

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)

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Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

In North America we are faced with a busy culture where our youth (ages 11-15) are encouraged to be part of the “right” social groups, sports, arts, or other peer activities. Peer pressure is abundant, and it is very difficult to encourage our youth to think and act for themselves. How do we introduce a sense of Sabbath that doesn’t worry about the physical, material world, but rather focuses on one’s spiritual development? How do we engage youth on a topic that may be foreign to them and seem, well, “weird”? In our present culture these youth have been pushed from a very early age to be active, almost constantly. As we introduce the idea of Sabbath, we will be trying to help the youth to “slow down” a little and to see the world around them. Be patient with the youth. They will fidget and be uncomfortable with any silence. Our task is not to “make them like it,” but rather to open up another way of being to them. The idea of resting and the idea of not worrying about one’s appearance, among other things, are both key to this component, and both are foreign to youth. Provide a safe space for them to feel free to explore.

About this Exploration

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BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

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

Leader Preparation

Spend time with the texts 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 youth who will be journeying with you: what could Sabbath mean to them? Familiarize yourself with the music and artwork suggested for this practice and have it available to use with the learners. If you are able, make a space in your room where you can sit on the floor and spend the first few moments in silent prayer with the lights low and a lighted candle. If you choose to sit on the floor, which many youth prefer, be sure to have the youth sit up and not lie down. For this session, begin by asking the youth to spend the quiet time thinking about how they might incorporate rest time and time with God. As you prepare for this session, think about your own Sabbath time. Do you try to make sure you take Sabbath time? Do you yourself have a definition of Sabbath time and what that means for you? As you look through the options below, think about your space and what may need to be done to provide for the activities.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Introducing the Labyrinth (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/28yd5cj> to read background on the labyrinth. Make a copy of the labyrinth for every participant. Spend time with the labyrinth before you work with your group so you are comfortable with it. If your church has a full-sized labyrinth, arrange for your group to use it.

Supplies:

- copies of labyrinth for each participant, Attachment: Activity 1

Use the description from the website to explain the labyrinth. Then invite the participants to spend time with their individual labyrinth. Encourage them to take these home and use them repeatedly. It may be helpful to use some sort of "tool" to trace the labyrinth, such as the eraser end of a pencil. A labyrinth is not a maze, and so it is not something on which to draw a line from start to finish. It is meant to be left as it is, so that you can use it repeatedly. Whether you are using a full-sized labyrinth or an individual one for each youth, have the group ponder the following questions as they trace the labyrinth:

Entering: What distractions in my life keep me distant from God? What is following me in this labyrinth that I want to let go of? What do I have leading me, so I don't have to choose my own direction?

In the center: What is God saying to me? How can I clear my head so I can listen to God? To help the youth, ask them to do a breath prayer: breathe in God's voice, breathe out distractions.

Exiting: Do I feel more at one with God and others? What do I need to leave behind so I can move into my world closer to God? What about this whole experience just makes me uncomfortable? Why?



2 Discerning What Sabbath Means to You

Leader preparation: Study the poster "The Public Fountain," <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Imagine what brought the boy to the fountain and what his day-to-day life might be like. Be prepared to talk about the poster with the youth.

One way to introduce this practice of faith is to bring a candle and invite the youth to sit in silence for 1-1½ minutes of guided silent prayer. Be prepared for them to giggle and be restless. If you choose to do this each session, you will find them easing into this practice as the weeks go on. Try to increase this time to 5 minutes by the end of the study of this practice.

Prayer: Holy God, you are the One who calls us to a time of Sabbath so that we can take a break from our busy lives and be in closer relationship with you. Be with me during this time of preparation so that I can find my Sabbath space. As I encounter my co-learners on this journey, open me to their places of yearning so that I can meet them in their own Sabbath space. 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, “The Public Fountain,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources> by Manuel Alvarez Bravo
- buckets or containers of water of different temperatures (ice cold, luke-warm, hot but not too hot to drink)
- a can or bottle of warm soda
- cups

Encourage the youth to look at the poster and imagine this child’s life. Think about the stream of water he is drinking. What temperature do you think the water might be? Why? Using the containers you have or by going to the kitchen, experiment with the youth getting a drink of water. Which temperature is most refreshing? What would they rather drink? Have they ever been some place where they had no control over the temperature of the beverage they drank? In many countries, ice is unheard of, even for fountain drinks. Pour the warm soda into the cups and don’t offer any ice. Do they like it? What would they think about drinking warm beverages . . . all the time?

Brainstorm the following questions with the youth. What gives you refreshment? Where do you go for refreshment? Do you ever think of refreshment as being Sabbath? On the seventh day of the week God rested or took “Sabbath.” What does that mean? Does this poster help you think of Sabbath? Why or why not? Is Sabbath the same for all of us? What differences might there be for different cultures or people?

