your Bible.

Supplies:

- Bible
- blankets or pillows
- paper
- pencils

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.

Before sending the children to sit in a quiet place, tell the children that they will sit in silence for five minutes. Explain that during this time they are to listen with their ears, with their head and with their heart. They may hear sounds in the room or from other places in the building. Tell them to listen to these sounds. They may have thoughts or ideas flow through their minds. Tell them to listen to these. They may hear a word from God in their heart. Tell them to listen for these words, too. At the end of their time of silence, have them write down what they heard and identify if they heard it with their ears, their head, or their heart.

Give each child a blanket or pillow and paper and pencil, and tell each to find a quiet place where he or she can sit and listen to the sounds in the environment. When each child has settled in to a quiet spot, read aloud 1 Kings 19:11–13, and then begin the five minutes of silence.

At the end of five minutes, tell the children to begin to write what they heard during the time of silence. Remind them to identify if they heard it with their ears, their head, or their heart.

Gather the children together. Ask for a show of hands for which children heard with their ears, their head, and their heart. Invite children to share the different things they heard during the time of silence. Affirm that God speaks to us in many different ways, giving attention to any messages that children heard with their heart. Taking time to listen to the world around us and what is inside us can help us hear God's call to us.

3 God Calls Many People

Leader preparation: Read the following scripture passages and identify the way each person is called by God. Write the list of scripture passages on a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard for display. The first three passages on the list are Bible Focus Passages for this Faith Practice.

- Ezekiel 2:1–5 (Ezekiel)
- 1 Samuel 3:1–10 (Samuel)
- 1 Kings 3:3–15 (Solomon)
- Isaiah 6:1–8 (Isaiah)
- Jeremiah 1:4–10 (Jeremiah)
- Hosea 1:2–10 (Hosea)
- Genesis 12:1–9 (Abram/Abraham)
- Exodus 3:1–3 (Moses)
- Jonah 1:1–3 (Jonah)
- Luke 1:26–38 (Mary)
- Acts 9:4–9 (Saul/Paul)

Supplies:

- Bibles
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard with scripture references
- markers

Distribute Bibles to the children. Assign scripture passages to each child or pair of children. Help the children to locate their assigned passages in their Bibles. Have them read the passage, looking for the way God called the person in the Bible story. Gather the group and invite each child, or pair, to tell the name of the person who was called by God and describe how God called that person. Point out the different ways God calls people.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Favorites (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Prepare a visual symbol for reading by folding a sheet of construction paper in half and opening it like a book. Inside the “book” list skills and talents that can be associated with reading: intelligence, imagination, appreciation of quiet, openness to new ideas. Use the “book” as an aid in explaining the “Favorites” activity to the children.

Supplies:

- prepared “book,” a visual symbol for reading
- construction paper
- scissors
- pencils
- markers

Give each child a sheet of construction paper, a pencil, and scissors. Invite the children to think of a favorite activity and create an image or symbol out of the construction paper representing that activity. For example, if a child enjoys reading, that child could cut out an image of a book or fold a sheet of construction paper in half to represent a book. Show the example you made of the “book.” While creating their symbols, challenge the children to think about what skills or talents are involved in doing their favorite activity. Have them use markers to write these skills or talents on their completed symbols. Invite the children to tell about their favorite activity and the skills and talents they use with the activity. Help the children associate their favorite things with God-given gifts. Often the activities that give us the most joy reflect the gifts God gives us.

5 I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the words and tune of “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” (tune: Grand Isle), especially noting the different types of people listed as saints. Think about what it means to be a “saint” and in what ways you are one of God’s saints. Determine if you will play a musical recording of this song or have an accompanist play the song from a hymnal. If you are comfortable singing, practice the song so you can lead the children in learning it. You may choose to simply read aloud the words with the children.

Supplies:

- hymn: “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” by Lesbia Scott (tune: Grand Isle), <http://www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh712.sht>
- music player or accompanist and piano

Ask the children to define “saint.” Accept the children’s answers, and then invite them to describe what a saint might look or act like. Invite them to learn the song “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God.” Encourage the children to notice the different types of people who are listed as “saints” as the lyrics are read aloud. Distribute copies of the lyrics of “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God,” and invite volunteers to read aloud each verse of the song. If you are comfortable with leading singing, help the children learn to sing the song. This repetition allows the children to encounter the message “I mean to be one too,” affirming their own “sainthood.” Invite the children to share what they noticed about different types of saints from the song lyrics. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions.

- In what ways did this song expand your understanding of who or what a “saint” is?
- How do you think saints use their gifts in the world?
- In what ways are you one of God’s saints?

6 The Beauty of Different Gifts

Leader preparation: Study “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” (c. 1912) by Gustav Klimt. How does the collection of images inform the theme of discovering gifts? In what ways can you help the children encounter this theme using the poster?

Supplies:

- artwork: “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” by Gustav Klimt, <http://www.art.com/products/p15177883-sa-i3715775/gustav-klimt-farm-garden-with-sunflowers-c1912.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=55eedd136d4049bcaab8f63c70afd3e3&searchstring=klimt+farm+garden+with+sunflowers>
- colored construction paper
- scissors
- markers
- tape or poster putty

Display “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” by Gustav Klimt. Tell the children to look carefully at the picture for two minutes. One by one, invite each child to describe what they see. Talk with the children about the variety of flowers and colors in the garden. Invite the children to consider what the garden would look like if all of the red flowers were removed or if there were just sunflowers. Celebrate the variety found in the garden, and the importance every flower makes in the whole picture. Let the children select a sheet of colored construction paper and a marker. Encourage each child to cut out a flower, plant, or tree to represent him- or herself. Use the marker to write their own traits or gifts on their cut-out. Invite everyone to tell about the plant they selected for themselves and the gifts they claim. Help them display their plant around the artwork.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 People Respond to God’s Call (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This is similar to Activity 3, in which the focus was on how God called people. This activity focuses on how people responded to God’s call. Read the following scripture passages and identify the way each person is called by God. Write the list of scripture passages on a sheet of newsprint or whiteboard for display. The first three passages on the list are Bible Focus Passages for this Faith Practice.

- Ezekiel 2:1–5 (Ezekiel)
- 1 Samuel 3:1–10 (Samuel)
- 1 Kings 3:3–15 (Solomon)
- Isaiah 6:1–8 (Isaiah)
- Jeremiah 1:4–10 (Jeremiah)
- Hosea 1:2–10 (Hosea)
- Genesis 12:1–9 (Abram/Abraham)

- Exodus 3:1–3 (Moses)
- Jonah 1:1–3 (Jonah)
- Luke 1:26–38 (Mary)
- Acts 9:4–9 (Saul/Paul)

Supplies:

- Bibles
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard with scripture references
- markers

Distribute Bibles to the children. Assign scripture passages to each child or pair of children. Help the children to locate their assigned passage in their Bible. Tell them to read the passage looking for the way the person in the story responded to God's call. Gather the group, and invite each child, or pair, to share the name of the person who was called by God and to tell how the person responded to God's call. Point out the different responses people give to God's call. Ask the children how they might have responded if God called them in the same way.

8 I Celebrate You

Leader preparation: Prepare a gift tag for each child using pieces of wrapping paper cut in 3-inch squares. You may also use Christmas gift tags.

Supplies:

- prepared gift tag for each child
- pens

Gather the children in a circle and give each child a gift tag and pen. Have the children notice the person on their left, and write the person's name on the gift tag. Under the name, list at least one gift or one thing they appreciate about the person. Go around the circle and have everyone present their gift tag to their neighbor by reading aloud the affirmation that is written, then giving the tag to the child named on the tag. When all the gift tags have been shared, lead the group in a prayer, such as: *Holy God, each person is a gift. You created us this way. As we learn and grow together, help us to discover and share the gifts you so freely give us. In your name, we give you thanks and ask for your blessing. Amen.*

9 What Have We Here?

Leader preparation: Draw a circle to fill a sheet of newsprint. In the center of the circle write the question "What have we here?" Place the newsprint sheet on the floor where the children can gather around it. You will remain on the floor to write on the newsprint circle.

Supplies:

- prepared newsprint
- marker

Gather the children in a circle around the prepared newsprint. Go around the circle and have each child tell one gift or one activity he or she enjoys or is proud of. Write on the border of the circle the word or phrase that each child shares. Stand and join the children's circle. Tell the children that each one of them is a gift from God, and God gives each person special gifts and skills and abilities. As a group, we bring our different gifts to make a unique and wonderful whole. Say a prayer, thanking God for the different gifts in your group, taking care to name each word or phrase listed on the newsprint circle.

Reflect

In what ways are the children making the connection between what they enjoy, what they are proud of, and their gifts? In what ways can you encourage them to look at their concrete activities and interests and link these to an understanding of God's call and gifts to each of them? Do the children make positive statements to one another? How can you encourage peer support within the group?

Pray the following prayer, or one like it, with the children: *Holy God, each person is a gift. You created us this way. In sharing our gifts, we become a unique and wonderful whole. Thank you, God, for the gifts of. . . [say aloud the words from the newsprint circle]. As we learn and grow together, help us to discover and use the gifts you so freely give us. In your name, we give you thanks and ask for your blessing. Amen.*

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Mark 1:14–20 offers a positive message to elementary children. They are shown that Jesus does not require particular skill or ability to be a follower. Instead he asks for a willingness to follow him. Children are eager learners who are willing to watch and learn and follow those whom they trust. They can be assured that Jesus welcomes them as followers as readily as he welcomed Peter, Andrew, James, and John.

About this Exploration

Scripture provides many examples of people discovering God-given talents that help them not only in their own lives, but also in ministering to or caring for others. As Solomon discovered, gifts such as knowledge and a discerning mind are to be valued more highly than riches, long life, or power. Scripture, along with the community, inspired and affirms people in recognizing the different gifts they possess. Gifts of ministry allow people to play important roles in this world, in faith-related settings as well as in homes, workplaces, schools, and places of recreation.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

1 Kings 3:3–15
Mark 1:14–20

Leader Preparation

God prizes wisdom and rewards followers who seek wisdom and justice over riches, power, and material goods. Turn to God and ask for the wisdom you need to guide the children in this exploration. God honors our prayers and petitions.

Prayer: Gracious God, grant me the wisdom and patience I need to receive your children this day. As I explore your Word, may I help them to explore it, too. Together, may we come to use and appreciate the gifts you give to us. Amen.

Session Development

For each session 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.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Drop Everything and Come! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Plan to use the toys and games in your meeting space as children arrive. You may want to gather simple board games, decks of cards, Legos, blocks, or other toys for children to play together at the beginning of the session. Mark the scripture text in your Bible for easy reference.

Supplies:

- Bible
- selection of toys, games, and decks of cards

As children arrive, encourage them to play with their friends using the toys and games available in the meeting area. When it is time for the session to begin, call the children to gather in a seated circle or seated around a table. Repeat these words in calling the children together: “Drop everything and come!”

When the children have gathered, ask them:

- What did you stop doing before you gathered in a circle? (Possible answers might be: stop playing a game, stop playing with a friend)
- What was it like to stop in the middle of your playing?

Show the children how to locate Mark 1:14–20 in the Bible. Have the children listen to the Bible story and notice what the disciples had to stop before they followed Jesus. Read the passage aloud. Ask:

- What did the disciples stop doing before they followed Jesus (Stop their work, leave their fishing nets, leave their boats, leave their father)
- What do you think it was like for the disciples to stop in the middle of their work to follow Jesus?

2 Fishers of What?

Leader preparation: Read Mark 1:14–20. On a blank sheet of paper, use a crayon to draw a large outline of a fish. Use this as an example for the children’s drawings.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- prepared paper with fish outline
- blank paper
- crayons

Distribute Bibles to the children, and help them locate Mark 1:14–20. Read the text aloud. Ask volunteers to enact the parts of the story as you read it a second time. The parts are: Jesus, Simon, Andrew, James, John, Zebedee (James’s father), hired men (optional). Read the text and encourage the actors to show the actions of their characters as they are described in your reading. Following the second reading, gather the children to discuss the story using these questions.

