



Giving and Receiving Hospitality

About this Faith Practice

Hospitality begins when we perceive ourselves and others as strangers in a community of welcome. Seeing Christ's presence in the other enables us to welcome Christ into the midst of the community, with all of the costs and joys of discipleship. Gentle, attentive, patient, and consistent care is required to create a community where members are intentional about seeking and welcoming all, especially those whose abilities, experiences, and cultural traditions are different from the mainstream of the current community. A community of hospitality is aware, sensitive, and open to divergent cultural practices. It reaches far beyond the limits of the familiar in a highly mobile world, transforming both the newcomer and the established community.

Let's Begin...

Now that you've downloaded the files for your faith practice and age group or setting, you can get started planning one or multiple sessions:

1 Open the .pdf file for your age group or setting. Choose an Exploration, the approach you think will help your group to best experience the faith practice. Choose any one of the following Explorations to use for one session:



Discovery



Scripture



Discipleship



Christian Tradition



Context and Mission



Future and Vision

Note: If you're planning multiple sessions, you can follow the order suggested above or feel free to use any order that fits the needs of your group. Some groups may choose to start with Scripture and then see where that leads them. Others may be more ready to act in their community and might want to start with Context and Mission.

2 Locate the Exploration you've chosen

3 Look through all 9 activities and select the ones you would like to do with your group.

- If you're planning a 30–45 minute session, choose 3 activities.
- 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.
- For 45 minutes to 1 hour, choose 4 or 5 activities.
- For a 1½ to 2-hour session, you can use all 9 activities.

Tip: Look for this symbol  to find activities designed for Easy Preparation (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church).

4 Make copies of any handouts () related to your activities. Order posters () if using art (see "Ordering Posters," below).

Use of Art, Music, and Scripture in Faith Practices

Faith Practices activities include many opportunities to grow in faith through the use of scripture, music, and art.

Ordering Posters

If you choose activities that use an art image, you or your church will need to purchase posters of the art by clicking on the link provided in the activity. If you wish to use art, you will need to plan ahead, since it takes 1 to 2 weeks for the posters to arrive after you place your order.

Art

Six posters are used with the faith practice Giving and Receiving Hospitality and may be ordered by clicking on the links provided.

From Imaging the Word Poster Sets:

"The Peaceable Kingdom" by John August Swanson (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"The Public Fountain" by Manuel Alvarez Bravo (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"Embrace of Peace" by George Tooker (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

From AllPosters.com:

"Barber Shop" by Jacob Lawrence (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters1>)

"The Luncheon of the Boating Party" by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters2>)

"Vendedora De Pinas" by Diego Rivera (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters3>)

Music

Three music selections are used with Giving and Receiving Hospitality. We have selected music which is easily found in many hymnals. A web link is provided to give more information about each music selection.

Come All You People, Tune: Uyai Mose (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong1>)

Wade in the Water, Tune: African-American Traditional (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong2>)

Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant, Tune: Servant Song (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong3>)

Scripture

Twelve Bible passages are used with Giving and Receiving Hospitality, two with each Exploration.

Discovery	Luke 19: 1–10	Hebrews 13: 1–8, 15–16
Scripture	Genesis 18: 1–15 (21:1–17)	Isaiah 25: 1–9
Discipleship	John 13: 1-17, 31b–35	Acts 2:42–47
Christian Tradition	Mark 14: 22–25	1 Peter 4:1–11
Context and Mission	Romans 12: 9–18	John 6: 1–21
Future and Vision	Luke 14: 15–24	Mark 10: 13–16

Writing Team for Giving and Receiving Hospitality

Arthur Clyde
Ginna Minasian Dalton
Barbara Rathbun
R. M. Keelan Dowton
Karen Wagner
Lori Keller Schroeder
Sandi Marr
Donna Hanby
Barbra Hardy
Martha Brunell
Melinda Campbell
Debbie Gline Allen
Ted Huffman
Patrice L. Rosner
R. Kenneth Ostermiller

Worship, Music, Arts, and Story
Adults
Seekers and New Church Participants
Young Adults
Older Youth
Youth
Older Children
Young Children
Multiage and Intergenerational
Living Practices in Daily Life
Workshop Rotation
United Church of Christ Identity and History
Editor
Managing Editor
Project Coordinator

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

There are several elements of the Luke passage that will appeal to children. First, they understand what it is like to have to get up on something in order to be able to see. Second, they enjoy being selected for something special. And third, when they see someone in need they are able to give generously just as Jesus saw that Zacchaeus was in need. Children need consistency so they will appreciate Hebrews 13:5b and 8, but if they have experienced a lot of change in their lives, they may have trouble believing it. Verse 16 is one they may have heard in many settings and versions, but finding out that it is in the Bible may be a revelation to them.

About this Exploration

Hospitality is the intentional and respectful care of both the potential and the gathered community with its diverse and ever changing hopes, dreams, fears and needs. Extending God's extravagant welcome requires expansion and adjustment of the physical space and the interior space of individuals. To be truly hospitable, individuals must be personally centered in God's grace for themselves and others. While respecting boundaries, hospitality requires suspending territories, prejudices and judgment to establish welcome space for all. Hospitality is a radical broadening of individual worldview to welcome people outside of current experience. Receiving hospitality can be more challenging than offering it. Hospitality must be experienced, modeled and practiced as a continuing expression of faith.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Luke 19:1-10
Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Leader Preparation

As you prepare for this session, pray for each child in your group and for yourself. Prepare your space so that it will be welcoming to young children. Include a worship/story area. See Attachment: Introduction, p. 7-8.

As you read the Bible passages recall times when you were aware of Jesus' presence in your life. For more information on Zacchaeus and tax collectors check the notes in your Bible or see the following article:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2ejsjiv>

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for bringing me to this group of children. Help me to reflect the love You have for us so that they will feel Your presence in their lives. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 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 using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90-120

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Group Covenant (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16 and spend time thinking about how children in this age group can show hospitality to one another and to the group leaders. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- Bible
- newsprint and markers
- tape

Gather the children in your story/worship area and tape up the pieces of newsprint at their eye level. Ask the children about ways to make others feel welcome and how to treat others when you are in your group. Write their ideas on one sheet of the newsprint. Many of the children in your group will not be able to read, but seeing the letters and hearing you say the words help them develop pre-reading skills. You may have to encourage them to include things such as "listening when others are talking," "helping others," and "sharing." Have everyone stand up, stretch, turn around, shake hands with one another, and sit back down. Explain that a covenant is like a promise. As a group you are going to write a covenant about how you treat one another when you are together. Read the Hebrews passage to them and have them repeat verses 1, 2 and 16 after you. Tell them that this is how God wants us to act. Now help them to choose 5 or 6 of their ideas from the list on the newsprint and write them on another sheet of newsprint that you titled "Our Covenant." Invite the children to decorate the borders of the paper.

2 Zacchaeus Play

Leader preparation: Read the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-5, and gather supplies.

Supplies:

- Bible or *Living God's Way* by Ralph Milton
- small step stool
- biblical costumes (optional, they can be as simple as oversized shirts and strips of cloth)
- paper leaves (optional)
- money bags or play money (optional)

Read the story to the children and review using the following or similar questions: How tall do you think Zacchaeus was? What did Zacchaeus do so that he could see Jesus? What did Jesus say to Zacchaeus? What did Zacchaeus tell Jesus he would do? Line up the children from shortest to tallest. Ask the shortest child to pretend to be Zacchaeus and the tallest to pretend to be Jesus. The other children will stay in line as the crowd. Place the step stool behind one end of the line of children -- maybe that child would like to pretend to be a tree and hold a few paper leaves. Have the children act out the story. Depending on the height range in your group "Zacchaeus" may have to crouch behind the line of children. If your group is small, you may need to extend your crowd line by using chairs. Have the children act out the story including having Zacchaeus sharing his money with the poor. Continue to act out the story until every child has had the chance to be either Zacchaeus or Jesus.

minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

Option: Invite an older children or young youth group to join you for part of the session. They could play the part of the crowd, making it harder for “Zacchaeus” to see. If you do this you might want to have some individually wrapped candies for the younger children to give to the older children to express hospitality and as a way to say thank you.

③ “Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man” Song

Leader preparation: Review the words, music and actions for song, or the week before ask if anyone in the congregation remembers this song and can spend about 15 minutes helping you teach it to the children. Don’t be afraid to make up actions if you need to. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- Bible
- *Wee Sing Bible Songs* (optional)
- CD/tape player (optional)

Zacchaeus was a wee little man,
A wee little man was he,
He climbed up in a sycamore tree
For the Lord he wanted to see:
And as the Savior passed him by
He looked up in the tree,
And He said: “Zacchaeus, you come down,
For I’m going to your house today,
I’m going to your house to pray.”

Gather the children in a circle, introduce your guest if you have one, and review the story of Zacchaeus. Play the music or sing the song for the children and show them the actions to go with it. Repeat the song several times. You might vary it by singing fast or slow, in a whisper or with deep voices. Be sure to have everyone thank your guest for joining you.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ Jesus Loves Me (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate the words and music for the song “Jesus Loves Me.” While many people know the first verse, there are 2 additional verses. Different hymnals will have verses in a variety of languages, and *Wee Sing Bible Songs* shows American sign language. Another source, especially if you need to hear the music is <http://www.hymnsite.com>. Click on “index” and scroll down to locate the song.

Supplies:

- Bible
- pictures of Jesus and children (optional)

Gather the children in your story/worship area. If you were able to locate pictures of Jesus and children, show them to the children. Open the Bible and read

Hebrews 13: 8. Have them repeat the verse after you several times. Ask if any of them know the song “Jesus Loves Me.” If some do, invite them to sing it for the rest of the group. Teach the second and third verses or try it in a different language. Since many of the children might be familiar with the word “aloha,” the Hawaiian version would be fun. Get up and dance in a circle as you sing. At the end raise your arms and shout, “Jesus, because you love us we can love others!”

5 Paying Taxes Game

Leader preparation: Review the story, gather supplies, and think about why and how you might pay taxes.

Supplies:

- two buckets
- 50 large plastic coins (you could use clothespins, beanbags, or even pennies if you are sure that the younger children won’t put them in their mouths)
- watch or clock with a second hand

Talk with the children about what taxes are and why we pay them. Explain that in Bible times the people in charge were from the city of Rome and were called Romans. The Romans expected everyone to pay taxes to them. Zacchaeus worked for the Romans as a tax collector. In order for him to make money, he would charge people more than the Romans were asking for so that he could keep some. Choose two children to be workers, one to be Zacchaeus, and one to be a Roman leader. Give each of them 25 coins and have them stand 10 steps back from their buckets. Give them 30 seconds to toss as many coins, one at a time, into the bucket as they can. If they have time, they can pick up any coins that missed and try again. Explain to the children that this is the money they have earned. Have Zacchaeus count the coins in each bucket and keep three coins for every ten. Zacchaeus now gives 2 coins to the Roman leader and keeps one for himself. Record how much money each worker, Zacchaeus, and the Roman leader have. Continue until every child has had a chance to be a “worker.” Who ended up with the most money? How did the children feel about having to pay taxes? What if they knew the money would go for something to help them?

