

Keeping Sabbath

About this Faith Practice

Sabbath is intentional time taken by individuals and faith communities to integrate the Divine with humanity and creation. Jesus models how to keep Sabbath both inwardly (through prayer, solitude, silence, and meditation) and outwardly (through communal ritual and acts of justice). Our inward movement toward a life centered in the Spirit indicates the reign of God within us. Jesus embodies the depth of sabbath-keeping experiences through outward action to followers and to those he encounters who have specific needs. Our practice of Sabbath is informed by God resting on the seventh day after laboring for six days to create the world, establishing a day of Sabbath. Building on this biblical tradition, some faith communities dedicate a specific day of the week to rest, worship, and work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

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:

"Out of Work" by Käthe Kollwitz (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

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

"Guatemala: Procession" by Betty LaDuke (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

From AllPosters.com:

"The Dance of Youth" by Pablo Picasso (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>)

"Going to Church" by William H. Johnson (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters8>)

"Midday Rest" (after Millet), c.1890 by Vincent van Gogh (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters9>)

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.

Let Me Enter God's Own Dwelling, Tune: Unser Herrscher (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong7>)

I Woke Up This Morning, Tune: Woke Up This Morning (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong8>)

I've Got Peace Like a River, Tune: Peace Like A River (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9>)

Scripture

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

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Discovery | Genesis 2:2–4 | Luke 12:22–31 |
| Scripture | Mark 2:23–3:6 | Exodus 20:1–17 |
| Discipleship | Luke 6:1–11 | Deuteronomy 6:1–9 |
| Christian Tradition | Mark 6:30–34, 53–56 | Isaiah 58:9b–14 |
| Context and Mission | Jeremiah 17:19–27 | 1 Corinthians 11:17–26 |
| Future and Vision | Psalms 119:105–112, 129–136 | Matthew 27:51–66 (Matthew 26:14–27:66) |

Writing Team for Keeping Sabbath

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| Carol Wilson | <i>Young Children</i> |
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Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

These resources offer activities and suggestions for ways children ages five to fourteen can learn about and experience keeping Sabbath together. These activities take into consideration the needs and abilities of all the children involved and recommend steps for leading and learning across the age span.

Multiage groups provide an exciting learning environment for children and youth of a variety of ages, offering everyone the opportunity to share, grow, and even teach one another. The wisdom and talents of younger children and youth feature as equally important. A positive aspect of multiage activities is the potential for leadership development in the more mature and responsible children (not necessarily older) by incorporating them as leaders and shepherds. It's an opportunity for them to build skills including listening, compassion, respect, and awareness of group dynamics. (It's important to use children who will model caring behavior for the other children.) Adults facilitating multiage groups of children provide support, guidance, and direction as necessary.

One idea to gel the multiage group is to start each session with a gathering time to create community. In this community time, include everyone, and possibly involve many, while maintaining adult leadership. This can be a time the adult leader introduces the theme(s) and activities of the day. Depending upon the size of your group, consider dividing into smaller groups after the gathering time, always blending older children with younger ones, if possible.



About this Exploration

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BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 2:2-4
Luke 12:22-31

Leader Preparation

Prime the interest of your congregation by introducing this Faith Practice in your church newsletter, e-mail, and website postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: "We are offering a multiage exploration of Keeping Sabbath through our exciting new Faith Practices resources. Numerous engaging activities will enable our children to understand the history of Sabbath, the modern concept of 'Sabbath time' that extends beyond Sunday, and the relevance of rest, re-creation, and remembering to their own lives. We'll be looking for children to help in leadership roles, too."

Spend time with the Bible Focus Passages, keeping in mind that we are focusing on what it means to be Sabbath-keepers. What does it mean to you to take Sabbath time? Think about the children who will be journeying with you; what could Sabbath mean to them? Learn more about the Jewish practice of Sabbath at

<http://www.jewfaq.org/shabbat.htm>
and <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cvqbc>;

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1. What Time Is It? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Sabbath time provides an opportunity to rest from usual activities. Read and review the game instructions in the activity description. Younger children in this age group may need help with ideas to complete the phrase. Consider teaming up a younger child with an older child.

Supplies:

- open area
- jar or basket holding action words on pieces of paper (optional)

Play a game about doing and resting. Explain that Sabbath time provides an opportunity to rest from usual activities. Invite the children to form a circle in an open area. Ask everyone to find a partner. Ask one pair of partners to start, and have them move to the center of the circle. The group calls out, "What time is it?" The pair in the middle decides on an action, and replies by completing the phrase with an action word, "It's time to...(e.g., jump, clap, frown, grin)." The group acts out that action. If the pair cannot think of an action, whisper a suggestion to them, or let them pick an action word from the jar. After the pair has suggested three actions, their fourth response is "It's Sabbath time!" Everyone acts out "rest." It's okay if they plop down on the ground and curl up, or if they just close their eyes!

Continue playing the game until all the children have a turn in the middle. Following the game, if time allows, invite the children to share some of the daily activities of their week and times and places they rest.

Have the children sit quietly, take a deep breath, and then exhale. Remind them that Sabbath time provides an opportunity for us to rest from our usual activities.

Prayer: *Thank you, God, for Sabbath time. Thank you for friends to play and learn with. Thank you, God, for rest. Amen.*

2. "Midday Rest"

Leader preparation:

In the creation story, God rests on the seventh day. Sabbath is a time for people to rest from our regular work and activity. Gather art supplies and the poster "Midday Rest" by van Gogh. For some children, the setting of the picture may be familiar, and for others it may be new.



and the Muslim interpretation and practice of Sabbath at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/299tyo8>.

Multiage activities are designed for mature and responsible children to help out in leadership roles. Therefore, it is appropriate to include those designated as leaders in the leaders' prayer, recognizing their value to the teaching process.

Prayer: God of work and rest, you call us into times of Sabbath so that we can be in closer relationship with you and all your people. Remind me/us of your directive to take Sabbath time, to take a break from the busyness and routines of my/our life, and to remember you. Show us ways to use Sabbath time to serve others. Be with me/us during this time of preparation. Show me/us ways to involve each child as we meet together, respecting their differing levels of maturity, ability, and enthusiasm. Create in me/us an open mind and heart, to share your wisdom and to learn. 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 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.

Supplies:

- poster, "Midday Rest" (after Millet) (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters9>) c.1890 by Vincent van Gogh
- a variety of art supplies, including paper, pencils, crayons, markers, watercolors, tissue paper, glue

In the creation story, God rests on the seventh day. Sabbath is a time for people to rest from our regular work and activity. Invite the children to look at the poster "Midday Rest." Have them sit in a circle and take turns responding. Ask these or similar questions:

- What do you see in this painting? (Go around the circle and invite each child to share one thing.)
- What are the people doing in the picture?
- When have you felt really tired and had to rest?
- When have you rested outside in God's creation?
- What do you think these people were doing before they decided to take a rest?
- How do you feel after you take a rest?
- How might the people in the painting feel after their rest?
- What colors in the picture feel restful to you?
- What other colors feel restful to you?

The poster shows people and animals resting in God's creation and is restful to look at. Invite the children to use the art supplies to create an art image of something restful. It might be people or animals resting in God's creation. It might be a design of restful colors. Once the children have completed their artwork, encourage them to share their creation with the whole group.

Prayer: God, thank you for art that invites us to think about you and your creation. Thank you for Sabbath time to rest from our regular routines. Help us use our Sabbath time wisely. Amen.

3. Weaving Sabbath into Creation: Making Twisted Wristbands

Leader preparation:

Cut embroidery floss into 24" lengths, keeping in mind the need for multiple lengths of the same color. Be familiar with the Genesis 1–2 story of creation. Locate and print instructions on the website "Ties that Bind" to make wristbands using seven strands instead of six. <http://www.tinyurl.com/27o4mbc>. Make a sample to familiarize yourself with the process.

Supplies:

- embroidery floss in a variety of colors
- scissors

The children will weave wristbands of embroidery floss representing the days of creation, presented in the first Genesis creation story. Have children locate Genesis 1 and 2 in their Bibles and read Genesis 2:2–4 aloud. Explain that God wove the gift of Sabbath rest right into the fabric of creation. Invite the children to make twisted wristbands as a reminder that they are invited to enjoy God's gift regularly. Have each child choose two colors of floss to use for a wristband. They will use seven strands of floss in all, one for each day of the week. Six strands will be the same color (or different shades of one color) and one (representing Sunday) will be a contrasting color. Be sure each child completes at least one wristband.



Some may need assistance. Older children may have time to make more than one. Encourage them to help other children. The completed wristbands may be shared or traded among the children or with other members of the congregation, to remind others to remember Sabbath time during the week.

Prayer: God, thank you for weaving the gift of Sabbath rest into the fabric of creation. Help us weave it into the fabric of our lives. Amen.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4. Sabbath Time with Finger Labyrinths (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Sabbath time, to take a break and talk to God, is a gift to all ages. Make copies of a finger labyrinth from the handout. If you have access to an onsite canvas or sand tray labyrinth, consider incorporating them into the activity. For additional information on labyrinths, see books from The Pilgrim Press, including *Christian Prayer and Labyrinths*, *Praying the Labyrinth* and *Living the Labyrinth*, or see Wikipedia. Consider that tracing the pattern of the labyrinth will support the development of fine motor skills in young children, and will offer meditation opportunities for older children. The labyrinth is not a maze, and so it is not a puzzle to be solved or to be written on. It is meant to be left as it is and used repeatedly. You might want to cover the finger labyrinth with contact paper to make it more sturdy for repeated usage.

Supplies:

- copies of a finger labyrinth, Attachment: Activity 4
- meditative music (optional)

Use finger labyrinths to explore prayer and meditation. Distribute the copies of the finger labyrinths and share basic information about labyrinths as a way to take a break from our busy lives, providing Sabbath time, for quiet, prayer, and listening to God. Invite the children to start tracing the path through the labyrinth with their finger or the eraser end of a pencil. Offer the following suggestions: As you trace the path to the center, think about all the things that kept you busy this past week, all the things you did. Remind them that this is not a race, but a time to move slowly, concentrating on where they are in the labyrinth, noticing their breathing. As they proceed, suggest that when your finger reaches the center of the labyrinth, thank God for these activities. Ask God to be with you as you discover new ways to rest on the Sabbath. Follow the path out, thinking about ways to observe Sabbath, ways to take breaks when life gets busy.

After they have experimented, invite them to spread out, to find a quiet place to trace their finger labyrinth. You might play meditative music.

Invite the children back to the group and provide an opportunity to share ideas they thought of for observing Sabbath, for taking breaks when life gets busy. Encourage the children to take the finger labyrinth home to share with their family.

Prayer: God, thank you for all the fun activities we do. Thank you for quiet Sabbath time to take a break and talk to you. Amen.



5. Two Kinds of Worry and Rest

Leaders preparation:

Read Luke 12:22–31. Take time to look carefully at both posters to familiarize yourself with the images and feelings they arouse in you. Try to be familiar with any children in crisis within the group — for example, those experiencing divorce, serious illness, abuse. Be sensitive if/when these concerns arise, respecting them as serious concerns. Be sure to follow up with the pastor should a serious concern arise.

Supplies:

- Bible
- poster “Midday Rest” (after Millet), (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters9>) c.1890 by Vincent van Gogh
- poster, “Out of Work” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>) by Käthe Kollwitz

Cover the title “Out of Work” with a sticky note so it cannot be read (yet) by the children.

Use art to discuss healthy Sabbath rest and rest that arises from hardship and despair. Sabbath rest helps us focus on God; not all kinds of rest are Sabbath rest. Hold up the posters “Midday Rest” by Vincent van Gogh and “Out of Work” by Käthe Kollwitz. Ask: What is the same about these pictures? What is different? What are the people in these paintings doing? About each picture, ask: How does this painting make you feel? How do you think the people in the field feel? Sad? Happy? Depressed? Joyful? Safe? Frightened? Worried? Worry-free? What might be the reason they feel this way? Explain: Resting by itself is not Sabbath rest. And sometimes when we rest, it is because something is wrong, we are worried, and we feel very separated from God’s love. Uncover the title, “Out of Work.” Why are these people looking so sad? If they are out of work, unemployed, what might they be worried about? (not enough money for food, rent, mortgage, medicine, etc.) Do you know anyone who is out of work? Hungry? Homeless? How do you think they feel?

Read Luke 12:22–31. How do Jesus’ words about not worrying relate to these two pictures? If there are already ways to help through your church (e.g. food collections, CROP walk, eyeglasses collections, serving at a soup kitchen, or providing emergency shelter), ask: What can we do to help unemployed, hungry, and homeless people so they can have energy and joy to have full lives? How can we use our Sabbath time, the time we set aside to worship and focus on God, to help ease their worries? In what ways can the church help people who find themselves in circumstances like those experienced by the people in the poster? If your church is not engaged in mission, be prepared with a suggestion.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time to be together and think about you and your people. Show us how to help those who face great hardship and despair. Amen.

6. Decorating Sabbath Pillowcases

Leader preparation:

Sabbath time offers the opportunity to rest from our usual activities and focus on God’s creation. Collect plain pillowcases (members of the congregation may like to donate these, or find them at a thrift store or dollar store). Children are often busy with a variety of activities. Celebrate the everyday activities named by the group, and encourage the children to honor opportunities for rest, not just on Sundays but throughout the week. The finished pillowcases can be used for gifts, encouraging the children to share their understanding of Sabbath time with others.



Supplies:

- pillowcases (any colors, but without patterns)
- fabric markers
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

Go around the circle and ask each child to name an activity in which she or he participates each week, such as sports, piano lessons, dance lessons, school activities, watching TV, playing on the computer. Explain that Sabbath time offers each of us the opportunity to rest from our usual activities and focus on God. Hold up a pillowcase and ask: What does a pillowcase have to do with resting? Let the children share their answers. Explain that Sabbath time is more than just resting or sleeping. It is time we think about God and God's creation. Ask the children what words or pictures could be written and drawn on the pillowcase to help us remember God's creation. Go around the circle and, using pictures rather than words when possible, on newsprint or whiteboard make a list of the children's suggestions. Hand out the pillowcases (to every child or to pairs). Invite the children to decorate their pillowcase, using the fabric markers, with the suggested words and images. Finished pillowcases may be taken home or used as gifts.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time to rest and think about you. Remind us to take Sabbath time each day. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activities



7. Sabbath View (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Read Genesis 2:2–4 and the entire creation story preceding it, starting at Genesis 1:1. At the top of three sheets of newsprint (or in three sections on a long sheet of butcher paper) write, respectively, "Plants," "Animals and Birds," and "Everything Else." Glue a picture in each section: a plant, an animal or bird, and something else in nature, e.g. stone, stream. (Remember, people are animals, too!) Having pictures next to the matching words will help nonreaders.

Supplies:

- Bible
- magazines with pictures to be cut up
- glue
- scissors
- three sheets of newsprint or one large strip of butcher paper

Create a mural of magazine pictures to illustrate creation and to appreciate and admire all the work of creation, as God did on the Sabbath day when the task was finished.

Have everyone find Genesis 1:1–2:3 in their Bibles and read aloud, reading about one "day" of creation at a time. After God's creative activity of each "day" is reported, ask: What work did God do? What did God create? Have the participants write out the names of the things created and find pictures to match. Have them glue items in the corresponding section of the mural.

Read aloud the concluding verses of the Genesis passage, Genesis 2:2–4. Ask: What did God do when the work of creation was done? When the task was fin-



ished, God stopped creating and saw that it was good, appreciating and admiring all the work of creation. God invites us to stop at least once each week on a Sabbath day to appreciate and admire God's creative work.

Hang the mural so that others can view it and through it remember and admire all that God has created. Find a place where people will see it on Sunday mornings, perhaps at the entrance to the sanctuary or where people gather after worship.

Prayer: God, thank you for your amazing creation and for making the Sabbath day when we, too, stop our regular tasks and take time to appreciate and admire your creation around us. Amen.

8. Setting Aside Our Worries

Leader preparation:

Read Luke 12:22-31. The traditional Sabbath activity of confession invites us to share with God and another person not only our wrongdoing, but also our cares and worries. This practice can encourage and enable us to bring our worries and concerns to God and enjoy peace of mind. Gather supplies and practice the song if it is unfamiliar. Some children are natural singers, and others are musically challenged. God loves all kinds of noise!

Supplies:

- words and music for "I've Got Peace Like a River" (Tune: Peace Like a River) <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9>; words: <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9w>
- a small stone for each participant
- a small electric fountain resembling a pile of stones, or a plastic dishpan and a pitcher full of water

Jesus shared comforting words with his followers about setting aside worries and living fully as God's children. Sit in a circle around the fountain (plugged in, but not turned on) or empty dishpan. Invite the children to listen to the words of the first verse of "I've Got Peace Like a River," and then sing that verse together.

Invite the children to name what makes them feel peaceful (calm). Give a small stone to each child. Invite the children to share (calling out or going around the circle) what makes them feel not at peace, naming something that worries or concerns them. The stone is a visual reminder of things that are of concern. As each child shares, invite the child to bring her or his stone to the center of the circle, near the fountain or in the dishpan, and leave the worry or concern with God.

Share with the children the words of verse 2, "I've got joy like a fountain." Turn on the fountain or slowly pour the pitcher of water over the stones, and sing that verse, "I've got joy like a fountain," together.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for reminding us to bring our worries to you. Thank you for Sabbath rituals that bring us joy. Amen.



9. Consider the Flowers

Leaders preparation:

Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- bouquet of fresh flowers
- Bibles
- meditative music
- pictures of flowers from calendars and magazines (optional)

In this activity you will introduce the idea of using Sabbath time to reflect on scripture and do something to help others. Invite the children to locate in their Bibles and read aloud Luke 12:27. Place the bouquet of flowers in the center of your circle/table, and ask: What do you think Jesus meant in telling the disciples to “consider” the flowers? (If fresh flowers are unavailable, strew several bright photos of flowers in the center of your circle.) How can looking at these flowers help us think about God and God’s creation? How can looking at these flowers help us think about what is important in life?

Invite the children to take some Sabbath time (quiet time for reflection on God’s creation) silently to “consider” the flower for two minutes (one minute if it is a fidgety group). Try to stay fully present in the moment. Think about what you see and what you think Jesus wanted us to see in the flowers. Play background soothing meditative music during the silent time.

Create small bouquets to be distributed to elderly people in the church, present or homebound. If using pictures of flowers, create cards for the elderly.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time to reflect on the beauty of your creation. Help us use the Sabbath time we have to care both for ourselves and others. Amen.

Reflect

Sabbath time is a precious gift offering us the opportunity to teach and learn from one another. How have you grown in your understanding of the Faith Practice of keeping Sabbath? What “nuggets” about keeping Sabbath have the participants gathered to take with them into their daily lives? As you think about your time with this group of children, thank God for the gifts each child brought to today’s gathering. What went especially well for you in this session? What challenges emerged for you? What might you do differently next time? Take a moment to record things to remember for future sessions.