3 Sharing Worries and Concerns

Leader Preparation: Visit the website <http://tinyurl.com/mqgqaf> to learn about worry dolls. If you are interested in purchasing worry dolls for all persons in your group there are many sources on the internet (<http://www.tinyurl.com/35pk6gh>). You may want to order one set for yourself and have the group make their own. The stones are an alternative to be used in the same way as the worry dolls.

There is a legend in the highland Indian villages of Guatemala: If you have a problem, worry, or concern, share it with a worry doll. Before going to bed, tell one worry to each doll, then place the dolls under your pillow. While you sleep, the dolls will take away your worries!

Supplies:

- small stones or worry dolls
- Bibles
- small boxes
- paints
- markers
- stickers

Read together the story in Luke 12:22–31. Spend time exploring what worries the youth carry with them on a regular basis. Can they hear the words of Jesus in this scripture to let go of their worries? Why or why not? Have each youth choose six stones out of the pile and a box to put them in. They can decorate the stones in any way they wish. Explain the Guatemalan legend of the worry doll to the group and how they can tell a different worry to their stones each night before they go to bed. They could use this same approach to turn their worries to God each night.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Making Room for Sabbath (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Sometimes we need to make room for Sabbath in our lives. For youth, this may mean giving up something that occupies a great deal of their time, but doesn't necessarily give them time or space for listening to God and entering into Sabbath. Print a copy of the time chart for each participant. Take time to fill in the chart for yourself!

Supplies:

- time chart, Attachment: Activity 4
- pencils

Ask the youth what takes up most of their free time in their day. Many will try to talk about school and homework, but help them see how they use their time outside of those activities. Have them complete the time chart. First, put in the time they sleep and the time they go to school. Then they can fill in the rest of the chart with after-school activities, practice, family meal time, playing, church, youth group, etc. What could they give up in order to provide time for Sabbath? Would they be willing to give up playing games on the computer or TV and instead play a game with the rest of their family? Brainstorm creative things they could do with their time that include people who mean a lot to them, so they could spend time with them and see that as Sabbath time. Make a covenant with one another to try spending just an hour or two this week with a family member or dear friend that doesn't include the TV, iPod, game cube, or some other electronic device.

5 Creating Sacred Space

Leader preparation: Sometimes we have to provide a sacred space to remind us to take time to be apart with God. Think about your own sacred space, if you have one. If you don't, what would it take for you to make a sacred space for yourself? What would that look like? Today you are invited to make a sacred space either where the group meets or somewhere else in the church where others can be invited to use it as well. You can add a global element by choosing fabric from another country for the cloth.

Supplies:

- colored cloth or cloth the color of the present liturgical season
- symbols for the space
- cross
- Bible
- candle
- stones
- sticky notes

Spend time talking to the youth about how sometimes it helps to provide a sacred place where we can go to be in conversation with God. Invite them to help you prepare that space where you meet or in another area in the church. Some youth may already have a sacred space in mind; invite them to use the sticky notes to write or draw something that reminds them of their sacred space. Make these a part of your worship center. Talk to them about what it might mean to have a space like this in their homes, what it would look like, how they might use it. Encourage them to talk to their family about making a sacred space at home and making time to use it at least once a week.

6 Trust Fall

Leader preparation: How do we learn to trust in God and one another? A trust fall is a way of introducing the youth to what it means to trust in someone else. When doing this activity, be mindful of size and abilities. A very small youth will probably not be able to catch someone much larger. Also, if a youth has been abused in any way, they may not want to try trusting someone. Be mindful of the needs of your group.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- trusting souls willing to take a risk

Read Luke 12:22–31 together as a group. Jesus is calling the disciples to trust in God, not to worry about what they will wear or eat. Invite the participants to talk about what it means to trust in someone else . . . especially God. What do you have to give up to trust other people? To trust God? Why is it difficult to trust others? What makes it difficult to trust in God? Try a group trust fall. Have the youth stand close together in a circle. Ask for a volunteer to stand in the middle of the circle. Have the volunteer close his/her eyes and cross his/her arms across the chest. The volunteer then leans backward. Those in the circle will catch the volunteer and gently move him/her back and forth across and around the circle. Make sure the youth aren't given any opportunity to banter with one another about their size. It is best for the leader to supervise, rather than join in this activity, and make sure no one gets hurt. Invite all who are willing to be the person in the center of the circle.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Taking the Worry Out of Another's Life (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Prepare to lead the group in a discussion about how to take the worry out of others' lives, in other words, how to offer a sense of Sabbath to another. Since youth are so self-conscious, maybe you can introduce this topic by coming dressed in a way that the youth would find humorous.

Supplies: None

This age group is all about peer pressure. Every time youth get dressed, they worry if they are okay or if their friends will make fun of them. Talk with the youth about how this feels and why they worry about what others think. Invite them to think of a student at school who is made fun of often. What can they do this week to offer "Sabbath" to that student? Do they make fun of the way others dress? Can they offer compliments rather than criticism? Invite a conversation about this, and encourage the youth to think about what their actions and words do to take Sabbath away from others.