6 God’s Peaceful Kingdom

Leader preparation: Locate a copy of the poster “The Peaceable Kingdom” (you may have another version in your files) and spend time reflecting on it. Which living creatures are depicted? Which (maybe insects?) are missing? Think about the children in your group and how they get along. If you have the Swanson print, visit this web site for a little background on the meaning of the peacock to different faiths and cultures: <http://www.tinyurl.com/yzxh3kx>.

Supplies:

- poster: “The Peaceable Kingdom”
<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCRresources>
by John August Swanson

Gather the children around the poster so that all can see and are comfortable. Tell them that it might seem like a long time, but you want them to spend one full minute looking at the picture. After the minute is up ask them what they think the picture is about. Allow for all answers and then let them know that this is one man’s idea of what God’s kingdom will be like when all of creation gets along. Ask them who they think the person in the middle is. Allow for all answers, and then ask them to pretend that they are the person standing in the middle of all

of the animals. How does that make them feel? Ask them why they think there is a peacock in the middle along with the person. Again allow for all answers, but then let them know that the peacock's tail with its "eye" reminded the early Christians of how God is able to see all things. Let the children pick out different animals to act out. Have them show what it is like when the animals don't get along and then what it will be like when God's Kingdom is realized and all live in peace.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Please and Thank You Circle (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- paper (or copies of the group covenant you made earlier)
- crayons or markers

Gather the children around a table. If your group is large you may want to divide them into two groups. Explain that you are going to decorate your group covenant or draw a picture of your group, but first you are going to play a silly game to help them to remember to say "please" and "thank you" and that they must wait to draw until everyone has a crayon. Remind them that using words like "please" and "thank you" and waiting until everyone has something is part of making others feel welcome. Give everyone a piece of paper, but hold the container of crayons and stand behind one of the children. Ask the child to the left what color crayon they want. Then have them say to the child on their left, "I would like a (color) crayon, please." This request is passed around the circle until it comes to the child you are standing behind, who then asks you. When you give them the crayon that child says "thank you" and hands it to the child to the right, who repeats "thank you" and the crayon continues around the circle until it reaches the child who originally asked. You now ask the child to the left of the first one. You can remain standing behind the first child, which means that each request/thank you cycle gets shorter or you can move one child to the left each time so that it remains the same. Which method you choose will depend on the age level and number of children that you have. Once everyone has their first crayon, make the rest available as you normally would and allow them to draw.

8 Greetings in Other Languages

Leader preparation: Go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/27semh> and pick out several different languages that are appropriate for your setting. Maybe someone in your congregation comes from a different country or has traveled there. Maybe you are supporting a specific mission project in another part of the world. You could also ask if there are people in your congregation who speak another language and would be willing to help you teach the children how to say "hello" and "good bye" and talk a little about the culture of that country. Write each greeting with its pronunciation and country on separate pieces of paper. Post each one in different areas around the room along with pictures if you are able to find some. Gather the supplies.

Supplies:

- list of greetings from Web site and from people in your congregation

- pictures of the people whose language you will be learning (check for old posters/pictures in supply closets, on the Internet, or books from your local library)
- globe or world map
- small dot stickers

Gather the children around the globe or world map and invite them to go on a trip around the world with you. Introduce your guests if you have some. Using the globe or map, show the children the places you will visit. Walk (or “fly”) to your first stop, practice the greeting and look at the pictures. Explain that not every culture uses a handshake when greeting others. Talk about and practice the forms of greeting that are appropriate for the countries you have chosen. Continue around the room in this way. When you return to your gathering area place a dot sticker on the globe or map showing the countries you “visited.” Be sure to thank any guests who joined you today. Learn to say “good-bye” in the language they helped you with.

Blessings

Leader preparation: What are some ways that you have been blessed? Think about the children in your group and how they have been a blessing to you. A blessing can also be given at a time of arriving or leaving. It is an act of hospitality, of caring, towards others. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- Blessing Bowl with a small amount of water (these can be purchased online or at local Christian stores, but any small bowl will do)
- roll-on glitter scents, baby oil, or olive oil (optional)

Gather the children in a circle. Explain that a blessing is something good, and it can also be a prayer. Ask them to name some things that they think are blessings. Allow for all answers and be prepared to share some ideas of your own. Tell them that you are going to close your time together with a special blessing. Show them the Blessing Bowl, or whatever you are using, and explain that you will make the sign of the cross on the back of their hand using the water, roll-on, or oil. As you go around the circle say, “Child’s name, God be with you this week” while you dip your finger in the water and make the sign of the cross. You may want to end each session together in this way. Once they understand what you are doing, the children can also pass the blessing around the circle, but you may want to hold on to the bowl of water or oil. When everyone has been blessed (including you), hold hands and say a short prayer thanking God for your time together.

Reflect

Take a few minutes to think about the time you have spent with the children as you did these activities. What have you learned about the group? How did they show hospitality to one another? How did you show hospitality to them? Where was God present in your time together?

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Attachment: Introduction

Young Children—ages 3–7

There will be a wide variety of abilities in this group:

- Those just beginning to recognize their name in print to those beginning to read
- Need help going to the restroom to being able to go alone
- Scribbles to recognizable drawings and printing
- Playing alone or in parallel to feeling left out if they don't have a friend to play with
- Attention span of a few minutes to 10 or 15 minutes
- From wanting to talk and being able to take turns listening to others

Most children in this age group:

- Enjoy doing finger plays and activities with body motions
- Like to use rhythm instruments and sing
- Like to use manipulatives such as blocks or play dough
- Are sensitive to the moods of others
- Recognize when someone is hurt or in need
- Enjoy listening to stories
- Want to please you
- Want to have a turn being the special helper

Younger children in this age group:

- Will not be able to focus on an activity for very long
- Will learn as much from guided play as from an activity
- Want to share things with you, but they may not be related to your questions
- Are still fairly me-centered

Older children in this age group:

- Don't want to be treated as babies
- Can function as helpers when asked
- Will misbehave if they become bored
- Can understand that younger children can't sit as long as they can
- Have a sense of fairness
- Understand taking turns

Attachment: Introduction

Creating a Welcoming Room for Young Children

Ideally this space should be clean, large, bright, and airy with appropriately sized tables, chairs, plenty of storage, and a variety of toys, but frequently we have to work with what we've got.

Entry area:

What can you do to make this area welcoming to young children and their parents? Is the space identified? Is there a sign welcoming them into the room?

Stand in the doorway and squat down so you are at a young child's eye level. What do you see? Is it fun and inviting? Would you want to come into this space?

Walls:

Posters should be at the children's eye level when standing.

Not all posters have to match your theme or topic, but those that don't should still be changed every couple of months or they fade into background.

Worship/Story Area:

Worship table—small folding table, bookcase, or even a set of plastic drawers with some or all of the following items:

- Cloth to match the colors of the church year or the season
- Bible
- Cross
- Offering basket
- Candle
- Nature items suitable to the season
- Posters in this area reflecting your theme or topic
- Individual mats or chairs, or a large towel or rug for all to sit on
- CD player

Play area:

You will always need at least a few items to occupy early arrivers or those that finish other activities early. How much you have will depend on your individual facilities.

- Puzzles
- Books
- Foam blocks
- Kitchen set
- Dolls
- Dress-up clothes
- Cars

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Young children can anticipate the arrival of special guests. They enjoy preparing for others to visit. Just as Abraham stood ready to invite in any one who came by, children are usually ready to have someone come over to play. However, they are not nearly as concerned as adults are about the neatness of the house or the presentation of the food. They also enjoy preparing to visit others, such going to see their grandparents or other relatives, when they know that they are loved unconditionally and will be welcomed.

About this Exploration

As hospitality and scripture intersect, we acknowledge the many ways people enter and encounter sacred story. Multiple intelligences, cultural experiences, social locations, and life experiences impact the reading and interpretation of scripture. This invites dialogue, mutual learning, and broadened understanding. Hospitality requires a commitment to multiple expressions of the story. We honor one another and one another's viewpoints. We are called to embody scripture in the context of a diverse world with many sacred texts. At the intersection of hospitality and scripture, the sacred story challenges and changes all.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 18:1-15
(21:1-17)
Isaiah 25:1-9

Leader Preparation

As you prepare for this session, pray for each child who will be in your group and for yourself. Prepare your space to make it welcoming to young children. Include a worship/story area with either a carpet or rug to sit on, or cushions and pillows, or small chairs designed for young children.

Does the arrival of visitors spur a cleaning spree at your house? As you read the Genesis text notice the biblical example of Abraham and Sarah who, at the drop of a hat, are prepared to entertain visitors. Being able to extend hospitality to others has far more to do with one's attitude than it does with the actual physical surroundings. Abraham wasn't concerned with shaking out the rugs and plumping the cushions. His primary concern was to offer ways for the visitors to refresh and renew themselves. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that God is our refuge and shelter, a place where we can be refreshed and renewed.

Prayer: Creator God, thank you for the love and generosity that you show toward me. Help me to be loving and generous with the children who are entrusted to my care. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Abraham Welcomes Visitors (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Genesis 18:1-15, and think about what you do to make others welcome in your home. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- Bible
- biblical costumes if available: these can be as simple as men's shirts and strips of cloth to tie around the waist and head

Young children enjoy listening to stories and dressing up. Gather the children in the story/worship area, and invite everyone who is willing to dress up in costumes, if costumes are available. Ask the children what they do at home to get ready for someone who comes to visit them. Tell them that in Bible times people had to walk long distances to go from one town to another. There weren't any hotels or restaurants or roadside rest areas. Also explain that people living in the desert may go for long periods of time without seeing other people, so they were always glad to have visitors and were eager to make them comfortable. Read the story of Abraham's visitors. As you tell the story again, have the children act it out. You may need to repeat the story several times to give everyone a chance to have the part of Abraham or Sarah or the visitors. Perhaps after the first time, one of the older children will be able to tell the story as the others act it out.