- What message was Jesus giving to people at the beginning of the story?
- What were the men doing when Jesus came along?
- What did Jesus ask the men to do?

Show the children the paper you prepared with a fish outline. Distribute blank paper and crayons. Have them draw them a large outline of a fish on the paper and then write their answers to these questions on the inside of their fish drawing:

- What do you think it means for the men to follow Jesus?
- What do you think it means for the men to be fishers of people?

When the children have written their answers, invite volunteers to share what they have written.

③ Scripture Collage

Leader preparation: Read 1 Kings 3:3–15. Gather blank paper for the children to draw the following symbols, representing the requests mentioned in the scripture (symbol = request).

- Brain = an understanding mind/wisdom
- Circle with line down the center = discern between good and evil/discern what is right
- Stick person = long life
- Bag of money = riches
- Sword = defeat of enemies
- Shield = honor

Supplies:

- Bible
- 6 sheets of blank paper
- crayons

Distribute the six sheets of paper and form six equal-sized groups. Assign an image to be drawn and colored by a different group, and explain what the symbols represent: brain, circle with a line down the center, stick person, bag of money, sword, and shield. The groups will keep their pictures to use when you read the scripture. Show the children how to locate 1 Kings 3 in the Bible. Tell the children to hold up their pictures when you read the item in the Bible story. Read 1 Kings 3:3–15 to the group.

Following the story, have the children work together to separate their pictures into designated piles. Make one pile for the items Solomon asked for in his dream and a second pile for the items God was pleased that Solomon *did not* ask for. Ask the children to explain the differences between the items in the two piles. Make a new pile for the items God promised to give to Solomon. Ask the children the following questions.

- Why did God promise all of these things to Solomon?
- How would each of these things help Solomon in ruling God's people?

Discerning & Deciding Activities

 4 **Solomon Begins to Serve (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Read 1 Kings 3:3–15. The children will think about what they would need to know or have to have available in order to be a king or queen. They will read scripture to see what Solomon did after he received word about God’s promise for his kingship, and note what Solomon did in his first act as a king.

Supplies:

- Bibles

In the first verses of 1 Kings 3:3–15, we learn that Solomon was a faithful man. He walked in the laws of his father, King David. He made sacrifices and offered incense to God. He made burnt offerings at altars. He made a pilgrimage journey to Gibeon. God raised Solomon to be a king over God’s people, following in the steps of his father. He longed to hear a word from God as he began his service as king. Read 1 Kings 3:3–15 to the children.

Form pairs of children and have them imagine that at the age of eighteen they will be anointed as king or queen of the town they live in. In their pairs, they should decide what they would need to have or what they would need to know to be ready to be a king or queen. Give the children two or three minutes to discuss, and then invite each pair to share what they would need.

Have the pairs work together again to decide the first things they would do once they became king or queen. Give the children two minutes to discuss, and then invite the pairs to share what they would do.

Distribute Bibles and help the children locate 1 Kings 3:15. Invite a volunteer to read the verse aloud while the others read along and notice the first things Solomon did as king. Following the reading ask the children to report what they noticed using the following questions.

- How did Solomon’s first acts as king compare to what you would do in your first acts as king or queen?
- Why do you think your responses are different?

Explain that Solomon started his service as king after he received word that God would give him what he needed to serve God and the people.

 5 **Vision After the Sermon**

Leader preparation: Obtain “Vision After the Sermon” by Paul Gauguin and spend time looking at it. Read the questions below and form your own answers.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Vision After the Sermon” by Paul Gauguin, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401
- artwork putty or tape

Gather the children where they can all comfortably sit and view “Vision After the Sermon” by Paul Gauguin. Tell them that they are going to spend two minutes

looking at the artwork, without moving or talking. Then you will ask them some questions to help them reflect on the image. Invite them to offer their responses, and assure them that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions you ask.

- What do you think is happening in this picture?
- Why do you think the two figures are wrestling?
- What might the women in the picture be looking at?
- What effect did the sermon have on the women? On the ones who are wrestling?
- What will the pole in the picture do, now that they have heard the sermon?

6 Follow Me Game

Leader preparation: The children will play a game in which they follow one another. After the game, they will talk about why they followed, and what it means to follow. Then they explore why the first disciples may have followed Jesus and what it means to follow Jesus.

Supplies:

- Bible

Gather the children in a large circle and use the following directions to explain the game.

- One person will be the leader.
- The leader selects a friend in the circle and moves to stand facing the friend, while remaining on the inside of the circle.
- The leader shows the friend a motion that can be done to three beats, such as clapping hands three times or doing three hops.
- The friend repeats the motion and then leaves the circle to stand behind the leader.
- The friend puts his or her hands on the leader's shoulders and moves with the leader to select a new friend.
- The leader and friend repeat the three-beat motion for the new friend.
- The new friend repeats the motion and then leaves the circle to stand behind and follow the leader and first friend.
- This pattern is repeated until all friends from the circle are in a line behind the leader.

If the children enjoy the game, they may play it several times, changing leaders with each new game. At the end of the game, have the children return to the large circle and sit. Talk about the game, asking:

- When the leader came to you, why did you follow?
- What did you do once you began to follow the leader?
- What skills or talents did you need to be able to follow the leader?

Read aloud Mark 1:14–20. Ask:

- When Jesus invited the fishermen to follow him, why do you think they went?
- What were they going to do when they followed Jesus?
- What skills or talents did they need to follow him?
- How would the fishermen get the skills or talents that are needed to do what Jesus asked them to do?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 What Do You Need to Follow Jesus? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Mark 1:14–20. The children will imagine that they are fishermen whom Jesus calls to follow him. Memorize this verse: “Jesus said, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’”

Supplies:

- Bible

Have the children gather in pairs or trios and imagine that they are fishermen on imaginary boats. You are playing the role of Jesus. Walk up to each child, look each directly in the eye and say, “Jesus said, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’” The lead each child out of the “boat” to a place on the floor to be seated. When each child has moved to follow Jesus, say: *In this story, you imagined that you were fishermen being called by Jesus. This was a pretend activity. However, the invitation to follow Jesus is real. He invites each of us to follow him.* Engage the children in conversation using the following questions.

- When Jesus comes to you and asks you to follow, why go?
- What do you do when you follow Jesus?
- What skills or talents did you need to be able to follow Jesus?
- How do you get the skills or talents that are needed to do what Jesus asks you to do?

8 Gift of Gifts

Leader preparation: Gather supplies so every pair of children has a gift box and wrapping paper. Think of examples of gifts people use in following Jesus.

Supplies:

- blank paper
- crayons or markers
- medium gift boxes
- scissors
- wrapping paper
- ribbon
- tape

As children of God and followers of Jesus, explain that God asks us and Jesus calls us to follow him and to use our gifts and skills to serve God and God’s people. Solomon asked for specific things to help him do what God called him to do: be a king for the people. God promised Solomon that he would receive the gifts that he needed.

Give each child a blank sheet of paper and crayons or markers. Have the children write or draw symbols of what they need to follow Jesus or to do what God asks them to do. They may draw a heart to show love of others, a hand to show help for others, a clock to show the gift of patience, a brain to show wisdom, and so on.

When the pictures are completed, form pairs and give each pair a gift box, scissors, wrapping paper, ribbon, and tape. Have the pairs place their drawings in-

side the gift box, and then work together to wrap the box. Have them write their names on the outside of the box. Stack the boxes in the worship area

Reflect

In what ways did the children practice following Jesus? How does following Jesus help them discover gifts for ministry?

9 Closing Litany

Leader preparation: Display the Closing Litany from the attachment for the closing activity..

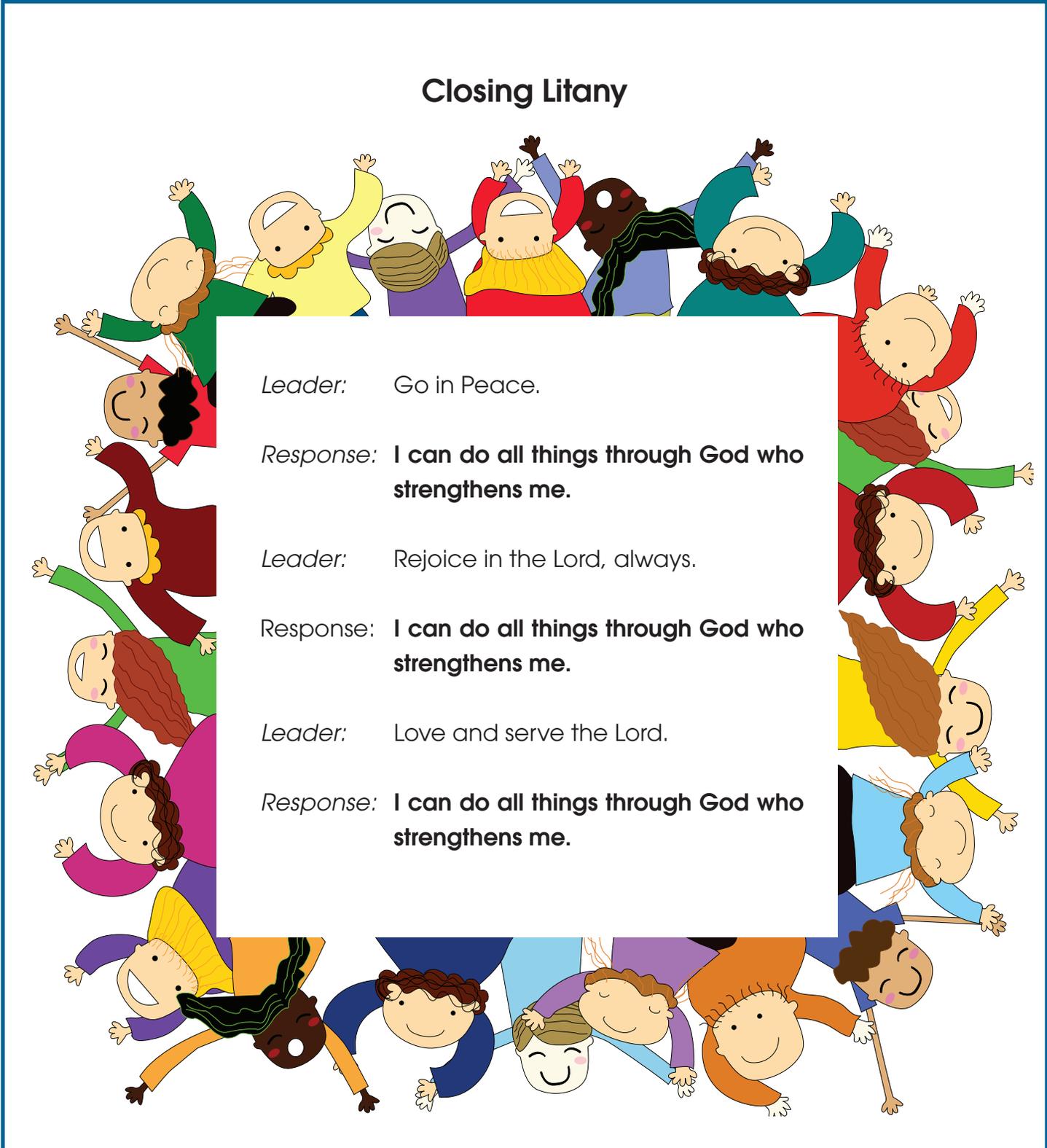
Supplies:

- “Closing Litany,” Attachment: Activity 9

Use the Closing Litany as a weekly ritual with children. The text comes from Philippians 4.