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Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Scripture

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About this Exploration

Scripture defines Sabbath in several ways. Our journey will help us explore how Sabbath was given as commandment and blessing, and how Jesus expanded Sabbath to be more inclusive. Jesus reinforced the concept that the Sabbath was about God but for people (Mark 2:23-3:6). Sabbath is a time of blessing, a time to rest from daily work and restore energy and “god-ness.” Sabbath is not a time to worry about rules, but to work for God’s reign, letting God take care of the rest. What helps us focus on Sabbath? Consider how we can recharge, refresh, and renew our spirits, minds, and bodies.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Mark 2:23–3:6
Exodus 20:1–17

Leader Preparation

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Exploring & Engaging Activities



1. Creation Scavenger Hunt (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Read Exodus 20:11. Be sure there is safe space outside where pairs can walk around. Consider accessibility for all participants. Think about possible pairings of participants, to maximize the effectiveness of the activity. If the weather or your location prohibit this as an outdoor activity, take an imaginary walk through the woods and a field and along a stream. Have the children look up, look under rocks, examine a log, etc.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- paper and pencils or pens
- hard surfaces (e.g. clipboards) to write on

On the seventh day of creation, according to one of our creation stories, God rested to appreciate and enjoy what had been created. Sabbath is a time for people to appreciate and enjoy God’s creation. Invite the children to locate in their Bibles and read aloud Exodus 20:11. Explain: On the seventh day of creation, according to one of the creation stories in the Bible, God stopped working in order to appreciate and enjoy what had been created. Sabbath is a time for people to appreciate and enjoy God’s creation. Pair up participants: one old enough to write legibly. Pairs head outside for 5-10 minutes to walk around and “hunt” for all the items they can see that God has created. Ask each team to write down their list.

Re-gather as a large group. Go back inside or, if the weather and location are appropriate, sit down outside. Take turns, by pairs, naming items on their scavenger hunt list. Determine what several pairs saw and if anyone saw something no other pair saw.

Prayer: *God of creation, thank you for making Sabbath time, when we can rest and appreciate and enjoy all the things, animals, and people that you have made. Amen.*

2. No Hands

Leader preparation:

Create a short list of tasks that would require the use of one’s hands, such as picking up a pencil, picking a small candy out of a bowl, turning on a light, drawing a picture, threading a needle, cutting out a paper circle. This activity provides an opportunity to reflect on compassion. The children will probably laugh as they try to complete the tasks, but help them consider that having a disability is not funny.

Keeping Sabbath



Multiage activities are designed for mature and responsible children to help out in leadership roles. Therefore, it is appropriate to include those designated as leaders in the leaders' prayer, recognizing their value to the teaching process.

Prayer: God of work and rest, you call us into times of Sabbath so we can be in closer relationship with you. Remind me/us of your directive to take Sabbath time, to take a break from the busy-ness of my/our life and remember you. Be with me/us during this time of preparation. Show me/us ways to involve each child as we meet together, respecting their differing levels of maturity, ability, and enthusiasm. Create in me/us an open mind and heart, to share your wisdom and to learn. Amen.

Supplies:

- clean socks
- materials needed for the children to complete the tasks in the list (e.g., scissors, toothbrush, comb, book, pen)

Have the group split into pairs. Invite one child in each pair to wear the socks on his or her hands. Ask the children wearing the socks to complete a simple task from your list. Have them try one or two more tasks. Then have the children swap places and ask them to do two or three simple tasks. After all children have had an opportunity to wear the socks and try some usually simple tasks, ask them to share about their experiences. How was it different trying to do the tasks while wearing socks? Would you like to have to wear socks on your hands all the time? What would be frustrating? How might life be challenging for someone who did not have the full use of his or her hand? This can be an opportunity to discuss growing in compassion by trying to experience another person's hardship or "walking in another's shoes."

Have children open their Bibles and read the story from Mark 2:23–3:6 together. Ask: How do you think life changed for the person who was healed? Explain: Jesus reminded the people that God wants us not just to rest on the Sabbath, but to use our time and energy to help other people.

Prayer: God, thank you for our bodies. Help us use them, strong and weak, to help others. Amen.



3. Sunday Is a Special Day

Leader preparation:

Cover the title of the poster.

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.

Supplies:

- Bible
- poster "Going to Church" (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters8>) by William H. Johnson

Show the poster "Going to Church." Be sure the title is covered. Ask: What do you see? Whom do you see? What is happening? How does the painting make you feel? Where might the people be going? Uncover the title. Ask: What does going to church have to do with keeping Sabbath?

Read (or have a child read) Exodus 20:8–11. Explain that "remembering the Sabbath day" is one of the Ten Commandments. Traditionally in most Christian churches, Sunday has been the Sabbath day, a day with less work and focusing on worship.

Ask: How can you tell these people are going to church? If someone painted your family going to church, what would be in the picture? What things does your family do on Sunday that are different from other days? Do you eat special food or special meals? Wear special clothes? Visit family or friends? What special things do we do at church?

Summarize: Sunday is a special day when we go to church to learn about God and worship God.

Prayer: God, thank you for our Sabbath day, for each Sunday when we come to church to learn about you. Help us always remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Amen.



Discerning & Deciding Activities

4. Interview Jesus of Nazareth (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Be sure the Jesus actor reads Mark 2:23–3:6 ahead of time. Choose someone who will be able to think on their feet and keep the interest of the group.

Supplies:

- robe (helpful, but not essential)
- Bible
- paper and pens

Announce that a very special visitor will come today — Jesus of Nazareth! He will be available to answer questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time. He and his friends were recently in trouble for breaking a couple of Sabbath rules: not to harvest grain and not to do the work of a doctor. Read Mark 2:23–3:6.

In small groups (three or four of varying ages) brainstorm questions you would like to ask Jesus about what happened and about Sabbath and Sabbath time. Ask each group to write down their top two questions and decide who from their group will ask Jesus these questions.

Invite a volunteer to put on the robe to dress up as Jesus and answer interview questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time. Jesus arrives! Have Jesus greet everyone saying, “Shalom” and “Peace be with you.” (Explain that this is a common greeting in Hebrew, the language Jesus spoke, that means “peace.”) Welcome Jesus. As if you are the host of a panel, let Jesus know the group has several questions to ask him. Invite each group, one by one, to ask their top question. Let Jesus respond to each question briefly. Don’t let one response go too long. If time allows, let each group ask their second question. (A prepared question to ask early on might be, “What is a commandment?” in order to explain that the biblical commandments attributed to Jesus are more like directives one would receive from a helpful teacher than like commands an army general would give. You could then ask, “What is/are the most important commandment(s) you taught/teach?”) Let everyone know Jesus has to get back to Galilee. Thank Jesus for coming. Ask everyone to bid him farewell. Jesus leaves.

Prayer: God, thank you for Jesus, who taught us that doing good is always more important than following rules and laws. Help us boldly to do good and work for justice in our community and world. Amen.

5. Expanding Paper: Expanding Sabbath

Leader preparation:

Preview the video showing how to climb through a hole in a piece of paper at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2fywwma>, and practice cutting the paper so that you will feel comfortable demonstrating the technique step by step. It may be easiest to pre-score the sheets of paper, making them ready to cut. You can draw a sample page and photocopy it, saving time.

Supplies:

- copy paper
- large pieces of newsprint
- scissors
- rulers



- pencils
- Bibles
- computer with Internet access primed to view “How to climb through a hole in a piece of paper”

While Jesus was careful to honor the Sabbath, he expanded our understanding of the Sabbath rule so that everyone would be included. It may seem impossible to climb through a single hole in a piece of paper, but if we think about it differently, we can do it!

Hold up a piece of copy paper and ask, “Do you think it is possible to cut a hole in a piece of paper big enough to step through?” Let the children voice their opinions. You could tally those who think it is possible and those who think it is impossible. Next, ask for suggestions: How do you think I can cut a hole in this piece of paper big enough for one of you to climb through? Let the children guess how this feat might be accomplished. Explain: Sometimes we do not believe or agree with something we hear, because it is a new idea for us. It seems impossible! The people in Jesus’ time believed certain things, and it was difficult for them to change their opinions. One of those things was that you should never do certain types of work on the Sabbath day.

Have the children find Exodus 20:8 in their Bibles and read it aloud. Ask: What is the rule about Sabbath? Have the children find Mark 2:23–3:6 in their Bibles and read it aloud. What does Jesus do on the Sabbath day? Does he follow the rule about Sabbath that we read about in Exodus? What new idea about the Sabbath rule does Jesus demonstrate? How has Jesus tried to change the minds of those around him?

Show the video “How to climb through a hole in a piece of paper.” Distribute paper and help children cut on the lines. Some children may have a difficult time with this precision cutting, so working in teams with one person cutting and others watching may facilitate success. Remind the children that the paper will tear easily and not to worry if it does.

If you have time, try using newsprint in the same way to create a hole that will expand to fit around several children at once.

Prayer: God, thank you for Jesus, who taught that it is good to be open to new ideas and possibilities. Help us when we become stubborn and inflexible. Open our minds to your creativity and wisdom. Amen.

6. Interview Moses

Leader preparation:

Be sure the Moses actor reads Exodus 20:1–17 ahead of time. Choose someone who will be able to think on their feet and keep the interest of the group.

Supplies:

- robe (helpful, but not essential)
- Bible
- paper and pens

Announce that a very special visitor will come today: Moses, leader of the Israelites! He will be available to answer questions about what Sabbath and Sabbath time are. He recently received the Ten Commandments when he was on Mount Sinai, and has just shared them with the Israelites. One of the commandments is



about remembering Sabbath. Read Exodus 20:8–11 .

In small groups (three or four) brainstorm questions you would like to ask Moses about what happened and about Sabbath and Sabbath time. Ask each group to write down their top two questions and decide who from their group will ask Moses these questions.

Have someone dress up as Moses (just a robe will do) and answer interview questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time, especially referring to the incidents of Exodus 20:1–17. Moses arrives! Have Moses greet everyone saying, “Shalom.” (Explain this is a common greeting in Hebrew, Moses’ language, that means “peace.”) Welcome Moses. As if you are the host of a panel, let Moses know the group has several questions to ask him. Invite each group, one by one, to ask their top question. Let Moses respond to each question briefly. Don’t let one response go too long. If time allows, let each group ask their second question. (A prepared question to ask early on might be, “What is a commandment?” in order to explain that these biblical commandments are more like directives one would receive from a helpful teacher than like commands an army general would give.)

Let everyone know Moses has to get back to the Middle East, where he and the Israelites live. Thank Moses for coming. Ask everyone to bid him farewell. Moses leaves.

Prayer: God, thank you for Moses, who has taught us about your directives and commandments. Help us learn them and understand them for ourselves and our time. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activities



7. Musical Chairs with Changing Rules (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Review the rules for the competitive and cooperative versions of musical chairs. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- lively music
- Bibles

Sometimes we need to change the rules to include everyone. Children will play the game musical chairs by two different sets of rules, one competitive and one cooperative. Sit in a circle and invite the children to name some games or sports that use rules. What are some of the rules? What would happen if one of the teams decided to change some of the rules? Comment that most games need rules to help things run smoothly. Play the competitive version of musical chairs: Place chairs in a line, every other chair facing the opposite direction. Have everyone sit on a chair. Start the music and have all the children stand up, take a giant step away from the chairs, and circle the line of chairs without touching any. While the music plays, remove one of the chairs. When the music stops, everyone must find a chair in which to sit. The child who is left without a chair sits out the next play. Continue the process until only one chair and two children remain. The winner is the last child fully seated in a chair.

Ask the children how they felt playing this game. How did the winner feel? How



did the first person out feel? How did everyone else feel? Let each child share.

Explain that the rules of game are going to change slightly. Play the cooperative version of musical chairs. Place chairs in a line, every other chair facing the opposite direction. Have everyone sit on a chair. Start the music and have all the children stand up, take a giant step away from the chairs, and circle the line of chairs without touching any. While the music plays remove one of the chairs. When the music stops, everyone must find a chair to touch. At least one foot or one hand must be on the chair. More than one person may touch the same chair and be “safe.” Continue this process, removing one chair each time, until everyone is together on and around the same chair. You may need to help one another, so everyone is able to somehow make contact with the chair.

Invite the children to talk about their experience. What did they like about each game? How did the game change? Have the children find Exodus 20:8–10 in their Bibles and read together. What is the rule that the Bible says we must follow?

Read Mark 2:23–3:6 together. How did Jesus adapt the Sabbath rules? What was the result? Explain: Jesus reminds us that sometimes rules need to be changed so that people are helped, not hurt, and so everyone is included.

Prayer: God, thank you for rules that keep us safe. Show us how to be like Jesus, and change rules that exclude or unnecessarily harm people. Amen.

8. Lend a Helping Hand

Leader preparation:

Gather supplies. Review information about Church World Service and Church World Service Kits. Locate the video “Children of the World” or pamphlets about Church World Service or the World Church Service Webpage, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2e85588>.

Supplies:

- Bible
- copies of the “Caring for Others” letter, Attachment: Activity 8
- video/DVD “Children of the World” and VCR/DVD player. If you cannot get a copy of this video, use Church World Service brochures and posters (available from Church World Service)

Jesus reached out on the Sabbath to “lend a hand” when he healed and restored. Invite the children to demonstrate various ways of using their hands. Have the children locate Mark 3:1–6 in their Bibles and read it together, taking turns reading one verse each. Ask: What day is it in the story? Who is in the story? What happens in the story? Explain that in this story hands are used on the Sabbath to feed the hungry and help someone. Ask: How might we use our hands to help others?

Introduce the work of Church World Service (CWS) and encourage the children to share what they know about this organization. Show CWS posters and brochures and/or watch the video “Children of the World.” Invite the children to name the kinds of things the children pictured in the CWS literature and on the video might need. Note that Church World Service provides a way for us to share things with those need them.

Review the different kit types collected by CWS. Help the group choose one type to assemble. Invite the children to decorate and fill in the “Caring for others” letter and take copies to give to families and friends. Younger children may want to



find pictures of the items to collect and glue them on the letter.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time, when we can, like Jesus, do special activities to help others. May our efforts to care for others make a difference for good in the world. Amen.

9. “Walk with Hope”

Leader preparation:

Research the website <http://www.hopenetwork.org>. Decide if this organization is one you would like to support, or choose a different organization that assists people with disabilities. Select and review one or more books about children with disabilities from your local library.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- paper and pens
- information (brochures, posters, etc.) about the Hope Network or the agency of your choice

Have the children locate and read aloud Luke 14:15–24. Invite them to tell the story in their own words. Emphasize that the “poor, crippled, blind, and lame” are people that God invites into our faith community. Ask if any of the group has experience with people who are differently abled. Many children may have family members who require extra attention and focus. And some children have schoolmates with disabilities. Be sensitive to the personal stories and to the role of caregiver.

Reflect

Sabbath time is a precious gift offering us the opportunity to teach and learn from one another. How have you grown in your understanding of the Faith Practice, keeping Sabbath? What “nuggets” about keeping Sabbath have the participants gathered to take with them into their daily lives? As you think about your time with this group of children, thank God for the gifts each child brought to today’s gathering. What went especially well for you in this session? What challenges emerged for you? What might you do differently next time? Take a moment to record things to remember for future sessions.

Explain about “Hope Network,” a Christian organization that serves people with disabilities, or the organization of your choice. Show the brochures and information to the children. Brainstorm ways the group can lead the congregation in participating in a “Walk for Hope” for the charity of your choice or in earning money to sponsor another walker. Think about ways the group can invite others who are differently abled. Agree to take action and follow up on one individual and one group idea.

Prayer: God, thank you for every person you have created. Show us ways to be welcoming and comfortable with everyone. Thank you for Sabbath time in which we can reflect on scripture and consider how to help others. Amen.



Caring for Others

Dear Friend,

Our group will be supporting the work of Church World Service by creating kits.

Please help us “care for others” by bringing the following items to the church:

Please bring all items by (date) _____.

Signed,

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

These resources offer activities and suggestions for ways children ages five to fourteen can learn about and experience “keeping Sabbath” together. These activities take into consideration the needs and abilities of all the children involved and recommend steps for leading and learning across the age span.

Multiage groups provide an exciting learning environment for children and youth of a variety of ages, offering everyone the opportunity to share, grow, and even teach one another. The wisdom and talents of younger children and youth feature as equally important. A positive aspect of multiage activities is the potential for leadership development in the more mature and responsible children (not necessarily older) by incorporating them as leaders and shepherds. It’s an opportunity for them to build skills including listening, compassion, respect, and awareness of group dynamics. (It’s important to use children who will model caring behavior for the other children.) Adults facilitating multiage groups of children provide support, guidance, and direction as necessary.

One idea to gel the multiage group is to start each session with a gathering time to create community. In this community time, include everyone, and possibly involve many, while maintaining adult leadership. This can be a time the adult leader introduces the theme(s) and activities of the day. Depending upon the size of your group, consider breaking into smaller groups after the gathering time, always blending older children with younger ones, if possible.



About this Exploration

Practicing Sabbath leads us to a fuller understanding of who we are as children of God. God calls the people of Israel to keep God’s words on their hearts, to teach them to their children, to fix them as an emblem on their foreheads. Jesus reminds the Pharisees that the law is given to free people from oppression, not further to oppress an already downtrodden people. As we explore what it means to keep Sabbath, we will experience that Sabbath becomes a way of being, as well as a way of doing.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Luke 6:1-11
Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Leader Preparation

Prime the interest of your congregation by introducing this Faith Practices component in your church newsletter, e-mail, and website postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: “We are offering a multiage exploration of Keeping Sabbath through our exciting new Faith Practices resource. Numerous engaging activities will enable our children to understand the history of Sabbath, the modern concept of ‘Sabbath time’ that extends beyond Sunday, and the relevance of rest, recreation, and remembering to their own lives. We’ll be looking for children to help in leadership roles, too.”

Spend time with the Bible Focus Passages, keeping in mind that we are focusing on what it means to be Sabbath-keepers. What does it mean to you to take Sabbath time? Think about the children who will be journeying with you; what could Sabbath mean to them? Learn more about the Jewish practice of Sabbath at

<http://www.jewfaq.org/shabbat.htm> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/24cvqbc>; and the Muslim interpretation and practice of Sabbath at <http://www.tinyurl.com/299tyo8>.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1. Wise Teachings Written on Our Hearts (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Gather supplies. Review the list of proverbs. Print the list, and cut apart the eleven proverbs, so each is on a thin strip of paper. Fold each proverb strip in half, and place into the basket.

Supplies:

- small basket
- scissors
- Bibles
- list of proverbs cut into strips

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| A stitch in time | saves nine. |
| A watched pot | never boils. |
| Pride goes | before a fall. |
| A penny saved | is a penny earned. |
| Where there’s smoke | there’s fire. |
| The love of money | is the root of all evil. |
| A change is as good | as a rest. |
| A fool and his money | are soon parted. |
| A place for everything and | everything in its place. |
| Actions speak louder | than words. |
| If life deals you lemons | make lemonade. |

One of the commandments God wants us to remember is to keep the Sabbath. There are other pieces of wisdom that we remember that help to guide our lives. Proverbs are shorthand versions of many of these wise teachings.

Have the first child draw a slip of paper out of the basket. Have her/him read it to herself or himself, then read only the first part aloud to the group. Have the rest



Multiage activities are designed for mature and responsible children to help out in leadership roles. Therefore, it is appropriate to include those designated as leaders in the leaders' prayer, recognizing their value to the teaching process.

Prayer: God of work and rest, you call us into times of Sabbath so we can be in closer relationship with you. Remind me/us of your directive to take Sabbath time, to take a break from the busyness of my/our life and remember you. Be with me/us during this time of preparation. Show me/us ways to involve each child as we meet together, respecting their differing levels of maturity, ability, and enthusiasm. Create in me/us an open mind and heart, to share your wisdom and to learn. 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 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.

of the group try to complete the saying. Continue this process until each child has had a turn. Invite the children to recall some of the wise sayings or teachings they hear at home. How did they learn these teachings? Why might a parent repeat them over and over?