8 Creating Journals

Leader preparation: Journaling is one way to reflect on our activities and see where we can make room for Sabbath. Each youth will make a journal in which to write, draw, or doodle to reflect on daily experiences of God and Sabbath. It is key to remember that journals are meant to be private places where we share

our deepest feelings without worrying whether or not it is “right.” Encourage the learners to use the journals in a way that feels best to them, emphasizing that they will not be required to share their journals with anyone.

Supplies:

- paper
- pencils, markers
- yarn
- stickers
- construction paper
- hole punch
- stapler
- Bibles

Have each youth choose a piece of construction paper for their cover and then add seven to ten pieces of other paper for their journal. The journal can be stapled, hole-punched and tied with yarn, or assembled in any creative way. Have the participants read silently Genesis 2:2–4. Then read that passage out loud as a group. Give the youth time to reflect in their journal what it means to take time for rest. This can be done in any way the youth would like -- writing, drawing, or using other art media you might have available. Journals are a great place to provide private reflection. Invite the youth to take the journals home and use them each day for the next week, or keep them in your learning space to be used each week. Keep in mind that journals are meant to be personal and shared only if the youth choose to share them. If they are kept in your learning space, be sure there is a way to keep them where no one can read them during the week. Although this particular activity will not be repeated in the other Explorations, you may choose to hang on to the journals and use them in other sessions.

Sabbath Covenants

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies:



- time chart, Attachment: Activity 9
- paper and pencils

Review what you have talked about during this session and invite the group to make a covenant with one another to spend at least one hour in quiet reflection this week. This time could be divided into 10 or 15 minute segments rather than one whole hour. Have the youth schedule this time on their charts. Invite the youth to journal about their time of Sabbath and share what they experienced the next time they meet.

Challenge: During the next week, do a special food drive, gathering specific items that are needed by your local food pantry/bank. Intentionally avoid sharing “leftovers.”

Reflect

As you think back on these activities, what touched you most? What did you learn about Sabbath, about yourself, about the youth? How can you grow in your own understanding of Sabbath? What one thing can you do this week to help you find Sabbath in your life?

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Attachment: Activity 1



Making Time for Sabbath

Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
12:00 am							
1:00 am							
2:00 am							
3:00 am							
4:00 am							
5:00 am							
6:00 am							
7:00 am							
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12:00 pm							
1:00 pm							
2:00 pm							
3:00 pm							
4:00 pm							
5:00 pm							
6:00 pm							
7:00 pm							
8:00 pm							
9:00 pm							
10:00 pm							
11:00 pm							

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Too often the Ten Commandments are seen as strict rules that must be obeyed at all costs. In the context of the Israelite community in the midst of the Exodus, they are a gift to the people from God that offers order out of their chaos. How do we help youth understand that some guidelines for community are in place not to keep them from doing things they enjoy, but rather to help them live more faithfully in the community? On the other hand, Jesus explains to the Pharisees that some rules get in the way of our caring for others. How do youth come to understand that the Bible offers us options for our living and that it isn't always an issue of right and wrong?

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

Spend time with the texts, 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 youth who will be journeying with you. What could Sabbath mean to them?

One way to introduce this practice of faith is to bring a candle and invite the youth to sit in silence for 1-1½ minutes of guided silent prayer. Be prepared for them to giggle and be restless. If you choose to do this each session, you will find the youth easing into this practice as the weeks go on. Try to increase this time to 5 minutes by the end of the study of this practice.

Prayer: Loving God, sometimes our lives are full of chaos, and you enter in to offer us order and comfort. As we gather on this day to hear your word and discern your gifts for us, open our hearts to new adventures and understandings. In Christ we pray. 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Living the Word (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the scripture and make sure you are familiar with both parts of the text (2:23–28 and 3:1–6).

Supplies:

- Bibles or copies of Mark 2:23–3:6 (*The Message* is a good version to use with youth)

Depending on the size of your group, you can either do this as one activity or divide it into two activities. Read the full text as a group. Have one youth read just 2:23–28. Have another youth read 3:1–6. Invite the youth to put themselves in the role of Jesus, the disciples, the authorities, the man with the withered hand. From the perspective of each role, ask: What strikes you as odd? As funny? Anything that makes you mad or sad? If you have enough participants, divide into two groups and invite the youth to come up with a play based on these two stories. Repeat the play several times to give everyone the opportunity to portray different characters. Try to help them to not just read the stories and do exactly what the text says, but to be creative. We wouldn't arrest or accuse someone for picking grain on the Sabbath. Is there another rule or law that some think should not be broken, but may need to be broken, in order to fulfill someone's immediate need?