Attachment: Activity 9

Closing Litany



Leader: Go in Peace.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Leader: Rejoice in the Lord, always.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Leader: Love and serve the Lord.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Students spend full days in school learning from teachers and peers. Discipleship involves a different type of learning: a learning done by following the life and example of Jesus and of those who follow him. In discipleship, people discover their gifts for ministry by following people who do ministry. Children are keen observers, who easily learn by following. Give them chances to respond to Jesus by answering his call to follow, as Matthew did.

About this Exploration

Jesus extends the invitation to “come, follow me.” We are asked to trust that our gifts, talents, and interests may be used by God for the ministry that is before us. We are not asked first to learn more or begin afresh in order to be noticed by Jesus, but rather to hear the Spirit’s call and come just as we are. Through this invitation we are encouraged to place our confidence in God, who is able to work through our open hands and hearts that are offered to the church, community, and world. If we have doubts about our abilities or qualifications, we can be encouraged by the countless biblical stories that remind us that God always chooses and uses the “least of these.” Come, let’s follow!

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Jeremiah 15:15–21
Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26

Leader Preparation

It is Jesus who calls people to follow. It is God who makes disciples. As God tells Jeremiah, people will turn or not turn to God in their own way. Jeremiah’s ministry, and your ministry, is to help others see what it means to be a disciple and what God asks of disciples. Ground your ministry in your faith in the God who calls you and gives you this ministry of teaching.

Prayer: Gracious God, help me to hear your call and follow you without hesitation, trusting you by faith, knowing that you respond to those who turn to you. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, 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.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 “Come, Follow Me” Game (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26. Use masking tape to mark a circular path on the floor of your meeting space. You may include curves and turns along the path to make it interesting. Mark waiting spots along the path by placing a masking tape “X” beside it. Designate a spot for each child to stand.

Supplies:

- Bible
- masking tape

Invite the children to play the “Come, Follow Me” game. Refer to the path marked on the floor. Have each child locate an “X” to stand on. Depending on the number of children in the group and the number of “X” spots you created, there may be more than one child on an “X.” Invite a volunteer to be the leader. Explain that the leader will move along the path from his or her spot to the next spot, which is marked with an “X.” When the leader meets another child, he or she will make a simple hand gesture and say, “Come, follow me.” The new child will repeat the gesture and then stand behind the leader and follow him or her to the next spot. The leader and followers move along the path, repeating the leader’s gesture and inviting each child to join the line and follow the leader. The game can be repeated if time allows.

After the game, gather the children for discussion using the following questions.

- Why did you follow the leader when he or she came to you?
- What did you have to do to be ready to follow?
- On a scale of 1 to 5—with 1 being really easy and 5 being not very easy—how easy was it to follow the leader?
- On a scale of 1 to 5—with 1 being really hard and 5 being not very hard—how difficult was it to follow the leader?

Invite a few children to share individual responses for why it was easy or difficult to follow. Then read aloud Matthew 9:9. Explain that Jesus asked Matthew to follow him, and Matthew got up and followed. Ask the children the following questions.

- Why do you think Matthew followed Jesus when he invited him?
- What did Matthew do to get ready to follow?
- (Ask for a show of hands.) Do you think it was easy for Matthew to get up and follow Jesus? Do you think it was difficult? (Invite a few children to share individual responses.)
- What would you do if Jesus came along and asked you to get up and follow him?
- What would you need to do to get ready to follow Jesus?

2 Banjo Lesson

Leader preparation: Study “Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner. How does the image inform the theme of discipleship? In what ways can you help the children encounter this theme using the artwork?

Supplies:

- artwork: “Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner, <http://www.art.com/products/p10286254-sa-i677605/henry-ossawa-tanner-the-banjo-lesson.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=6ce32fa19f9d47aaa58758970c9f0162&searchstring=banjo+lesson>
- tape or artwork putty

Display “Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner. Have the children look carefully at the artwork for two minutes. One by one, invite each child to describe what he or she sees in the artwork. Talk with the children about the relationship between the boy and the man using the following questions.

- How could the boy and the man have come to know each other?
- If you could hear the music that’s being played, what would it sound like?
- Do you think the boy is teaching the man to play the banjo, or is the man is giving the boy the banjo lessons?
- In what ways are these two sharing gifts?
- What emotions do you see in the image of the man? In the image of the boy?
- Describe when someone has shared a gift with you.

3 The Summons

Leader preparation: Obtain a music recording of “The Summons” and become familiar with the lyrics, especially noting the different types of calls that are given. A “summons” is an authoritative or urgent call to someone to be present or to do something. This definition suggests a stronger call to serve than a simple invitation to follow. Think about what it means to be “summoned” and in what ways you have responded to God’s summons.

With older children, your focus will be on the first and last stanzas of the song. If you are comfortable singing, practice the song so you can lead the children in singing it. You may choose to simply read aloud the words of stanzas one and five with the children.

Supplies:

- song: “The Summons” by John Bell (tune: Kelvingrove); video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0aAkOe87mo&feature=related>; lyrics <http://www.spiritandsong.com/compositions/30338>
- music player
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- pencils

Distribute a copy of the lyrics of “The Summons” to each person. Play the recording of “The Summons” while children listen and read along with the lyrics page.

Across the top of a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard, write the phrase “Summons = Call or Invite.” Explain that a summons is similar to the words “call” or “invite.” We talk about Jesus calling or inviting his disciples to follow him, and we say that they have been summoned to follow. A summons is a stronger version of calling or inviting.

Read aloud the words of stanzas 1 and 5, and have the children listen for the different summons or calls in the song. Following your reading, have the children circle the different summonses or calls they find in the stanzas. Invite the chil-

dren to tell what they have circled. Record their responses on the newsprint or whiteboard. Add examples that you notice as well.

Explain that a summons needs a response. If we are invited to something, we need to respond to the invitation. Have the children look at stanzas 1 and 5 again and underline the responses they find. Invite the children to tell what they have underlined. Record these on newsprint and add response examples that you notice as well. Review the list you recorded on the newsprint or whiteboard. Have the children name different responses they could give to the summons they have listed. You may add your ideas for responses to encourage the children's comments.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 I Will Deliver You (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Jeremiah 15:10–21. The narrative verses that precede the poetic dialogue give insight into the context of the dialogue. The text is one of Jeremiah's confessions or complaints in which he reveals to God his suffering and struggle as a prophet. The dialogue reads like a conversation between God and Jeremiah, where Jeremiah laments and God reassures him that he will be strengthened, saved, and delivered by God as he turns back to God and the work he's been called to do in God's name. The key verses for children's understanding are verses 15a, 19, and 21.

On a sheet of newsprint write, "O Lord, you know . . ." On a second sheet write, "If you turn back, I will take you back. . . . I will deliver you. . . ."

Supplies:

- Bibles
- prepared sheets of newsprint
- markers

Open your Bible to Jeremiah 15, and show the children where the story is located. Explain that following God's call is not always easy. Jeremiah's story shows Jeremiah talking with God about how hard it is to follow the call God has for him. In the conversation between Jeremiah and God, scripture also shows God's response.

Invite the children to talk about the ways God calls us to live. Offer suggestions such as loving one another, being kind to a brother or sister, standing firm against a bully. Acknowledge that at times we have a gift for ministry, but we don't want to use it. God knows that it is not always easy to live as a disciple or to live the way God calls us to live. Refer to the newsprint sheet on which you wrote "O Lord, you know . . ." Have the children imagine that they are having a conversation to God. Create a list of what they would say to God about the challenge of living as a disciple. Their comments should start with the phrase "Oh Lord, you know . . ." Record the children's comments on the newsprint.

Read aloud verses 15a, 19, and 21. These verses are part of God's response in the conversation with Jeremiah. Refer to the newsprint sheet on which you wrote, "If you turn back, I will take you back. . . . I will deliver you. . . ." Ask the following questions.

- What do you think it means to "turn back"?
- Who is to turn back? What do they turn back to?
- In what ways will God deliver Jeremiah?

Have the children think again about the responses they gave to the phrase “O Lord, you know . . .” You may want to refer to the first newsprint list you developed. Have the children imagine what God might say to them, using the phrase “I will deliver you.” Record the children’s comments about ways God will deliver us from the struggles we face in living as disciples. Highlight the positive ways God supports us as we try to live as disciples.

5 Who Follows Jesus?

Leader preparation: A key verse in the Matthew passage is verse 13b: “For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.” Read Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26, looking for the different types of people to whom Jesus ministers. Are these the kinds of people whom the Pharisees would expect Jesus to spend time with? Are they people you would spend time with? How does the collection of verses in the scripture reading reflect the message of the key verse?

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite the children to imagine Jesus walking around in the world today speaking to people, helping people, and teaching people about God. Ask: *Who do you think would gather around Jesus? Why would they come to Jesus?* Affirm all responses, because we really don’t know!

Distribute Bibles. Help the children locate Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26. Invite a volunteer who is a strong reader to read the scripture aloud while the other children follow along in their Bibles. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions.

- Who was gathered around Jesus in these stories?
- Why did these different people come to Jesus? What, if anything, did they want from him?
- What did the different people have in common as they looked to Jesus? (A response might be: Each person, except the Pharisees, had faith in Jesus.)
- What did Jesus give to each person who came to him?

Read aloud verse 13b: “For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.” Use the following questions with the children.

- Who is included in Jesus’ call?
- Why would these people come to Jesus?
- How are you part of that group of people whom Jesus calls to follow him?
- Why would you follow Jesus?
- What gift does Jesus give to you?

6 What’s on Your Heart?

Leader preparation: Read the activity description, and write your activities and interests and talents and skills on your own paper heart. In what ways do these things give you clues to your own call to follow Jesus?

Supplies:

- red or pink paper
- markers
- scissors

Explain to the children that a way to discover the gifts God has given us is to name the activities and interests that excite us and then look at the talents and skills used in doing the activities. Give everyone a sheet of red or pink paper and a marker. Have each child draw a large heart on the paper and cut it out. On the left side of their heart, each child is to name the activities and interests that he or she really enjoys or finds exciting. These can be hobbies, athletics, favorite school subjects, and so on. Remind the children that they don't have to be good at doing these activities; they simply have to enjoy them. On the right side of the heart, each child can list the talents and skills he or she uses in doing these favorite activities.

When the children have completed their lists, gather the group and let each share one or two items from. Explain that God places a call on each of our hearts. We get a clue to what that call is by looking at what lies in our hearts—the things that excite us, that we enjoy, that we're interested in doing. These things help us know what God wants us to do as we follow Jesus.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Closing Litany (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Display “Closing Litany,” Attachment: Activity 7.

Supplies:

- “Closing Litany,” Attachment: Activity 7

Use the “Closing Litany” as a weekly ritual with children. The text comes from Philippians 4.



8 Turning to God

Leader preparation: Read Jeremiah 15:15–21 and Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26. Pay close attention to the actions God calls Jeremiah to take and Jesus calls his followers to take. Jeremiah is called to turn back and stand before God, to utter the precious words God gives him to speak. Jesus lifts up people who follow him, who look to him for mercy, and who come to him in need with faith in what he can do. Consider ways in which you follow these teachings.

Copy the attachment “Turning Back to God” and cut apart the strips. Place the strips in a bowl or basket from which the children will draw. Each will read his or her strip aloud and pantomime the activity and turning back to God.

Supplies:

- Bible
- “Turning Back to God,” Attachment: Activity 8
- small bowl or basket

Gather the children where there is open space for pantomiming. Explain that in the Jeremiah passage, God tells Jeremiah to turn back to God and to stay with God, even through the difficult times of his ministry. Have each child draw a strip from the basket, read it aloud, and pantomime the activity for the other children. Following the pantomime, he or she will turn around and pantomime as a follower of God might do it. This shows a change and a “turning back to God.” Repeat the activity until each child has a chance to pantomime and turn back.