2 Camping Out

Leader preparation: Read Isaiah 25:1-9 with special attention to verses 4, 6, and 8b. Think about your experiences with different types of weather. When have you been caught in a storm either physical or mental? Where did you take refuge? Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- Bible
- small pop-up tent or sheet, table, chairs, etc. to create a "shelter"
- metal pans or bowls and spoons
- spray bottles of water (optional)
- light snack

If the weather allows, set up your shelter outside. Gather the children outside of the shelter. Talk about how, in biblical times, many people lived in tents. Ask if any of them have been camping or spent the night in a tent in their backyard. Ask about the weather and if they were too hot or cold, or if they got wet. Read Isaiah 25:4, 6, and 8b, explaining that this is how a man named Isaiah described God. Divide the children into two groups. One group will be the "campers," and the other group will be the "storm." Have the "storm" move off a ways while the "campers" pretend to set up camp. Let the "storm" start by making noise with the pans and spoons and spraying water. Have them move closer to the "campers." (You may want to have a helper monitor the spray bottles if you use them, but if you are able to use a tent they will make a fun sound when sprayed on the outside.) Ask the "campers" what they should do and encourage them to get into the shelter. After the "storm" passes, trade roles and repeat. Then gather in your shelter for a snack. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for shelter from storms and for the food.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 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 using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

3 A Song of Rejoicing

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the words and music to “Enter, Rejoice, and Come In” <http://www.tinyurl.com/EnterRejoiceFP> (tune ENTER, REJOICE) or another gathering song such as “This Is the Day”: <http://www.tinyurl.com/ThisIsTheDayFP>.

If the children in your group are very young, focus on verses 1, 3, and 5. If you are not confident in leading a song, invite someone to help you teach this to the children. Remember, this is a fun song and a fun time together. You are not seeking perfection, but a sense of joy that each child has come today.

Young children like to use rhythm instruments and sing. Make the waving ribbons. Use 3” wooden or metal hoops and 5’ lengths of ribbon, fabric strips, or crepe paper in different colors and widths. Fold the ribbon in half, loop through the hoop, and pull the loose ends through the ribbon loop. Use 3 to 4 ribbons per hoop. Alternatively, the children could just wave shorter lengths of ribbon, but the hoops are fun to have on hand.

Supplies:

- copy of the song
- rhythm instruments (optional)
- waving ribbons

Gather the children in a circle in an area where they will have room to move around. Introduce your guest if you have one. Practice saying “Good Morning” and shaking hands. Tell the children that you are going to learn a song about inviting others in and rejoicing today. Ask them what they think the word “re-joyce” means. Allow for all answers but, if they haven’t come up with the words “happy,” “glad,” or “joyful,” suggest these words. Teach the song one verse at a time by singing it for the children and then having them repeat phrases after you. Have the children stand in a circle with arms outstretched and fingertips touching. Pass out the rhythm instruments and/or waving ribbons. Now sing while playing and moving along. You can move around the circle, in and out of the circle, even have a parade down the hallway. If you use rhythm instruments, let the children trade them around. When it is time for parents or caregivers to pick up the children at the end of the session have the children stand in a group a few feet back from the door and encourage the adults to gather outside in the hall. When all or most of the adults are there, have the children invite them into the room by singing to them.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Root of Hospitality (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Look up the meaning of hospitality and related words. Make a list in a column on newsprint of these words: hospitality, hospital, hospice, hostel, hostess, host. Use a different color marker for each word. Post the list in the room at the children’s eye level. While most young children cannot yet read, some are beginning to recognize and name letters. Review the scripture passages. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- list of hospitality words
- newsprint, markers

Gather the children around the posted list. Ask them what they notice about all of the words (they all start with the same 3 letters). Read the words, and after each word ask the children if they know what that word means. Explain “hospitality” and see if they can work out the meanings of the next few words. Some children may have experience with a family member being under hospice care. Explain that a hospice is a place where you can be taken care of, and that there are special types of hotels called hospices so that they don’t associate the word just with death. Talk about host and hostess. Explain that they are the host or hostess whenever someone comes to visit them at their home. Review all the words and ask the children again what they all have in common. If they don’t name it, point out that along with the similar spellings, they all have to do with taking care of others or providing a safe place for others.

5 What Would You Want?

Leader preparation: Locate some pictures of Bible lands. Many Bibles and Bible reference books include photos. Check your church library, or the Internet (<http://www.bibleplaces.com>). Study the pictures and think about what it would be like to have lived during Bible times. How might living in that same geographic area be different now? If you lived there, what kinds of things would you want or need? Gather supplies. Make copies of the handout, “In the desert, what would you want?”

Supplies:

- copies of the handout, Attachment: Activity 5
- pencils, crayons/markers
- pictures of Bible lands

Gather the children and show them the pictures of Bible lands starting with those from ancient times. Explain that this is the area where the people we read about in the Bible lived, the place where Jesus grew up and did his ministry. Distribute the handout and pencils. Work through each set of pictures having the children circle the one they would choose. There are no right answers here, but you can point out why one might be better than another in the desert. Have them turn their paper over and draw a picture on the back where they pretend they are living in Bible lands and are inviting someone into their home. If there is time, look at the more modern pictures and talk about how they are the same and different.

6 Sandy Painting

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. If you do not have pre-mixed finger paint available, you can make finger paint by combining 1 cup of powdered laundry detergent with 3 tablespoons of liquid tempera and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water or mixing $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of liquid starch with powdered paint. Mix just enough sand with paint to give the paint a grainy texture. Add a few drops of liquid soap to the paint and blend well. This will help with cleanup, especially if the paint gets on clothes.

Supplies:

- liquid tempera
- liquid soap
- clean fine sand
- paint brushes
- small cups or jars for the paint
- cardstock

- smocks or aprons
- small tub of water
- towels
- newspaper or plastic for floor and table

Remind the children that the land of the Bible stories is dry and dusty. Invite them to make a sandy painting of a desert. Provide a smock or apron for each child. Men's shirts work well as smocks. Encourage the children to finger paint a picture, but have the brushes ready if they don't like that sensory experience. As the children finish, set aside their paintings to dry. Provide a tub of water for them to wash their hands.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Abraham, Abraham, Visitor (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The game "Abraham, Abraham, Visitor" is similar to "Duck, Duck, Goose."

Supplies: None

Gather the children outside or in an area where you will have some room to move. Choose one child to be Abraham, and have the rest sit in a circle. "Abraham" goes around the circle, tapping children on the shoulder and calling each "Abraham" until he/she picks one to be the "Visitor." The "visitor" stands and the two children run (or walk fast) around the circle in opposite directions. When they meet, they must high five each other. The first child returns to the empty spot, stops, bows to the other child and says "welcome to my tent." The child who was "Abraham" will now sit down and the other child becomes the new "Abraham." Continue playing until everyone who wants to has a chance to be Abraham. Let the children decide if they would rather be "Abraham" or "Sarah," and use that name as they go around the circle.

8 Something for Others

Leader preparation: Check with your church nursery to see if there is a toy or book that they need or what snacks they keep on hand for the children. Gather supplies and make a sample.

Supplies:

- toy, book, or snack for nursery children
- coffee filters
- washable markers
- spray bottle of water
- newspapers or plastic to protect table
- smocks or aprons
- hair dryer (optional)

Gather the children in your worship/story area and show them what you have brought for the children in the nursery. Explain who this gift is for and how the gift might be used. Tell them that you are also going to make some decorations for those children. Spread the newspapers on the table and floor. Have the children put on the smocks or aprons. Help the children fold the coffee filters into quarters. Then lightly spray both sides to dampen. To decorate the filters, the chil-

dren will hold markers of different colors against the dampened coffee filter so that the color has a chance to bleed into the damp areas. They may want to work from both sides. Open the filters and set aside to dry. You may want to use the hair dryer to speed the process. As they work, give the children the opportunity to talk about how they feel about giving something to someone else and not being able to have something for themselves. Ask some wonder questions such as, “I wonder how the children in the nursery will feel about our gifts.” “I wonder how you feel about giving a gift.” “I wonder how you feel about getting gifts.” Visit the nursery and deliver the gift and decorations.

9 Greeting Others

Leader preparation: Read Genesis 18:1–5. How did Abraham greet his guests? How do you greet others? Think about all of the ways that you have seen others extend greetings (handshake, high five, hug, kiss, pat on the back, sports team hand slaps, etc.) Check the following Web sites for the ways of greeting used in other cultures: <http://www.tinyurl.com/23zsnyp> (you may need to scroll down to reach the article) <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dkwooh>.

Supplies:

- Bible

Gather the children in the worship/story area. Ask if they remember how Abraham greeted his guests. Allow for all answers and then read Genesis 18:1–5 to them. Talk about different ways you say hello to people. Be sure to include some from the list and Web sites above. Then ask the children about the ways they say goodbye to someone. Are they the same or different? Divide the children into two lines and practice saying hello and goodbye in different ways. As the children leave today, say to each one, “God loves you, and so do I.” Maybe you will want to bless them in this way every week.

Reflect

In what ways are you and the children gaining a new understanding of the meaning of hospitality? Is it easier for you to extend hospitality or to receive it from others? Where do you see hospitality happening in your everyday life?

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Attachment: Activity 5

**In the desert,
what would you want?**

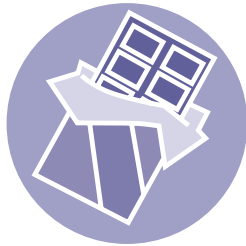


hot chocolate

OR



water



candy bar

OR



nuts



umbrella

OR

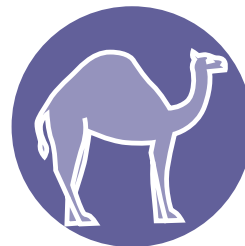


tent



car

OR



camel

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Children learn by example. The Bible stories are important, but it will be how the adults in their lives model the example of Jesus that will have the most effect on them. It is not easy for them to put others first or to think in terms of what is best for the group, but with guidance, practice, and the example of others they will get there.

About this Exploration

Hospitable disciples see God in each encounter with the people in our daily lives and those who lie beyond our usual circles of experience. The distinctions between other and self decrease when other living creatures and the earth are encountered as a sacred system of interrelationships.

We practice hospitality in cultures with habits of expected interaction. However, Jesus calls us to habits of attentiveness which go beyond our own cultures, needs and experiences. As disciples, all can be encouraged to see the face of Jesus in every experience of hospitality.

Hospitality encompasses giving and receiving. Receiving the gift of hospitality from another, even when uncomfortable, embodies receiving God's many gifts to our world.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
John 13:1-17, 31-35
Acts 2:42-47

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Leader Preparation

As you prepare for this session pray for each child who will be in your group and for yourself. Prepare your space so that it will be welcoming to young children. Include a worship/story area.

Being a disciple of Jesus means following him and learning to be more like him in his obedience to God. It is a lifelong process. Helping the children to become disciples of Jesus includes teaching them, but mostly it consists of modeling Christian behavior to the best of your ability.