2 Exploring the Ten Commandments

Leader preparation: Spend time reflecting on Exodus 20:1–17. Notice how the Ten Commandments are ordered. The first section is about God: who God is and what God expects. God is the only God. The second section is about family: how to treat your parents. The last section is about community: don't take anyone else's stuff! That list includes their life, their spouse, their reputation, and their belongings. Today we are going to try to explore what life would be like without rules. You will play a game encouraging the youth not to follow any rules; they can all do whatever they want. This, of course, will not work out well and will be chaotic. The early Israelites were in the same predicament. They were wandering around the desert without a lot of direction and frustrated with their situation. The Ten Commandments were offered to give some order in the midst of their chaos. Once the youth are frustrated by the lack of rules, you will introduce the rules for the game. Help the youth to see that life without rules would be unbearable and that the Ten Commandments are not a burden of rules to be followed, but a gift of order in the midst of chaos.

Supplies:

- Bibles for all participants
- cards or a board game the youth would enjoy

Too often in faith formation the Ten Commandments have been introduced as something that needs to be memorized. Spend time reviewing the commandments to see if you can find a way to see them as a gift, rather than a burden of rules. Who is God really? What does it mean to have only one God? If we follow the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me," how does that inform how we live? Think about Sabbath with the youth. What is Sabbath? What is God offering in this context? Is it just another rule we have to follow, or a gift we can embrace?

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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.

Invite the youth to play a game, either the board game you brought or the cards. Don't offer any rules; tell them they can do whatever they want. It won't take long for the youth to figure out this just doesn't work. How can they play without rules? Instead of just following the rules of the game, have them come up with their own rules. How is that working? Are there too many “bosses”? Can they agree on the rules, or do they need someone to intervene and help them out? Offer them the rules of the game, or rules you have created for the game. How does that work? Compare this experience with the experience of the Israelites and the Ten Commandments. Now read Exodus 20 again. Does it sound different? Do the commandments make more sense? How does Sabbath fit into this? Notice how the commandments address our relationship with God, with our family, and with others.

3 Singing Sabbath

Leader preparation: Become familiar with “I've Got Peace Like a River” (Tune: PEACE LIKE A RIVER). Hear the tune at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9>. If possible, plan to sing it where you gather. If you don't want to sing a cappella and don't have a piano handy, see if you can find someone who plays a recorder or other appropriate musical instrument to accompany you.

Supplies:

- hymnals or copies of the hymn for all participants
- musical instruments

Sing the song together. Examine each verse. What does it mean to have peace like a river, joy like a fountain, etc.? What other images come to mind for the group? Invite the youth to make up their own verses, keeping in mind the theme for today is keeping Sabbath.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Exodus 20:1–17, focusing on verses 8–11.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint or white board and markers

Have someone read aloud Exodus 20:8–11. Ponder together what it means to “re-member” the Sabbath and “keep it holy.” It is one thing to remember our coat or our book bag or someone's birthday, but how do we remember the Sabbath? Refer to the celebration of communion. Jesus said, “Do this to remember me.” The church, the body of Christ, is brought together (re-membered) at the Table. Perhaps it is more helpful to ask ourselves how we forget the Sabbath. Brainstorm together and make a list of things we do that reflect forgetting or neglecting the Sabbath. Create another list of things we do to remember, honor, and celebrate the Sabbath. What can we do this next week to make sure we remember the Sabbath?

Explore what it means to keep the Sabbath holy. How do we do that? How do we neglect doing that? (Filling our days with “stuff” and not taking time to pray, watching too much TV, not taking time to listen to God.) What can we do differently in our lives to help us keep the Sabbath holy?

5 Blue Laws

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the history of the blue laws of your state and community. If possible, print a list of these laws for the youth to see. They are called blue laws because they were typically printed on blue paper. You may want to do this for effect. Also familiarize yourself with Mark 2:23--3:6. To deepen the discussion, look into other cultures/religions that have restrictions on their Sabbath days. Judaism and Islam are two places to start. Compare their restrictions to the blue laws.

Supplies:

- paper (blue if possible)
- black pens or markers
- online computer access, if possible
- concordance (if you don't have one, ask your pastor or check the church library)

Introduce the concept of blue laws to your group, and ask if they are familiar with these. Are there restrictions on the Sabbath that they are aware of? Have they ever noticed that certain places are never open on Sunday? Have they ever wondered why? Is it a law in your state? If they think of certain places, do an online search to see if it is a law or not. Of course, a business may be closed as a choice of the owner, not because of a law. For example, many restaurants and museums are closed on Mondays. Read together Mark 2:23--3:6. Using a concordance, see if you can find any laws in the Bible that prohibit work on the Sabbath (check out Exodus 20). Are the Pharisees the ones obeying the law? Do you think they are being faithful to the spirit of the law? What is the difference? Look over the blue laws you have brought with you. Are they currently enforced? Are these laws obeying the commandment to honor the Sabbath? Are they faithful to the spirit of the commandment?

Have the group create their own government and laws. As they organize, have them consider whether their community will have blue laws. Encourage them to discuss whether using faith-based criteria is appropriate when organizing civil laws. What if people join their community who don't share their faith tradition? How do you accommodate them? What if they observe a different Sabbath day? Once they are organized, have them write down their "laws." Have them role-play being a community, with one of them being chosen to break one of their laws for a "good" reason. Does the group agree that the law needed to be broken? Did the "criminal" have other options?