Reflect

In what ways are the children learning about what it is to be a disciple? In what ways are they beginning to identify the gifts God gives them for ministry?



9 “Jesus Calls You” Game

Leader preparation: Draw an outline of a game board on a sheet of artwork board. Draw a large circle or oval the shape on the poster board. Draw a smaller shape inside, matching the first circle or oval. Draw short connecting lines between the two shapes creating spaces for children to move markers around the game board. You will need approximately 20 to 30 spaces. Copy and cut apart the attachment “Game Board Cards.” Place each card face down on separate game board spaces. You do not need to cover each space with a card. Gather coins or buttons for children to use as markers, and one die.

All the children will play a game together in which they roll a die and move around the game board. If they land on a space with a card, they will read the card and follow the instructions. The invitations on the cards are adapted from calls included in the song “The Summons” (see Activity 3).

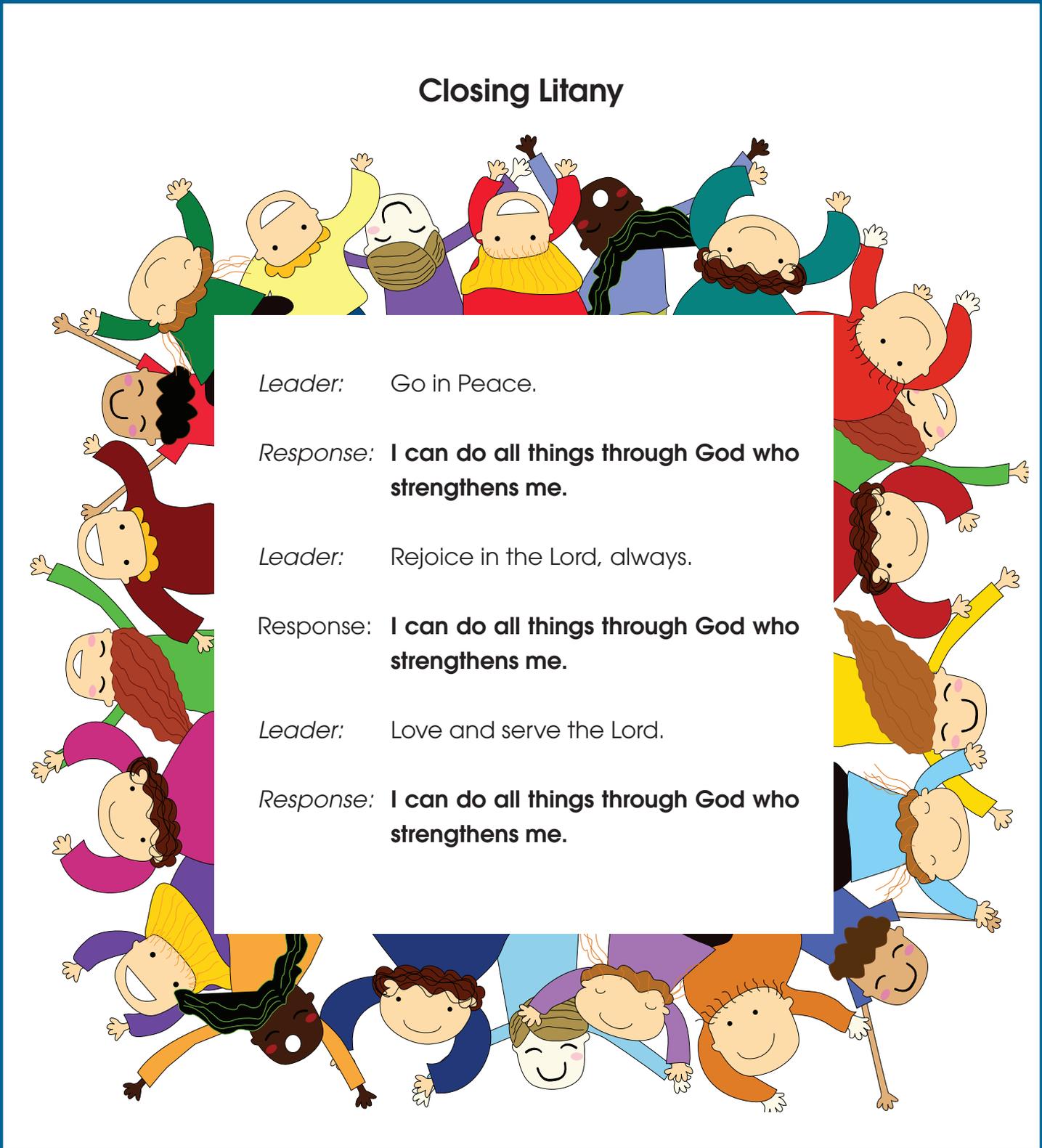
Supplies:

- prepared game board made with artwork board
- “Game Board Cards,” Attachment: Activity 9
- coins, buttons, or other game markers
- a die

Set up the game board on a table or on the floor. Gather all the children around it. Have each child select a marker and place it on the START space on the game board. Explain that players take turns rolling the die and moving ahead the number of spaces shown. If there is a card on the space where they land, they are to read and respond to the statement on the card, then follow the instructions on the card. The object of the game is for players to get to the END space.

Attachment: Activity 7

Closing Litany



Leader: Go in Peace.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Leader: Rejoice in the Lord, always.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Leader: Love and serve the Lord.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Attachment: Activity 8

Turning Back to God

Complaining that following Jesus' call is too hard to do.

Not wanting to read the Bible.

Having a problem with a friend, but not sharing the problem with Jesus.

Missing a party because you have to go to church school.

Missing a soccer game because it's scheduled during Sunday worship.

Acting tired of being nice to people.

Being afraid to face a bully.

Telling the truth when you know it will get you into trouble.

Knowing it would be easy to cheat on a test.

Fighting with your best friend.

Attachment: Activity 9

Game Board Cards

<p>Jesus calls your name and asks you to follow him. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to follow. Stay on this space if you do not follow.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to care for people who care for you. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to do this. Stay on this space if you do not do this.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to be a friend to someone who is lonely. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to do this. Stay on this space if you do not do this.</p>
<p>Jesus asks you to go to a new place where you've never been to follow him. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to follow. Stay on this space if you do not follow.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to care about people who are mean to others. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to do this. Stay on this space if you do not do this.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to love God and he shows you how to do it. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to do this. Stay on this space if you cannot do this.</p>
<p>Jesus asks you to show his love to other people. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to do this. Stay on this space if you do not want to do this.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to do things that will cause others to stare at you. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to do these things. Stay on this space if you do not do these things.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you show love to yourself. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to do this. Stay on this space if you do not do this.</p>
<p>Jesus asks you to talk about him to your friends and other people. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to do this. Stay on this space if you do not want to do this.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to share what's on your heart with him. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to share. Stay on this space if you do not want to share.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to show love to your neighbor. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to do this. Stay on this space if you do not do this.</p>
<p>Jesus offers to give you strength to do what he asks you to do. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to accept Jesus' gift. Stay on this space if you do not want to accept his strength.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to help someone who is hurt. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to help. Stay on this space if you do not help.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to trust him and not be afraid. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to trust him. Stay on this space if you do not trust him.</p>
<p>Jesus asks you to leave everything you have and go where he sends you. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to follow. Stay on this space if you do not follow.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to feed people who are hungry. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to do this. Stay on this space if you do not do this.</p>	<p>Jesus asks you to try to make a difference in the world. Move ahead 2 spaces if you agree to try this. Stay on this space if you cannot try this.</p>

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Christian tradition is an elusive concept for elementary-age children. In their short lives any event that occurs more than once becomes a tradition, yet they are often unaware of long-standing traditions, especially ancient practices of the Christian church. For some, it may be necessary to explain your church's particular heritage and traditions. Through scripture, story, and ritual children can be introduced to Christian traditions that inform their identity and open their understanding of gifts for ministry.

About this Exploration

Faithful Christian practices encourage a communal awareness that God calls, nurtures, and blesses the use of our gifts to strengthen God's work in the world. Our understanding of this partnership with God is always emerging. Traditional gifts, such as preaching, hospitality, music, and caring have been demonstrated in ways recognizable since ancient days. Christian tradition may also be informed by and evolve to include modern forms of expression such as social media, video, legislative advocacy, and more. No matter the era or tradition, gifts of ministry are grounded in a desire to minister with and on behalf of Christ.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Luke 10:38–42

Isaiah 49:1–7

Leader Preparation

The actions of Mary and Martha on the occasion of Jesus' visit highlights two important traditions of ministry: a ministry of listening and presence, and a ministry of hospitality and service. Often, the leader identifies with Martha's role as one who volunteers and prepares and serves the children in the group. Make room for the Mary side of ministry. Pause and pray, stop and listen to what God has to give to you, before you give to the children.

Prayer: Calm my heart, O God. Silence the voices that call to me to do more. Let me stop and listen to you as part of my preparation for the service I seek to give. In Christ's name, I seek you. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, 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.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Who Told You? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: On the bottom of a sheet of newsprint, write Isaiah 49:6b:

I will also make you a light for other nations. Then you will make it possible for the whole world to be saved.

The children will name people in your congregation who have told them about Jesus. You may use a current church directory for this activity, or you may simply invite children to list people in the congregation they know. You will help the children recognize that the people who have shared God's love and good news with them have lived into the Christian tradition of passing on God's light and salvation.

Supplies:

- Bible
- prepared newsprint
- markers
- (optional) current church directory

Gather the children and ask them to tell you who first told them about God or Jesus. Record on newsprint the names they identify. Invite the children to share any stories they recall about first learning about Jesus. Ask them to identify who in your congregation has told them about God or Jesus. Encourage them to think about church-school teachers, pastors, choir directors, camp counselors, youth-group leaders, youth, and other adult friends. Record the names on newsprint.

Read aloud Isaiah 49:6b from the bottom of the newsprint. Ask: *How have the people named on the list been messengers of God's love and good news?*

2 Pentecost

Leader preparation: Display "Pentecost from the Rabbula Gospel." Read Acts 2:1–12. The people gathered in the Upper Room after Jesus' death received God's promised gift of the Holy Spirit, which moved them out to the world to tell about Jesus and the Gospel. Tradition calls the Pentecost event the birthday of the church, when the gift of the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus' followers to build what would later become the Christian church. We could call these followers of Jesus early saints of God who made it possible for the church to include us today.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: "Pentecost from the Rabbula Gospel" (Anonymous), https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401
- tape or artwork putty

Gather the children where all can see the displayed artwork. Tell them that artwork is titled "Pentecost." Explain that the artist intended to illustrate scripture from the book of Acts, which tells about the Pentecost event in the life of the early church. Have the children listen to Pentecost story while studying the artwork. Read aloud Acts 2:1–12. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions.

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

- What elements from scripture do you see illustrated in the artwork?
- Who do you think the people are in the artwork?
- How are the people in the artwork connected to us?

③ “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God”

Leader preparation: Locate the lyrics and read “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God.”

Supplies:

- song: “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” by Lesbia Scott (tune: Grand Isle); lyrics, <http://www.hymnary.org/hymn/UMH/712>
- music player

Discuss with the children their understanding of saints of God. Ask the children to explain the different gifts they might see in saints. Then read the lyrics or sing “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God.” Explain that God’s saints can be regular people, just like you and me. In fact, we are all saints of God! Invite the children to name one gift they have that shows that they are saints.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

④ The Better Part (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Luke 10:38–42. Prepare to serve as narrator and to assist the children in enacting the story of Mary and Martha. You will need three children to play the characters of Jesus, Mary, and Martha. If you want to involve more children, have them take part as “props.” For instance, a child could be a table or a chair or a tree, and so on. Children could also play other people in the room with Mary, Martha, and Jesus.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- chair

Gather the children in an open area. Invite volunteers to enact the roles of Jesus, Mary, and Martha (and others, as designated). Read aloud the scripture passage one time for children to hear the flow of the story. Have the children listen for the gifts that are shown in the story. Have the volunteers take their places in a home setting. The narrator directs the action of the story.