The John 13 passage is used to remind us that we are to love and serve one another, but we tend to think of the “one another” as those outside of our family circle. Remember that Jesus was washing the feet of his friends, his family, the people he was in contact with daily. The giving and receiving of hospitality should not be limited to “others,” but must extend to those we see regularly. How do you extend hospitality to your family? How do you accept hospitality from them? How does this extend to your church family?

Prayer: Generous God, you sent Jesus as an example of your great love and how we should live. Help me to be an example of love and hospitality to these young children. Amen.

1 Following Jesus (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: We are to follow the example that Jesus set. The group will practice that by playing “Jesus Says,” a game similar to “Simon Says.”

Supplies: None

Ask the children to tell you what the word “disciple” means. Allow for and affirm all responses. A disciple is someone who follows a leader or teacher and learns from them. Who are some of Jesus’ disciples? (Allow for responses). There are twelve very special disciples listed in the Bible. You may have heard of some of them. They are Peter, Andrew, James son of Zebedee, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, Thaddaeus, Simon, and Judas. There are many others named as well, but did you know that each of us is a disciple too? Why is that? (Allow for responses). We want to follow and learn from Jesus just like the original disciples did.

To play the game “Jesus Says” follow the rules for the game “Simon Says.” The leader should be the first to have “Jesus” say to do things like give a hug, shake hands, dance for joy, shout “Amen,” along with the usual fun actions. If someone follows the directions when Jesus doesn’t say to them, respond, “Jesus says to try again.” Pick a new leader and continue the game until all the children have had a chance to be “Jesus.”

2 Dusty Road Footprints and Foot Washing

Leader preparation: Read John 13:1-17, 31-35, gather supplies, think about the children in your group, and recruit at least one additional helper. Depending on the number of children in your group, you may want more helpers. Add a few drops of the dishwashing liquid to the paint and blend well for easier clean up.

Supplies:

- Bible
- pair of sandals
- large drop cloth or plastic tablecloths
- two strips of white butcher paper or other heavy paper each about 4’ long
- liquid tempera paint in several colors
- dish washing liquid
- pie tins or other shallow dishes to hold the paint
- chairs
- towels
- several small tubs of water

Gather the children in your worship/story area and read the scripture passage to them. Explain to them that Bible times people wore sandals or went barefoot. Most of them walked everywhere they went, and the roads were very dusty. Look at the pair of sandals and talk about how dirty your feet would get. Tell them that a good host would always have water and towels ready to wash the feet of guests so that they would feel clean and refreshed. Let them know that you are going to make “dusty road” footprints and help one another by washing their feet. Spread out the drop cloth and lay the strips of paper on top of it, place the pie tins with a small amount of paint in them at one end and the chairs, basins of water, and towels at the other end. Station one child and your helper at the

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 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 using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

foot washing end of each strip. Have the other children line up at the paint end and remove their shoes and socks. One at a time let the children pick two colors of paint and step into it. Then, with paint on their feet, they will walk down the strip to the other end of the paper and sit in the chair. The waiting child will now wash and dry that child’s feet. The child who was the washer now moves to the paint end while the child whose feet were washed waits for the next child. Assure the children that it is okay if the footprints overlap since that is what would happen on the road. You may want to turn your paper around halfway through so that you have foot prints going in both directions. Don’t forget to have you and your helper walk down the road as well and let a child wash your feet. Display your “dusty road” for the rest of the congregation to see.



3 Ways of Serving Others

Leader preparation: Locate a copy of the poster “The Barber Shop” and spend some time looking at it. What are these men doing for each other? Who exactly is serving and who is being served? What kind of conversation might be going on? Reflect on the time you have spent in a barber shop or beauty parlor. Read John 13:1–17, 31–35. How might the children in your group serve others?

Supplies:

- Bible
- poster: “Barber Shop” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters1> by Jacob Lawrence
- card stock, or heavy paper, cut into quarters
- crayons or markers

Gather the children around the poster where all can see and sit comfortably. Tell them that you are going to spend one minute just sitting and looking at the poster. Now ask them what they think is going on in the picture. Allow for all answers, and then explain that it is a barber shop. Ask them about their experiences getting their hair cut. Where do they go? Who does it? Do they get their hair washed? Is it easy to sit still? Explain that the people who cut our hair are doing us a service. They are helping us with something that we need to have done.

Remind the children that Jesus served others. Ask if they can think of any way that Jesus did things for others. Share or review the John 13:1–17 “Washing Feet” story with them. Ask: What are some things that need to be done around our room? What are some tasks that we could do? What are some things they could do at home to serve others? (Put away dishes, take out the trash, give a hug, dust.) Using the card stock quarters have them make coupons that they can give to their parents or other family members listing something that they can do. Before you end your time together, remind them of the things that they said they could do in your room and get them done! Lead the children in a short prayer thanking God for the people who help us and for our ability to help others.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Servant Song (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review the words and music to the hymn and spend some time thinking about what it means to you. Ask someone from your music department or congregation to help you teach this hymn to the children. If you know someone who knows American Sign Language, maybe they could help you teach one or two signs per line to the children to go with the song. Decide how many verses your group can easily learn. Plan on at least the first two.

If possible, arrange to sing the song for another group or for the congregation. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- words and music to “Won’t You Let Me Be Your Servant?” (tune: SERVANT SONG) <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong3>
- copy of suggested actions, Attachment: Activity 4
- one Web site for American sign language: <http://www.lifeprint.com/index.htm>

Gather the children together in your worship/story area. Introduce your guest if you have one. Remind the children that you have been talking about serving others and showing hospitality. Tell them that you are going to learn a new song about serving others. Sing the song for them one time. Then start teaching it to them, along with the actions, one line at a time. Thank your guest for coming to help. If possible, sing the song for another group or the congregation.

5 All for One and One for All Picnic

Leader preparation: In the early church the followers pooled their resources to make the best use of them and to be able to take care of others. This activity could be done outside if the weather is appropriate. Place one item in each bag, leaving one bag empty. Tape or tie shut each bag.

Supplies:

- Bible
- one grocery bag for each child
- box of crackers or cookies
- juice
- cups
- napkins
- blanket or beach towel
- other items that might be used on a picnic

Have the children sit in a circle and place one bag behind each of them. Be sure to use the empty bag as well as those essential for your picnic. What are some things that you might need for a picnic? (Allow for responses.) Please open the bag that is behind you. Can you have a picnic with just a blanket? Or just with napkins? How can we have a picnic today? What about name of child whose bag is empty? She/he doesn’t have anything to bring. (Allow for responses.) Listen to what the Bible says. Read Acts 2:42–47. Everyone put their belongings together for all to use. Do you think that we could do that for our picnic? Hopefully the children will agree with that idea. Follow through with it and enjoy your picnic.

6 Alike and Different

Leader preparation: Read Acts 2:42–47. Think about the children in your group and how they are alike and how they are different from one another. Remember that the disciples traveled to other countries and other cultures sharing the word of God with all. Gather supplies and write the following headings on blank paper: Color, Food, Animal, Game/Toy, Movie/TV Show, Book. Tape these pages in different areas of your room. Locate Israel, Greece, and Italy on the globe.

Supplies:

- Bible
- globe

- six papers labeled with interest areas (see above)
- markers or pencils

As the children arrive, take them around to the different interest papers and ask them for their favorite color, food, etc., writing their response on the paper. After everyone has had a chance to respond, collect the papers and gather the children in a circle. Show them the paper headed Color and read all the different colors that are listed. Point out when the same color is listed more than once. Ask the children if we should treat someone differently just because they like a different color than we do. Then ask if we should be nicer to someone who likes the same color. Continue through all the papers. Tell the children that the first disciples went to other countries to share God's word and the teachings of Jesus. Show them Israel, Greece, and Italy on the globe. Ask them if they think that the people in all these people looked the same, dressed the same, and liked the same food. If they answer yes, let them know that while there may have been some things that were similar, there were many things that were different just like in your group. Tell them that Jesus came to help us learn to share God's love with everyone even if they are different from us. Read or review Acts 2:42–47. Ask them if they think God wants us to treat people differently just because they may have a different skin color, different clothing, or like different foods. Remind them that God loves all of us equally. Encourage them to think of things that they can do for others. Lead the children in a brief prayer thanking God for all the ways that we are different.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Welcome to Our Room (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about getting your home ready for visitors. Are there areas that are always ready and others that require major cleaning? Do you prepare differently for friends coming over for the evening versus someone coming to spend the weekend? Read Acts 2:42–46. The early followers met in one another's homes on a regular basis, sharing food, fellowship, learning, and prayers. Ask the parents/guardians/caregivers to return a few minutes earlier than normal.

Supplies:

- tub or basin of water
- sponges, clean rags, or paper towels
- broom and dustpan or carpet sweeper
- vacuum cleaner (optional, but some younger children may not like the noise)

Gather the children in your story/worship area. Don't worry about having them clean up from your previous activity. Ask them what they do to get ready for company. How do they help their parents prepare for guests? What do they do for guests when they arrive? Have them look at your room. What are some things that would need to be done before someone could be invited in? Get to work! Wipe off tables and chairs with damp sponges or rags. (You might want to be the one who rinses and wrings them out.) Push in chairs, pick up toys, sweep the floor. Don't let the parents in until you are ready. Have the children line up at the door and say "Welcome to our room!" as you open it. Encourage the parents to shake hands with each of the children and call them by name. Let the children show them around your newly cleaned room. Sing a simple song for the parents

— *Zacchaeus Was A Wee Little Man* <http://www.tinyurl.com/ZacchaeusFP> — if you learned that in the Discovery Exploration or any other one that the children know. Stand at the door and, as each person leaves say, “Thank you for coming today.” Give them a hug, handshake, or gentle pat on the shoulder.

8 Fellowship Hour

Leader preparation: Think about your children and your church’s schedule. Is it possible for the children to greet people during your coffee hour/fellowship time? Is the set up such that the older children in your group could help serve? What could the younger children do? Coordinate with whoever is in charge of that time. If the children can participate in the greeting and/or serving, make those arrangements with the parents/guardians. Gather supplies. Be aware of food allergies in the group when selecting items for the snack mix.

Supplies:

- length of butcher paper long enough to cover one of your serving tables
- crayons, markers
- ingredients for making snack mix (nuts, seeds, raisins, chocolate chips, small crackers, etc.)
- one small bowl for each ingredient
- serving bowl
- mixing spoon
- small cups for scooping
- plastic wrap
- hand wipes or sanitizer

Gather the children around a table and talk about what fellowship means. How do you experience fellowship in your group? Explain that you are going to make a treat and decorate a table covering to be used during the coffee hour/fellowship time at your church. Begin by having everyone clean their hands. Also remind the children that if they have to cough or sneeze they should step away from the table. Assure them that they will get to eat some of the treat later and that they should not eat any while they are fixing it. Set out the ingredients and let the children take turns adding scoops of each one to the larger bowl. Take turns stirring the mixture as items are added. When this is done, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and set aside. Now spread out the paper and let the children decorate it. If it is possible to use these things on the same day, then take them to the appropriate place. Otherwise, make sure that they are used the following week. You might want to make a small sign saying that the snack mix and table covering were made by your group. Save a little out for your group to share if they are not able to participate in the regular fellowship time.