6 Church Search

Leader preparation: If you want your pastor or worship leader to come to visit with the group, set this up ahead of time.

Supplies: None

Take a walk around your church and look for symbols of Sabbath. Where do you find them? If you can't find any, what could you create to add to your space to remind you of Sabbath? Are there symbols of the Ten Commandments in your building? Do they invite Sabbath, or do they feel more as if they demand obedience? How could they be used in a way to invite Sabbath? Talk with your pastor/worship leader to see what can be done to help the congregation be more intentional about Sabbath when they gather together.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 A Poem for Sabbath (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Writing original poetry can be a way for youth to express themselves and delve more deeply into a subject. You will invite the youth to write an acrostic poem about Sabbath.

Supplies:

- paper and pencils

Have the youth write the word SABBATH in a vertical column down the side of their paper. Beside each letter, ask them to come up with a word or phrase that will help them to remember the Sabbath. For example:

- S Sharing time with family
- A Allowing time for God
- B Breathe
- B Basking in God’s love
- A Attention to God’s Word
- T Taking time to pray
- H Holding friends and family in prayer

When all the acrostic poems are completed, invite those who are willing to read them aloud. Ask the participants’ permission to have their poems printed in the church newsletter or order of service.

8 Hugs and Kisses

Leader preparation: Review Mark 3:1–6. In many of the healing stories in the Gospels, Jesus touches the one being healed in some way. Notice that in this story Jesus does not touch the man. He simply says, “Stretch out your hand.” You will explore with the youth ways we can offer healing without physical touch. This will be especially helpful if there is anyone in your group who has been abused in some way. They may be very leery of exercises like a group back rub or some other kind of touch, so this may open them to other forms of healing.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers
- plastic wrap
- ribbon
- Hershey’s hugs and kisses candies
- construction paper
- hole punch

Read together the story in Mark 3:1–6. What do you notice about this story that might be different from other healing stories you may have heard? If the group is not familiar with other healing stories, lead them to some of them. Mark 5:24b–34: the woman who believes she will be healed by simply touching the hem of Jesus’ garment — this story is sandwiched in between the story of healing Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:21–43), where Jesus takes the girl by the hand and Mark 7:31–37 where Jesus touches the deaf man and he hears again. Mark 8:22–26: Jesus lays his hands on the blind man, and he can see. In this story (as well as in some others), Jesus heals without touching the man. In what ways can we offer healing to

others without touching them? List the ideas on the newsprint or whiteboard. When you are in need of healing, what makes you feel better that doesn't include touch? Invite the group to brainstorm ways to offer healing to another person this week. Make a covenant with one another to find one person to offer healing to this week.

One way to offer healing is by offering little gifts to others. Cut out construction paper hearts and punch a hole in the top. Write a greeting on the heart: "God loves you," "Hugs and kisses from the youth," or something you come up with as a group. Wrap two or three Hershey's hugs and kisses in the plastic wrap. Tie the plastic wrap with the ribbon, threaded through the hole in the top of the heart. Decide who will receive these gifts.

9 Tea and Sabbath

Leader preparation Try to find a tea that might be appealing to youth (hint: sugar always helps). If you can find a tea set, it would be nice, but just making sure each participant has a tea cup is sufficient. Make biscuits from a favorite recipe, or buy some scones or biscuits for the group.

Supplies:

- tea or other beverage the youth might enjoy
- scones or other type of biscuit
- tea cups
- Bibles

In many cultures it is tradition to pause for tea at about 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.. In South Africa students pause from their studies every morning and afternoon to have tea. Everyone brings a cup to school, and they also bring biscuits for tea time. The tea is often served with milk in it. Tea time is spent gathering with friends to relax before going back to work or school.

Read Exodus 20:8–11. How does pausing each day to have tea coincide with taking Sabbath? Talk about how it might feel to take a break each day from normal activities to have tea. How might it make you feel? Serve the tea and scones.

Reflect

What was a new insight for you in these activities? What have you learned about how you celebrate the Sabbath? Thinking about your learners, what impacted them the most? How can this be used for future journeying together?

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Sometimes in life we are called to make hard choices or to stand up for the rights of others, even when doing so may mean not abiding by the norms of society. How can we help youth discern when it is faithful to stand up against the norms of society, and when it may be more faithful to abide by the norms of society? When are we called to take time to rest from our creative activities and be rejuvenated by God and give thanks to God? When is it time to allow our rest to be interrupted to reach out to our sisters and brothers in need? How do we find balance in our lives and make room for Sabbath?

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 to oppress further 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

In the Hebrew Scriptures we are called to love God with all our heart, soul, and might. What does this mean for us? When Jesus on the Sabbath either feeds his disciples or heals a man with a withered hand, the Pharisees are filled with fury. Which are we called to love more, the law or God? In these activities, we will look at ways our rules might get in the way of faithfulness.