Have children, in pairs, find Deuteronomy 6:1-9 in their Bible and read it aloud as a group. Each child might read one verse, or one child read the entire passage. Ask the children to identify the words that God wanted the Israelites to remember. Why do you think God told the people to keep these commandments in their hearts? Explain that to the Israelite people the heart represented the whole body. Everything, including a person's thoughts, feelings, and actions came from the heart. If all thoughts, feelings, and actions come from a person's heart, what would it mean to have God's commandments kept in your heart? How might this commandment be part of our Sabbath keeping?

Prayer: God, thank you for wisdom. Help us remember wise teachings in our hearts. Amen.

2. Scripture in Song

Leaders preparation:

Learn the two songs and practice the accompanying actions.

Supplies:

- space to stand, move, and be loud
- words to "I've Got Peace Like a River" (Tune: Peace Like a River) <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9w>; tune <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9> and "This Is the Day" (Tune: This Is the Day), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2ugz3tq>
- actions for the song, Attachment: Activity 2

Singing songs is one Sabbath activity through which we learn, remember, and recite scripture. Have children locate and read aloud Deuteronomy 6:7. Explain: One Sabbath activity is reading and reflecting on scripture. One way we remember scripture is through songs. Invite all the children (if able) to stand and sing "I've Got Peace Like a River." Ask if anyone knows where these words can be found in the Bible. (Read Isaiah 66:12.) Teach actions to accompany the words of the song and sing again.

Invite the children to sing "This Is the Day." Ask if anyone know where these words can be found in the Bible. (Read Psalm 118:24.) Teach actions to accompany the words of the song and sing again! Try creating additional lyrics and motions.

Prayer: God, thank you for the Sabbath tradition of singing. Thank you for all the songs like the ones we learned today that help us write the words of the Bible in our memories and on our hearts. Amen.

3. Writing God's Word on Our Doorposts: Making Mezuzahs

Leader preparation:

Review Deuteronomy 6:1–9. Learn more about the mezuzah at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cc8qg>.

You may find that showing pictures of mezuzahs and completing items 1–3 will fill the time. Making mezuzahs might be done at another time. A traditional prayer to recite when hanging the mezuzah is used in this activity's closing prayer and can be found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/22uc6ua>. If you know a Jew-



ish family, you might invite them to come to this session and show or describe a mezuzah, explaining how and why they use it.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- copies of the Hebrew letter “Sh” or “Shin” “ש” found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/28a5kv6>
- printed copy of a simple mezuzah at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cc8qg> on which the Hebrew letter shin is clearly visible
- printed pictures of mezuzahs downloaded from the Internet
- empty toilet paper rolls (one per person)
- black markers
- colored (or white) copy paper cut in 2" x 8" lengths (can be preprinted with Deuteronomy 6:4)
- old children’s Bibles or magazines to cut up and use for prayer scroll pictures and texts (optional)

Have the children find Deuteronomy 6:1–9 in their Bibles and read aloud together. Ask: What do you think it means to write the words of God on the doorposts and gates of one’s home? What would this look like at your house? How would you put this prayer on the door frame of your front door? Remember, everyone’s idea is valid and deserves the listening ear of the other participants.

Show pictures of mezuzahs. Many Jewish families place a mezuzah on the frame of each door in their home. The Hebrew word “mezuzah” means “doorpost” and is taken from the commandment in Deuteronomy 6:9 and 11:19 to write special words on the doorposts and gates of one’s home. A mezuzah is a special tube made to hold a prayer written on parchment, usually Deuteronomy 6:4–5, which begins in Hebrew, “Shema Yisrael,” and familiarly in English, “Hear, O Israel, “ and continues, “the Sovereign our God, the Sovereign is One.” The parchment is rolled up and placed inside. Traditionally, the exterior of the mezuzah is decorated with the Hebrew letter shin, which is the first letter of “Shema,” the first word in Deuteronomy 6:4. The mezuzah is a tangible reminder to pause, acknowledge God’s presence, and connect to God through scripture and prayer.

Ask each person to write out the “Shema Yisrael” (Deuteronomy 6:4–5) on one side of a copy paper strip (or use preprinted strips for children who find writing difficult). Decorate the front side of toilet paper roll with the Hebrew letter shin and/or other simple designs. Roll up a prayer paper strip like a scroll and insert into tube. Make an extra mezuzah to attach to the doorpost of your learning area.

The children can take home their mezuzah and attach (with masking tape) to a doorframe outside of their bedroom or other room in the home. Suggest that the children stop when they pass the mezuzah, touch the letter shin, and say a prayer, remembering God is present. Older children may want to memorize the Shema Yisrael.

Prayer (a traditional Hebrew prayer recited when hanging a mezuzah): *Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments and commanded us to affix a mezuzah. Amen.*



Discerning & Deciding Activities

4. Midweek Reminders to Take Sabbath Time (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Cut 8 ½" x 11" paper in half, enough for each child to have at least one piece.

Supplies:

- 8 ½" x 11" paper cut in half
- drawing and writing instruments
- 6" pieces of yarn
- small stickers (optional)

Sometimes we need a gentle reminder to help us remember to stop when we get too busy and to take Sabbath time. Ask: What do you do or could you do to take a break when you get too busy or too tired? Let each child respond with at least one idea. Ask: What do you do to think about God? Let each child respond with at least one idea.

Explain that Sabbath time includes taking a break when we think about and talk with God. Sometimes we need a gentle reminder to help us remember to stop when we get too busy and to take Sabbath time.

Invite the children to choose one idea for Sabbath time from those shared and write it on their piece of paper. Older children might assist younger ones. They may decorate the paper with their own drawing and/or stickers.

Roll up each Sabbath time reminder and tie it with a piece of yarn. Have the children take home these Sabbath time reminders and put them somewhere where they will be seen during the week.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time, time to take a break and think about you. May these reminders help us remember to take Sabbath time this week. Amen.

5. "The Dance of Youth"

Leader preparation:

Gather supplies. Spend time reflecting on the unity and divisions within your congregation and specifically within the group of children with whom you will be working. Become familiar with the poster "The Dance of Youth."

Supplies:

- poster "The Dance of Youth" (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>) by Pablo Picasso
- pieces of paper (white or pastel colors) slightly larger than the figures in the poster
- pencils
- erasers
- fine tipped markers
- scissors
- reusable adhesive

The Sabbath experience encourages us to gather as a community to share God's love with one another. Invite the children to look at the poster "The Dance of



Youth.” Ask: How do you feel when you look at this picture? What do you think the figures are doing? How do you think they feel? If the figures could talk, what might they say? How would the picture look different if each person was angry with the others?

Have the children open their Bibles and find 1 Corinthians 11:17–26 and read aloud. Explain that Paul, who wrote this letter to the church in Corinth, wanted the people to love one another, not argue, when they gathered for worship. Distribute paper and invite the children to draw a dancing figure to represent themselves. Cut out the figures and affix them to the poster with reusable adhesive.

Prayer: God, forgive us when we do not get along with one another. Help us find ways to love one another within our own church, and to spread that love into our community and world. Amen.

6. “Share the Love” Door Hangers

Leader preparation:

Make copies of the blank door hanger template, like the one in hotels saying “Do not disturb.” Learn about the mezuzah at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cc8qg> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/22uc6ua>. Depending on the ages and abilities of the children in your group, you may want to cut out the door hangers ahead of time.

Supplies:

- one blank door hanger for each child (heavy shirt board and template if children will trace and cut out their own) Attachment: Activity 6
- scissors
- craft foam (optional: trace the template on the foam to make a door hanger)
- colored and/or patterned paper
- markers, crayons, pencils, stickers
- a heart-shaped stencil or template

Love of God and showing love to others are central to the Sabbath experience. Explain the Jewish practice of placing a mezuzah on the doorpost of the house. The mezuzah is a way of being reminded that God is close. A door hanger is something we can place on our door to remind us that God is close and God’s love is to be shared with others. Distribute the supplies for tracing and cutting out the door hangers. Invite the children to cut out the door hanger and decorate it with symbols of love to be a reminder of God’s love.

Provide an opportunity for each child to tell about the door hanger she or he created and where they plan to hang it in their home.

Prayer: God, bless our Sabbath door hangers, that they, like mezuzahs, will remind us to share your love with others. Amen.



Sending & Serving Activities

7. Today's Heroes of Hope (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Make a list of all the activities people in your church do to work for peace and justice, to help others, especially on Sundays, but it can be on other days. Identify one or two people in your congregation who help others regularly on Sundays (for example, provide rides to church, take the church flowers to shut-ins), serve on a volunteer fire department, volunteer at a local school, volunteer in a soup kitchen, participate in a peace vigil (or other witness activity). Ask them to come to this session and talk about what they do and why, especially emphasizing the connection between their faith and their activity/ministry.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- a guest

There are real heroes and saints in our world — women, men, and children. They use their Sabbath time for doing good in the world, not just for their own leisure. They are signs of hope. Can you see them? Have the children find and read aloud Luke 6:1-11 in their Bibles. Explain that Jesus broke traditional Sabbath rules in order to “do good,” in order to help others. Ask: What does Jesus do on the Sabbath to help others? What do people in our church do to help others on Sunday? (If no response, expand the questions to other days, explaining that Sabbath rest prepares us for doing God’s work throughout the week.) Be sure to ask the children what they do to help others.

Introduce the guest (or guests) and invite her or him to share about her or his activity/ ministry. Provide an opportunity for the children to ask questions.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time, when we can use our energy to help others. Thank you for the heroes of our congregation, for people who make a difference in our world by helping others. Amen.

8. Sabbath Time Reminders

Leader preparation:

Make a sample Sabbath time reminder jar ahead of time. During the activity, encourage the children who work quickly to help others. If you have time for more preparation, print out several Sabbath time ideas onto small strips of paper, and have the children choose those they like and glue them onto thicker business cards to put in their jars.

Supplies:

- blank business cards (or cut-up 3" x 5" note cards)
- writing instruments
- baby food jars
- stickers or pens that write on glass
- whiteboard or newsprint and markers

We can share our ideas for celebrating Sabbath with others. Invite the children to print Genesis 2:3 on a business card and decorate the card, if desired.

Invite the children to brainstorm different ways they can celebrate Sabbath, take Sabbath time, in the coming week. Remember Sabbath time is special time for



rest and focusing on God. Record the children's ideas on newsprint or a whiteboard.

Have each child choose two or three ideas (more if they have time) and print each one on a separate card. Leaders and older children can help younger ones.

Make holders for the cards by decorating the baby food jars with self-adhesive stickers and the pens that write on glass. Place the business cards into cardholders. Encourage the children to take home the cardholders and share the ideas on the cards with their families.

Prayer: *God, thank you for the gift of Sabbath time, time to take a break and think of you. Amen.*

9. Make Every Sip Count!

Leader preparation:

Find out what brand of coffee and tea your church purchases. Learn about the Fair Trade movements and available products at:

- Chicago Fair Trade <http://www.chicagofairtrade.org>
- Transfair USA <http://transfairusa.org/>
- Fair Trade Resource Network <http://www.fairtraderesource.org>
- Oxfam America <http://www.oxfamamerica.org>
- Global Exchange's Global Economy resources <http://www.tinyurl.com/2edbblla>

Gather printed information about Fair Trade and some products to display and share.

Supplies:

- bulletin board(s)
- Fair Trade brochures and posters
- scissors
- poster pins
- samples of Fair Trade coffee, tea, and chocolate
- Fair Trade video (if available)

Sabbath is a day to work for justice. Use the Sabbath day (Sunday) to teach the congregation about Fair Trade, introduce them to Fair Trade products, and encourage the congregation to move toward being a Fair Trade church. Set up Fair Trade display.

Gather around the display. Ask if anyone knows about Fair Trade. Explain what the Fair Trade movement is. Show the Fair Trade video, if you have it.

Read Luke 6:1–11. Jesus did what he thought was right, even though it meant doing things differently on the Sabbath. Many churches and other organizations purchase only Fair Trade goods, to be sure they are making a difference for justice in the world. Ask: What brand of coffee and tea does our church use? Take a visit to the kitchen to find out, if time allows.

If your church already uses only Fair Trade goods, celebrate! Have the children make posters about Fair Trade with headlines such as "We make every sip count!" If your church is not purchasing Fair Trade goods, discuss with the children how



they might use their Sabbath time (Sundays) to teach the congregation about Fair Trade and encourage the congregation to make a change, for example, make a Fair Trade informational bulletin board, have a Fair Trade tasting morning, create a convincing case to take to whoever purchases the beverages.

Enjoy eating a Fair Trade chocolate bar.

Prayer: God of justice and abundance, thank you for the efforts of people who try to help everyone have enough resources to be safe and healthy. We pray for the Fair Trade movement, for all the people promoting it, and for all the people whose lives have improved because of it. Help us remember your call to help others, even on the Sabbath. Amen.

Reflect

Sabbath time is a precious gift of offering the opportunity to teach and learn from one another. How have you grown in your understanding of the Faith Practice, keeping Sabbath? What “nuggets” about keeping Sabbath have the participants gathered to take with them into their daily lives? As you think about your time with this group of children, thank God for the gifts each child brought to today’s gathering. What went especially well for you in this session? What challenges emerged for you? What might you do differently next time? Take a moment to record things to remember for future sessions.

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Actions to accompany “I’ve Got Peace Like a River”

Peace: With arms up high, make “vee” peace sign with your hands

River: Make a wave motion with hands

Joy: With hands, trace an exaggerated smile on your face

Fountain: Two hands together in front of body, push upward and outward
(tracing water in the fountain)

Love: Cross hands across chest

Ocean: Gesture broadly, indicating something large

Actions to accompany “This is the Day”

‘This is the day’: Bring arms up over your head, spread your fingers, and bring your arms around down to your side making a big circle like the sun.

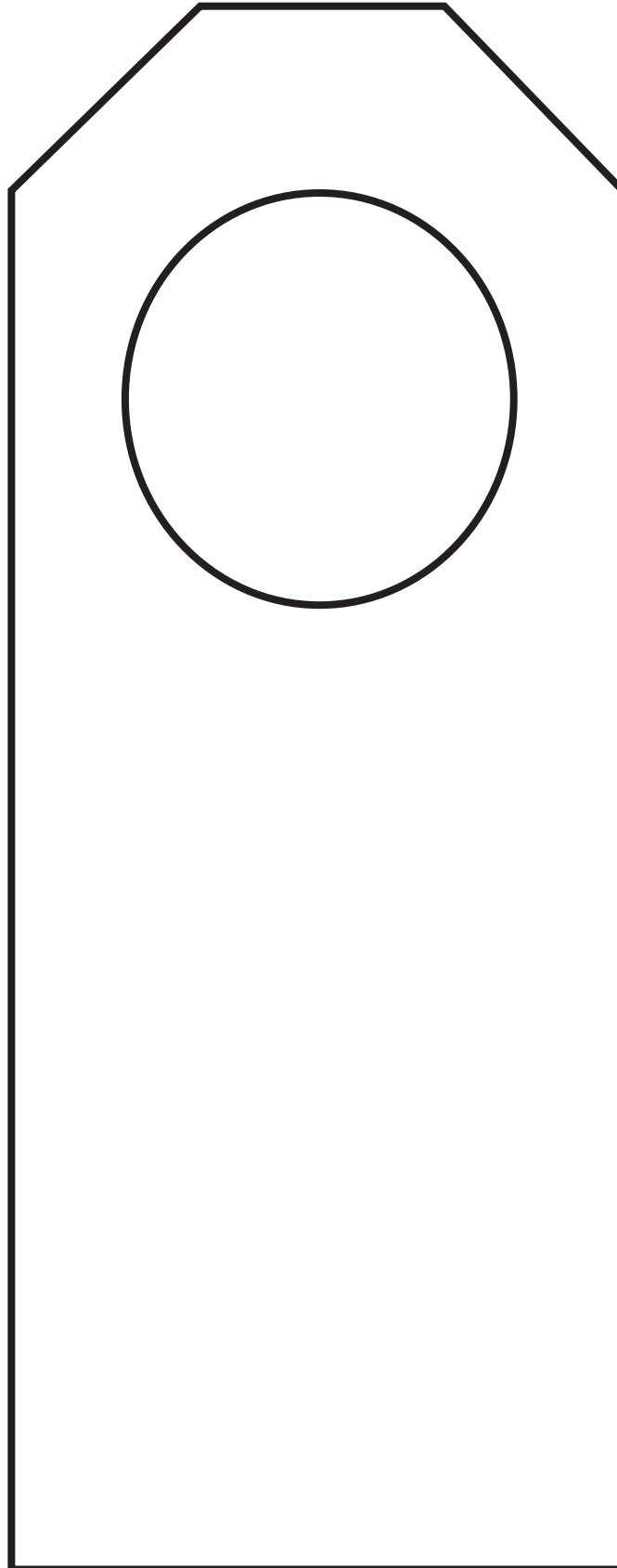
‘These are my friends’: Walk around and shake hands with as many people as you can.

‘This is the world’: Spread your arms out really wide and turn in a circle (not too fast!).

Keeping Sabbath



Attachment: Activity 6



Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

These resources offer activities and suggestions for ways children ages five to fourteen can learn about and experience “keeping Sabbath” together. These activities take into consideration the needs and abilities of all the children involved and recommend steps for leading and learning across the age span.

Multiage groups provide an exciting learning environment for children and youth of a variety of ages, offering everyone the opportunity to share, grow, and even teach one another. The wisdom and talents of younger children and youth feature as equally important. A positive aspect of multiage activities is the potential for leadership development in the more mature and responsible children (not necessarily older) by incorporating them as leaders and shepherds. It’s an opportunity for them to build skills including listening, compassion, respect, and awareness of group dynamics. (It’s important to use children who will model caring behavior for the other children.) Adults facilitating multiage groups of children provide support, guidance, and direction as necessary.

One idea to gel the multiage group is to start each session with a gathering time to create community. In this community time, include everyone, and possibly involve many, while maintaining adult leadership. This can be a time the adult leader introduces the theme(s) and activities of the day. Depending upon the size of your group, consider breaking into smaller groups after the gathering time, always blending older children with younger ones, if possible.



About this Exploration

Throughout the history of the church, the practice of Sabbath has run from narrow to broad. Certain faith traditions establish restrictions concerning a Sabbath day, limiting everything from household tasks to social activities. Other traditions focus on the intent of the practice: worship, study, and rest. All these traditions highlight rest and re-creation. Current understandings have broadened Sabbath to embrace the practices of justice and of devotion in and around the moments of our daily life. These various interpretations provide the foundation for our practices of Sabbath today.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Mark 6:30-34, 53-56
Isaiah 58:9b-14

Leader Preparation

Prime the interest of your congregation by introducing this Faith Practices component in your church newsletter, e-mail, and Web site postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: "We are offering a multiage exploration of Keeping Sabbath through our exciting new Faith Practices resources. Numerous engaging activities will enable our children to understand the history of Sabbath, the modern concept of 'Sabbath time' that extends beyond Sunday, and the relevance of rest, re-creation, and remembering to their own lives. We'll be looking for children to help in leadership roles, too."

Spend time with the Bible Focus Passages, keeping in mind that we are focusing on what it means to be Sabbath-keepers. What does it mean to you to take Sabbath time? Think about the children who will be journeying with you; what could Sabbath mean to them? Learn more about the Jewish practice of Sabbath at

<http://www.jewfaq.org/shabbat.htm> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/24cvqbc>; and the Muslim interpretation and practice of Sabbath at <http://www.tinyurl.com/299tyo8>.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1. Centering with Sabbath Time (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

We use Sabbath time to stop and reflect on God's presence. This activity can be used to start a session or as a break in the middle.