9 “Be Church” Game

Leader preparation: Review the description of the game. Read Acts 2:42–47.

Supplies:

- Bible
- large piece of paper
- marker

Gather the children in an area where they can move around. Share the Bible story about the early church with them. Help them to describe some of the things the early Christians did together such as praying, eating, breaking bread, praising

God, learning, etc. Depending on the ages of your children, choose 4 to 6 of these activities and come up with a simple action for each one. List them on your paper. Practice these actions a couple of times. Tell the children that you are going to play a “Be Church” game. Have them scatter through the area you are using. When the leader calls out “be church” they should run around the area until the leader calls out one of the words on your list. Then they will stop where they are and do the action until the leader calls “be church” again. Continue in this manner mixing up the actions. You may want to let the children take turns being the leader. Close by ending with a prayer or praising God action and have everyone sit where they are while you lead them in a brief prayer thanking God for the first Christians, your church, and the fun you have had.

Reflect

Are the children thinking about others more? Are they pleased about participating in the life of the church? Are they learning to become disciples, followers, of Jesus? It may feel like a one step forward, two steps backward process, but it is the same for adults. The fact that you care enough to spend time with them is more important than you know. You are both blessed and a blessing. See if you can make a list of all the ways that is true.

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Attachment: Activity 4

Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant?

(tune: *SERVANT SONG*)

Suggested Actions

Verses 1 & 6

You: point to other person

I/me/my: point to self

Servant: palms up in front of you move hands back and forth, then palms facing and shoulder height move down to waist height

Christ (Jesus): with middle finger of right hand touch palm of left hand, then reverse

Pray: hands together in prayer

Verse 2

Line 1: walk in place

Line 2: link arms

Verse 3

Christ-light: sign for Christ above then hold up one finger like a candle and wave back and forth

Shadow of your fear: wrap arms around self and look afraid

Hold my hand out: hold hand out

Speak: point to mouth

Peace: hands out in front of you, palms down

Hear: point to ear

Verse 4

Weep: point to eyes and move fingers down cheeks

Laugh: point to your big smile

Joy: look joyful

Sorrow: look sad

Journey through: walk in place

Verse 5

Sing: hand to side of mouth

Heaven: point to sky

Find harmony/all we've known: link arms

Christ: sign for Jesus

Love: cross arms at wrists over chest

Agony: point index fingers at each other and jab together twice

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Children this age tend to be quite literal, which can make the Mark passage rather scary for them. If it is possible, using “The Last Supper” from *Living God’s Way* by Ralph Milton will be especially helpful for this Exploration. Regardless of which version of the story you use, put more emphasis on the why of communion—that we do this to remember Jesus and to connect us with other Christians. The youngest children in this group are just beginning to get the feel of yearly traditions, but daily and weekly routines are important to them. It is helpful for them if you have an opening and closing ritual that you use each session. They can feel the importance of the ritual routine of Communion long before they will understand it.

About this Exploration

God continually invites us to extravagantly welcome others into abundant life. We are not the first to experience questions, failures, accomplishments, joys and sorrows. Our Christian tradition gives us ancestors in faith whose stories and life experiences inform our own. Every drop of water reminds us of Christ’s baptism. Shared meals recall Jesus’ breaking bread and sharing the cup. Grounded in Hebrew tradition, Jesus displayed radical commitment to the poor. Love for the poor continues to characterize Christian community. God invites us to welcome those whom we encounter in daily life, and those we might not otherwise encounter, to see them as God’s beloved people, and treasure the diversity of humanity. We are called by God to create a safe, welcoming environment for all. We join the family of all time.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Mark 14:22–25;
1 Corinthians 11:23–26
1 Peter 4:1–11

Leader Preparation

As you prepare for this session, pray for each child who will be in your group and for yourself. Prepare your space so that it will be welcoming to young children. Include a worship/story area. Think about the traditions of your church family and your own family. Do they have similarities? Do they overlap in any way?

Both of the readings about the Last Supper suggest that the sharing of the bread and wine took place after the regular Passover meal. This would indicate that Jesus was adding to, rather than replacing, this observance. The 1 Peter passage tells us to be hospitable without complaining and to serve to the best of our God-given abilities. Jesus was the prime example of this. How do you go about your daily life? Are you able to cheerfully extend hospitality to others? Do you complete the task at hand to the best of your abilities? One day, one task at a time, make a conscious effort to not complain and to function to your best. Make a list of all of the jobs/professions that are service-oriented. Take time to remember Jesus.

Prayer: Creator and Helper of us all, as I work with these children let me give them my best efforts. Let my words and actions be a reflection of your great love for all of us. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Traditions (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the traditions that your church uses to mark its worship time and the year. Are these traditions rooted in the Bible? Some traditions become so routine that they are hard to change. Other traditions can have a great deal of variation as long they happen.

Supplies:

- Bible
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers
- tape
- markers
- paper
- crayons

Gather the children in your worship/story area. Talk with them about some of the routines they have in their family, such as getting ready for bed at night, getting ready in the morning. Then talk about the way they celebrate their birthday. Tell them that that routine is a tradition, something that their family does every year. Ask them to describe some other traditions in their family such as Christmas or Easter celebrations. Write their ideas on the newsprint or whiteboard. Show the children the Bible and tell them that our most important church traditions come from the Bible. Talk about showing hospitality, sharing with others, and taking care of others. Let them know that worshipping, praying and eating together are all things that the Bible tells us we should do. The people who believe in God and Jesus have been doing these things for thousands of years. Make a list of things that happen in your services of worship each week such as a time of greeting or passing of the peace, lighting of candles, music, prayers, offerings and communion. Give the children a chance to share their favorite traditions from church or home. If there is time, invite them to draw a picture of it.



2 Passing the Peace

Leader preparation: Think about how your congregation “passes the peace.” Is it separate from the time of greeting? Do you use special words? Locate a copy of the poster “Embrace of Peace” by George Tooker and spend time reflecting on it.

Supplies:

- poster: “Embrace of Peace” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources> by George Tooker

Gather the children in your worship/story area. Explain that “passing the peace” is a special way of greeting others and that you are going to practice how to do it. If your congregation has special words that are used during worship then use those. If not, use “Peace be with you,” and respond with “And also with you.” So that the children will understand this practice, go to each child and say, “Peace be with you,” and have the child respond to you, “And also with you.” Then have one child stand in front of the group and say, “Peace be with you,” and have the group respond “And also with you.” Give every child a chance to be the leader.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 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 using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

Then divide into groups of two or three so that they can shake hands or give a hug as they extend peace to one another.

Show the children the poster “Embrace of Peace.” Ask them to spend one minute quietly looking at the picture, and then give them the opportunity to tell what they see. What are the people doing? Where might they be? How are they feeling?

Each time your group gathers you might want to include passing the peace as part of your opening time.

3 Bread and Grapes

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Check for any food allergies among the children. If you are feeling adventurous, you might include feta cheese, hummus, cucumber, dates, raisins, and honey—typical foods in the Middle East.

Supplies:

- Bible
- a variety of breads and crackers (try to include pita bread, flatbread crackers and soft pretzels along with more traditional breads)
- several kinds of grapes
- paper plates and paper cups
- napkins
- water or grape juice
- hand wipes

Gather the children and have everyone wash their hands. Explain that you are going to have friendship meal together. Show the children the different foods that you have brought. Ask if this reminds them of a special meal that you have talked about before. Allow for all answers, but steer them toward Jesus’ Last Supper and communion. Share the story with them. Have the children help you pass out the plates, cups, and napkins while you cut or break the bread in to portion size pieces. Offer a mealtime blessing, or invite one of the children to do this. Depending on the age of the children in your group, you can pass the different breads and grapes around or you may want to serve them yourself. Encourage everyone to try at least a taste of the different types. As you share this meal together ask the children about which things they do and don’t like, but also talk about what has been going on with them this week.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Who Is Coming? Charades (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Print and cut apart the list of suggested characters if you want the children to draw them from a bowl.

Supplies:

- list of characters, Attachment: Activity 4

Gather the children in a semicircle. Explain that you are going to play a game of charades where they will each act out someone who might come to visit them.

Once they guess who it is, they need to come up with ways to make the visitor feel welcome. Then they can act that out as well. Make sure that everyone who wants to has a chance to act out something. Be prepared to give hints to both the actors and the guessers! You may need to allow the youngest children to make noises or speak.

5 “Wade in the Water”

Leader preparation: What types of music are used by your church? What types do you like to listen to? Spirituals are an important part of Christian music traditions. If you are not familiar with the song, “Wade in the Water,” you can find a copy of the words and its history at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cthq3b>. You can hear a version at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dyehab>. If you are not comfortable teaching music to the children, ask if there is someone in the congregation who is familiar with the song and can help you. Remember that this is to be an enjoyable experience and that you are not seeking perfection from them or you. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- Bible
- copy of words to the song “Wade in the Water”
<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong2>
- 3’ length of ribbon or crepe paper in red, white, and blue, enough so that there will be several children with each color

Gather the children in a circle in an area where you will have room to move around. Introduce your guest if you have one. Practice saying “Good morning” and shaking hands. Briefly explain the history of the song “Wade in the Water” <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong2>, and ask the children if they can think of a time when we use water in church. Tell them that when someone is baptized water is used as a symbol that they have been made clean by God. Slaves used water as a way to “clean off” their scent so that they could not be followed. Start by teaching the children the chorus. Have them side step around the circle, changing direction with each repetition of “wade in the water.” Do an all over body shake on “God’s gonna trouble the water.” Show the children the Bible and explain that the verses refer to stories in it. Distribute the red, white, and blue streamers, telling the children to wave their color when it is mentioned. Sing or say each verse, doing the chorus with motions in between. If you had a guest helping you, be sure that the children thank him or her.

6 “Living as Jesus” Game

Leader preparation: Review the activity description and review the list of statements. Spend time thinking about the little things you do every day. Do they bring you closer to God in some way or do they hold you in place or even push you back? Gather supplies.