Following the drama, ask:

- What gifts are shown in the Bible story?
- Which gift does Jesus say is “the better way”? What do you think Jesus means by this statement?
- What does Jesus’ statement tell us about Martha’s gift?

⑤ Mary and Martha Game

Leader preparation: Read Luke 10:38–42. There are a number of ways to listen to God, including the act of sitting at God’s feet in quiet attention as well as busying oneself with hospitality and serving others. Jesus indicates that Mary

chose the better way by stopping to listen to Jesus. Yet Martha’s actions put her in touch with him, too.

Set up a board game using the attachment “Mary and Martha Game Board.” Make a copy of the attachment “Game Cards,” and cut apart the cards for use with the game. Make a game board and cards for each group of four children. Gather a coin or button for each child to use as a marker. To play the board game, players roll a die and move their markers around the game board, landing on different spaces listing ways to discover gifts for ministry.

Supplies:

- Bible
- “Mary and Martha Game Board,” Attachment: Activity 5a (for each group of four children)
- “Game Cards,” Attachment: Activity 5b (for each group of four children)
- coin, button, or game piece for each child
- one die for each group of four children

Have the children get in groups of four and give each group a “Mary and Martha Game Board,” prepared set of “Game Cards,” game pieces, and a die. Use the following directions to explain the game to the children.

- Place your markers on one of the spaces marked START.
- The player with the next birthday goes first, and the play continues to the left.
- When it is your turn, roll the die. If you roll an odd number, move your marker 3 spaces. If you roll an even number, move your marker 2 spaces.
- Some of the spaces have instructions to draw cards. Each card lists different gifts for ministry. When you land on a card space, draw a card and decide if the gift listed on the card would have you “sitting at Jesus’ feet” or “keeping busy in the kitchen.”
- See who can move their marker around the game board first.



6 The Servant Song of Isaiah

Leader preparation: Read Isaiah 49:1–7. You may want to read the story from a Good News Bible or from *The Message* to gain insight to help the children write a paraphrased version of the dialogue between God and Isaiah. Make a copy of the attachment “Diagram of a Dialogue” for each child.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- “Diagram of a Dialogue,” Attachment: Activity 6
- pencils
- (optional) newsprint and markers

Distribute Bibles, copies of “Diagram of a Dialogue,” and pencils. Help the children locate Isaiah 49:1–7 in their Bibles. Read the scripture aloud. Following the reading, have the children look closely with you at verses 1–4. Notice that the passage is set as a dialogue between Isaiah and God.

Using of “Diagram of a Dialogue,” have the children write “God” and “Isaiah” in the “Who” section of the handout. You may determine that your children would work better recording the parts of this study on newsprint. Use this as an option.

Work with the children to identify the verses in the dialogue when Isaiah speaks and when God speaks. Write the verse numbers down the left side of the hand-out, leaving space between the numbers to write summaries of the dialogue. With the children, work through the scripture passage, working verse by verse to summarize the dialogue and write the summaries on the left column of the worksheet. Form two groups, one to work with Isaiah's message and one to work with God's message. Have the groups work together to paraphrase or rewrite the dialogue in their own words or the right column of the worksheet. Be available to offer assistance as needed.

Bring the two groups together. Have them designate children to read the two parts of the dialogue to the group. Use these questions for discussion:

- How long has God known Isaiah?
- What work has God given Isaiah to do?
- What does Isaiah think about the work he does for God?
- What promise does God make to Isaiah?
- Do you think this promise makes up for the suffering Isaiah goes through? Do you think Isaiah will continue doing God's work?

Explain that doing God's work is not always easy. Isaiah struggles to stick with it, even as God assures him that God stands with him. God makes this promise to each of God's servants: to stand with us even when the going gets difficult.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Closing Litany (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Display "Closing Litany," Attachment: Activity 7.

Supplies:

- "Closing Litany," Attachment: Activity 7

Use the "Closing Litany" as a weekly ritual with children. The text comes from Philippians 4.

8 God Knows Your Name

Leader preparation: Read Isaiah 49:1. Think about your name, what it means, the story behind how your name was given, or if you have relatives of special friends with the same name. Know that God calls each of us by name.

Supplies:

- Bible
- self-adhesive nametags
- markers and pens

Give each child a self-adhesive nametag and a pen. Have each child write her or his name on the nametag and return it to you. Form a circle with the children and teach them this response: "The Holy One has chosen me." Read aloud Isaiah 49:1. Say something like: "God called Isaiah before he was born. God promises to stay faithful to Isaiah in everything he does. God makes this same promise to each of us."

Stand in the center of the circle holding the nametags in a stack. Stand face to face with the child whose nametag is on the top of the stack. Say to the child, “[Child’s name], God has called you by name.” The child responds with, “The Holy One has chosen me.” Remove the backing from the nametag and place it on the child. Move to stand in front of the next child whose nametag is on the top of the stack. Continue this ritual until each child has participated. Rejoin the children in the circle and have children join hands. Let everyone say, “Amen.”

9 Light to the Nations

Leader preparation: Read Isaiah 49:6 and think about the ways you bring light to the world. Bring in a flashlight. Review the words to the children’s song “This Little Light of Mine.”

Supplies:

- Bible
- flashlight

Gather the group in a circle. Read aloud Isaiah 49:6b. Explain that as God chose Isaiah to be a light to the world, Christians understand that each person brings light to the world in the ways we live our lives showing our love for God and Jesus, as we listen to God and to one another, as we offer service and hospitality to one another. Show the children the flashlight and tell them that you will pass the flashlight around the circle. When a person receives the light, he or she will tell one thing they do to shine a light to the world in the way that they live or in the way they treat others.

The children should take care to not shine the light directly into their eyes or the eyes of their neighbor. When the flashlight returns to you, lead the children in singing one stanza of “This Little Light of Mine.”

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Reflect

Are the children able to identify Christian traditions that affect their lives? Are they able to identify ways they can join in Christian traditions and make new traditions?

Attachment: Activity 5a

Mary and Martha Game Board						
START	Prayer	Listening	Sitting at Jesus' feet	Practice/try things out	Doing ministry	START
Feedback from friends						Follow what you enjoy
Doing ministry						Follow what you are good at doing
Prayer						Feedback from friends
Listening						Feedback from trusted adults
Sitting at Jesus' feet						Listening
Practice/try things out						Doing ministry
START						Feedback from friends

Attachment: Activity 5b

Game Cards		
Follow Jesus	Do right	Teaching
Believing	Live justly	Healing
Faithful	Do God's will	Learning
Brave	Helping	Participate as a community member
Love God	Serving	Offer hospitality
Strong	Sharing	Listening

Attachment: Activity 6

Diagram of a Dialogue

Who?

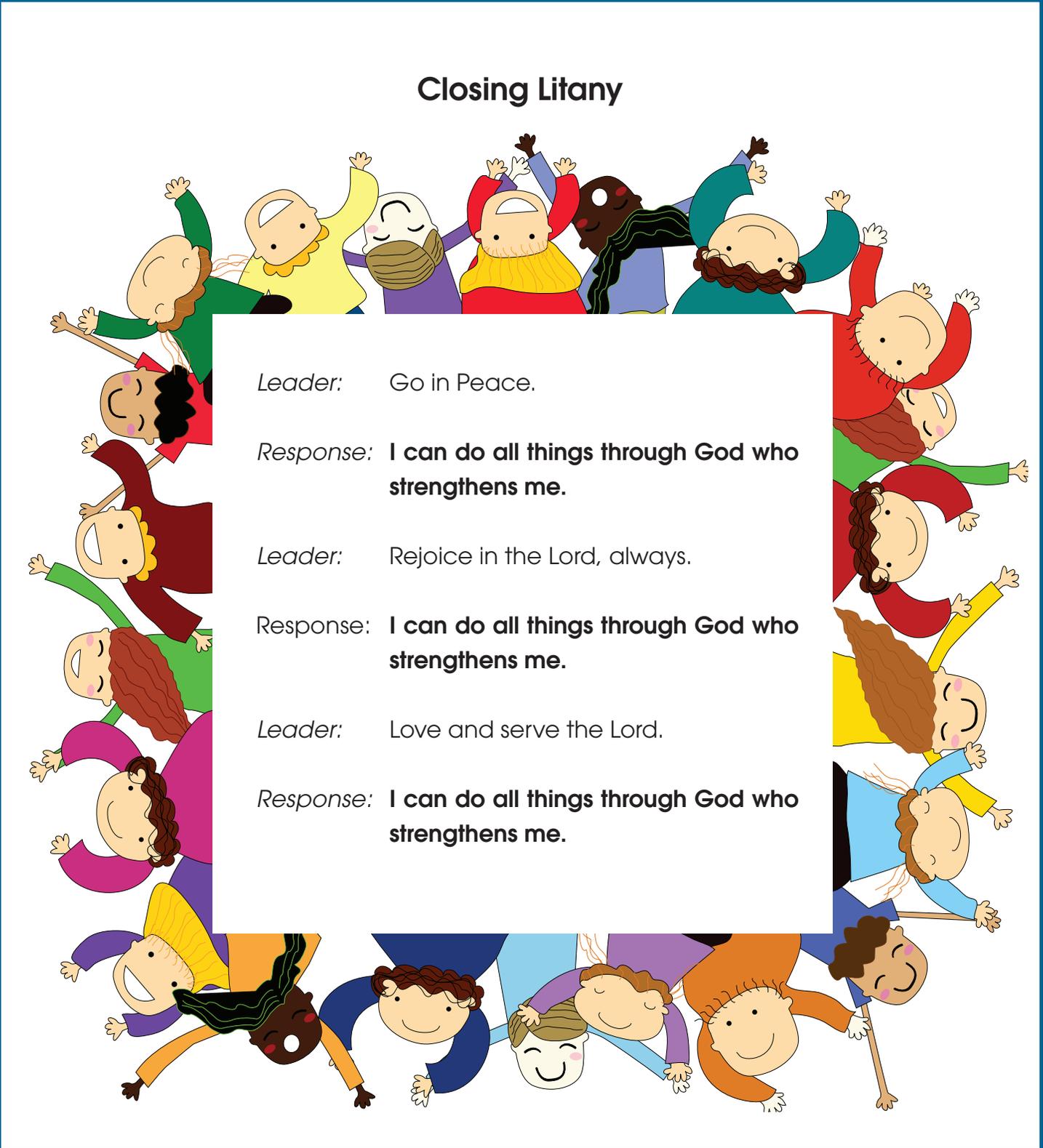
Name the characters in the dialogue.

What?

Summarize what is said in the dialogue.

Attachment: Activity 7

Closing Litany



Leader: Go in Peace.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Leader: Rejoice in the Lord, always.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Leader: Love and serve the Lord.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

As concrete thinkers, it's a challenge for children to think of churches and ministry in places beyond the community they inhabit. In this Exploration they explore ways that mission grows from the gifts and skills within them and how mission is shared with people beyond themselves. They also have a chance to gain an awareness of Christians in other parts of the United States who are seeking to serve God, just as they do.

About this Exploration

Each of us is like "letters from Christ," as Paul says, sent to bring hope and healing wherever there is need. In all contexts, there are opportunities for us to share our gifts of ministry in a variety of ways, be it at home, at school, in the workplace, in the neighborhood, and at church. Over our lifetimes, the diversity of our gifts can emerge and grow, and may change, as we move into new places and spaces in our lives. Trusting that God can work through us right where we are is an exciting way to realize that the Holy Spirit is all around us.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Nehemiah 2:11-20
2 Corinthians 3:1-6

Leader Preparation

Do you think of mission as something done in Jesus' name for people far away? In this Exploration mission is service of God that grows out of the inner call and gifts God gives us. God's mission is service to any of God's people whether far away or in your own church and community. You engage in mission as you help children embrace the work God does with them and through them right where they are.