One way to introduce this practice of faith is to bring a candle and invite the youth to sit in silence for 1-1½ minutes of guided silent prayer. Be prepared for them to giggle and be restless. If you choose to do this each session, you will find the youth easing into this practice. As the weeks go on, try to increase this time to 5 minutes by the end of the study of this practice.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to lead these youth to act responsibly and with conscience. May they learn to live lives of faithfulness. 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Making Decisions (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review the story, “The Decision” and think through possible endings.

Supplies:

- the story, “The Decision,” Attachment: Activity 1

Invite the youth to enter into the excitement of getting ready for a long-awaited vacation. How do they prepare for a vacation? What do they take along? What does the family do to keep occupied on long trips? Read the story, or ask one of the youth to read the story. How many different endings to the story can they imagine? Should the person telling the story feel guilty for going on vacation and letting someone else take care of the situation, or should she or he stay home? Why or why not? If we understand taking Sabbath as being healthy for us, what does it mean to allow others to take Sabbath time?

2 Singing Sabbath

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the song “Let Me Enter God’s Own Dwelling” (Tune: UNSER HERRSCHER). Hear the tune at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong7>.

You will spend time getting familiar with the words and what they mean and making your own music. If your church has musical instruments, plan to use them. If not, bring things that can be used for instruments, or have the youth make some instruments. See <http://www.tinyurl.com/26ewret>.

Supplies:

- copies of the hymn “Let Me Enter God’s Own Dwelling,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong7>
- musical instruments or materials to make instruments

Sing the hymn with the youth. Spend time looking at the words to identify the words or phrases that they don’t understand, such as “condescend,” “entreat,” “sanctify,” “vanities,” etc. Invite the group to write lyrics that are more meaningful and relevant to them. Perhaps the first line of stanza 1 could be “Let me enter God’s church building, open wide the big red door.” Invite the youth to sing the song with their new words and to play their own music. This can get out of hand with there just being a lot of noise, but encourage the youth to find their own meaning in this music and to create their own hymn. If they are willing, arrange for the youth to lead the congregation in singing their lyrics.

3 Cultural Expectations of Sabbath

Leader preparation: Gather a variety of newspaper ads and magazines, especially magazines of interest to teens.

Supplies:

- newspaper ads and magazines
- scissors
- glue
- poster board

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.

Advertising directs much of our lives and our perceived notions of what we need. Invite the youth to look through the magazines to find ads that encourage Sabbath. Are there any? A lot? What do the advertisements tell us we need? How do these “needs” help or hinder Sabbath? Make one collage of the advertisements that encourage Sabbath and another of advertisements for things that might get in the way of Sabbath. Compare the two posters. What do they say about our society?

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 An Encounter with Sabbath Healers (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: If there is a nurse, doctor, or other health care worker in your faith community who works on Sundays, ask them to meet with your group on a Sunday when they don't have to go to work. This can also be a firefighter, police officer, or EMT who is on call on Sundays. Ask them specifically to talk about their vocation as a calling rather than just a job.

Supplies:

- willing participants
- Bibles

Invite the worker(s) to visit your group to talk about what it means for them to have to work on the Sabbath. How do they feel when they help someone on the Sabbath? If they cannot celebrate Sabbath on Sunday, when do they set aside Sabbath time? Read Luke 6:1–11. How does this passage speak to them in their life and their vocation? Encourage the youth to ask questions about the chosen vocation and how they see this as their ministry or calling.

5 Defining Sabbath

Leader preparation: Spend time studying the two posters that might present different understandings of Sabbath so that you can help the youth to define for themselves what Sabbath means.

Supplies:

- “The Dance of Youth,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>, by Pablo Picasso
- “Going to Church,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters8>, by William H. Johnson

Hang the two posters side by side. Without telling them the titles of the posters, invite the youth to describe what they see in the two posters. Make up stories to go with each picture. What were the people doing before this picture? After they have spent some time with their own interpretations, tell them the titles of the two posters. Do their perceptions change at all when they have the titles in front of them? What definition of Sabbath would they write based on each poster? What do the posters have in common? What is different about them? What might the posters say about how one “keeps the Sabbath”? How does this help define what Sabbath means?

6 Prayerful Poses

Leader preparation: In many ways these texts call us to examine what it means to take Sabbath time. Provide clay, aluminum foil, or some other material to make figures that are celebrating Sabbath.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- aluminum foil, clay, modeling dough, pipe cleaners, twistable wire, and any other material that can be molded

Read the Deuteronomy and Luke texts and talk about what it means to take Sabbath time. The Pharisees were outraged that Jesus heals a person and that he and his disciples pick grain on the Sabbath — both actions that violate their laws about Sabbath. Invite the youth to spread out in the room. When you give a signal, they are to strike an individual pose that represents Sabbath time. Hold that pose. Give the signal and have them strike another pose, this time with one or two partners. Hold that pose. Go to each pose and invite the others in the group to describe what they see. How is that pose related to Sabbath?