Supplies: None

Read aloud Mark 6:30-32. One way we rest is to meditate. Invite everyone to sit comfortably in a chair, in a pew, or on the floor. Explain: We're going to take some Sabbath time, when we cease our regular activities, go to a quiet place, and focus on God's presence. Close your eyes. Breathe out. Feel your cares and worries leaving.

Breathe in. Feel God's spirit of peace entering. Hold it. Breathe out. Release any bad feelings you have. Breathe in God's mercy. Hold it. Let your breath out slowly, letting go of busy thoughts in your mind. Breathe in Christ's love. Hold it. Breathe out and let your love flow to others.

Prayer: *God, you are in this place. Thank you for Sabbath time, when we can stop in the middle of our busy activities and quietly think of you. Amen.*

2. "A Quiet Place" Collage

Leader preparation:

Locate a copy of the book *A Quiet Place* by Douglas Wood through your public library or online (available used for less than \$10). Read the book and become familiar with it, so that you can read it easily to the group. Think about areas available that provide a safe environment to be used by the children as a quiet place. Consider that for young children quiet time may be just as infrequent as for many adults. The spiritual formation of young children will be supported by Sabbath time in which merely to be. Hang a large sheet (or sheets, depending on number of children involved) of poster board on which the children's completed artwork will be posted in a collage manner. If you have an entire bulletin board available, prepare it for use. Across the top of the bulletin board or poster board sheets write "Our Quiet Sabbath Places."

Supplies:

- Bibles
- book, *A Quiet Place* <http://www.tinyurl.com/22lmz2f>
- restful music and player
- large sheets of poster board
- tape (or pins) with which to hang poster board and attach art work
- colored construction paper for booklet covers
- stapler

Keeping Sabbath



Multiage activities are designed for mature and responsible children to help out in leadership roles. Therefore, it is appropriate to include those designated as leaders in the leaders' prayer, recognizing their value to the teaching process.

Prayer: God of work and rest, you call us into times of Sabbath so we can be in closer relationship with you. Remind me/us of your directive to take Sabbath time, to take a break from the busy-ness of my/our life and remember you. Be with me/us during this time of preparation. Show me/us ways to involve each child as we meet together, respecting their differing levels of maturity, ability, and enthusiasm. Create in me/us an open mind and heart, to share your wisdom and to learn. 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 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.

- markers
- crayons

This activity is an opportunity to learn about Sabbath as a time to take "quiet time"; providing quiet Sabbath time and space to think about special quiet places. Have the children find and read aloud Mark 6:30–32. Jesus and his followers went to a deserted place to rest. Christian tradition models taking time away, taking Sabbath time, for quiet reflection. Explain that today's session focuses on finding "deserted places," quiet places that are calm and restful.

Read the book *A Quiet Place* to the group. Invite the children to respond with questions or comments. Ask the children to name places they use as a quiet place: for example, at home, at church, at school, at a grandparent's home, outside.

Distribute paper, markers, and crayons to the children. Encourage the children to draw pictures of the quiet places they like. If children prefer to cut and paste, provide the magazines and invite them to find and cut out pictures of calm, quiet, and restful spaces. Encourage children to take their supplies and find a quiet place (within the area you've chosen) in which to work on their piece of the "Our Quiet Sabbath Places" collage. Play the restful music while they work. Attach all the completed Quiet Places art work onto the background (bulletin board or hanging poster board). Encourage the children to explain the Quiet Sabbath Places collage to family and other church members.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time when we can focus on you and Jesus. Thank you for quiet places where we can find calm and be rested. Help us use our quiet Sabbath time to strengthen us to work for your justice. Amen.

3. Doing Justice on the Sabbath: Feeding the Hungry

Leader preparation:

Sabbath is a time to focus on both meditation (our spiritual practices) and justice (our acts of service). Isaiah 58:10 reminds us that when we act for justice, for example, "offer food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted," "light shall rise in the darkness." This Sabbath activity involves bringing light into the darkness of those who are hungry by sharing food. If your church does not regularly collect food for those in need, ask the children and other church members to bring canned food to church for this activity, perhaps by writing a letter or having an item included in the church newsletter or website. Donate the food collected to a local food distribution center.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- food collected for a neighborhood food bank or soup kitchen
- large box

Invite the children to find and read aloud Isaiah 58:9–10. Explore with the children what they know about "the hungry" in your community or around the world. Who is hungry? Where do they live? How do they get food? Do local schools have feeding programs? Is there a community food bank? A soup kitchen? Remind the children that one aspect of Sabbath is to set aside time to do justice, to work on changing things to "bring light" and improvement into the darkness of people's lives.

Have the children decorate a large box in which to put the collected food. What kind of messages do they want on the box? How will the messages encourage others to contribute food to the effort? Have some of the children write out the



scripture and paste in on the box. Talk about where this collected food will go and whom it will help.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time set aside to work for justice. Bless this food that we have collected on this Sabbath day. May it help the hungry and satisfy their needs. And may the giving of it bring light into their lives and ours. Amen.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4. A Sabbath Mixer (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

An old Sabbath tradition is teaching and learning. Jesus, like Jewish rabbis or teachers, taught people about God and how to live faithful lives. If there are an odd number of participants, you can join in, but be sure to remember to watch the clock! This is an activity for pairs; groups of three do not work for this activity because of the time constraints. If there are participants with restricted movement, consider placing chairs in pairs around the room, so one person can remain seated while the second, more mobile person in each pair moves to find a new partner.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- list of sentences to complete
- a watch or clock with a second hand
- a room in which people can move around easily

This activity works as a mixer to build community. It can also be used as a time to stretch and move in between more sedentary activities. It's a great way to be sure everyone says something.

Invite the children to find and read aloud Mark 6:34. An old Sabbath tradition is teaching and learning. Jesus, like Jewish rabbis, taught people about God and how to live faithful lives. Have each person find a partner and introduce themselves. If the group is large enough, encourage the participants to partner with someone they do not know well, or someone of a different age group. A ground rule for this activity is: no interrupting!

Each person has one minute to complete this sentence, "Something I like learning about at church is..." (if participants find it difficult to complete a sentence, ask "What do you like to learn at church?"). Call time at the end of one minute, saying something like, "Now the second person has one minute to share." At the end of the second minute, have everyone thank their partner and find a new partner.

With new partners, introduce yourselves to each other. Each person has one minute to complete this sentence, "My favorite Bible story is..." Repeat the process for each sentence/question. You may find that one minute is too long a time; feel free to make the time shorter if talking has waned.

Sentences to complete: (When reading aloud the incomplete sentence, draw out your voice over the blank spaces to imply there is something missing.)

- Something I would like to learn more about is...
- Something I do not understand about God is...



- My favorite Bible character is...
- (Think of your own!)

Prayer: *God, thank you for the Sabbath traditions of teaching and learning. Thank you for church and Sunday school where we learn about you and Jesus. Help us grow in wisdom and always ask questions when we do not know. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

5. We Care about Water

Leader preparation:

To be informed as a leader, go online and research water facts at <http://www.water.org/>.

Consider that for many children a basic understanding of simple ways to conserve water will begin with turning off a faucet after washing hands or brushing teeth. Older children may be passionate about water conservation, taking a moralistic approach.

The UCC documentary *Troubled Waters* <http://www.ucc.org/troubled-waters> gives a good overview of the issues around drinking water worldwide.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- magazines
- scissors
- glue
- markers and crayons
- construction paper
- paper or index cards for writing on
- large piece of paper (or bulletin board) with the heading "We Care about Water"

Invite the children to read Isaiah 58:11. Remind the children that Sabbath time is time set aside to reflect on God and God's creation and to consider how to be good stewards, good caretakers, of God's creation. Today we will focus on God's gift of water. Explain that water, as a symbol and gift from God, is central to Christian tradition. God's gift of water is to be conserved. We can both celebrate the gift of water and use it carefully and wisely.

Invite the children to respond if they have used water during the last week for the following: wash hands, brush teeth, take a bath, shower, swim (pool, lake, ocean), water a plant, drink, give water to a pet, eaten something that needed water to grow. Invite the children to share other ways they have used water during the week. Recall to the children that water is a gift from God and one that we celebrate and need to use carefully.

Invite the children to suggest ways to care for water. If helpful, suggest examples: repairing a dripping faucet or a leaking garden hose, turning off water while brushing teeth, spending less time in the shower. Older children may have ideas about how your congregation could better care for water, for example: signs beside sinks reminding people to turn them off, planting indigenous plants that require less watering.

Invite the children to cut or tear out pictures of water from magazines that illustrate care and concern for water. (This might include pictures of polluted water to juxtapose with positive images.) The children might also add drawings to the collage. Older children might write up conservation suggestions as reminders for people to consider. Create a collage with cut-out pictures, completed art work,



and written items. A way to enhance the finished product is first to frame each individual item with colored construction paper using glue or staples.

Display the collage in a place where others will be able to view it. Be sure to include a note in the church bulletin or newsletter drawing people's attention to the collage and the lesson that inspired it.

Prayer: God, thank you for this Sabbath time to think about water—water that grows our food, water that we use for washing, water that nourishes the earth. Help us care for the water you have given us by not wasting it and by keeping it clean. Amen.

6. Sabbath Time Journals

Leader preparation:

If you journal, consider why you journal and how you utilize your journaling time. If you do not journal, consider journals or memoirs you have read. (Remember *The Diary of Anne Frank*?) How did the author use their journal space and time? Different ages will use journals in different ways: younger children and more visually based children may draw more than write. Children may be tempted to use their journal merely to keep track of their daily activities. A Sabbath journal offers children the opportunity to pray with words and pictures and to open themselves to listen to God's word in their lives. Try writing (or drawing) some entries into your journal before leading this activity so that you can share your experiences.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- blank books or booklets (some with and some without lines; these can be purchased inexpensively at dollar stores and pharmacies)
- pens
- pencils
- markers, crayons, stickers

Have participants find and read aloud Mark 6:30–34, 53–56 in their Bibles. Explain that Sabbath rest is not merely “taking a break,” but is a time to reflect and think about Jesus and God and what the purpose of our life is. Journaling is one way to use our Sabbath time to reflect on our activities and see where God is calling us. Distribute blank books, one to each participant. Have them write their names—large and clear—on the cover (so the owner can be identified without opening the book). Emphasize that journals are meant to be safe, private places where one can write deep feelings without worrying about anyone else reading them or whether or not they are “right.” Give time to decorate their journals, outside and in, with stickers and markers.

Suggest they write/draw their first entry as a thank-you letter to God, a prayer in words or images. They might talk to God about their week just past or about the week ahead, sharing what they are thankful for. They might talk about church, their family, school, whatever is on their mind that they want to share with God. Suggest other types of letters/prayers to God: “Please” letters, “I am sorry” letters, “I am afraid” letters, “I am worried about” letters, “Please help others” letters.

Encourage the children to take their journals home and use them each day for the next week as a way to take Sabbath time with God.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time, in which we can talk to you and listen to you. Thank you for journals, which can help us take the Sabbath time we need. Help us use them to reach out to you. Amen.



Sending & Serving Activities

7. How Does Our Church Care for Water? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: To be informed as a leader, go online and research water facts at <http://www.water.org> and <http://www.ucc.org/troubled-waters>. Consider that for many children a basic understanding of simple ways to conserve water will begin with turning off a faucet after washing hands or brushing teeth. Older children may be passionate about water conservation, taking a moralistic approach. Prepare a tour route of your church that you will follow during the session. Be sure to highlight areas with water usage, including restrooms, kitchens, janitor closets, and gardens.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- a pad of paper or index cards
- pen
- church buildings

Invite the children to locate and read Isaiah 58:11 aloud. Remind the children that Sabbath time is time set aside to reflect on God and God’s creation and to consider how to be good stewards, good caretakers, of God’s creation. Today we will focus on God’s gift of water and how we use and care for water in our church. Explain that water, as a symbol and gift from God, is central to Christian tradition. God’s gift of water is to be conserved. We can both celebrate the gift of water and use it carefully and wisely.

Tell them we are going on a tour of our church building(s) to think about how we use water.

Ask the children to look for any place that water is used. When you come upon water usage (water coming in or going out from the premises), ask: Are we being careful with the way this water is used? Is there any waste of water? Where did it come from? Where does it go? Might there be a sign to post that could remind people not to waste water here?

Encourage children to consider ideas about how your congregation could better care for water, for example: signs beside sinks reminding people to turn them off, planting indigenous plants that require less watering, keeping storm drains and gutters clear, providing a bird bath. Ask an older child (or have them take turns) to write down ideas and suggestions that might be shared with the wider church.

Ask the children what they have seen and learned on the church water tour that they would like to share with the congregation. This can be included in the church bulletin or newsletter. Remember to include mention of the Sabbath lesson that inspired the activity.

Prayer: God, thank you for this Sabbath time to think about water and how we use it in our church. Help our church care for the water you have given us by not wasting it and by keeping it clean. Amen.

8. Making Mosaic Justice Candle Holders

Leader preparation:

Sabbath is a time to focus both on meditation (our spiritual practices) and jus-



tice (our acts of service). Isaiah 58:10 reminds us that when we act for justice, for example, “offer food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,” “light shall rise in the darkness.” These verses connect acts of justice with the creation of light. This Sabbath activity involves sharing light with others.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- clear-glass votive cups of varying shapes and sizes
- mosaic grout
- stained-glass cobbles (pebble-size pieces that are flat on one side and domed on the other)
- tea lights or votive candles
- greeting cards (or paper and envelopes)
- pens/pencils
- list of church members to receive gifts

The children will make mosaic candle holders. The completed candle holders initially may be used to enhance your worship space. At some point the candle holders are to be distributed as gifts to church members who are confined to their homes or a nursing facility. The latter extends the activity into an act of service.

Gather and set out supplies.

Invite the children to locate and read aloud Isaiah 58:9–10. Explore with the children how they feel when they see or hear about someone being treated unfairly, and how they feel when they hear about someone being helped, or actually help someone themselves. Explain how light is often a word for improving a situation; for example, bringing light into someone’s life, shedding light on a situation, “you light up my life,” bringing the facts to light. (A metaphor is a word or phrase used as a symbol for something else, used to create a comparison.) Remind the children that one aspect of Sabbath is to set aside time to do justice, to work on changing things to “bring light” and improvement into people’s lives.

Make candle holders. Apply the stained-glass cobbles to grout on the outside of the votive cups, placing flat side against the cup and domed side facing out; allow to dry; place candle in each holder. Write a card to accompany each candle holder gift, or plan to deliver them in person.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath opportunities to do justice, to help others. Thank you for light that rises in the darkness. Help us share that light of justice with others. Amen.

9. Doing Justice—Working for Peace—on the Sabbath

Leader preparation:

Review the text from Mark 6:30–34, 53–56 and create a simple outline of the story to tell the children. Read the story of Sadako, the 1000 paper cranes, and the Children’s Peace Memorial at <http://www.tinyurl.com/285kslu>. Reflect on individuals and/or groups in your community that work and/or witness for peace. Print out the directions for making paper cranes at <http://www.tinyurl.com/29ww96o>. Make one or two paper cranes to familiarize yourself with the process. Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- paper for paper cranes
- paper



Reflect

Sabbath time is a precious gift offering us the opportunity to teach and learn from one another. How have you grown in your understanding of the Faith Practice of keeping Sabbath? What “nuggets” about keeping Sabbath have the participants gathered to take with them into their daily lives? As you think about your time with this group of children, thank God for the gifts each child brought to today’s gathering. What went especially well for you in this session? What challenges emerged for you? What might you do differently next time? Take a moment to record things to remember for future sessions.

- copies of the directions
- samples

Have children find and read aloud Mark 6:30–34 and 53–56. Review the story. Who is in it? (Jesus, the twelve apostles/disciples, a crowd, the sick, villagers.) What happens? (Jesus and the disciples heal the sick) What do the disciples and Jesus do before they help the people? (They go to a deserted, quiet place and rest for a while.) This passage reminds us of the need to take quiet Sabbath time to be renewed and strengthened to work to help others. One way we help others is to work and witness for peace.

Explain that working and witnessing for peace has been a part of the work of the Christian community throughout history. Invite the children to name ways that your church, their families, and/or other people in your community work and witness for peace. Share the examples you thought of during your time of preparation.

Display the completed paper crane(s) you have brought. Invite each child to take a piece of paper and follow you, making folds as you move through the steps to fold a crane. Be patient. Encourage the children to help one another. Little hands may need larger hands to help make the folds.

Whether they are sent to Hiroshima, the president of the United States, the mayor of a small town, or a sick person recovering from an illness, the gift of a thousand paper cranes is a powerful gesture of caring, devotion, and love. As a group, decide what to do with the cranes you have made. For example, distribute them during worship one Sunday or deliver them to shut-ins, mail them to the president or other political leader, or take them to the offices of people who work for the city—teachers, police officers, fire fighters, people working at City Hall. Several suggestions are listed on the Global Ministries Web page link <http://www.tinyurl.com/285kslu>.

If your group is energetic, consider sending a thousand cranes to the Children’s Monument in Hiroshima’s Peace Park. String them on garlands of 100 cranes each, and mail them to:

Office of the Mayor, City of Hiroshima
6-34 Kokutaiji-Machi
1 Chome Naka-ku
Hiroshima 730
Japan

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time when we turn our thoughts to justice and peace. Bless these paper cranes that we have made with our hands. May they be a sign of peace to all who see them. Amen.

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

These resources offer activities and suggestions for ways children ages five to fourteen can learn about and experience “keeping Sabbath” together. These activities take into consideration the needs and abilities of all the children involved and recommend steps for leading and learning across the age span.

Multiage groups provide an exciting learning environment for children and youth of a variety of ages, offering everyone the opportunity to share, grow, and even teach one another. The wisdom and talents of younger children and youth feature as equally important. A positive aspect of multiage activities is the potential for leadership development in the more mature and responsible children (not necessarily older) by incorporating them as leaders and shepherds. It’s an opportunity for them to build skills including listening, compassion, respect, and awareness of group dynamics. (It’s important to use children who will model caring behavior for the other children.) Adults facilitating multiage groups of children provide support, guidance and direction as necessary.

One idea to gel the multiage group is to start each session with a gathering time to create community. In this community time, include everyone, and possibly involve many, while maintaining adult leadership. This can be a time the adult leader introduces the theme(s) and activities of the day. Depending upon the size of your group, consider breaking into smaller groups after the gathering time, always blending older children with younger ones, if possible.



About this Exploration

The prophet Jeremiah goes to the busiest places in the city to call the people to observe Sabbath as a day intentionally set apart by God. In the same way, we are called to take the gift that is Sabbath to our communities and then to the wider world. As communities of faith, we are encouraged to model Sabbath living that is joyful, inclusive, and not burdensome. The Corinthian church was challenged to rethink the way they lived out the Sabbath together in community. Maybe we will have to do the same! What do you mean—change?

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Jeremiah 17:19–27
1 Corinthians 11:17–26

Leader Preparation

Prime the interest of your congregation by introducing this Faith Practices component in your church newsletter, e-mail, and website postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: “We are offering a multiage exploration of Keeping Sabbath through our exciting new Faith Practices resources. Numerous engaging activities will enable our children to understand the history of Sabbath, the modern concept of ‘Sabbath time’ that extends beyond Sunday, and the relevance of rest, re-creation, and remembering to their own lives. We’ll be looking for children to help in leadership roles, too.”