Prayer: May the Spirit of the living God be written on your heart, and may your life be Christ's letter to the children who know you and learn from you. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, 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.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 The Rhythm Game (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Practice leading the movements for the Rhythm Game so you can teach it to the children. You will lead the children in two versions of the game. In the first version, the children will learn the basic rhythm and chant while telling what item they would bring to a party. In the second version, the children will tell what they bring to God's world.

Supplies: None

Slap—"I'm going" / Clap—"to a"
 Slap—"party" / Clap—"and I'm"
 Slap—"bringing" / Clap—[no words]
 Slap—[say what you will bring] / Clap—[no words]

You begin the rhythm, and allow the children to join you. Begin the chant, adding your item. Children add their items, one by one, moving around the circle. Be prepared to pause for laughter and to get the children back on track with the rhythm.

Suppose God is giving a party to help the world. To help the children think about qualities and characteristics that they share in God's world, ask:

- What gifts or talents could you share with others or use to serve others?
- What is it you like to do or what is it you are especially good at that would bring joy or love to others?

Tell them that these are gifts they have that can be shared in God's world.

Explain the second version of the Rhythm Game. You follow the same pattern and use a similar chant. This version focuses on the gifts, qualities, or characteristics each child brings to God's world. Such items may include: a smile, laughter, drawing, soccer skills, happiness, and so on.

The chant:

Slap—"I am" / Clap—"part of"
 Slap—"God's" / Clap—"world"
 Slap—"and I" / Clap—"bring"
 Slap—[say what you will bring] / Clap—[no words]

2 The Important Book

Leader preparation: Obtain a copy of the children's book *The Important Book* by Margaret Brown Wise (HarperCollins, 1990), available from your library or through your local bookseller or an online book store. Read the book and prepare to read it aloud to the children. Stronger readers may be able to read it to the other children.

Supplies:

- book: *The Important Book* by Margaret Brown Wise
- “The Important You,” Attachment: Activity 2
- crayons or markers

Read the story aloud, and invite children to notice the detail used in describing each item. The final line identifies the unique gift possessed by the item. Talk with the children about the importance of each gift and what difference this gift makes in the world. Following the story, give each child a copy of “The Important You” and crayons or markers. Have the children describe themselves as an important gift. Have them fill in the blank spaces on the page and draw an illustration of *you* being you. Invite volunteers to share their writings and illustrations.

③ Using and Sharing Gifts

Leader preparation: Obtain the animated movie *Ratatouille* (Walt Disney Video, 2007). It is a story of a rodent named Remy, who has a passion and gift for cooking. As a rodent, he can’t share his talent in public eateries. He teams up with a young chef and, together, man and rat make a big impression in the restaurant world. Review Scenes 11 and 12, or 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28. Select a clip showing Remy using his gifts of smell and cooking to create a dish that wins raves. Set up equipment to show the selected film clip to the children.

Supplies:

- movie: DVD of *Ratatouille* (Walt Disney Video, 2007)
- computer and digital projector or television and DVD player

Introduce the film clip to the children by explaining the summarized the movie. Have the children look for the gifts displayed by Remy and by Linguini, and be ready to tell how the two shared their gifts with each other.

Show the film clip. Use the following questions for discussion.

- What gifts does Remy have? How does he use them?
- What gifts does Linguini have? How does he use them?
- In what ways do the two characters use their gifts together?
- What is the outcome when the two share their individual gifts?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ A Letter from a Friend (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read 2 Corinthians 3:1–6. Read the attachment “A Letter from a Friend.” Fold the letter and place it in an envelope. Address the envelope to your group.

Supplies:

- Bible
- “A Letter from a Friend,” Attachment: Activity 4
- envelope

Gather the children and ask them to raise a hand if they have ever received a letter in the mail. Then ask them to raise a hand if they have ever sent a letter. Have

volunteers tell from whom they received their letters. Ask: *For what occasions do people usually send or receive letters?*

Show the children the letter you prepared from “A Letter from a Friend.” Tell them that the letter is addressed to your group, and it was written by a minister who lives in Maine. Invite a volunteer to read the letter aloud. Ask the children:

- What is the special occasion for this minister to write a letter to the group?
- What is the main message in the letter?
- What does it mean when Paul writes, “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone” (v.2)?
- In what ways are you like a letter?
- What does it mean to be “written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God” (v. 3)?

5 Nehemiah’s Adventure

Leader preparation: Read Nehemiah 2:11–20. Gather chairs and arrange them in a square with seats toward the center of the formation. This will represent the walls of Jerusalem. If you want to make a more elaborate set, you may gather blankets to cover the chairs or large cardboard boxes to set up to form the walls. Gather cardboard building blocks and place them near the chair formation for the people to use to rebuild the walls. You may find blocks in a pre-school classroom. You may also make building blocks by stuffing paper grocery bags with crumpled newspaper and taping the opening shut.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- 12–16 chairs
- (optional) blankets or large boxes
- cardboard building blocks
- (optional) paper grocery bags
- (optional) newspaper
- (optional) tape

Read aloud Nehemiah 2:11–20. Tell the children that the formation in the center of the room represents the walls of Jerusalem, and the blocks can be used to build or repair the walls.

Form three groups: Nehemiah and his inspectors, the people of Israel, and local officials. Give each group a Bible and have them move to separate areas in the room. They are to read the scripture again, noting the words and actions of their group in the story, in preparation for acting out the passage with the other groups. (Suggested actions: Nehemiah and his inspectors will sneak around and try to inspect the walls. The people of Israel will respond to instructions to build/rebuild the walls. Local officials will sneak around and try to stop Nehemiah and his inspectors from inspecting the walls.) Allow three to five minutes for groups to decide how they will enact the scripture passage. Gather the groups and have them take their places to begin the enactment. Read Nehemiah 2:11–20 again while the children act it out.

Following the drama, gather the children for discussion. Ask:

- Why did Nehemiah (and his inspectors) sneak out at night? What did he do while he was out? What gifts and skills did he use to do this work?

- Why didn't the local officials want Nehemiah out around the walls of Jerusalem?
- What did the people of Israel do while Nehemiah was out sneaking around?
- What did Nehemiah command the people of Israel to do?
- What gifts and skills did they use to do this?

6 A Letter

Leader preparation: Read 2 Corinthians 3:1–6. Gather blank paper and markers.

Supplies:

- Bible
- blank paper and pencils
- markers

Gather the children at tables. Give each child a sheet of paper and markers. Read aloud 2 Corinthians 3:1–6. Restate the key verse from the passage: “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone” (v.2). Explain that Paul is telling people that others see what we believe by watching how we live our lives. Ask: *What things can we do to show what we believe?*

Tell the children to write the first letter of their first name in a large letter on the paper. Inside the letter have them write the things that they do which show people that they believe in Jesus, or that they are a follower of Jesus. When the children have completed their letter, invite them to share their work. Have the children take their letters home to remind them of the ways they live their lives.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Closing Litany (easy preparation)

Leader preparation: Display the “Closing Litany.”

Supplies:

- “Closing Litany,” Attachment: Activity 7

Use the “Closing Litany” as a weekly ritual with children. The text comes from Philippians 4.

8 What Is Mission?

Leader preparation: Read Nehemiah 2:11–20 and 2 Corinthians 3:1–6. Look for the various missions God’s people were sent to do in each of the stories. Write the word “Mission” in large letters at the center of a sheet of newsprint, and lay the sheet on a table or on the floor where all the children can write on it.

Supplies:

- Bible
- prepared newsprint
- markers

Gather the children around the prepared newsprint sheet. Explain that the scripture passages for this session show examples of God’s people engaged in a mission: work that they have been sent by God to do. Read aloud Nehemiah 2:11–20

and 2 Corinthians 3:1–6. Ask the children to name the mission of Nehemiah and God’s people, or Paul’s mission to God’s people, or the mission response of the people who received Paul’s second letter to Corinthians (depending on which scripture you studied.) Write these missions on the newsprint.

Distribute a marker to everyone, and have the children write examples of mission around the word on the newsprint. Encourage the children’s free association of words and concepts of mission. After the children complete their writing, have them sit back and look over what they have written. Read aloud the children’s responses, highlighting links or associations you recognize.

Have the children use the marker to underline missions they are involved with. Invite guests to share their mission connections with the group.

9 Song: “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me”

Leader preparation: View the video “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me,” and become familiar with the words and tune of the song, especially noting the different ways people can be used by God—in living, praying, serving, singing. Consider how you are used by God. In the way you live? In the way you pray? In the way you serve? In the way you sing? In what other ways can you be open to be used by God? Use some of these ways in creating additional stanzas for the song.

If you are comfortable singing, practice the song so you can lead the children in learning it. You may choose to simply read aloud the words with the children.

Supplies:

- song: “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me,” African American spiritual (tune: I’m Gonna Live); lyrics, http://www.hymnary.org/text/im_gonna_live_so_god_can_use_me?tab=about; video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOG931NJB10>

Invite the children to learn the song “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me.” Distribute hymnals or copies of the lyrics to “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me.” Have volunteers read aloud each stanza of the song. As the song is read, encourage the children to notice the different ways people are used by God—in living, praying, serving, singing. Notice with them how each stanza is similar. Ask them to identify the parts of each stanza that changes.

The repetition in the song allows the children to claim ways they can live for God through different activities in their daily lives. Invite the children to suggest additional activities from their daily lives where God can use each of them. Use these to create additional stanzas for the song.

Reflect

Were the children able to recognize a larger context for God’s ministry? In what ways could you open their understanding of God’s mission reach around the world?

Attachment: Activity 2

The Important You

Fill in the blank spaces on the page to describe yourself. Draw an illustration of **you being you**.

The important thing about you is . . . that you are you.

It is true that you . . .

And you . . .

And now you are . . .

And you can . . .

And you will . . .

Or you will . . .

But the important thing about you is . . . that you are you.

A Letter from a Friend

Dear Children of the Church,

My name is Pastor Beth and I am a Protestant minister serving two yoked churches in rural Maine. The churches up here are very small and are spread many miles apart. Often, we feel like we're alone out in the Maine woods. People live hard-working lives, working in the forests and fields harvesting potatoes or wood, milking cows two times a day, or clocking in at factories for eight-to-ten hour shifts. There is not much time to be involved with activities outside our homes or our families. People's work runs seven days a week, with no break on Sundays. The cows and trees and potatoes don't know that it's Sunday, or any other day!

Often, I feel like I'm leading one of the small congregations described in Paul's New Testament letters. We're scattered Christians. We're out here alone, trying to hold on to Jesus' teachings, trying to live faithful lives in places where such living is not the norm of the people living around us.

I am encouraged to hear about the work and other activities of churches outside of Maine. Sometimes our only connections to others are through letters, Internet sites, and occasional travels for pastor's meetings or larger church-sponsored events. I share stories with folks in my congregations that tell of the faithfulness of other Christians in different parts of the world. It's good to know God's good news is alive across the globe. It gives me renewed hope to work, and preach, and pray, and serve with the people of my two little churches as we try to make a difference in our own small part of the world, while other Christians try to do the same.