Invite the youth to use whatever material you have gathered together to make figures posed in ways that honor the Sabbath. They may work alone, with a partner, or in a small group. The figures can be individual or grouped together, small or large. Encourage the youth to talk about their figures when they are finished. By using the aluminum foil for this project, you convey that this is not an art project that calls for perfection, but rather is about movement and creativity. When the group is finished, have them place the figures in a place where they can continue to be a part of your time together until you are finished with the faith practice of Sabbath-keeping.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Clearing Your Calendars (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Find or prepare a simple calendar for the week with space for each waking hour. Make a copy for each person in the group. An example can be a Daytimers daily calendar or a daily calendar from Microsoft Office, or use the handout from the Discovery Exploration.

Supplies:

- paper and markers
- calendars or handout, Discovery Exploration, Attachment: Activities 4 & 9

Sabbath-keeping is not just about taking a day off. It can be as simple as pausing for an extended moment in the midst of daily life to recall our relationship with God and all of creation. God established a pattern for Sabbath in the very beginning: six days of work, one of rest. Think of this 6:1 pattern: days, hours, minutes. Six things for me, one for God and others. Some schools follow a pattern of six classes for work and one for study. Ask the youth to consider what they have on their calendars for the next week. Where can they make time for Sabbath? What can they give up (not school or homework) so that they can have some Sabbath time with their family? Encourage them to talk to their family about taking Sabbath time, and have them report back in the next session about what they were able to do. Give each person a calendar to take home to keep track of the activities

for the week. It will be helpful if the calendars have a space for each waking hour so they can track their activity. Certainly much of their time will be used with school. But, even in the midst of the school day, can they find time to find some Sabbath?

8 Offering Sabbath

Leader preparation: Research a mission in your area in which the youth can participate.

Supplies: None

So often when we think of Sabbath, we think of ourselves: how we can rest, how we can find time to get away. Many people do not have the luxury of Sabbath. Perhaps they are financially challenged and can't take time off work, or their life circumstances are difficult and they must always be working for survival. If you know of a family in your church or community in this situation, brainstorm with the youth about how you might be able to offer Sabbath to this person or family. Another possibility is to collect loose change every day for the next several weeks and offer the money as a tip for a server who must work on the Sabbath in order to keep her own family fed. Remind the youth that every time they drop coins in their collection container at home, they can remember to pause and praise God. Encourage the youth to come up with an idea that is faithful to who they are and is something they can get excited about doing.

9 Stand by Me

Leader preparation: Review the YouTube video of John Lennon singing Ben E. King's song "Stand By Me" at <http://www.tinyurl.com/5fxm3>. If possible, project the lyrics of the song for the group to read.

Supplies:

- YouTube video at <http://www.tinyurl.com/5fxm3>
- Bibles

In Luke's story of Jesus healing the man with the withered right hand, Jesus tells the man, "Come and stand here." When people in authority were ready to attack him, Jesus invited the man with the withered hand to stand right next to him. Everyone has times in their life when they need someone to stand by. Listen to John Lennon sing "Stand By Me." Invite the youth to name people who have stood by them. They don't need to describe any details of these experiences, just recall names of people who stood by them. This is one way of offering Sabbath. Then invite the youth to think about people that they can support, people that they can stand by. This may be a younger person for whom they are a role model, or it may be someone at school that is ridiculed and picked on. Perhaps there is someone who is homebound that needs company. Have the youth brainstorm ways they can stand by others and offer this kind of Sabbath to them.

Reflect

Being a disciple isn't always easy. What did your group learn about discipleship and Sabbath? How can we model discipleship and Sabbath for our youth? What can you take home with you that can help your spiritual journey?

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Attachment: Activity 1

The Decision

I couldn't wait. After months of working way too many hours and spending very little time with my family, I couldn't wait for us to start our vacation together. We had planned a trip to Mackinac Island in Michigan, where we would rest, relax, ride our bikes, and just "be" together. We spent our time before the trip preparing our bikes, making sure we had everything we needed and planning what we would take with us. Fresh air, a swimming pool, and no motorized vehicles — this seemed like the perfect getaway for us.

The morning of our departure arrived. We were busy packing the car and getting our bikes lined up for the bike rack. Everyone was excited. The children were picking out their books and movies to keep them busy during the car ride, and the snack bag was all ready to go. Just as we were leaving the house, the phone rang. It was my co-worker. Her mother was in the hospital, and she needed to go be with her father. Could I take her shift so she could go? We had always covered for each other in the past, but I really wanted and needed this time away with my family.

How could I say no to her? How could I disappoint my family again? What should I do?

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

From the beginning God made the Sabbath holy and commanded God's people to keep it holy. This ancient practice goes back to the time of creation. We see in the Isaiah passage that the people of Israel have once again strayed from the ways of God. "Remove the yoke among you" refers to the many times burdens have been put upon others in the community. Sabbath is not just for the wealthy, but for all of God's people. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus encourages the disciples to get away to rest, but the crowd continues to follow them and make demands on them. Sometimes we are the disciples trying to get away for a bit of rest, but pressures continue to be put upon us. Other times we are the crowd demanding of others when they need rest. Throughout this Exploration we will try to find a balance between taking time to rest and offering rest to others in need.