Spend time with the Bible Focus Passages, keeping in mind that we are focusing on what it means to be Sabbath-keepers. What does it mean to you to take Sabbath time? Think about the children who will be journeying with you; what could Sabbath mean to them? Learn more about the Jewish practice of Sabbath at

<http://www.jewfaq.org/shabbat.htm> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/24cvqbc>; and the Muslim interpretation and practice of Sabbath at <http://www.tinyurl.com/299tyo8>.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1. The Lord’s Supper: A Mixer (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Note: This activity would work best in a congregation where young children share in Communion. Communion is one ritual we share together as Sabbath time, a designated time to focus on God. This experience of Communion includes all ages; no one is excluded. If there are an odd number of participants, you can join in, but be sure to remember to watch the clock! This is an activity for pairs; groups of three do not work for this activity because of the time constraints. If there are participants with restricted movement, consider placing chairs in pairs around the room, so one person can remain seated while the second, more-mobile person in each pair moves to find a new partner.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- list of sentences to complete
- a watch or clock with a second hand
- a space in which people can move around easily

The children will share with one another, one on one, about Communion, allowing people an opportunity to share their experiences and explore various thoughts and feelings. This activity works as a mixer to build community. It can also be used as a time to stretch and move in between more sedentary activities. It’s a great way to be sure everyone says something.

Have the children locate and read aloud 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Communion is an important ritual Christians share together as Sabbath time, a designated time to focus on God. Have each person find a partner and introduce themselves. If the group is large enough, encourage participants to partner with someone they do not know well, or someone of a different age group. A ground rule for this activity is, “No interrupting!”

Each person has one minute to complete this sentence, “When I hear the word ‘communion’ I think ...” (if participants find it difficult to complete a sentence, ask them to “Describe what ‘communion’ means to you”). Call time at the end of one minute, saying something like, “Now the second person has one minute to share.” At the end of the second minute, have everyone thank their partner and find a new partner.

Instruct participants to introduce themselves to their new partners. Each person has one minute to complete this sentence, “Something I really like about Communion is ...”

Repeat the process for each sentence/question. You may find that one minute is too long a time; feel free to make time shorter if talking has waned.

Keeping Sabbath



Multiage activities are designed for mature and responsible children to help out in leadership roles. Therefore, it is appropriate to include those designated as leaders in the leaders' prayer, recognizing their value to the teaching process.

Prayer: God of work and rest, you call us into times of Sabbath so we can be in closer relationship with you. Remind me/us of your directive to take Sabbath time, to take a break from the busyness of my/our life and remember you. Be with me/us during this time of preparation. Show me/us ways to involve each child as we meet together, respecting their differing levels of maturity, ability, and enthusiasm. Create in me/us an open mind and heart, to share your wisdom and to learn. 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 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.

Sentences to complete (when reading the incomplete sentence aloud, draw out your voice over the blank spaces to imply there is something missing):

- When I take Communion, I think about ...
- When I eat the bread and drink the juice, I think about ...
- A song I like to sing at Communion time is ...
- (Think of your own!)

Prayer: God, thank you for Communion, such a special time of Sabbath when we think about you and what it means to follow Jesus Christ. Amen.

2. African Hand Washing

Leader preparation:

Observing the Sabbath, for both Jews and Christians, has traditionally included a gathering around a meal. The ritual of hand washing has been included in the celebrations of both of these faith communities. Participating in rituals and observances of a faith community helps children develop a sense of belonging to that faith family. Gather supplies. Be sure to read the directions carefully so you are familiar with the hand-washing process and can help the children stay clean.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- bowl
- pitcher or jug of water
- towel
- simple snack of your choosing (be aware of food allergies)
- plates and napkins

Invite the children to sit in a circle around the container of water and towel. Have them find and read aloud Paul's account of the Last Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26. Explain that often people of faith have celebrated Sabbath by sharing a meal. Ask if the children do anything special with their family for Sunday lunch, dinner, or supper. It has been important to prepare oneself for the Sabbath meal by washing hands, both for health and safety, and as a sign of respect for God. In rural Africa (Zimbabwe, for example) where there is no running water, a bowl, a pitcher of water, and a towel are brought to the people gathered for the meal and are passed around so each person can wash their hands. Often it is a child or a youth who carries the bowl around for this hand-washing ritual.

Invite the children to take turns placing their hands above the bowl. Using the water in the pitcher, pour water over the child's hands and into the bowl. Have children "wring their hands" to get them clean and then use the towel to dry their hands. (Note: the dirty water goes into the bowl. Hands stay out of that water and are held above it while fresh water is poured over them.) As the water is poured, have the group pray with each child, "Thank you, God, for these hands." Once all the children have participated in the hand washing, invite them to say a simple blessing for the food and share the simple Sabbath snack you've prepared.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for Sabbath time, when we think about you. Thank you for rituals like hand washing that prepare us for special meals and special Sabbath time. Amen.

3. Making a Sabbath Cloth

Leader's preparation:

Read and reflect on 1 Corinthians 11:17–26. The Jewish practice of preparing for the Sabbath meal often includes using a special Sabbath (or Shabbat) tablecloth.



See <http://www.tinyurl.com/2eeng3a> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cd4h8q> for more information about Sabbath meal preparations and links to pictures of modern Sabbath tablecloths for sale. These tablecloths are usually white decorated with religious symbols, such as the Star of David, the dove of peace. Gather the supplies. Be sure the work space is adequate, as this is a “big” activity. Also, identify space where painted cloths may stay to dry. You will be most prepared if you design and create a Sabbath cloth yourself, to provide a sample during the group time.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- white or pastel colored cloth that will work with fabric paints (1 square yard for each participant)
- fabric paints (lots, so waiting time is minimal)
- paper
- pencils

Each child will learn about and create a Sabbath cloth to take home. The Sabbath cloth is a tangible reminder that an important aspect of keeping Sabbath is having peace by sharing with and loving one another.

Gather around tables where each child has ample space to work. Invite the children to find and read 1 Corinthians 11:17–26. Explain how at the church in Corinth, Greece, many people at the Sabbath gathering had become greedy and uncaring toward others. Talk about how one of the most important parts of Sabbath time is sharing with and loving one another, bringing peace and rest to everyone.

Jewish families have often used a special tablecloth that is used only for the Sabbath meal to help them remember peace, sharing, and love on the Sabbath. Jesus’ family may have had one that his mother, Mary, brought out each week for the Sabbath meal. The Sabbath cloth usually includes a picture of the family home or other important building drawn (or traditionally, sewn) in the center, with the names of family members around it, as well as prayers and blessings for the family. If you made your own Sabbath cloth as part of your preparation, show it to the group.

Invite the children to use the art supplies provided to create their own Sabbath cloth to take home. Assure them that whatever kind of family they may have (one parent, two parents, step, blended, mixed, multigenerational, etc.), they can make a Sabbath cloth that honestly portrays their unique family. Use paper and pencil to sketch a design before painting. Encourage, or even pair up, older children with younger ones, to help everyone reach a satisfactory outcome.

Once the children have completed decorating the Sabbath cloths, invite them to tell the whole group about the pictures and names on their cloth. A large group can divide into smaller groups for this discussion. Be sure to include different ages in each group.

Allow ample time for Sabbath cloths to dry completely before sending them home with the children.

Prayer: God, thank you for our families and our homes. Thank you for Sabbath time that invites us to gather together in love and peace. Bless our Sabbath cloths that they may remind us of your love in our lives. Amen.



Discerning & Deciding Activities

4. Our Ideal Church (Easy Preparation)

Leader's preparation:

Read and meditate on 1 Corinthians 11:17–22. Consider what characteristics you think describe an ideal church. How do you think Sabbath is best practiced? The children might not be familiar with the word “ideal,” so help them understand this is a discussion of the type of church we would like to have. Other helpful words might be “perfect,” “really great,” “best.” Rather than limit your vocabulary, this is an opportunity to help the children expand their vocabularies.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

Invite the children to find and read aloud 1 Corinthians 11:17–22. Explore what Paul is complaining about regarding the Sabbath behavior of the church in the city of Corinth, Greece. Ask: What, for you, would be the ideal (perfect, really great, best; try to use words appropriate to the ages involved) church, the type of church we would like to have and be a part of? How would your ideal church keep or honor the Sabbath? What would your ideal church not be like? What habits or activities would an ideal church avoid on its day of worship, its Sabbath? List their ideas on the newsprint or whiteboard.

How does our church compare? Read the list from the newsprint or whiteboard. Invite the children to vote on each one that is found in your church. Place the number of votes beside each statement or idea.

Invite the children to brainstorm ways to help your church better match their ideas of what makes an ideal church. List these ideas on newsprint or marker board also. After the session, give these ideas to the pastor or the appropriate governing board chairperson.

Prayer: God, thank you for our church in all its imperfections. Help us make it the best church it can be. Amen.

5. Conversations with a Missionary

Leader preparation:

Familiarize yourself with missionaries or mission partners connected to your congregation and denomination. For example, the Global Ministries website, <http://www.globalministries.org>, includes information about all international mission partners supported jointly by the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2axwtpg>, which provides an alphabetical listing of all missionaries. Staff there or at your denomination’s website can help you determine which missionary to contact by Skype for a conversation about how Sabbath is observed in the country where they serve. Arrange a time when your group of children can gather to contact the missionaries. Missionaries in another time zone will often arrange their schedule to be awake and available during your meeting time. Practice having a Skype session (<http://www.skype.com>) with the missionary(ies). Explain to them that your group will be asking them questions about how they keep Sabbath in their country, and what their Sunday traditions are, in particular.



Set up computer, Internet link, screen, and projector. You might contact the missionaries beforehand to be sure the Skype connection is successful, and then just keep the connection up and running. (In some countries this extra time online may not be available, or the cost may be prohibitive.)

Supplies:

- printed photos and information about missionaries you will be contacting (taken from denominational contact person or website), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2axwtpg>
- Skype contact information for the missionary
- computer with a camera, microphone, speakers, a live Internet connection and Skype capabilities, <http://www.skype.com>
- a data projector, screen, or large white wall
- world map or globe

Introduce the missionary(ies) to the children, using the information, stories, and photos you downloaded. Locate on the map or globe the country in which the missionary(ies) serve. How far away is it? Miles? Hours? What day is it there? What time of day? Explain that you are going to contact the missionary(ies) through Skype to talk with them about the Sabbath traditions and practices in their country.

Before making the Skype connection, brainstorm with the children questions to ask the missionary(ies) about Sabbath-keeping and Sunday traditions in their country. Let each child choose one question to ask. Contact the missionary(ies) on Skype, projecting their image and audio so that all can see and hear. Have the missionary(ies) give a brief introduction of themselves. Have each child introduce him or herself and ask a question. One or two older children might take notes if you would like the information that they share available afterwards. Ask the missionary(ies) if there is anything else they would like to add.

While you are still connected, pray the Prayer of Jesus together. Then say good-byes.

If time allows, ask the children what they learned, what they found interesting, and how the Sabbath traditions described by the missionary(ies) compare to those in your church.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for the missionaries our church supports all around the world, especially (name[s] of those contacted) in (their country). Bless their work and the people in their community. Thank you that we could share a bit of our Sabbath time today with them. Amen.

6. Sabbath Meals Unite Us

Leaders preparation:

Familiarize yourself with the story of the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 11:17–26. This can be a messy activity, so choose appropriate work space near water for cleaning up. If you have adequate time, bake the bread during your gathering. If not, this activity will include follow-up baking at home with the children's families. Be sure families are supportive so this will happen. The children will need to help one another measure and pour ingredients. Set up includes spreading a plastic tablecloth on work area, and putting out all supplies. Empty flour and sugar into large sturdy (not tipsy) bowls.

If your group gathers before the worship hour, make one loaf of bread to bake during the service of worship. The children can share this freshly baked Sabbath bread after the service.



Supplies:

- copies of the Sabbath Quick Bread recipe and all the ingredients, Attachment, Activity 6
- plastic ziplock bags
- large paper, plastic, or recyclable grocery bag
- measuring cups (one cup and ½ cup) and tablespoons
- plastic table cloth
- large bowls
- thick permanent markers
- ingredients for each participant

Invite the children to locate and read aloud the story of the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 11:17–26. Talk about how an important part of keeping Sabbath is sharing food with those we love while celebrating all the amazing things Jesus Christ has done for us. A special Sabbath food is bread, which is also used as an element in the celebration of Communion. Let the children know that they will be mixing ingredients to create a special bread kit that they can take home to bake and share with their families.

Invite the children to prepare for the activity by washing their hands. This could get messy, but keep it fun!

Explain to the group that the supplies provided are the ingredients to make a simple bread. Give everyone a large grocery bag and have them write their name on the outside with a permanent marker. Review the recipe with the children, and point out the items that they will be putting into their bag: the recipe, a can of carbonated drink, a plastic ziplock bag containing measured sugar and flour.

Have the children measure the flour and sugar, and place these ingredients in a ziplock plastic bag. Older children might be responsible for measuring and pouring certain ingredients to help younger children. Be sure no one takes over, that each child is involved in some way in the process of filling the bags.

Give each child a copy of the recipe, a can of carbonated drink, and a plastic bag of flour and sugar. Put these items in their shopping bag. Suggest that the Sabbath bread might be shared not only with their families, but with friends and neighbors as well! Remind the children that keeping Sabbath includes sharing food with family and friends, like Communion, bringing people together through love.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time, when we remember those we love. May this bread bring our families together in love, as the bread of Communion brings us together as a family here at church. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activities



7. Sunday Clothes for Justice (Easy Preparation)

Leader's preparation:

Choose your outfit wisely on this day! Everything you wear will come under scrutiny. Research sweatshop-free, environmentally friendly fashions and Fair Trade clothing. Co-op America has an informative website at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2bc9h4h>.

Co-op America writes, "Sweatshops and child labor are a growing problem, par-



ticularly in clothing and textiles ... Check out Green America's no-sweatshop resources to help you make sweatshop-free clothing purchases: our National Green Pages™, Guide to Ending Sweatshops, and Real Green article on building a sweat-free wardrobe."

Supplies:

- Bibles
- printed information you found on the Internet about sweatshops and the clothing industry regarding treatment of workers and the environment
- globe or world map

When we participate in injustice and oppression, we carry a great burden on our shoulders and in our hearts. The children will analyze the clothes they wear regarding treatment of growers and manufacturers, and the impact on the environment by the particular materials used.

Have the children find and read aloud Jeremiah 17:19-27. Ask: What might be a "burden" the people would be tempted to carry through the gates of Jerusalem? What other kinds of burdens are there? (e.g., burden of guilt, burden of responsibility). When we participate in injustice and oppression, we carry a great burden on our shoulders and in our hearts. The prophet Jeremiah is telling the people that at least on the Sabbath (for us, at least on Sunday) everyone should try to lay their burdens down. One area of frequent injustice in which we often participate without knowing has to do with the clothes and shoes we wear. In order to keep prices down, some businesses treat their workers unfairly, pay poor wages, and use materials that harm the earth.

Let's look at our clothes. Where were they made? Find the countries on a globe or world map. What is the material? What do we know about these countries or that material? What are eco-friendly clothes? What are "sweatshop-free" clothes and shoes? These will be more expensive. Why? Why would we want to purchase them even if they cost more?

How could we carry "no burden of injustice" with us, especially when we come to church? What clothes or shoes would you have to give up? How do you feel about that? Would you say your "Sunday clothes" promote justice or support injustice? It can be difficult to work for justice and avoid participating in injustice, but that is what God calls us to do.

Prayer: God, forgive us for getting what we want even when it hurts someone else. Provide us with the energy and commitment we need not to take on the burden of injustice and oppression, especially in what we wear. Help us remember all the people involved in making our clothes and shoes, and pay fairly so they will earn a fair wage. Also, help us not to misuse the earth's resources to make things we selfishly want, even when it will hurt our environment. Hear our prayer. Amen.

8. United in Community

Leader's preparation:

Get a list of at least five churches in your community. Become familiar with the history of two or three of the congregations, why they started, and some of their strengths.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- names and addresses of neighborhood churches
- phone book (optional)



- cards and envelopes
- postage stamps
- pens
- stickers

Ask the children to name some of the other churches in your community. Perhaps their friends or other family members attend these churches. Add to their list those that you know. You might look up churches in the phone book. There are several reasons why there are so many churches. Some are simple: some people like to live near their church, so when a town grows, more congregations are started. People speak many languages, so congregations worship in different languages. The children might not have correct ideas, so direct the focus of the conversation while you allow them to consider the possibilities. Congregations are started also when people have differing views about what church should be like and about God, for example, disagreements about baptism (infant versus believer's baptism), Communion (frequency and who is allowed to partake), the role of certain members (e.g., women, gay and lesbian persons), etc. Share the history of different churches in your community, highlighting why they started and what their strengths are in the community today.

How might we reach out to be in community (communion) with other churches? Invite children to find and read aloud 1 Corinthians 11:17-26. Make greeting cards to send to community churches. You might include a message such as "Greetings from the...Church down the road! We are studying Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (11:17-26) and want to send our Christian greetings to you. We are praying for you and hope you will pray for us! Your brothers and sisters in Christ." Have everyone sign each card.

Prayer: God, thank you for churches where everyone can feel welcome. Forgive us when we don't get along or when we compare ourselves unfairly to others. Show us how to learn about one another and respect one another even when we disagree. Help us reach out in friendship to other churches in our community. Amen.

9. Creating a Sabbath Space for Birds

Leader's preparation:

Gather and set out supplies. Decide if the participants will share jars of peanut butter and bowls or bags of seeds, or if it will work better to dish out smaller quantities of peanut butter and seeds into bowls or paper cups. Identify places where the feeders may be hung.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- pinecones (the bigger the better)
- peanut butter
- bird seed
- kitchen knives for spreading peanut butter on pinecones
- sturdy string or twine for hanging bird feeders outside
- scissors

Invite the children to find in their Bibles and read aloud Exodus 20:8-11. Ask: Who and what rests on the Sabbath, according to God's wishes in this story? (family, workers, slaves, men and women, livestock [working animals], foreigners). Everything that works rests on the Sabbath day, including livestock. "Sabbath is a chance for nature to rest from human interference," explains Cath James of the Methodist Federation for Social Action.



What are livestock? Which animals are “working animals”? The idea is that people and animals who work need a day off to rest, to be able to work again. Explain that while birds are not “livestock,” we’re going to use our Sabbath time to make life easier for the birds that live near our church. Divide the group into pairs, with different ages in each pair. Each pair receives one pinecone, twine/string, and access to peanut butter and birdseed. Tie twine around top section of pinecone, making it secure for hanging. Spread peanut butter on each pine nut (petal) of the cone. Press birdseed into the peanut butter. Hang feeders outside if weather permits. Otherwise, keep them to be hung later.

Prayer: God, thank you for animals, for those that help us by working in fields, and for those that live independently of humans. Thank you that we can use this Sabbath time to remember them and provide the birds of this community a place to enjoy. Amen.

Reflect

Sabbath time is a precious gift offering us the opportunity to teach and learn from one another. How have you grown in your understanding of the faith practice of keeping Sabbath? What “nuggets” about keeping Sabbath have the participants gathered to take with them into their daily lives? As you think about your time with this group of children, thank God for the gifts each child brought to today’s gathering. What went especially well for you in this session? What challenges emerged for you? What might you do differently next time? Take a moment to record things to remember for future sessions.