“Living as Jesus” game statements:

- Praying
- Sharing toys
- Calling someone names
- Taking a walk
- Throwing trash on the ground

Reading a story to someone
Carrying a package for someone
Throwing eggs at someone's house
Getting a drink for someone
Giving someone a hug
Telling someone they are stupid
Helping someone who is hurt
Grabbing a toy
Hitting someone
Reading the Bible
Fixing food for someone
Praising God

Supplies:

- Bible
- list of statements
- length of rope long enough to make a circle that the children can stand around

Gather the children in an area where they can make a circle. This game can be played outside if the weather permits. Use the rope to make a circle, and have the children stand just inside the circle. Stand in the middle of the circle and read 1 Peter 4:8–11. Place the Bible in the middle and step outside of the circle. Tell the children that you are going to say some different things. They have to decide if it will take them closer to God or if it will take them away from God. If it will take them closer, they are to take one step toward the Bible. If it will take them farther away, they are to take one step back. Mix up the statements and add some of your own, but end with several statements in a row that will take them closer so that everyone will end up closer to the middle. Join hands for a short prayer thanking God for fun ways to learn. End by having everyone wave their hands in the air and shout, "Yeah, God!"

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Cards and Invitations (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review Activity 8. Decide if you are going to invite another group for a "party" during the next session, or if you want to make cards for your congregation's shut-ins, military personnel, or college students. You may have time to do both. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- paper
- crayons and markers
- stickers
- envelopes
- list of shut-ins, military personnel, or college students
- preprinted cards or labels for invitations

Gather around tables with plenty of space for the children to work. Ask them if they have ever received cards in the mail. How did it make them feel? Tell them

that you are going to make cards for members of your church who can't come to church and so they miss seeing everyone. Make sure the children sign their names. You may want to include their ages and a brief description of what they have drawn. If you are making invitations for the next session, be sure to include the time that the guests should come to your room. As the children work, talk about what activities they might like to do or the food they would like to serve. Acknowledge all suggestions, but keep the final plans simple. When the invitations are finished, deliver them to the appropriate group. Don't forget to send the cards if you made those!

8 Let's Have A Party!

Leader preparation: If you decide to do this activity, use Activity 7 to create invitations. Coordinate with an adult, youth or children's group to come to your party. Gather supplies. Check for food allergies.

Supplies:

- items to decorate the room for a party
- simple snacks and paper products
- antibacterial wipes or sanitizer
- music and CD player (optional)

Spend the first half of your time together decorating and preparing the snacks. If the children will be handling the food, have them clean their hands and remind them to step away from the food if they need to cough or sneeze. Assure them that they will be able to eat later and that now is not the time to sample the food. Practice singing "Jesus Loves Me" <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSongJLM> or "Enter, Rejoice, and Come In" <http://www.tinyurl.com/EnterRejoiceFP>. Decide how you will welcome the guests (hiding and shouting surprise, standing in a line to shake hands, etc.). Remind the children that their guests should be allowed to sit in the chairs and that they may have to stand or sit on the floor. Also remind them that they need to thank their guests for coming and that they will need to clean up when it is time to leave. When everyone has arrived and is seated have the children introduce themselves. Invite the guests to introduce themselves. Sing a song, say a group thank you, and serve the snacks. Encourage the children to collect and throw away any trash. As your guests leave, have your group join you at the door to shake hands with them and thank them for coming.

9 Communion Practice

Leader preparation: Ask your minister to come talk with the children about how communion is served in your church. If that is not possible, be sure that you are familiar with the format. Arrange to bring the communion ware and communion elements to your room for the children to see. Or, plan to visit the sanctuary or other area where these items are stored. Gather supplies. Set up your worship table so that it looks similar to the set-up used in your sanctuary.

Supplies:

- Bible
- communion ware and communion elements
- child-sized stole and/or cross necklace (this can be as simple as a piece of cloth and a cross cut from cardboard on a string)

If you have a guest, welcome him or her and make appropriate introductions. Gather the children in your worship/story area. Ask your guest to explain to and demonstrate for the children the format that your congregation uses for communion. If possible, let them examine the communion ware and elements. Remind the children that communion is a way of remembering Jesus and connecting with other Christians. Give them the opportunity to take turns wearing the stole and/or cross necklace and “serving” communion using communion ware. Close with a short prayer thanking God for sending Jesus to show us how to live and how to treat others.

Reflect

As you think back over your time with the children, how has your understanding of serving others and being served changed? Are the children becoming more familiar with whatever rituals you use in your time together?

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Who Is Coming Charade Suggestions

Older person with a cane or walker

Blind person

Mother with a baby

Butterfly

Deaf person

Person on crutches

Person in a wheelchair

Person who is sad

Person who is hungry

Dog

Friend

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

At this age level, children are very open and compassionate. They are quick to recognize when someone is hurting and needs help. If they can't give the help needed, they will try to get an adult involved. The flip side of this is that children this age would much rather receive than give, especially when it comes to more material objects such as toys and crayons. It is helpful for them to see and/or hear the results of their giving, even if that is a hug and thank you from their leaders when they bring in something for an outside mission.

About this Exploration

Hospitality marks the identity and inspires the action of a welcoming community. Discerning needs of the local community and expressing compassion for the global community call individuals and congregations to respond to the real need. Each individual brings unique gifts to the community and extends opportunities to share. Mission partnerships are never one-way streets. Risking outreach to others creates opportunities to receive. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and those in prison are ways of welcoming Christ into the community. Those sent forth in mission are uniquely able to return with lessons of hospitality offered by those who have been served. Looking to God for guidance, the open hearts and serving hands that reach out to the world are the same hearts and hands that welcome.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Romans 12:9–18
John 6:1–14 (15–21)

Leader Preparation

As you begin your preparation for this session pray for each child who will be in your group and for yourself. Prepare your space so that it will be welcoming to young children. Include a worship/story area.

It is easier to give out of abundance than it is out of little, but consider the words of Anne Frank: “People who give will never be poor.” Watch the children as they interact with one another. Thank them for helping others, listening when someone else is talking, or working together. Think about your own need for affirmation when you give of your time or money. You may not crave public acknowledgement, but almost all of us want to know that we are making a difference in some way. Giving and receiving is a two-way street. You shouldn’t do one without being willing to do the other. How graciously do you give? How graciously do you receive what others give to you no matter how small it may be?

Prayer: O Most Gracious God, you give to us so freely. Help me to be an example of gracious giving and receiving to these young children so that they may experience your love. Let me always be willing to share what you have given to me. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Feeding the Five Thousand (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read John 6:1–21, and gather necessary supplies. Cut enough bread and fish templates from heavy paper so that each child will have one. The children will have varying artistic abilities; be ready to praise all efforts.

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper
- crayons
- “fish” and “bread” (round or oval) templates

If the weather is nice, you might take the children outside to hear the story. Gather the children in a circle and ask them to tell about a time when a lot of people came to their house to eat. Who fixed the food? How long did it take? How much was there? Now ask them to pretend that they are on a hillside listening to Jesus teach. Read them the story of Jesus feeding five thousand people, or tell the story in your own words. Hand out the paper, crayons, and templates. Help the children draw or trace five loaves of bread and two fish on one side of their papers. Ask how many people they think they could feed with that. Talk about how many they think 5,000 is. Have them turn over their papers, or give them new ones, and ask them to draw as many people as they can in one minute. Remind them that because one child was willing to share, Jesus was able to feed even more people than they can draw.

2 Can I Help? Game

Leader preparation: Read Romans 12:9–18.

Supplies:

- list of situations: You are cold. You are hungry. You hurt your arm. You can’t tie your shoe. You are hot. You are tired. You broke your leg. You broke your toy. (Others of your own choice.)

Invite the children to sit in a line or semicircle on the floor. Take one child aside and give him or her one of the actions to act out. Tell the children that one of them is going to act out something that a person might do. When they think they know how to help that person, they should raise their hand. Have the first child stand in front of the group and perform the action. Allow them to talk if they need to. When one of the other children raises a hand, invite that child to come up and help the first person. Ask the helper to explain how he or she is helping. Be sure to have the first child say “thank you” to the helper. Now give the second child an action to perform. Continue until all the children have had a chance to need help and to be helped. Remind the children that God wants us to help other people, even those we don’t know.

3 What Is Peace?

Leader preparation: Read Romans 12:9–18. Think about what living peaceably means to you. Locate a copy of *Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace* by Shelley Moore Thomas. You may be able to find it at your local library. Look for pictures of people from many different ethnic backgrounds doing a variety of activities.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 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 using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

Check in your resource closet, magazines, other books, or the Internet. Select music that you think of as being peaceful.

Supplies:

- *Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace* by Shelley Moore Thomas
- pictures of people from many different ethnic background doing a variety of activities
- poster:
“The Peaceable Kingdom” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
by John August Swanson
- peaceful music and music player

Quietly play the music as the children enter. Gather the children in a circle, and invite them to tell you what they think peace is. (Let the music continue to play.) Allow for all answers. Ask them what color they think peace is. For this age group the answer could be the same as their current favorite color, and that is okay. Now ask them what they think peace sounds like. Depending on their life experience, peace may be a lack of sound. Read the book *Somewhere Today*, or look at the pictures and/or the poster. Talk with the children about how peace can happen in small ways. Let them know that whenever we do something for and with others, we are creating a peace-filled time. Ask them to name ways they think they can help create peace. Be ready with some suggestions of your own that are specific to your group of children such as “when Bobby lets Ann help him with the puzzle” or “when Susie lets Chris go first at the drinking fountain.”

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Thank You Cards (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the different volunteer positions in your congregation. With whom are the children most likely to come into contact? Are there greeters or ushers that they will see most weeks? Youth who help with the children’s activities on a regular basis? Find out how many volunteers there are and decide if the children will be able to make individual cards or one or two large cards that can be displayed. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- cardstock or poster board
- crayons, markers
- sticker
- stamps and ink pads

Gather the children in your worship/story area. Talk with them about the volunteers you have identified. Ask them if they know who these people are and what they do in the church. If they don’t have a good grasp of the position, then fill in with any information you have. Tell them how these volunteers are showing hospitality to them and to others who come to your church. Remind them that everyone likes to be thanked when they do something, but that we sometimes forget to thank people for the things they do. Tell them that today you are going to make thank you cards for those volunteers. Help them write “Thank You to our ushers, greeters, youth, etc.” on the cards and then let them decorate them however they would like. Be sure they sign their names. You might want to include their ages. If possible have the children deliver the cards to the intended recipients. Or, you could present the cards during a service of worship. Lead the children in a short prayer thanking God for these volunteers and the work that they do.