Discovering Gifts of Ministry

Attachment: Activity 4 (Continued)

The words that Paul wrote in his second letter to the Corinthian church reminds me that all of us are given the Spirit of the living God to show God's good news in the world. This is what Paul writes:

"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter for Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

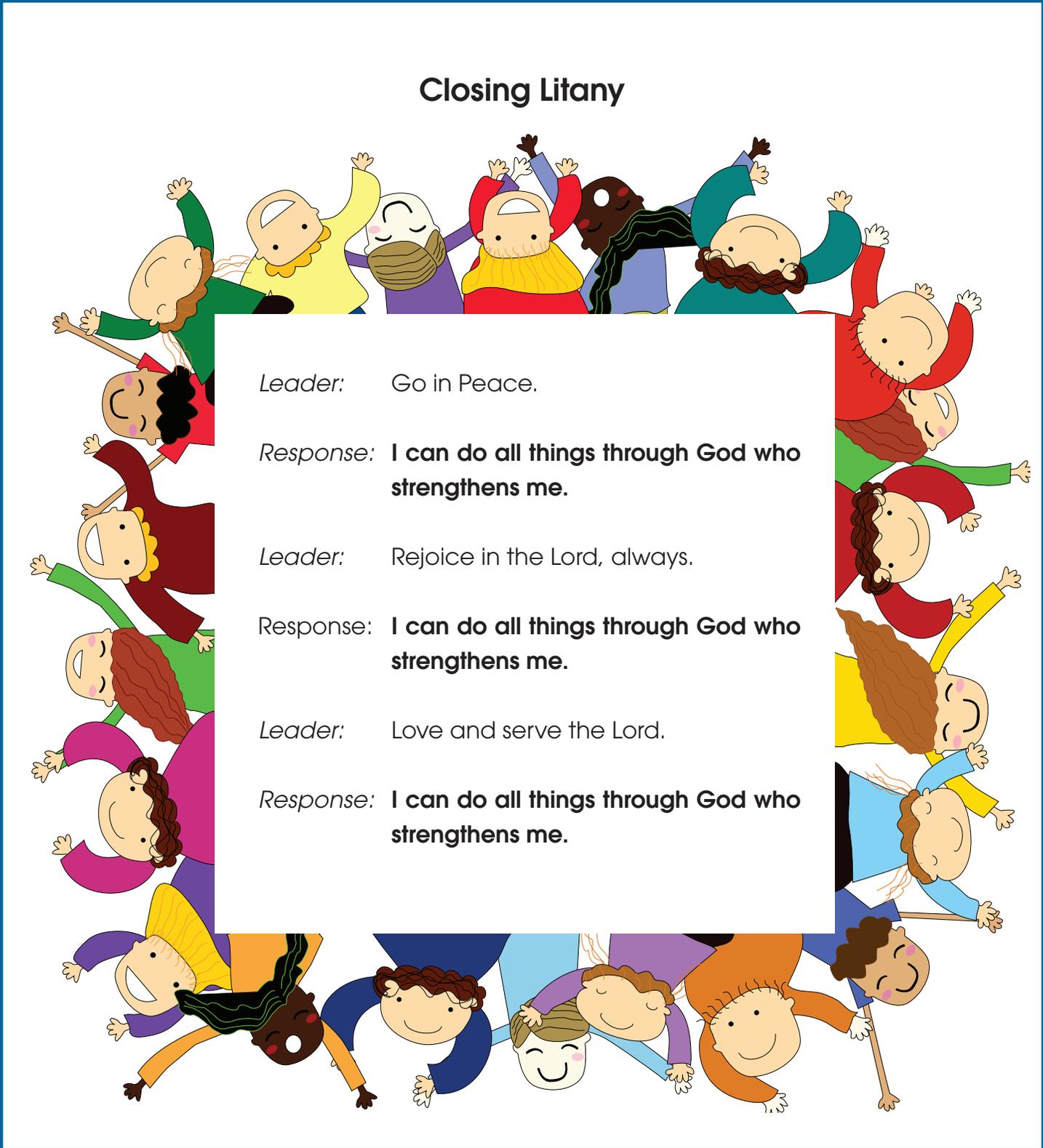
It is good to know that the Spirit of the living God has written God's letter of love on the hearts of each of us. No matter where we live, or where we seek to serve God, God's spirit unites us, encourages us, and reminds us that we are not alone in loving God and living the Gospel.

May God's grace continue to be written on your heart.

Peace to you,

Pastor Beth

Closing Litany



Leader: Go in Peace.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Leader: Rejoice in the Lord, always.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Leader: Love and serve the Lord.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

The children in this age group have not lived long lives, but they have lived long enough to have memories of their past and hopes for their future. In discovering gifts for ministry, it is helpful to let the children consider their past, looking for God's presence with them and times when God may have spoken to them, like God spoke to young Samuel. Give them opportunities to listen for God's voice and to claim the gifts and vision that they already possess.

About this Exploration

We are not who we once were. We adapt and change along with the shifting circumstances we experience. Gifts of ministry develop throughout the duration of our lives. Our gifts are revealed, acquired, and developed as we encounter the present and are led toward expanding hope for the future. When we engage our gifts of ministry we join with God in making that hope reality, and we become the people God calls us to be.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
1 Samuel 3:1–10, 11–20
Philippians 4:1–13

Leader Preparation

In what ways do your gifts, interests, and passions propel you toward your future? Are you living in ways that God can use you? In this Exploration you give the children opportunities to hear God’s voice and identify how God is calling them toward their future. Use this Exploration as an opportunity for you to hear God’s voice and to hone your vision as well.

Prayer: Holy God, you call each of us by name. Let me hear your voice, let me heed your voice, let me use what you’ve given me in ministry with you. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, 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.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Here I Am . . . There I Was (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: We are not who we once were. We adapt and change along with the shifting circumstances we experience. Gifts of ministry develop throughout the duration of our lives. Make a sample life line for yourself using the activity description below. Use it as a model for the children as they develop their lifeline.

Supplies:

- sample life line
- 11" × 17" blank paper
- pencils

Display your prepared life line for the children. Give each child an 11-inch by 17-inch sheet of paper and a pen. Show them how to fold the paper in half lengthwise, so the two shorter ends meet. Make a crease along the fold, and then open the paper to its full size. Have the children draw a line across the length of their paper, crossing over the center crease. Have each child place a dot on the line where it meets the center crease and write his or her age above the dot. On the left side of their paper, each should place a dot on the line near the edge of the sheet and then write his or her birth date above the dot. Finally, each should draw an arrow at the end of the line on the right side of their paper.

Explain that this life line represents a life. They are going to place marks on the line to show significant events in their lives. A special event could be the day they were born, when a sibling was born, when they moved to a new house, when they got a pet, when they started school, when they learned a team sport, when they moved, when they went to camp, when they earned a badge, when they were baptized, when they played their first musical instrument or athletic game, and so on. Have the children mark and label their life lines.

Encourage the children to look over their life lines and significant events and think about how God was present during each event. Make notes of these on their life lines. Invite them to think about what gifts they received in their significant life events and to note these on their life lines. Acknowledge that the children’s life lines extend beyond today. There is a future that they will live into. Invite them to mark their life lines with hopes or plans they have for their future. These plans may include starting middle school, being the captain of a team, singing in a school musical, volunteering in an animal shelter, getting baptized, getting a driver’s license, voting for the first time, going to college, getting a job, using a special gift in a vocation, and so on. Encourage the children to think about their vision for their future, and how God will be with them as they move into their future.

2 Peace Blessings and Prayers

Leader preparation: Study “Diamond Peak, Nevada, USA.” How does the image inform the theme of future and vision? In what ways can you help the children encounter this theme using the artwork?

Supplies:

- artwork: “Diamond Peak Nevada, USA,” <http://www.art.com/products/p13950276-sa-i2807680/diamond-peak-nevada-usa.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=55eedd136d4049bcaab8f63c70afd3e3&searchstring=diamond+peak>
- tape or artwork putty

Invite the children to look carefully at the artwork for two minutes. One by one, invite each child to describe what he or she sees in the artwork. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions.

- What might the person on the snowboard be seeing?
- What gifts is he using?
- What would it feel like to fly through the air like this?
- How you could live a life with this kind of energy and freedom?
- With what could you do with the gifts of energy and freedom?

3 Imagine Yourself . . .

Leader preparation: Children can use wonder and imagination to hear God’s vision for their future. Do activity yourself so you can better assist the children.

Supplies:

- blank paper and markers

Give everyone a sheet of paper and markers. Invite each to move to a place in the room where he or she can sit alone quietly and comfortably. Set the paper and marker beside each child. Have the children close their eyes and breathe deeply. When you hear that children settle, say:

Imagine yourself five years from now. You are on top of the world, and everything is going well for you. You are happy. You are using your gifts and trying new interests. Fill in the details in your mind. What are you doing? Who are you with? What makes you so happy? Take time in silence to imagine living through a typical day.

After a period of silence, invite the children to open their eyes and draw or write about what they imagined. They may use words or images or designs. Encourage them to remain quiet during this time and to think about these questions:

- I wonder what God is telling me in this scene. Write a word or phrase that God is speaking to you.
- What does the scene that you imagined tell you about who you are called to be and what you are called to do?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Here I Am! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read 1 Samuel 3:1–10. Think about the parts of the story that might be significant to a child who hears it. Difficult parts could be sleeping alone in the temple, hearing repeated voices in the night, or hearing God call their name. How can you help the children connect this story to their future and their vision for ministry?

Supplies:

- Bibles

Distribute Bibles to the children and help them locate 1 Samuel 3:1–10. Invite three volunteers to play the parts of Eli, Samuel, and God, with you taking the part of the narrator and directing the action in the story. First explain that Samuel was living in the temple and learning about God and how to serve God under the direction of a priest named Eli. He looked up to Eli as a boy might look up to a parent. Eli looked after Samuel like a parent might look after a child, though the two were not related.

Have the volunteers act out the story while the other children make an “audience.” If you have time, invite other children to act out the story a second or third time, to allow more children to be actively involved. Following the drama, use these questions for discussion:

- When Samuel heard his name being called in the night, who does he think is calling him? How does Samuel respond to being called?
- If you heard your name being called in the night, who might you think is calling you? How would you respond?
- How did Eli know that it was God who called Samuel’s name?
- What does Eli eventually tell Samuel to do when he heard his name being called?

Explain that this story marks the beginning of an active relationship between God and Samuel. Samuel will grow up to be a prophet who speaks God’s word to God’s people. Ask: *Do you think Samuel had an idea or a vision of what God would do with him in his future? An important part in Samuel’s future began when he stopped and listened for God.*



5 “Sisters in the Wind”

Leader preparation: Display “Sisters in the Wind” by Ethan Hubbard and spend time looking at it. How does the image inform the theme of future and vision? In what ways can you help the children encounter this theme using the artwork?

Supplies:

- artwork: “Sisters in the Wind” by Ethan Hubbard, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401
- tape or artwork putty

Invite the children to look carefully at the artwork for two minutes. One by one, invite each child to describe what he or she sees in the artwork. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions.

- Imagine yourself one of these girls. Who is with you, and what are you doing?
- What do you see?
- How do you feel about what you see?
- What is God telling you in this scene?
- How does what God tells you influence who you are called to be and what you are called to do?



6 Treasure Hunt

Leader preparation: Copy the attachment “Gift Cards” onto card stock and cut apart cards. Hide them around the room.

Supplies:

- “Gift Cards,” Attachment: Activity 6

Tell the children that you have hidden eight gift cards around the meeting space. Have them work in pairs to find the gift cards. When all the cards are found, gather the children and have them read the cards and describe an activity they can do to share the gift listed on the card.

Explain that you have been studying the topic of gifts: talents, abilities, and activities that God gives to us to share in ministry. Ask: *How are the gifts listed on your gift card gifts of ministry?* Review each gift card, and invite the children to explain how the listed gift is a ministry.

Invite each child to name one of the gift card gifts that he or she currently shares with others. They may also name one gift they will share in the future. Have the children take home one of the gifts cards.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Closing Litany (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Display “Closing Litany.”

Supplies:

- “Closing Litany,” Attachment: Activity 7

Use the “Closing Litany” as a weekly ritual with children. The text comes from Philippians 4.