Sabbath Quick Bread Recipe

(<http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Yeast-Free-Bread/Detail.aspx> , Andrew Chin)

Ingredients:

- 2 ½ cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons white sugar
- 1 (12 fluid ounce) can or bottle lemon-lime flavored carbonated beverage

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350° F (175° C). Grease one 9" x 5" loaf pan.

Combine the flour, sugar, and carbonated beverage. Mix well and place into the prepared pan.

Bake at 350° F (175° C) for 45 minutes. Note: If using a sweetened carbonated beverage, cut back a little on the sugar.

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

These resources offer activities and suggestions for ways children ages five to fourteen can learn about and experience “keeping Sabbath” together. These activities take into consideration the needs and abilities of all the children involved and recommend steps for leading and learning across the age span.

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One idea to gel the multiage group is to start each session with a gathering time to create community. In this community time, include everyone, and possibly involve many, while maintaining adult leadership. This can be a time the adult leader introduces the theme(s) and activities of the day. Depending upon the size of your group, consider breaking into smaller groups after the gathering time, always blending older children with younger ones, if possible.



About this Exploration

Sabbath implies renewal based in reflection. Rooted in the past, Sabbath beckons us toward the future. It calls us to encounter God in the present moment. Sabbath is a way for us to remember that we are God's beloved children. Awareness of God's presence can guide us through all of life's experiences. As God's people, we often find ourselves facing challenging times, not unlike those faced by the psalmist and by Jesus' followers after his crucifixion. At such times, a sense of God's presence can guide our choices toward a future filled with the possibilities of Sabbath transformation.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

***Psalm 119:105–112,
129–136***
Matthew 27:51–66
(Matthew 26:14–27:66)

Leader Preparation

Prime the interest of your congregation by introducing this Faith Practices component in your church newsletter, e-mail, and website postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: "We are offering a multiage exploration of Keeping Sabbath through our exciting new Faith Practices resources. Numerous engaging activities will enable our children to understand the history of Sabbath, the modern concept of 'Sabbath time' that extends beyond Sunday, and the relevance of rest, recreation, and remembering to their own lives. We'll be looking for children to help in leadership roles, too."

Spend time with the Bible Focus Passages, keeping in mind that we are focusing on what it means to be Sabbath-keepers. What does it mean to you to take Sabbath time? Think about the children who will be journeying with you; what could Sabbath mean to them? Learn more about the Jewish practice of Sabbath at

<http://www.jewfaq.org/shabbat.htm> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/24cvqbc>; and the Muslim interpretation and practice of Sabbath at



1. Sitting with Sadness: A Mixer (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Sabbath time can be a time we sit with sadness as Jesus' friends did the day after he was crucified. If there are an odd number of participants, you can join in, but be sure to remember to watch the clock! This is an activity for pairs; groups of three do not work for this activity because of the time constraints. If there are participants with restricted movement, consider placing chairs in pairs around the room, so one person can remain seated while the second, more-mobile person in each pair moves to find a new partner.

Supplies:

- list of sentences to complete
- a watch or clock with a second hand
- a room in which people can move around easily

Participants will share with one another, one on one, about "sadness," allowing people an opportunity to share their experiences and explore various thoughts and feelings. This activity works as a mixer to build community. It can also be used as a time to stretch and move in between more sedentary activities. It's a great way to be sure everyone says something.

Have each person find a partner and introduce themselves. If the group is large enough, encourage participants to partner with someone they do not know well, or someone of a different age group. A ground rule for this activity is: no interrupting! Each person has one minute to complete this sentence, "When I hear the word "sad" I think . . ." (if participants find it difficult to complete a sentence, ask them to "Describe what 'sad' means to you"). Call time at the end of one minute saying something like, "Now the second person has one minute to share." At the end of the second minute, ask everyone to thank their partner, find a new partner, and introduce themselves. Each person has one minute to complete this sentence, "Something that makes me sad is..." Repeat this mixer process for each sentence/question below. You may find that one minute is too long a time; feel free to cut time short if talking has waned.

Sentences to complete (when reading the incomplete sentence aloud, draw out your voice over the blank spaces to imply there is something missing):

- One time I was really sad was when...
- Something that makes me feel better when I am sad is...
- A song that picks me up when I am sad is...
- (Think of your own!)

Prayer: *God, thank you for this community of sharing and growing. We draw closer to you as we draw closer to one another during our Sabbath time. Thank you for being with us during times of sadness. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

Keeping Sabbath

<http://www.tinyurl.com/299tyo8>.

Multiage activities are designed for mature and responsible children to help out in leadership roles. Therefore, it is appropriate to include those designated as leaders in the leaders' prayer, recognizing their value to the teaching process.

Prayer: God of work and rest, you call us into times of Sabbath so we can be in closer relationship with you. Remind me/us of your directive to take Sabbath time, to take a break from the busyness of my/our life, and to remember you. Be with me/us during this time of preparation. Show me/us ways to involve each child as we meet together, respecting their differing levels of maturity, ability, and enthusiasm. Create in me/us an open mind and heart, to share your wisdom and to learn. 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 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.



2. From Scattered to Whole: A Sabbath Puzzle

Leader preparation:

Read and reflect on Matthew 26:69–75. Make a photocopy of "The Dance of Youth" by Pablo Picasso, ideally full size and in color, but a smaller black and white copy will work. Make a puzzle by cutting the copy into pieces, at least one per participant. If it's a large group, make two or three puzzles. Store the pieces in a plastic ziplock bag or other container that closes tightly. If you made multiple puzzles, store each puzzle separately.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- poster "The Dance of Youth" (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>) by Pablo Picasso
- a photocopy of the picture
- scissors
- a basket or other container
- plastic ziplock bag(s)

Sabbath time allows us to move from factions and individualism to unity and community, just as the disciples did after Jesus died. Invite the children to read aloud Matthew 26:69–75 and 27:45–56. Point out how it is a sad time for Peter and the other followers of Jesus who are afraid and scattered. Some of Jesus' friends, his disciples, watch from a safe distance.

Empty the puzzle pieces in the center of your circle. Have each participant take one piece, until all the pieces are taken. Point out that the puzzle is scattered, as the disciples were. Ask: What can we do to restore the picture to wholeness? Have the children use their pieces to put the puzzle back together again, bringing all the dancing figures back into wholeness.

Sabbath time can help us go through a time of feeling scattered and alone. By continuing to pray and staying close to God, our Sabbath disciplines will help move us toward wholeness.

Prayer: God, thank you for Sabbath time, when we can express our true feelings even when we are afraid and alone, as the disciples were after Jesus died. Help us remember that when we reach out to you, you restore us to wholeness. Amen.

3. Eye of God

Leader preparation:

The Huichol Indians of Mexico and the Aymara Indians of Bolivia weave brightly colored yarn on a simple frame of two crossed sticks to create a design called ojo de Dios, or eye of God. Review the illustrated instructions at <http://crafts.kaboose.com/gods-eyes.html> or <http://www.allfreecrafts.com/nature/ojo-de-dios.shtml> and make at least one eye of God, so that you are familiar with the process. This can seem difficult initially, but with patience the task is easily completed, even by young children, and the results are usually pleasing. The more contrasting the colors of yarn, the brighter the finished product. You may want to teach one or two of the older children how to make the eyes of God beforehand, so they will be able to help the younger children. This is a fairly quiet activity that requires focus, dexterity, and patience of all participants.

Supplies:

- directions, Attachment: Activity 3
- several skeins of bright colored yarn, medium weight



- sticks for the X-shaped frame: popsicle sticks, craft sticks, twigs or chopsticks work well (two for each participant)
- craft glue
- scissors

Read Psalm 119:105. Follow the instructions on the handout to make the weaving. Hang up your eye of God as a focal point to use during Sabbath exercises of prayer and/or meditation.

Prayer: God, thank you for beautiful symbols that remind us of you. Bless these eyes of God that they may help us enrich our Sabbath life. Amen.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4. “Where God Has Paced a Comma” (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Many churches have created slogans throughout the years. For example, the slogan for the United Church of Christ, “God Is Still Speaking,” is based on the statement “Never place a period where God has placed a comma.” That statement, though rooted in historical expressions of our faith, comes to us through the great 20th-century comedian Gracie Allen (1895–1964). She wrote that line in a note she intended for her husband and life partner, George Burns, to find after her death. A legendary actor and singer, Allen wrote, “Never place a period where God has placed a comma.” God has spoken, but God is still speaking. The comma connects us through the centuries to the words of John Robinson, who told the Pilgrims before they embarked on their journey across the sea that God “hath yet more truth and light to break forth from his holy Word.” We share John Robinson’s hope for the Pilgrims. Read and reflect on Matthew 26:14–27:66. Remember that not all faithful Christians believe in a physical resurrection of Jesus. Be open to and respectful of the various understandings of death and resurrection the children may bring to the discussion.

Supplies:

- any item with the slogan “Never place a period where God has placed a comma” or with the large red comma (optional)
- Bibles

Tell the children the story behind the UCC’s use of the red comma and the slogan. Tell the story about Gracie Allen and how the slogan came into being.

Ask the children the difference between the use of a period and a comma in a sentence. With little children you can help teach this difference by saying everyone’s name with a pause (comma) in between names and a stop (period) at the end of the list of names. Another example: when you are riding a bike, turning a corner is like a comma, a pause, and then you keep going, but in a new place. A period, a “full stop” (as it is called in English-speaking Africa) is when you stop the bike at the end of the ride. Explain that the comma invites us to pause and listen to God, to remember that God is still alive and active. Sabbath keeping is respecting that pause, that comma, and listening for what God still has to say.

Have the children locate and read aloud Matthew 27:55–66. Ask: When Jesus died, how did God use that death to show that God is not finished speaking, but has more to say to humanity? Help the children realize that the resurrection is the



central example in our faith of a God who is still speaking, who has more to say.

Prayer: God, thank you for helping us pause when we talk, and in our activities. Thank you for Sabbath keeping, which reminds us to continue to listen to you. Remind us not to put a period at the end of your words, but always to be open to new revelation and truth. Amen.

5. Weeping Tears for Injustice

Leader preparation:

Children, even young ones, are aware of injustice in their world, that not everything is fair. They know that life is harder for some people than for others. This activity invites the children to think more deeply about those who suffer in our world. Pictures of suffering can be confrontational, so be sure the pictures you offer are ones you are comfortable with. Choose two or three pictures of injustice to share, and tear (not cut) them out. Read Psalm 119:105–112, 129–136, focusing on verse 136. Consider these words by Cath James of the Methodist Federation for Social Action, “Sabbath is not therefore a self-indulgent rest, but a chance to step back and re-evaluate, to check that what we are working towards is in line with our social justice beliefs.... This rest is not in doing nothing but, as Jesus reminds us, in finding ways to make a difference that energizes us.”

Supplies:

- Bibles
- magazines and newspapers with pictures portraying situations of injustice (news magazines, newspapers, and mission publications often provide such pictures)
- a large flat space (table, counter, or floor)
- candle in holder (with drip catcher) and a candle lighter
- copies of “I’ve Got Peace Like a River” (Tune: Peace Like a River)
<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9>;
words: <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9w>

Invite the children to find and read aloud Psalm 119:105–112, 129–136. Have someone reread verse 136. Remind the children that Sabbath time is not merely time to rest, but also time to consider injustice and to work for justice. A simple definition for injustice is when people, animals, or other parts of creation are ignored or treated unfairly (unlovingly), and suffering is often the consequence. Considering verse 136, ask: What injustices make us sad? Angry?

Display the two or three pictures of injustice you have chosen. Tell the children how you feel when you see these pictures, when you think about the people in the pictures. Sad? Angry? Other feelings? Explain that you tore them out, rather than cut them, to help illustrate these feelings. There is nothing smooth and pretty about the suffering in the pictures, and the rough edges help get this across. Invite the children to look through the magazines and tear out pictures of things that make them sad or angry, focusing on things that “break God’s law” of love.

Sit in a circle, and invite each child to hold the pictures he or she gathered. Light a candle in the center of the circle. Put the pictures you chose in the center near the candle. Go around the circle, each child sharing one or two of the chosen pictures and saying what makes him or her sad or angry about the situation in each photo. Have the children hold up each photo (one or two) so others can see. If your group is large, pass the photos around. Then place the photos in the middle of the circle, around the candle. After everyone has shared, have everyone breathe deeply and slowly, then exhale slowly and pray this echo prayer, inserting the



situation from each picture or using the phrase “this (these) situation(s) where there is injustice and suffering”: God (God), we commit this situation to you (we commit this situation to you). Hear our prayer (hear our prayer). Amen (Amen) .

If time allows, explore what you, as individuals or as a group, might actually do to address any of the concerns raised. Remind the children that prayer, as an action, is important too. Remind the children that God wants us to be strengthened by our Sabbath activities to help others. While some things about our world may make us sad or angry, we are called to respond by spreading God’s love. Sing stanza 3, “I’ve Got Love Like an Ocean,” of “I’ve Got Peace Like a River.”

6. Sowing Seeds of Justice

Leader preparation:

If you did Activity #5, you might consider using the pictures (if taken from newspapers) the children gathered for this activity. Pictures of suffering can be confrontational, so be sure the pictures you offer are ones you are comfortable with. Find pictures on newsprint portraying situations of injustice (e.g., war, poverty, unattended health concerns, affluent housing juxtaposed with poor housing), enough for every child to have one. Read and meditate on Matthew 27:51–66. Consider these words by Cath James of the Methodist Federation for Social Action, “Sabbath is not therefore a self-indulgent rest, but a chance to step back and re-evaluate, to check that what we are working towards is in line with our social justice beliefs ... This rest is not in doing nothing but, as Jesus reminds us, in finding ways to make a difference that energizes us.” Set up the flower pot half-filled with potting soil.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- pre-selected newspaper pictures portraying situations of injustice
- flower pot
- potting soil
- two or three sunflower seeds for planting
- newspaper (to cover work area)

Invite the children to find and read aloud Matthew 27:51–66, an account of Jesus’ execution and what happened after that. Ask: Who is in this story? How do you think they feel? Are they sad or angry? Why? How would you feel if someone you knew was treated unfairly and hurt? Remind the children that sometimes Sabbath time feels like a dark, lonely time in between a situation that causes sadness or anger and finding hope. The Saturday after the day of Jesus’ crucifixion was a traditional Sabbath day. It is a day in the story when nothing seems to happen. It is a day that feels hopeless to Jesus’ friends and family.

Spread out the pictures you brought illustrating injustice. Point out the pot with soil and the sunflower seeds and explain that you are going to use these pictures of injustice to help the sunflower seeds grow. On that Saturday Sabbath after Jesus died, everything stayed quiet and seemingly unchanged for a while. Like Jesus’ friends, we will have to be patient, hoping that something good will happen. Invite the children each to choose one picture and rip it into tiny shreds. Use the newspaper shreds as mulch around your seedling. In the weeks ahead, help the group notice the flower’s growth. Rejoice in the gradual disintegration of the mulch as your life-giving water and the healing of time break it down.

Prayer: God, thank you for the reminder to take Sabbath time when we are sad or angry. Help us remember that when we face the truth and are patient, you will show us how to help you bring love into the world. Amen.



Sending & Serving Activities

7. Signs of Sabbath Treasure Hunt (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation:

Read selections from Psalm 19. Prepare and print copies of the “Signs of Sabbath Treasure Hunt List.” Plan this activity for when the children can have access to the church building and grounds. Help younger children partner with older children, older children providing the necessary reading and writing. Younger children can carry the sticky note pads, the clipboards, and lead the way as you walk through the church. Consider taking notes and working with church leadership to follow up on the children’s suggestions, or to identify how the children might themselves effectively introduce the ideas to a responsible committee or board. Some of the questions are similar, e.g., Is there a place to “take a break” and a place to rest when ill? In smaller churches, one place may be used for several Sabbath activities. In larger churches, this activity may actually introduce children to spaces in the church with which they are not familiar, e.g., the library, an infrequently used chapel or study.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- copies of “Signs of Sabbath Treasure Hunt List,” Attachment: Activity 7
- pencils
- bold markers and large sticky notes
- clipboards (optional)

Have the children locate Psalm 119 and take turns reading aloud Psalm 119:105–112, 129–136. Distribute copies of the “Signs of Sabbath Treasure Hunt List.” Have the older children take turns reading aloud the signs of Sabbath. Discuss where these signs can be found in your church, checking them off if they can be found and noting those that are not present in your church. If possible, travel to different parts of the building to allow the children to see where Sabbath is practiced. At each place leave a large sticky note saying “Sabbath keeping is practiced here.” If there is a particular sign of Sabbath that cannot be found, ask “Why not?”

After your trip through the building, invite the children to share opinions as to whether that aspect of Sabbath-keeping is important for the church. If they feel it is important, invite them to make suggestions for introducing that practice into the church. For example, if there is no quiet place for people to spend time with God, after reflecting on “Why not?” brainstorm where and how such a space might be created.

Prayer: God of the Sabbath, thank you for our church, which helps us keep Sabbath through prayer, worship, helping others, doing justice and resting. Amen.

8. Time Seemed to Stop: Taking an Eco-Sabbath

Leader’s preparation:

Read and reflect on Exodus 20:8–11. Learn about the Amish Community’s commitment to resting from labor, including farm labor, on their Sabbath day. The following resources provide helpful background for this activity:

- a. An instructive document written by the Mennonite Central Committee
<http://www.washingtonmemo.org/newsletter/spring09>
- b. Shabbat as an important ritual observance in Judaism
<http://www.tinyurl.com/24cvqbc>



- c. Information on the nature of Shabbat <http://www.jewfaq.org/shabbat.htm>
- d. Lights Out London, an example of environmental Sabbath rest
<http://www.tinyurl.com/22lz3co>
- e. Earth Hour began in Sydney, Australia, in 2007
<http://www.tinyurl.com/ylnzbox>

Supplies:

- Bibles

Consider what it would mean to have an eco-Sabbath, a day to refrain from using technology, a day to unplug and let the earth have a rest. Decide what actions might be included in an eco-Sabbath.

Have children locate and read aloud Exodus 20:8–11. Guide a group discussion about the commandment that everything, including livestock, rest on the Sabbath day, a day to let nature rest from human intervention and use. Describe what you have learned about the Amish Community's commitment to resting from labor on the Sabbath. If you are in a farming community, discuss what this Sabbath might look like today for your community, for the participants' families. If yours is not a farming community, continue to the next item.

Explain that part of the Orthodox Jewish tradition of keeping Sabbath is not only to abstain from using animal labor, but not to use anything electrical, cook, or do other "work" activities. Ask what would get turned off in the children's homes. At church? In the community? What if we took an eco-Sabbath, a day without using any electricity? What would this look like? Mention Earth Hour Lights Out, citywide one-hour eco-Sabbaths, held in London, Melbourne, and Sydney.

If the children are interested and willing, consider writing an eco-Sabbath covenant and setting a date to observe it. They might introduce the plan to the wider church and invite others to join them "unplugging for God."

Prayer: God, forgive our thoughtless treatment of the environment. Forgive us for using so much electricity and other resources needlessly. Make us willing to use less, to be thoughtful and caring of your creation. Amen.