5 Girl with Pineapples

Leader preparation: Locate a copy of the poster “Vendedora de Pinas” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters3> and spend time with it. Read 1 Peter 4:1–11 and look at the picture again. Does this change your reactions to the picture in any way? Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- poster: “Vendedora De Pinas” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters3> by Diego Riveria
- pictures of pineapple farms from the local library or the Internet <http://www.tinyurl.com/badjfu>
- globe
- fresh whole pineapple
- fresh pineapple already cut up
- small bowls or plates
- spoons
- napkins

Gather the children where they can all comfortably sit and view the picture. Tell them you are going to spend one minute just looking at the picture. Then ask them how the picture makes them feel. Allow for all answers. If they haven’t mentioned how the girl in the picture might be feeling, ask them what they think. Explain to them that the girl has probably helped to grow and pick the pineapples and is now trying to sell them in order to make money to buy food. Show the children the pictures of pineapple fields and the whole fresh pineapple. Encourage them to touch it very carefully. Ask if they would like to walk through all those pineapple plants to take care of them and to cut the pineapples when they are ripe. Also talk about what it would be like to sit in the sun at the side of a dusty road all day trying to sell pineapples. Ask if this is something that they would like to do. Remind them that there are people who do grow pineapples just so that we can have this delicious fruit to eat. Show them on the globe where pineapples come from (they originated in Brazil and Paraguay, but are also grown in Hawaii and Australia). Enjoy a fresh pineapple snack together, but first say a prayer thanking God for people who grow pineapples. Ask God to bless them and be with them.



6 Is There Enough?

Leader preparation: Divide play dough into snack-size zipper-lock bags. Provide enough for each child to have a reasonable amount to play with plus several extras. Have one bag out for easy access (depending on the number of children you have this bag should only have enough dough for each child to have a marble sized piece), have a second bag hidden where the children won’t come across it, and keep the rest in a bag or box out of sight. Ask an older child to help you with this activity. Tell the helper where the second bag is hidden and to get it out when you say, “What do you think, child’s name?”

Supplies:

- commercial or homemade play dough (see recipes in Attachment: Activity 6)
- snack-size zipper-lock bags
- play dough tools (optional)

Gather the children around a table and get out the first bag of play dough. Start to play with it and then realize that everyone else may want some too. Divide the play dough among all the children, but of course it won’t be very much. Suggest

that maybe you should just put it away since there really isn't enough for everyone to have a nice amount to play with. As you begin to collect up the dough say, "What do you think, child's name?" When the helper brings the second bag, ask the children if they think there will be enough to use if you combine the two bags. Acknowledge all answers, but then bring out the rest of the play dough and give each child a bag. As they play, talk about sharing. Ask if they would rather have no play dough, just a little, or enough. Remind them of the Bible story of the little boy who shared the little amount of bread and fish he had.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Food Pantry Visitor (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Invite someone from your local food pantry to talk with the children about how the pantry works, who it serves, and the kind of supplies needed. Ask if they have any pictures they could share with the group. Remind your guest of the age of your group. Gather supplies. Be mindful of the different economic situations of the children. Using lunch bags means they can be filled with one can or box. Make a list of food items for each child.

Supplies:

- Bible
- one paper grocery or lunch bag per child
- crayons or markers
- list of food items needed, one per child
- thank you card

Remind the children that you have been talking about how Jesus fed a large crowd and that the Bible tells us to share with others. Introduce your guest, and let the guest talk with the children. Allow time for questions, and thank your guest for coming. Have the children sign a thank you card to send to your visitor.

Read Romans 12:12–13 to the children and talk with them about how they can show hospitality to strangers by bringing food donations. Invite the children to decorate the paper bags. Attach a copy of the list of the food items that are needed. Send the bags home with the children along with instructions on when to return the filled bags.

8 How Much Food?

Leader preparation: Make arrangements to deliver collected food items to your local food pantry. Gather supplies. Creating cards and drawings allows those children who couldn't bring in food, or those who were not there the previous session, the opportunity to contribute. You can also have the children blow a kiss into a bag to help "collect love for others." Be sure to seal the bag of "kisses" and include it with the others.

Supplies:

- large cardboard box to collect food donations
- paper
- crayons and markers
- assorted stickers
- lunch bag for "kisses"

If the children brought food for the local pantry, have them place their bags in the box as they enter the room. As you wait for all the children to arrive, let those who come first create drawings and cards to be given to the families that come to the food pantry. Have the children help you sort through the food, count how much you have, talk about what you would use to make a meal. Is there anything missing? Put all the items back in the box along with the cards and pictures. Form a circle around the box. Hold hands and have the children repeat the following prayer (or create one of your own):

Loving God, bless this food. Let it help other children to grow strong and not be hungry. We are glad that we can help others. Amen.



9 Prayers and Placemats

Leader preparation: Print out several different mealtime prayers. Cut them apart and arrange each one on a piece of 8 ½" x 14" or 11" x 17" paper for a placemat. Leave room on the placemat to add a prayer that the group will create. Make a copy for each child. **Option:** To make the placemats more sturdy, cut poster board to the size of the paper and glue around the edges. Provide precut clear contact paper that is 2" larger in both directions than the placemat. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- mealtime prayers, Attachment: Activity 9
- Bible
- placemat for each child
- crayons or markers
- glue stick
- scissors
- poster board and clear contact paper (optional)
- snack (optional)

Gather the children around a table. Ask if anyone has a special prayer that they say before meals and affirm all responses. If the prayers printed on the placemats are different, share those with the children. Remind the children that Jesus gave thanks to God before feeding the crowd of people (John 6:11a). As a group, create a new mealtime prayer. Be sure to include everyone's ideas. Depending on the number of children and the amount of help you have, write the prayer on each placemat or on a separate piece of paper and make copies to cut and glue into place. Invite the children to decorate their placemats. Cover the placemats with the precut contact paper, wrapping the extra around to the back of the placemat. If there is time, try out the placemats and the group's prayer by having a snack. Make sure everyone takes home their placemat. **Option:** If you do this activity before an all-church dinner, make copies of the placemats the children made to be used for that meal.

Reflect

In your time with the children were you able to give out of abundance, from little, or from both? Were the children able to experience a sense of helping others within the group and outside of it?

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Attachment: Activity 6

Play Dough Recipes

Cooked Play Dough

- 1 cup flour
- ½ cup salt
- 1 tablespoon cream of tartar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Food coloring

Combine all ingredients except the food coloring. Stir continuously over low heat for 3–5 minutes until mixture begins to thicken. Continue stirring until the mixture forms a ball. Remove from heat. If you want different colors, divide into portions before adding the food coloring. Turn onto a floured surface and knead until smooth and even in color. Store in a plastic bag or covered container.

You may need to add more flour or more water to achieve a smooth, pliable consistency. Add only small amounts at a time.

Scented option: add 1 envelope of unsweetened powdered drink mix to the ingredients before cooking.

Play Dough

- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 1 cup water

Mix flour and salt in a large bowl. Slowly add water while mixing until the dry ingredients are uniformly moistened. Remove the mixture from bowl and knead for several minutes.

If you want to have reusable dough, add a tablespoon or so of cooking oil along with the water. This will help to keep it from drying out.

Color option: add food coloring with water.

Attachment: Activity 9

Mealtime Prayers and Books of Prayers

God is great.
God is good.
Let us thank God
For our food.
Amen.

God is good,
God is great,
Let us thank God
For our plate.
Amen.

For each new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food, for love and friends,
For everything Your goodness sends
—(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Come, Lord Jesus,
Be our guest.
Let this food to us be blessed.
Amen.

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
Amen.

Johnny Appleseed Prayer

Oh, the Lord is good to me,
And so I thank the Lord,
For giving me the things I need,
The sun and the rain and the apple seed.
The Lord is good to me.
Amen.

Books:

Thank You for This Food by Debbie Trafton O'Neal (Augsburg 1994)

Thank You for This Day by Debbie Trafton O'Neal (Augsburg 2000)

Personal Prayers for Families by Peter Bean (Dimensions 1993)

I'm Your Child God: Prayers for Our Children by Marian Wright Edelman (Hyperion 2002)

Sing Me to Sleep, Wake Me with A Song by Helen Haidle (Gold 'n' Honey Books 1996)

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

Children this age are still fairly self-centered. They are more aware of what they want than how that will affect others. They do not think about how turning down an invitation or refusing an offer of help will hurt the other person's feelings. But they also know what it is like to be excluded from a group or an activity. Sometimes there are valid reasons for this exclusion that have to do with health, safety, or age-appropriateness, but at other times the exclusion is from their peers or because adults don't want to take the time or make the effort to include young children in an activity.

About this Exploration

Pursuing hospitality invites self-examination and even criticism. Where are we as individuals and where is the community in the complexity of protecting, tending and making space for self, God, others and all creation? Where are the points of giving and receiving hospitality? How do we discover the courage to reach beyond the familiar? What growth is required as individuals and as a community? What practices, events and experiences are worthy of celebration? What sustains a continuing journey? Living into God's future calls forth a dance of individual and communal points of view, commitments, passions and understandings. God welcomes all into this future.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Luke 14:15–24**Mark 10:13–16****Leader Preparation**

As you begin your preparation for this session pray for each child who will be in your group and for yourself. Prepare your space so that it will be welcoming to young children; include a worship/story area. As you spend time with the scripture passages think about the similarities they have. Both are about accepting those who are normally excluded.

Where do you spend your time and energy? Who receives your invitations, offers of help and support? Are you reaching out in a variety of ways to a variety of God's people? No one expects you to give up everything or solve all the problems, but have you fallen into comfortable habits with the way you reach out to others so that they know God's love? Could you stretch yourself a little more by volunteering in a soup kitchen or at a nursing home? Is there a mission project that you could help organize? You are already showing the young children that they are important by spending time with them. How can you help them see the importance of others?

Prayer: God of us all, help me in my daily struggle as I try not to exclude those you would invite to your great banquet. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities**1 Jesus and the Children (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Read Mark 10:13–16, and spend time thinking about how to make the children in your group feel welcomed and cared for. Gather supplies. Display the pictures you were able to find of Jesus with children.

Supplies:

- Bible
- words to “Jesus Loves Me” <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSongJLM>
- costume: large shirts and fabric strips (optional)
- pictures of Jesus with children
- poster: “Christ Among the Children” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources> by Emil Nolde

Gather the children in your worship/story area. If you were able to locate pictures of Jesus with children, show these to the children and talk about how the pictures make them feel. Read Mark 10:13–16 and invite their response. Let them act out the story, using the costumes if you have them available. You may need to give them prompts the first time through. After several repetitions, invite the children to sit in a circle. Ask them how they feel when they are told they are too little to do something. Listen carefully to their answers and point out that sometimes there are health and safety reasons for not allowing them do something like staying up late or riding a roller coaster. Do tell them that they will always be an important part of God's family. Place your hand on the shoulder of the child to your right and say “Remember name, God loves you.” Have the children pass this blessing around the circle. Sing “Jesus Loves Me.”