8 Make Future Tellers

Leader preparation: Folded-paper fortune tellers have been made by older children and youth through the years. Make a sample fortune teller, and show the children how to make one of their own. Follow the directions on the attachment “Making a Future Teller.” Additional instructions and video demonstrations may be found on the website “How to Make a Paper Fortune Teller,” http://www.ehow.com/how_2053986_make-paper-fortune-teller.html#ixzz1QILtGW96.

Supplies:

- “Making a Future Teller,” Attachment: Activity 8a
- “Future Teller Phrases,” Attachment: Activity 8b
- 8½” square blank paper for each child
- scissors
- colored pencils or crayons

Show the children the sample Future Teller that you made. Ask if any of them know how to make this item. Children with experience can help other children with the folding. Explain that you are calling this a “Future Teller” rather than its common name of “Fortune Teller” because the phrases written on it will give advice and insight for the future.

Give each child a sheet of blank paper, scissors, and colored pencils or crayons. Give each child a copy of “Making a Future Teller.” Lead the children through the steps to make their own Future Tellers. When the items are folded, read aloud the phrases on “Future Teller Phrases.” Give them copies of “Future Teller Phrases” for the children to use to write phrases in their Future Tellers. Have the children write on and decorate their Future Tellers. They may want to make another Future Teller to give to someone in the congregation.



9 One Spirit of Love

Leader preparation: Practice the song “One Spirit of Love” by Paul B. Svenson. Gather lots of old magazines. To help keep the children focused, you might want to cut out a variety of pictures from the magazines from which they can choose.

Supplies:

- song: “One Spirit of Love,” by Paul B. Svenson (©1987/2011 Dad’s Songbook Music LLC. All rights reserved. Used by permission www.dadsongbook.com); video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBg80JaNI1M>
- “One Spirit of Love,” Attachment: Activity 9a
- “Litany,” Attachment: Activity 9b
- old magazines
- scissors
- markers
- glue
- construction paper
- music player

Reflect

This Exploration gave the children plenty of opportunity to name and claim gifts for ministry. In what ways were they able to consider God’s call and vision for their own future? We walk with God on a journey throughout life. For the children, the recognition of this journey is just beginning.

Hand out the litany written using the lyrics to the hymn “One Spirit of Love.” Lead the group in the litany. Ask the children if there is a line or two that particularly appeals to them or “jumps out” at them. Take a few moments to listen to the responses of the group and encourage them to engage one another in conversation.

Invite them to create a collage to illustrate a line from the litany. On the construction paper, children can write a favorite line or two from the litany. They can then look through the magazines and cut out pictures and phrases that represent or illustrate that line. Children can then glue the images to the construction paper, forming a collage. Display the completed collages in the order of the words of the song.

When the children are finished, invite anyone who is willing to share what has been created. Invite the group to listen to the song.

Attachment: Activity 6

Gift Cards

THE GIFT OF LISTENING

Stop and give your full attention to hear what another is saying.

THE GIFT OF A COMPLIMENT

A simple and sincere “You look great in that color” or “You did a super job” can make someone’s day.

THE GIFT OF AFFECTION

Be generous with appropriate hugs, kisses, pats on the back and handholds.

THE GIFT OF A FAVOR

Every day, go out of your way to do something kind.

THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER

Clip cartoons, share articles, and funny stories.

THE GIFT OF SOLITUDE

There are times when we want nothing better than to be left alone.

THE GIFT OF A WRITTEN NOTE

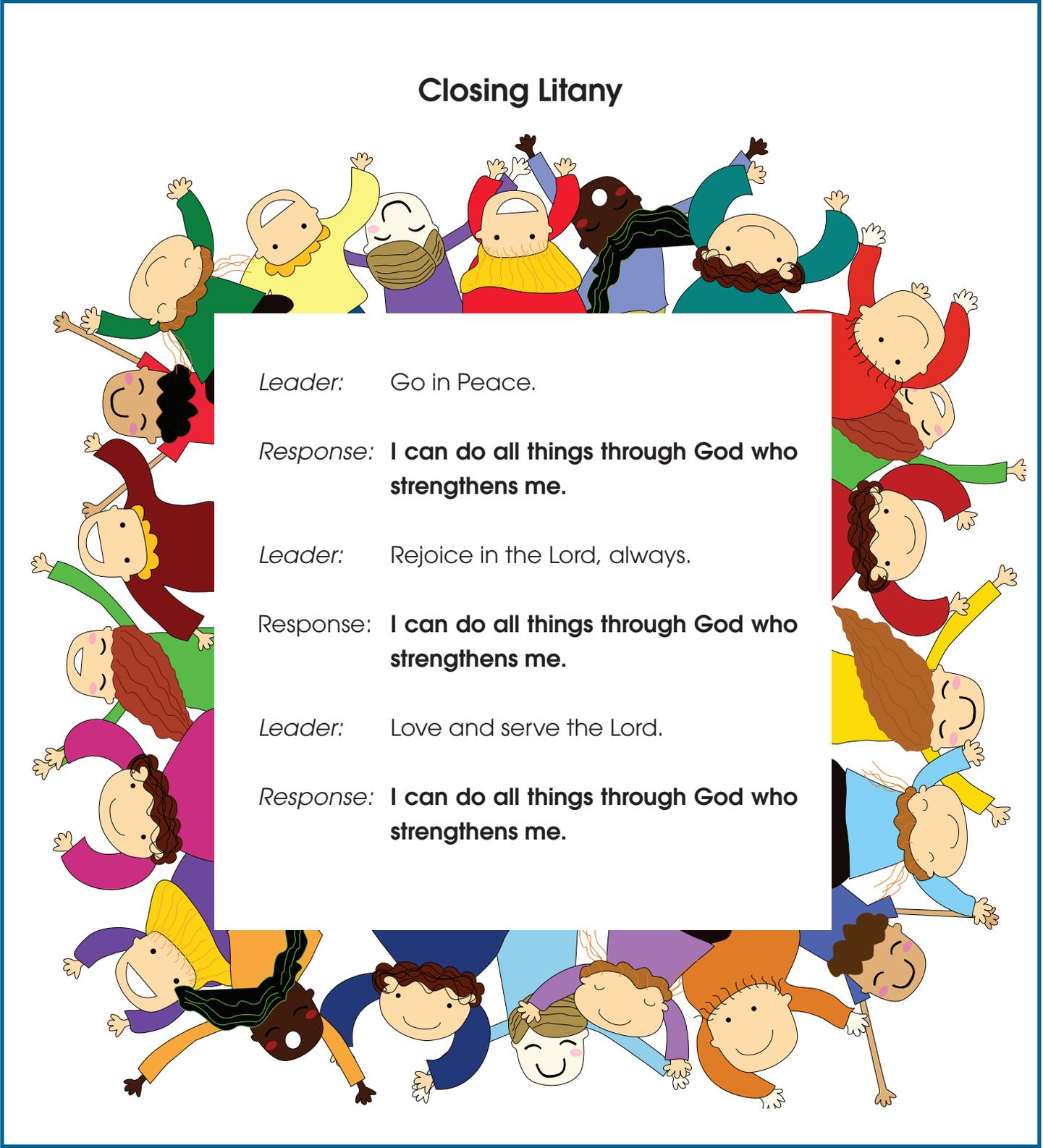
A brief handwritten note may be remembered for a lifetime and may even change a life.

THE GIFT OF A CHEERFUL DISPOSITION

The easiest way to feel good is to extend a kind word to someone. It’s not hard to say, “Hello” or “Thank You.”

Attachment: Activity 7

Closing Litany



Leader: Go in Peace.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Leader: Rejoice in the Lord, always.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Leader: Love and serve the Lord.

Response: **I can do all things through God who strengthens me.**

Attachment: Activity 8a

How to Make a Future Teller

Supplies:

- plain paper
- scissors
- colored pencils or crayons

How to work:

1. Create a square of paper by folding the top left corner of a standard sheet of paper diagonally to the opposite side of the paper. Cut the excess strip off the bottom, open the folded sheet and you should have a square of paper measuring approximately 8½ inches by 8½ inches.
2. Refold the paper on the diagonal, but this time create the fold using the right, top corner folded over to the left bottom corner. Open the paper back to its square shape and you should have two crease marks running from corner to corner.
3. Hold a corner of the square and fold it to the center of the paper. Repeat for each corner until you have a smaller square of paper with four flaps.
4. Turn the paper over and again fold each corner into the middle to create an even smaller square with four flaps.
5. Turn the paper over again so that the four square flaps are facing up. Fold the paper in half along the open flap lines to create creases. The paper creases form a plus sign since you are folding from side to side, not corner to corner.
6. Open the fortune teller for a test drive. Place the index finger and thumb of your right hand under the square flaps on the right side. Do the same for the left side. Slowly bring your fingers together and the fortune teller will open.
7. Open and close the flaps on the fortune teller by opening and closing your fingers together, manipulating the flaps one way and then another.

Attachment: Activity 8a (*Continued*)

8. Write four colors on the top, square flaps. Choose colors with different numbers of letters in the word, such as red (3), blue (4), green (5), orange (6). The flaps can be colored or decorated to match their respective colors.
9. Flip the fortune teller over and write eight numbers on the triangular flaps. Use one odd and one even number for each pair of flaps.
10. Raise the triangular flaps and write one future telling phrase under each half triangle.
11. Tell someone's (or your) future. Hold the Future Teller in your hand and choose a color. Open and close the device one time for each letter in the color. Next, choose a number and then open and close the Future Teller the correct number of times, based on their number. Finally, choose one more number, lift the selected flap, and read the advice.

Attachment: Activity 8b

Future Teller Phrases

Philippians 4:1–13 offers words of encouragement, and so do some other letters in the New Testament. May you be encouraged by these words:

“Stand firm in the Lord.” Philippians 4:1

“Rejoice in the Lord, always; and again I will say, Rejoice.” Philippians 4:4

“Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.” Philippians 4:5

“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable—think about these things.” Philippians 4:8a

“If there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Philippians 4:8b

“Keep on doing the things you have learned and received and heard and seen . . . and the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:9

“I can do all things through (God) who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

Attachment: Activity 9a

One Spirit of Love

♩ = 89
Muted strum
Light Reggae Feel

Paul B. Svenson



1. Ma - ny are the won - ders of God ma - ny
2. Some will be the tea - chers of life some the
3. Li - ving as the bo - dy of Christ and the



doors o - pen wide ma - ny roads that are still un -
prea - chers of love some the fa - thers and some the
heart of the earth and the hands that will break new



tra - veled Ma - ny are the gifts that we share
mo - thers Some will be the ones who will care
gro - und Cel - e - brate the gifts from with - in



ma - ny bur - dens we bear ma - ny
some will li - sten and share serv - ing
now its time to be - gin God's -



my - ster - ies still un - ra - veled
God as they serve each - o - ther
peo - ple can turn the world a - rou - nd now!



CHORUS Ma - ny gifts One spi - rit of love one spi - rit of love



Ma - ny gifts One spi - rit of love one spi - rit of love

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Attachment: Activity 9b

Litany

Based on the song “One Spirit of Love”

One: Many are the wonders of God, many doors open wide,

All: Many roads that are still untraveled,

One: Many are the gifts that we share, many burdens we bear,

All: Many mysteries still unraveled.

Unison:

Many gifts, one spirit of love, one spirit of love.

Many gifts, one spirit of love, one spirit of love.

One: Some will be teachers of life, some the preachers of love,

All: Some the Fathers and some the Mothers,

One: Some will be the ones who will care, some will listen and share,

All: Serving God while they serve each other.

One: Living as the body of Christ, and the heart of the earth,

All: And the hands that will break new ground,

One: Celebrate the gifts from within, now it’s time to begin,

All: God’s people can turn the world around now.

Unison:

Many gifts, one spirit of love, one spirit of love.

Many gifts, one spirit of love, one spirit of love.

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