9. Keeping Vigil: Proclaiming the Good News

Leader preparation:

Read and reflect on Matthew 26:14–27:66. The Sabbath after Jesus was executed was a quiet day of fear and hiding, Many of Jesus' friends abandoned him, and like Peter denied even knowing him. For many Christians keeping vigil is an important response to injustice, so that we do not succumb to the fear and hiding of those first disciples. Familiarize yourself with religious groups that hold regular vigils such as those listed by state at <http://www.utahpeace.org/vigil.htm>.

Bellingham, Wash., <http://www.tinyurl.com/2ayuwhm>, is home to the longest-running peace vigil in the United States. Started by Howard and Rosemary Harris more than forty-six years ago, it has seen more than four generations. Members of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ in Bellingham are instrumental in keeping that weekly vigil going every Friday, particularly Alfred and Dotty Dale, both in their mid-eighties.

Prayerfully consider what injustices or human needs of which the children in your church may be aware, such as children at their school who need free food, homophobia in your community or in the news, a local business with unfair employment practices, the exploitation of coffee growers by large corporations (if



your church uses Fair Trade coffee and tea, the children are likely familiar with the reasons), a local environmental concern, a current war, families who need food (and come to your church's food bank), children sponsored by your church or individual members. Gather supplies to make placards for the vigil.

Supplies:

- poster boards
- wooden slats
- staple gun
- poster paints or large markers
- Bibles
- poster "Guatemala: Procession" (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>) by Betty LaDuke

Ask the children: Have you ever seen someone be treated badly? What did you do? It is likely someone will say they were afraid to do anything to help. Use this as a segue to talk about fear. Fear can protect us by keeping us safe, but can also stop us from helping someone who needs our help. Ask the children: Who in our world is suffering? Who is being tortured? Who is being kept from food and safe water? Who is being abandoned by our society? They may share a wide variety of responses. Listen respectfully, and guide the conversation to the things upon which you were reflecting during your time of preparation. Explain that it is important for faithful Christians to turn to God when they are afraid, and to ask for (pray for) courage to do the right thing. Ask: What is some injustice (something that is not fair or good) in the world that makes you angry to hear about? E.g., war, hungry children.

Describe the ancient practice of vigil keeping and its relationship to Sabbath keeping (a time set aside when we work and witness for justice). Display the poster "Guatemala: Procession." Explain that sometimes people walk (or march) as part of a vigil. Make posters related to the issue of injustice about which the children have strong feelings (e.g., Christians for peace; Jesus fed the hungry. So should we; God is love; Everyone is God's child; God loves everyone — gay and straight; Honk for peace — make God smile!). Be sure statements are faith-based and not just an opinion. Staple the decorated poster boards to the slats. Be sure they are secure, with the slat going almost to the top of the poster board to avoid bending.

Get permission from parents and caregivers as well as the pastor and chair of the congregation's governing board for the children to walk around the church parking lot with their signs. Be sure to talk about tolerance before heading out to the vigil. Consider what to do if rude actions or comments are received from people driving or walking by.

Pray before heading outside: *God, help us not be afraid to speak out for what is right. Grant us courage boldly to share our faith with others. May we not be caught silent and hiding as the first disciples were when Jesus was crucified. May our actions help those who, like Christ, suffer injustice at the hands of those more powerful. Amen.*

Reflect

Sabbath time is a precious gift offering us the opportunity to teach and learn from one another. How have you grown in your understanding of the faith practice of keeping Sabbath? What "nuggets" about keeping Sabbath have the participants gathered to take with them into their daily lives? As you think about your time with this group of children, thank God for the gifts each child brought to today's gathering. What went especially well for you in this session? What challenges emerged for you? What might you do differently next time you lead a group? Take a moment to record things to remember for future sessions.

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Eye of God (Ojo de Dios)

What You Need:

2 sticks (craft sticks, popsicle sticks, twigs, etc.)
Glue
Yarn – either one color or several colors

What You Do:

Step ①

Cross the sticks and glue them together. Number the sticks according to the illustration in the website linked below. Glue the end of the yarn behind the center of the cross.

Step ②

Hold the crossed sticks so it appears as an “X”. With the yarn hanging from the bottom, wrap it diagonally over the top of the cross point, going over stick number one and behind it.

Step ③

Turn the cross one clockwise turn to stick number two and repeat step two. Continue on to stick three then four. As you wrap the yarn, make sure each row of yarn lies side by side and not on top of the row next to it. Continue to wrap the yarn until you see an ‘eye’ forming at the center.

If you are using different colors of yarn, tie the next color to the end of your yarn and continue to wrap as before. Change your colors as desired. If you are using multi-colored yarn, continue wrapping till you reach the ends of the sticks. Tie off at the end and tuck under. The tassel is optional. Tie a loop of yarn on top for hanging your God’s Eye.

http://www.christiancrafters.com/craft_godseye.html



Signs of Sabbath Treasure Hunt List

When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, God said, “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.” Holy means to set something aside for God, so part of Sabbath-keeping is setting time apart for God.

1. Is there a place for people to pray quietly together at our church?

Yes No Not sure

2. Is there a place where people gather in a large group to worship God?

Yes No Not sure

3. Is there a quiet place where people can go to spend time alone with God?

Yes No Not sure

4. Is there a place where younger members can meet to learn about God?

Yes No Not sure

5. Is there a place where we can go to find suggestions about ways of keeping Sabbath?

Yes No Not sure

One Sabbath Day Jesus healed a man with a withered hand. Jesus got into trouble for breaking the Sabbath rules, but Jesus knew that it was more important to help. We can remember that part of Sabbath-keeping is helping others.

6. Is there a place where we can find information about the ways our church reaches out to help others in our community?

Yes No Not sure

The very first followers of Jesus had to learn how to celebrate the Sabbath together. Paul wrote a letter to encourage them to share their food and gather for a fellowship meal. We can remember that part of Sabbath-keeping is sharing food with others.

7. Does our church collect food to share with others?

Yes No Not sure

8. Is there a place where food can be prepared for us to share together?

Yes No Not sure

9. Is there a place where our church family can gather to share Communion?

Yes No Not sure

When God created Sabbath, God explained that it was a time of rest for all people. We can remember that part of keeping Sabbath means taking time to rest.

10. Is there a place where babies or toddlers can go to rest?

Yes No Not sure

11. Is there a quiet space where people can take a break for a while?

Yes No Not sure

12. Is there a place where someone who feels faint or ill can lie down?

Yes No Not sure

13. Can you find any other signs of Sabbath-keeping in our church? If yes, list them below.

Yes No Not sure

Keeping Sabbath



Intergenerational

About this Setting

Have a group ranging from five to eighty-five years old? Have 20 minutes to three hours to fill? Fear not! Intergenerational groups provide an opportunity to involve everyone in the congregation — playing, learning, and working together. There's a valuable place for everyone. Intergenerational resources assume groups that include people of all ages: children, youth, young adult, and adult. There are many benefits from learning to practice one's faith in a group that includes a variety of levels of faith maturity. Leaders are encouraged to remember that each person in an intergenerational group has gifts to offer and to receive from others in the group. Choice is the name of the game! Choose from the activity options what appeals to you and your context, and have fun together! Remember, success in intergenerational group activities depends on leadership from the facilitator: choose appropriate people for appropriate tasks, regardless of age. If a small group is not working out, intervene and reorganize groups as needed.

Intergenerational Options

These activities may be used to build an intergenerational event for the commencement or conclusion of your series on "Keeping Sabbath" (up to three hours). Or, the activities may be used independently (15–20 minutes each), interwoven with age-specific activities throughout the series. An intergenerational event might be used during a time of year that is already set aside as special, such as Advent, Kwanzaa, Lent, Vacation Bible School, or forty days of prayer for children.

Keeping Sabbath



INTERGENERATIONAL

Familiarize yourself with all twelve activities, four from each of the categories of Exploring and Engaging, Discerning and Deciding, and Sending and Serving. Consider the age of participants and the time available for this event, and choose a group of activities that will meet your needs.

For an event lasting one to two hours, choose three or four activities from the list of twelve. There are enough activities for three or four events! Or, choose a single activity (15–30 minutes) to use as the activity at a community meal or other gathering. Wearing name tags is a good idea, as often older and younger members of a church do not know one another's names.

Each activity ends with a prayer appropriate for the end of the session.

Gather as a church family to grow together and have fun!

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Whether we are new to a particular faith practice or an old hand with much experience, all of us benefit from new opportunities to explore the shape of the faith practice and to engage the issues of faith that the practice offers. Sometimes this is a matter of learning new ideas about the practice. Sometimes this is more about reflecting on what we have done in our practice. The activities in Exploring and Engaging help us figure out how a faith practice intersects with our life and the life of the community of faith.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

Practicing our faith always involves discernment: naming the realities of our community and world and seeking the will of God for our lives and for the world. We then decide how we will act, what we will do, what values move us forward, what faith has called us to do. The activities in this section give us opportunity to practice by discerning and deciding.

Sending & Serving Activities

Practicing our faith involves serving others and being sent out as empowered disciples of Jesus Christ. We need time in our exploration to plan how we will serve. We need moments that send us forth blessed by the community from which we venture out. The activities in this section offer opportunities to practice our faith through sending and serving.

Intergenerational Leader Preparation

Yikes! All these ages! So many people with so many interests and needs! Take a deep breath. Breathe in, thanking God for this opportunity to bring God's people together. Breathe out, releasing your worries and anxieties about how this activity or event will turn out. Check in with yourself. Has the necessary preparatory work been done? Are you feeling excited about the activities you've chosen? Are you eager to help your congregation learn more about the practice of Sabbath? Are you familiar with special needs of folks you expect to participate? Breathe in, "Hear, O Israel: the Sovereign is our God, the Sovereign alone..." (Deuteronomy 6:4). Breathe out, "...and you shall love the Sovereign your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

What about those teenagers? In several of the activities, teenagers and older children engage as teachers or activity leaders with younger children. Invite those teenagers you have chosen for more responsible roles of leadership to gather with you and other leaders/teachers to join in a prayer of preparation.

Prayer: God of the Sabbath, thank you for caring for us during work and play. Enable us to relate to all those gathered today, bringing them ever closer to you through our Sabbath activities. Help each of us (name each person in the prayer circle) to be the best leader we can be today. May all of us learn better what Sabbath means and how to practice Sabbath in our own lives and as a church. Amen.



Exploration: Discovery

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Exodus 20:8-11

Luke 4:16-21

1 Sabbath: A Mixer (Exploring and Engaging) (Easy preparation)

Leader preparation:

We keep Sabbath by building our community of faith. This activity works as a mixer to build community. It can also be used as a time to stretch and move in between more sedentary activities. It's a great way to be sure everyone says something. Be sure to include introductions (of partners), as in many congregations older and younger members do not necessarily know one another by name. If there are several elderly or otherwise less-mobile participants, consider placing chairs in pairs around the room, so one person can remain seated while the second, more mobile person in each pair moves to find a new partner. If you have a participant who is not mobile, be sure that, when people move to find a new partner, someone always goes to that person. If there is an even number of other participants, the leader can sit out and focus on time-keeping. This is an activity for pairs. Groups of three do not work for this activity because of the time restraints.

Supplies:

- list of sentences to complete
- a watch or clock with a second hand
- a room in which people can move around easily

Participants will share with one another, one on one, about "Sabbath," allowing people an opportunity to share their experiences and explore various interpretations of Sabbath.

1. Read aloud Genesis 2:2-4 to gathered group.
2. Mixer:
 - Have each person find a partner and introduce himself or herself. If the group is large enough, encourage the participants to find someone they do not know well, or someone of a different age group.
 - One ground rule for this activity is: No interrupting!
 - Each person has one minute to complete this sentence, "When I hear the word 'Sabbath' or 'Sabbath time,' I think..." (if participants find it difficult to complete a sentence, ask them, "Describe what 'Sabbath' or 'Sabbath time' means to you").
 - Call time at the end of one minute, saying something like, "Now the second person has one minute to share."
 - At the end of the second minute, have everyone say good-bye to their partner and find a new partner. Start with introductions again, and then share (each for one minute) on the second sentence/question.
 - With their partner each person has one minute to complete this sentence: "One of my favorite ways to take a break (a Sabbath) during the day is ..." This might be phrased, "What do you do when you want to take a break during the day?"
 - Repeat the process for each sentence/question below, or until interest wanes.

You may find that one minute is too long a time; feel free to make the time shorter if talking has waned.

Sentences to complete: (When reading the incomplete sentence aloud, draw out your voice over the blank spaces to imply there is something missing.)



- When I hear the word “Sabbath,” I think of...
- One of my favorite ways to take a break (a Sabbath) during the day is...
- Something that keeps me from having a break (Sabbath) in my life is...
- One of my favorite (Sabbath) activities at church is...
- Something that draws me closer to God is...
- A song that brings me closer to God is...
- When I am tired, I like to...
- (Think of your own!)

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for this community of sharing and growing. Thank you for Sabbath time during which we draw closer to you as we draw closer to one another. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

2 Sabbath Cinquain (Exploring and Engaging) (Easy preparation)

Leader preparation:

We keep Sabbath by remembering God in word. Cinquains are poems that follow a particular pattern. Familiarize yourself with the cinquain format by writing some trial poems on simple subjects such as “cat” or “flower.” Print the cinquain format on a large sheet of newsprint or poster board. Consider ways the final cinquains might be shared with the wider community, perhaps in your church newsletter or during a service of worship. If you are including a worship component as part of an event, you might plan to include these poems.

Supplies:

- numerous large sheets of newsprint and markers
- cinquain format printed clearly on large paper

In groups the participants will write cinquain poems on the theme “Sabbath.” Introduce the cinquain format, explaining that a cinquain is a five-line poem using different parts of speech to describe the theme, which is the single word on line 1. In our case, the theme word will be “Sabbath.” The lines get longer, then shorter, resulting in a diamond-shaped poem.

Cinquain format:

Line 1: one word (subject or noun)—theme of poem

Line 2: two words (adjectives) that describe line 1

Line 3: three words (action words ending in “ing”) that relate to line 1

Line 4: four words (feelings) that relate to line 1

Line 5: one or two words (synonym of line 1 or a word that sums it up)

Sample:

Flower
bright magnificent
growing bending adorning
joyful happy glad love
God’s creation

Closing prayer: *Use the completed cinquain as the main section of the prayer, starting with “God, we thank you for Sabbath,” ending with “Amen.”*



Exploration: Scripture



3 Community Unity Collage (Discerning and Deciding)

Leader preparation:

Photocopy several copies of the figures in “The Dance of Youth” by Pablo Picasso. Cut out around each individual figure until you have one cut out for each participant. Prepare a bulletin board with the banner “We Are United through Communion.” This activity is especially meaningful in faith communities where all ages are welcome at communion.

Supplies:

- bulletin board or large sheet of poster board for collage background
- poster, “The Dance of Youth” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>) by Pablo Picasso
- individual figures cut from photocopies of “The Dance of Youth”—on different colors of paper
- scissors
- markers
- Bibles
- basket(s) to hold cut-out figures
- poster pins or staplers to attach figures to larger bulletin board

The participants will create a congregational collage illustrating that communion and Sabbath draw us together in unity.

1. Ask participants to locate and read 1 Corinthians 11:18 in their Bibles.
2. Ask: What might have caused the divisions and factions Paul describes in the congregation in Corinth? What causes people not to get along? What has caused misunderstandings and hurt feelings in your church? Be sure young and old have a chance to share.
3. Explain: Paul explains that communion, a Sabbath activity, will help us overcome our differences and divisions.
4. Show the poster “The Dance of Youth” by Pablo Picasso. Ask what the participants see. What are the figures doing? Explain that they are united in a joyful dance. The dance brings them together as community, “in communion” with one another.
5. Explain that communion and Sabbath draw us together in unity, as these figures are drawn together in a dance.
6. Give a figure to each person. Have markers ready for people to print their first name on the figure. Have pins/stapler ready to attach each figure to the bulletin board (on and around the poster of “The Dance of Youth”) to join in the dance.

Closing prayer: God, thank you for the Sabbath practice of communion that unites us in community like dancers in a dance. Help us work in union to overcome any difference we have, so we can joyfully worship and serve you together. Amen.



4 Interviewing Jesus and Moses (Discerning and Deciding) (Easy preparation)

Leader preparation:

This activity offers an option of interviewing either Jesus or Moses about Sabbath and Sabbath-keeping. If you choose to hold both interviews, they can be done one after the other or at different times.

Option 1: Interview of Jesus of Nazareth

Leader preparation:

Be sure the Jesus actor reads Mark 2:23–3:6 ahead of time. Choose someone who will be able to think on their feet and keep the interest of the group.

Supplies:

- robe (helpful but not essential)
- Bibles
- paper and pens

Someone, in the role of Jesus, answers interview questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time, referring especially to the incidents of Mark 2:23–3:6.

1. Announce that we are going to have a very special visitor today: Jesus of Nazareth! He will be available to answer questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time. He and his friends were recently in trouble for breaking a couple of Sabbath rules: not to harvest grain and not to do the work of a doctor.
2. Have participants locate and read together (one person reading aloud) Luke 4:16–21.
3. In small groups (three or four of varying ages) brainstorm questions you would like to ask Jesus about what happened and about Sabbath and Sabbath time. Each group will write down their top two questions and decide who from their group will ask Jesus these questions.
4. Jesus arrives! Have Jesus greet everyone saying, “Shalom” and “Peace be with you.”
5. Extend a warm welcome to Jesus. As if you are the host of a panel, let Jesus know the group has several questions to ask him. Invite each group, one by one, to ask their top question. Let Jesus briefly respond to each question. Don’t let one response go too long. If time allows, let each group ask their second question. (A prepared question to ask early on might be, “What is a commandment?” in order to explain that these biblical commandments are more like directives one would receive from a helpful teacher than like commands an army general would give.)
6. Let everyone know Jesus has to get back to Galilee. Thank Jesus for coming. Ask everyone to bid him farewell. Jesus leaves.

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for Jesus, who has taught us about Sabbath-keeping and that doing good is always more important than following the world’s rules and laws. Help us boldly to do good and to work for justice in our community and world. Amen.*

Option 2: Interview of Moses

Leader preparation:

Be sure the Moses actor reads Exodus 20:1–17 ahead of time. Choose someone who will be able to think on their feet and keep the interest of the group.



Supplies:

- robe (helpful but not essential)
- Bibles
- paper and pens

Someone, in the role of Moses, answers interview questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time, referring especially relating the information from Exodus 20:1–17 regarding God’s Ten Commandments.

1. Announce that we are going to have a very special visitor today: Moses, leader of the Israelites! He will be available to answer questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time. He recently received the Ten Commandments when he was on Mount Sinai and has just shared them with the Israelites. One of the commandments is about remembering Sabbath. Read Exodus 20:8–11.
2. In small groups (three or four) brainstorm questions you would like to ask Moses about what happened and about Sabbath and Sabbath time. Each group will write down their top two questions and decide who from their group will ask Moses these questions.
3. Moses arrives! Have Moses greet everyone saying, “Shalom.” (You might explain this is a common greeting in Hebrew, Moses’ language, that means “peace.”)
4. Extend a warm welcome to Moses. As if you are the host of a panel, let Moses know the group has several questions to ask him. Invite each group, one by one, to ask their top question. Let Moses briefly respond to each question. Don’t let one response go too long. If time allows, let each group ask their second question. (A prepared question to ask early on might be, “What is a commandment?” in order to explain that these biblical commandments are more like directives one would receive from a helpful teacher than like commands an army general would give.)
5. Let everyone know Moses has to get back to the Middle East where he and the Israelites live. Thank Moses for coming. Ask everyone to bid him farewell. Moses leaves.