2 Welcome to God's Party Mural

Leader preparation: Read Luke 14:15–24. Spend time thinking about how you feel when others turn down your invitations or offers of help. Locate a space where you will be able to display your group's creation to share with others in the congregation. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- Bible
- long strip of butcher paper or an individual piece of paper for each child
- markers or crayons

Gather the children in your worship/story area and read Luke 14:15–24 to them. Ask them if they have ever had a party and invited a friend that couldn't come. How did that make them feel? Did they have time to invite someone else? Tell them that God is having a party and everyone is invited, not just a few people. Explain that some people don't understand about God, so they have turned down the invitation. But God isn't giving up; they are still invited. Also let them know that since they come to church and want to learn about Jesus, they have said “Yes” to God's invitation. (They won't understand all this yet, but you are planting seeds that will grow.)

Ask them what they think God's party looks like and who is there. Move to the tables and invite them to create a picture of God's party. If you are using one large piece of paper, assign different parts for them to draw. Be sure they sign their

names to their creation. Display the mural where others in your congregation can see it. Add a title and the scripture reference. You may want to write a brief explanation under each section of the mural.

③ Not a Straight Path Painting

Leader preparation: Think about your personal faith journey. Has it been a straight path? More than likely the answer is no. There have been some twists, turns, and backtracking along the way. But God is still there with open arms. Our lives are not perfect. We never know for sure how things are going to turn out, but there is still beauty to be found.

Gather supplies, mixing a few drops of liquid soap with the paint to ease clean-up. For either option, pour a small amount of paint into the pie tins or shallow bowls, using one per color. Place one or two strings (leaving an end over the edge) or 2 or 3 marbles into each color of paint. Recruit helpers for this activity. Provide books, puzzles, or other quiet activities for those who are waiting to paint or have finished painting.

Supplies:

- liquid tempera in several colors
- dishwashing liquid
- pie tins or other shallow bowls
- white construction paper
- smocks or aprons
- newspaper or plastic to cover tables and floor
- small tub of water
- towels

Option 1

- 18" length of cotton string (at least 1 per color)

Option 2:

- marbles
- plastic spoons
- 2 shoe boxes with lids

Gather the children in your worship/story area and remind them that you have been talking about hospitality and doing things for others. Ask them if it is always easy to be nice to others. Let them know that even though we forget sometimes, God wants us to keep trying. Explain that you are going to make paintings that show how we don't always walk in a straight line when we follow Jesus. Let them know that only one or two of them paint at a time. While they wait their turn, they may read books or work puzzles. Before they paint they will need to put on a smock or paint shirt. Before each child paints, write the child's name on the paper. When they are finished, put the paintings in a safe place to dry.

Option 1: Fold a piece of paper in half and open it back up. Choose one color of paint. Pick the string up out of the paint by the clean end and lay it on one side of the paper in a wiggle pattern with the clean end off the edge of the paper. Fold the top half of the paper over and hold it down lightly while the child pulls out the string. Return the string to the paint. Open the paper to see the design.

Option 2: Place the piece of paper in a shoe box with the ends of the paper rolling up the sides. Pick 2 or 3 paint colors. Use a spoon to roll the marble around in the paint to coat it. Then place the painted marbles in the shoe box, and put on the

lid. Let the child shake the shoe box side to side and front to back. Remove the lid, remove the marbles and the paper, and enjoy the design.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 New and Used (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the things that you give and receive. How do you feel when you are on the receiving end of only half of someone else's attention? How many times have you given only half of your attention to someone? What kinds of things have you given to charity or to thrift stores? How do you want the items you buy to look? Think about the different economic levels from which the children in your group come. Is it possible to have your group do a short-term toy or book collection for a local homeless or children's shelter? Or, talk with the children about the types of collections your church does throughout the year and encourage them to participate.

Supplies:

- one well-used toy, stuffed animal, or book
- one gently used or new toy, stuffed animal, or book
- paper
- crayons and markers
- large cardboard box

Gather the children in your worship/story area and show them the two toys. Ask them which they would rather have. Most children will go with the newer item. Ask them why they would pick that one rather than the other. How would they feel if someone gave them an old toy? Would they want to keep it or give it back? Ask if they have ever sorted through their own toys and given some away. Were the things they gave away still good to play with, or were they worn out? Do they think other children would have really wanted them? As you discuss this be mindful that you may have children who could only give worn items or whose only toys are those they get from a thrift store. Remind the children that sometimes people who don't have very much are more willing to share than those who have a lot because they know what it is like to not have enough. Lead the children in a prayer thanking God for all that they do have and asking for help to be kind and generous to others.

If you collect toys or books, invite the children to decorate posters to hang up around your building or to decorate the boxes in which the items will be collected.



5 Water, Water, Everywhere?

Leader preparation: Locate a copy of the poster "The Public Fountain" and spend time with it. Where do you think this young boy lives? Is this his only source of water? Is there running water in his home? Think about your own situation and that of the children in your group. How might it be different from this boy's situation? Read Luke 14:15–24. Would this boy have been on the first guest list or the second?

Gather the supplies. Think about all the places in your building where you could get a drink, and map out the longest route possible to get to them. Enlist the help of another adult or youth to cover your building's drinking fountain or other

water source with a plastic bag and an “Out of Order” sign before you begin your walk. Be sure to remove the bag and sign after you have gone past.

Supplies:

- Bible
- poster: “The Public Fountain” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources> by Manuel Alvarez Bravo
- globe
- plastic trash bag
- “Out of Order” sign

Gather the children where they can sit comfortably and view the poster. Spend one full minute looking at it in silence. Then ask them what they think is going on in the picture. How old is the boy? Why is he drinking from the pipe? Where does the water come from? Where is it going? Who else uses this well? This picture was taken in Mexico, but it could easily have been taken in the Middle East, South America, or any number of other places. Show the children these areas on the globe. Ask the children what it would be like if they had to walk to a public well to get their water. Send your aide out to cover up the nearest drinking fountain or water source. Tell the children that all of you are going to take a walk to get a drink. Take the long way around as much as possible to get to the first source of water. When it cannot be used, ask the children where you should go next. Start off again, once more taking the longest route possible. Once you are out of sight, have your aide remove the coverings and, if it is feasible, get ahead of you to cover the next source of water. When you cannot use the next source, ask the children what to do next. Ask them how they are feeling. Is anyone getting thirsty or tired? Trudge on to the next source of water (or back to the original site if you need to). At last everyone can get a drink, but before you do say a short prayer thanking God for the gift of clean, fresh water. After everyone has had a drink, ask the children how they feel now. Take the shortest route back to your room.

6 Signs of Hospitality Walk

Leader preparation: Spend time thinking about how you and the other members of your church show hospitality to the children and to visitors.

To help keep the children together in a group, have them hold on to the long rope as you walk around the church building and grounds. Recruit a helper to assist on the walk. If available, a wheelchair or stroller would help point out the difficulties of stairs, certain doorways, and restrooms.

Supplies:

- a long rope with knots tied every 3'
- clipboard
- pencil
- paper
- a wheelchair, stroller, or cart (optional)

Take the children on walk around your building. Stop at doors, drinking fountains, restrooms, windows, bulletin boards, pictures, etc. Are things easy for the children to use or see? What about older members of the congregation or those who have different physical abilities? If you have a wheelchair or similar item, take time to figure out how easy it would be to get into and around certain areas. Ask the children how they think things could be better. If you can, check out the worship areas. Keep a list of ideas to share with your church board. If weather and location permit, walk around the outside of the building as well. Does it look

friendly and nice? What could be done to make it better? Acknowledge all ideas that the children name.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 What Can We Do for Others?

What Can Others Do for Us? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the children in your group and how they treat one another. Consider their age differences. Are there some things that the older children can do for the younger ones? What can the younger children do for the older children?

Supplies:

- paper
- crayons or markers

Gather the children in a circle. Ask them to think about ways that other people help them (tying shoes, reaching something up high, spelling words for them, etc.). Ask them to think about things that they can do for others (picking up something off the floor, setting the table, giving a hug, etc.). Make sure they come up with things that they can do for one another and not just for adults. Have them act out their ideas. Remind them to say “thank you” after someone “helps” them.

Give each child a piece of paper. Help them fold the paper in half and draw a line down the middle. On one side ask them to draw a picture of them helping someone. On the other side ask them to draw a picture of someone helping them. Label the pictures and put them on display.

8 “Come All You People” (Uyai Mose)

Leader preparation: Review the words to the song. If you are not confident in leading music with the children, ask someone to help you.

Supplies:

- song “Come All You People” (tune: Uyai Mose Iona Community)
<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSONG1>
- world map or globe
- paper plates
- dried beans
- small plastic cup
- markers or crayons
- crepe paper or ribbon in 2’ lengths
- stapler and staples

Gather the children where they can see the map or globe. Explain that you are going to learn a song from the African country of Zimbabwe. Show them where this country is in relation to where you live. Remind the children that God’s love extends to everyone in the world. Go over the song with them several times.

Explain that in many parts of Africa dried beans are used to make instruments. Distribute paper plates and invite the children to decorate the bottom side. Let them pick out several lengths of crepe paper or ribbon. Help them fold the plate in half and insert one end of the streamers at the fold. Staple the two edges of the

plate together being sure to catch the ends of the streamers. Place the staples close together so that the beans won't fall out. When you are about half way around the edge, help the children pour in a small cup of beans. Finish closing the paper plate shaker.

Sing the song again and include the following motions:

On the word "come," gesture with a hand to come.

On the words "praise your Maker," use the shakers.

On the words "worship the Lord," raise hands in the air.

Arrange to sing this song for the congregation or for another group.

9 Welcome to God's Party Cards

Leader preparation: Think about how others make you feel welcome when you go to their homes, or even when you come to church. You might want to pre-print some or all of the cards depending on the abilities of your group. Write "Welcome to God's Party," "Thank you for coming to God's party," "We are glad you came to God's party," or similar phrases on a whiteboard or newsprint posted where the children can see to copy. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- Bible
- cardstock cut into quarters
- crayons or markers

Gather the children around your workspace and read or retell the story in Luke 14:15–24. Remind them that people who come to church have already accepted God's invitation. Now you are going to do something to make them feel welcome. Distribute the cards and show the children the phrases you have written. Explain that they are to copy the phrases and decorate the cards. Perhaps the older children could write the phrases, and the younger children could decorate the cards. When they are finished, you will scatter the cards around the sanctuary or worship area for people to find. If possible, let the children help you scatter the cards. Don't forget to leave some for your music and worship team leaders.

Reflect

In your time together, have you been able to see a change in the children? Even if you are not able to see this change, don't despair. Know that you have planted seeds of love and hospitality. It may take time for these seeds to take root and sprout upward, but they are there, and you have made a difference.

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