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for Moses, who taught us about Sabbath and your directives and commandments. Help us learn them and understand them for ourselves and our time. Amen.*



Exploration: Discipleship



5 Creating Sacred Sabbath Space (Discerning and Deciding) (Easy Preparation)

Scripture Focus:

Exodus 20:8, “Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.”

Leader Preparation: Review the questions and adapt them as necessary for your group.

Supplies:

- chairs arranged in groups of three or four
- large newsprint or poster board
- colored markers for writing and drawing
- paper and pens for groups



- crayons
- tape to hang paper/board
- magazines that can be cut up
- scissors

This activity invites participants to reflect on what they find restful and renewing. Remembering Sabbath is an activity of the mind. By reflecting on what is restful and renewing for us, we can better know how to keep Sabbath in our lives.

Directions: Work in groups no larger than three or four so that each person will have ample time to share. Be sure each group has a span of ages.

1. Discuss the following questions about Sabbath, remembering that Sabbath is a time of rest and renewal when we focus on our relationship with God. Smaller children may understand “feel calmer” or “get stronger” more than “renewal.”
 - When you think of Sabbath, what story or book comes to mind or is especially meaningful to you?
 - When you think of Sabbath, what room, space or place comes to mind or is especially meaningful to you?
 - When you think of Sabbath, what food comes to mind or is especially meaningful to you?
 - When you think of Sabbath, what song comes to mind or is especially meaningful to you?
2. Write or paste the words and illustrations from all the groups on a large paper or poster board beneath the phrase “Sabbath Space.”

Closing prayer: *Spirit of peace, thank you for Sabbath space in our lives. Thank you for special things in our life that help us remember Sabbath, that help us rest and renew ourselves. Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.*

⑥ Letting Go and Letting God (Deciding and Discerning)

Leader preparation:

Read Exodus 20:8–11. Particular elements of our lives separate us from God, while other elements draw us closer to God and one another. Sabbath is a time to draw closer to God and one another.

Supplies:

- Bible
- table (safe area for lit candles)
- one candle for each participant (tapers in sand or tea lights work well)
- matches
- pieces of colored yarn about 8" long (one for every participant)

This activity encourages participants to reflect on the things that separate them from God and those things that draw them closer to God.

1. In groups of twos, answer the following questions:
 - What worries you about home, school, health, family, friends, the world?
 - What work or activities separate you from God? Another way to ask this is, What work or activities make you feel stressful?
 - What behaviors or activities do you do that you wish you did not do?
2. Explain that Sabbath practices of lighting candles and praying can help us draw closer to God and one another.
3. Invite each person to light candles for the worries, stresses, and compulsive behaviors they mentioned.



4. Pray: God, we offer our worries, stresses, and behaviors to you. Amen.
5. In groups of two, answer the following questions:
 - When you have a holiday or vacation, what do you look forward to?
 - What draws you closer to God? Another way to ask this is, What work or activity makes you feel more peaceful and good about yourself?
 - What draws you closer to others? Another way to ask this is, What work or activity makes you feel more peaceful and good about others?
6. Give a piece of yarn to each participant. Have their discussion partner tie it on a finger, around their wrist, or onto their clothing somewhere, for example, around a button or a purse strap. Explain that tangible objects can help us remember God and draw closer to God.

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for all things in our lives that give us comfort, peace, and goodness. Help us take Sabbath time to remember these things when we feel worry or stress. Amen.*



Exploration: Christian Tradition



7 Creating a Sabbath Worship Center (Exploring and Engaging)

Leader preparation:

Keeping Sabbath means we cease work and remember and communicate with God through worship. This Sabbath worship center may be created at the outset of the event and then used throughout the event. Other objects might be added. A closing worship time might use this same worship center as its focus. Be sure to blow out the candle after this activity. While communion elements are brought to the Sabbath table, this activity does not include sharing in a communion meal. If you wish, you could share communion from the table at some time during the event.

Supplies:

- candle in holder and matches
- Bible
- bread on plate or in basket
- red juice in a cup
- small table
- tablecloth (a special one if available),
- bowl
- pitcher of water
- reading parts printed out, Attachment: Activity 7

The group brings items to create a Sabbath worship center. Each item brings meaning and part of the Christian story, to enhance our Sabbath time by reminding us of God, Jesus, and our community.

Put a table in center of circle or front of room. Distribute items among the participants for them to bring forward at the appointed time. Designate two children to bring items forward, one to carry the item and the other to read, allowing non-readers to fully participate.

- Bring forth the tablecloth. A child reads, "This tablecloth reminds us of the Sabbath cloths that adorned the Sabbath table in Jewish homes long



ago and today. Our worship tables are often covered with special cloths. This tablecloth makes this ordinary table special.”

- Bring forth the candle and light it. A child reads, “This light reminds us of God, who created by saying, ‘Let there be light.’ Light gives warmth and life that we might live.”
- Bring forth a bowl and pitcher of water. Place the bowl on the table and pour in the water. A child reads, “This water reminds us of the springs of life. Water quenches our thirst and grows our gardens. This water also reminds us of our baptism into the community of faith.”
- Bring forth a Bible. A child reads, “This special book reminds us of the stories of our forebears in the faith like Sarah and Abraham, Moses and Miriam, Mary Magdalene and Jesus, and many others. It also helps us know how to follow Jesus.”
- Bring forth bread and cup. A child reads, “This communion meal of bread and juice reminds us of Jesus, who shared a meal with his friends before he died. Sharing this bread and juice, we are one with Christ and with one another.”

We gather around this worship table to have Sabbath time, time to rest and think about God.

Closing prayer: Dear God, Creator, Christ, and Spirit, we pause from the hustle and bustle of our lives to remember you. You are the source of our being, the light of our lives, the bread and juice that feed so much more than our bodies. You feed our spirits too. These symbols of our faith -- fire, water, word, communion -- draw us away from the distractions of our lives and draw us closer to you. May each of us feel you in this Sabbath moment. Amen.

8 Meditation on Mandalas (Exploring and Engaging)

Leader preparation:

Read Mark 6:30–32. Browse through the numerous mandalas created by children on display at <http://www.tinyurl.com/cgd2g>. Creating mandalas is a traditional form of Buddhist and Hindu meditation in Tibet. Sometimes the intricate design is made with sand and lasts only a short time. The process, not the outcome, is the focus. Print out a mandala pattern to be colored for each participant. To download a free black and white mandala pattern to color, go to <http://www.mandali.com/sample/> or <http://www.tinyurl.com/7pxgea>, which also features numerous brilliant mandalas. To order a mandala coloring book, go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/28w4vfm> (\$11) or <http://www.mandali.com> (\$8-\$10). Set out all coloring materials on the tables. Place an uncolored mandala sheet at each place.

Supplies:

- a mandala pattern for each participant
- bright colors for drawing (pencils, markers, and/or crayons),
- tape or pins to hang up finished mandalas
- tables and chairs
- CD player
- CD of soothing music
- a printed copy of a colorful mandala

A traditional Sabbath activity is meditation. Coloring the intricate patterns of a mandala provides a meditative centering activity that appeals to all ages.

1. Invite all the participants to find a place at a table, creating a blend of ages and abilities at each table. At their place they will find a mandala pattern sheet.



2. Explain that this activity is about meditating and meditation – going to a quiet place to be renewed, which is a traditional Sabbath activity in Christianity and a common practice in other religions, specifically Hinduism and Buddhism.
3. Show an example of a finished mandala. Invite everyone to begin coloring a mandala, using the activity as a time to center themselves, to enter into the quiet space and the beauty of the design, thinking about God and God’s beautiful creation.
4. Play the soothing music in the background. Allow as much time for drawing as the participants are comfortable with.
5. Hang the completed mandalas in a meditation gallery.

Closing prayer: *God of quiet places, thank you for Sabbath time and Sabbath activities that help us slow down and appreciate the beauty around us in your creation. Amen.*



Exploration: Context and Mission

9 Sabbath—Time to Remember Others (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation:

Read Luke 4:16–21. Prayerfully consider those in your congregation who are unable to be at this intergenerational event. To expand this activity, prepare a list of the names and addresses of a variety of people beforehand: inmates at a local jail or prison, homeless people in your community, residents at a local care center, prisoners of conscience (list available from Amnesty International, <http://www.tinyurl.com/pfjta6>), global mission partners of your denomination, children sponsored by members in your congregation, etc.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- pens
- blank greeting cards (church stationary works well, but any cards will do)
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers
- church directories (ideally with photos)
- stickers
- crayons or markers

Moving from exclusion to inclusion, the group first remembers those often excluded in our communities. Then the group focuses on those from the congregation who are marginalized and absent from this intergenerational event in order to include them by sending cards of greeting and prayer to them.

1. Read: Luke 4:16–21.
2. Brainstorm: Turn to the person next to you and think of people in your community and the world who are “poor, captive, blind, oppressed.” (You might use more familiar words for different ages such as: lonely, unhappy, sick, in jail, marginalized, excluded, forgotten.)
3. Plenary: Have each pair share one person or type of person they thought of. Write these on newsprint or a whiteboard (or just listen).
4. Ask the large group: Who is not here today at this event? List them by name on newsprint or a whiteboard. Who is sick? Who is in the hospital?



- Who is elderly and shut-in? Who is away or abroad? (Peace Corps and Vista volunteers, service men and women, missionaries, others.) Who is away at college?
5. Divide into groups to write cards to people on the list. Ask each group to take one to three cards and write the name of a recipient on a card. Have groups decide what to write on the card and how to decorate it (if blank). Smaller children can put stickers on or draw something. Be sure everyone signs their name, or has their name added (if they cannot write).
 6. Option 1: Pass out envelopes with the cards and have each group address the envelope and place the card inside, ready to mail. Distribute church address labels to be affixed. Option 2: Collect the completed card (with name of recipient clearly printed on each) and send later.

Closing prayer: *Great Spirit, you call us into relationships, and Jesus reminds us on that Sabbath day long ago that we are connected to the poor, the oppressed, the captive, and the ill. We pray for all your people, especially those whom we have remembered and written to today. Thank you for your word in our midst that compels us to reach out beyond our comfort zones. Amen.*

10 Create a Sabbath Space for Birds (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation: Gather and set out supplies. Decide if participants will share jars of peanut butter and bowls or bags of seeds, or if it will work better to dish out smaller quantities of peanut butter and seeds into bowls or paper cups. Identify places where the feeders may be hung.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- pine cones (the bigger the better)
- peanut butter
- birdseed
- kitchen knives for spreading peanut butter on pinecones
- sturdy string or twine for hanging bird feeders outside
- scissors
- one or two large flat ceramic baking or serving dishes (to serve as bird baths)
- water for bird bath

Create a bird-friendly area outside the church by making and hanging bird feeders and setting out bird baths.

1. Invite the participants to locate and read aloud Exodus 20:8-11.
2. In groups of three (including different ages) have participants discuss: Who and what rests on the Sabbath, according to God's wishes in this story? (family, workers, slaves, men and women, livestock [working animals], foreigners; everything that works, including livestock) What are livestock? Which animals are "working animals"? "Sabbath is a chance for nature to rest from human interference," explains Cath James of the Methodist Federation for Social Action. What does this quote mean to you?
3. Explain that while birds are not "livestock," we're going to use our Sabbath time to make life easier for the birds that live near our church.
4. Have participants divide into pairs, with different ages in each pair, ideally an adult and a child or youth. Each pair receives one pinecone, twine/string, and access to peanut butter and birdseed.



5. For feeders: Tie twine around top section of pine cone, making it secure for hanging. Spread peanut butter on each pine nut (petal) of the cone. Press birdseed into the peanut butter. Hang feeders outside if weather permits. Otherwise, keep to be hung later.
6. For birdbaths: Have groups of two or three take the ceramic birdfeeders outside, locate a safe and protected spot, and fill them with water.

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for animals, for those that help us by working in fields, and for those that live independently of humans. Thank you that we can use this Sabbath time to remember them and provide the birds of this community a place to enjoy. Amen.*



Exploration: Future and Mission

Making Eyes of God (Exploring and Engaging)

Leader Preparation:

The Huichol Indians of Mexico and the Aymara Indians of Bolivia weave brightly colored yarn on a simple frame of two crossed sticks to create a design called ojo de Dios or eye of God. Review the illustrated instructions at <http://www.tinyurl.com/3hh6ge> or <http://www.tinyurl.com/ydktccr> and make at least one eye of God, so that you are familiar with the process. This can seem difficult initially, but with patience the task is easily completed, even by young children, and the results are usually pleasing. The more contrasting the colors of yarn, the brighter the finished product. Plan to pair up each child with an adult, or two children with an adult.

Supplies:

- several skeins of medium weight bright colored yarn
- sticks for the X-shaped frame: popsicle sticks, craft sticks, twigs or chopsticks work well (two for each participant)
- craft glue
- scissors

Create eyes of God as Sabbath meditation focal points.

1. Read Psalm 119:105.
2. Hold the sticks in an X or cross position. Wrap the yarn around the center of the two sticks to hold them together in a cross shape.
3. Take one color of yarn and wrap it over and around one stick, then over and around the next, over and around the next, and so on. Keep doing that until the color is used up.
4. Tie a different color string onto the old one with a tight knot.
5. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until complete.
6. Take a piece of string for a hanger, cut it, and tie or glue it to your eye of God.
7. Hang up your eye of God as a focal point to use during Sabbath exercises of prayer and/or meditation.

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for beautiful symbols that remind us of you. Bless these eyes of God that they may help us enrich our Sabbath life. Amen.*



Keeping Vigil: Proclaiming the Good News (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation:

Read and reflect on Matthew 26:14–27:66. The Sabbath after Jesus was executed was a quiet day of fear and hiding; many of Jesus' friends abandoned him, and like Peter, denied even knowing him. Keeping vigil is for many Christians an important response to injustice, so that we do not succumb to the fear and hiding of those first disciples. Familiarize yourself with religious groups that hold regular vigils, such as those listed by state at <http://www.utahpeace.org/vigil.htm>. (Note: Bellingham, Washington, is home to the longest-running peace vigil in the United States. Started by Howard and Rosemary Harris more than forty-six years ago, it has lasted more than four generations. Members of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ in Bellingham,

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2ayuwhm>,

are instrumental in keeping that weekly vigil going every Friday, particularly Alfred and Dotty Dale, both in their mid-eighties!) Prayerfully consider injustices or special needs of which members of your church might already be aware: e.g. children at the local school who receive free meals, homophobia in your community or in the news, a local business with unfair employment practices, the exploitation of coffee growers by large corporations (if your church uses Fair Trade coffee and tea, some members will be familiar with this concern), a local environmental concern, a current war, families who need food (and come to your church's food bank), children sponsored by your church or individual members, etc. Gather supplies to make placards for the vigil. You may need to check with local authorities to determine if a permit is needed for your vigil.

Supplies:

- poster boards
- wooden slats
- staple gun
- poster paints or large markers
- Bibles
- poster, "Guatemala: Procession" (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>) by Betty LaDuke

A Sabbath vigil: a response to injustice. This activity can be broken into parts: reflection and discussion, clarifying the message of the vigil, preparing posters, holding the vigil. The actual vigil might be a culmination of your Sabbath event, or a follow-up at a different time. If there is already a regular local peace and justice vigil, consider joining in. Some regular vigil groups already have plenty of signs for participants to hold.

1. Invite the participants to locate and read aloud Matthew 27:27–56.
2. Ask: When Jesus was being tortured and was suffering, who tried to help him? Point out that the male disciples are not around and the female disciples are standing and watching from a distance, not getting involved.
3. Ask the participants: Have you ever seen someone be treated badly? What did you do? It is likely someone will say they were afraid to do anything to help. Use this as a segue to talk about fear, and how fear can protect us by keeping us safe, but how it also can stop us from helping someone who needs our help.
4. In pairs or groups of three (mix different age participants as much as possible, to encourage intergenerational interaction), have the participants consider: Who in our world is suffering as Jesus did? Who is being tortured? Who is being kept from food and safe water? Who is being abandoned by our society?



5. Ask each small group to share one or two examples with the larger group. Write out a list, noting those mentioned by more than one group. They may share a wide variety of responses. Listen respectfully, and, if helpful, guide the conversation to the things upon which you were reflecting during your time of preparation.
6. Explain that it is important for faithful Christians to turn to God when they are afraid, and to ask for (pray for) courage to do the right thing.
7. Back in pairs and groups of three, have participants share: What are some injustices (something that is not fair or good) in the world that make you angry to hear about? For example, war, hungry children. Then have each group share with the large group one or two things they listed.
8. Describe the ancient practice of vigil-keeping and its relationship to Sabbath keeping (a time set aside when we work and witness for justice). Display the poster “Guatemala: Procession.” Explain that sometimes people walk (or march) as part of a vigil.
9. Have participants choose one issue of injustice on which to focus.
10. Invite the participants to make posters related to the issue of injustice they have chosen: for example, Christians for peace; Jesus fed the hungry. So should we; God is love; Everyone is God’s child; God loves everyone--gay and straight; Honk for peace--make God smile! Be sure statements are faith-based and not just an opinion. Staple the decorated poster boards to the slats. Be sure they are secure, with the slat going up almost to the top of the poster board to avoid bending.
11. Pray before heading outside: God, help us not be afraid to speak out for what is right. Grant us courage as part of our Sabbath keeping practice boldly to share our faith with others. May we not be caught silent and hiding on the Sabbath as the first disciples were when Jesus was crucified. May our Sabbath actions help those who, like Christ, suffer injustice at the hands of those more powerful. Amen.
12. Be sure to talk about tolerance before heading out to the vigil. Consider what to do if rude actions or comments are received from people driving or walking by.
13. Stand by the road near the church holding the signs high for passersby to see (or join a preexisting vigil). Be sure there is enough room for pedestrians to pass by easily and safely. Joyfully proclaim the Good News of God’s love, peace and justice.

Reflect

What an amazing group of people have gathered here: young and old, energetic and thoughtful, brash and timid, faithful and doubtful. What a privilege it is to work with them, to teach and learn together, to stretch and grow. How has God used you during this intergenerational event? What moments were filled with delight? What challenges did you face? Is there any follow-up needed, regarding either activities or relationships? Who stands out for you from this event? Who may need special prayers or pastoral care? Now it is time for you to think of ways to renew and refresh yourself, to take Sabbath time, to apply the lessons presented (and hopefully learned) to your own life, starting now. May God be with you as you continue to grow in the faith practice of Sabbath-keeping.



Attachment: Activity 7

Tablecloth is brought forward.

A child reads, "This tablecloth reminds us of the Sabbath cloths that adorned the Sabbath table in Jewish homes long ago and today. Our worship tables are often covered with special cloths. This tablecloth makes this ordinary table special."

Candle is brought forward and lit.

A child reads, "This light reminds us of God, who created by saying, 'Let there be light.' Light gives warmth and life that we might live."

Bowl and pitcher of water are brought forward.

Place the bowl on table and pour in the water. A child reads, "This water reminds us of the springs of life. Water quenches our thirst and grows our gardens. This water also reminds us of our baptism into the community of faith."

A Bible is brought forward.

A child reads, "This special book reminds us of the stories of our forebears in the faith like Sarah and Abraham, Moses and Miriam, Mary Magdalene and Jesus, and many others. It also helps us know how to follow Jesus."

Bread and cup are brought forward.

A child reads, "This communion meal of bread and juice reminds us of Jesus, who shared a meal with his friends before he died. Sharing this bread and juice, we are one with Christ and with one another."