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Footsteps and Roadblocks (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: In Mark 6 Jesus and his disciples are trying to get away to rest, but everywhere they go they are followed by the crowd. Sometimes when we try to get away, it isn't the crowd that gets in our way, but our own distractions. For this activity the youth will make a path for them to get from where they are to "Sabbath," a place of rest. They will make footprints to guide their path, but they will also make bricks and print on the bricks those things that get in their way. Make sure you have enough space in your meeting area to do this activity. Or, see if you can use a different part of the building.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- construction paper
- scissors
- markers
- blocks or bricks (these can be made of construction paper)

Leader Preparation

Familiarize yourself with the Bible Focus Passages for this session. Look over the activity options and decide which ones you will do with your group. Visit the websites suggested and become familiar with what they have to offer. Gather the necessary supplies and spend time thinking about your learners and their lives. What gets in the way of their having Sabbath time? What is unique about this group of youth? What can they offer to the congregation to share what they have learned?

One way to introduce this practice of faith is to bring a candle and invite the youth to sit in silence for 1-1½ minutes of guided silent prayer. Be prepared for them to giggle and be restless. If you choose to do this each session, you will find the youth easing into this practice. As the weeks go by, try to increase this time to 5 minutes by the end of the study of this practice.

During the time of silence this week, invite the youth to think of what they would like to do to "get away from it all" and how they might include time for God in that space.

Read together Mark 6:30–34, 53–56. Ask: What, do you think, are the disciples and Jesus trying to do? Why would it be important for them to get away for some rest? Why would the people be so persistent in following them? What adjectives would you use to describe these people? What might be going on with these people? What could be the result if the disciples and Jesus don't get a chance to rest? What would happen if Jesus and the disciples did not pay attention to the people? How do you decide when to rest and when to meet the demands of others?

Invite the youth to go on a journey where they might find some rest. Have them make footprints (they can trace their own feet) and make enough (about ten footprints each) to get them from where they are (either figuratively or literally) to where they want to go. In your room you may have a point A for starting and a point B for the Sabbath destination. Explain they don't need to get from A to B by using a straight line (think of all the detours the disciples and Jesus took). What gets in their way when they are trying to rest? It might be a parent or a sibling, but it also might be their own agendas (ball games, time with friends, shopping, a job, etc.). Have them make bricks out of the construction paper (they don't have to be three-dimensional; they might be just darker rectangle pieces of paper than that used for the footprints), and write their roadblocks or distractions on the bricks. Collect the bricks. Ask the youth to lay out their footprints in a path they would like to take. (You will need a pretty good-sized space for this activity, so consider a larger gathering space if you have one. If not, have the group do this all together using only one path.) Once they have created their path, randomly place the bricks on the path. Talk to the youth about how the bricks get in the way of their path. What do they need to do to get around or remove the blocks?

Today we are specifically talking about tradition in our lives. Ask: What traditions include Sabbath? Which ones might get in the way of Sabbath? Does their family have a definition of Sabbath? Does your faith community? How would you define tradition? How can you get rid of some of your bricks? Over which bricks do you have control? Which ones have control over you?

Prayer: *Good and gracious God, you have given us the gift of Sabbath, but we have not always made room for it in our lives. Help me to let go of the obstacles that get in the way of Sabbath time. Help me to be mindful of my brothers and sisters around the world who may be in need of a kind of Sabbath different from what I need. Help me to reach out in love and grace. In the name of Christ I pray. 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 Rangoli Painting

Leader preparation: Prayer painting is a tradition in India to celebrate special days or acknowledge special places. Read details at <http://www.tinyurl.com/24fntc7>. For some people, Sabbath is a time of doing what they like to do best. Artists often find in their work a sense of Sabbath as they are able to create. Do an Internet search of Rangoli to find different patterns of the art to introduce to the youth, such as <http://www.tinyurl.com/3y836sb>.

Supplies:

- paper
- paints
- paint brushes
- markers

Spend time talking to the youth about how art can be a type of Sabbath-keeping. Those who are intimidated by art or feel they are inadequate may not feel that way. Introduce the Indian art of Rangoli, and invite the youth to create their own designs on paper. Remind them there is no “right” way to create. They are free to use the color as they wish. Encourage them to paint in a way that is relaxing and freeing for them. Since we aren’t going to actually paint on the walls or floors of the building, you may use the art as a collage on your wall. If someone is more comfortable with words, encourage them to write a poem or to use words in some creative way.

3 Understanding Sabbath

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with Sabbath practices as experienced by other cultures. For example visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/37jd9zn> or a similar site.

Supplies: None

Share with the youth what you discovered about cultures that take the definition of Sabbath more literally. Discuss with the youth what they would need to change in their lives in order to observe the Sabbath in this tradition. What would they have to give up? How would they have to plan ahead? Try not to make this an exercise of us against them, but rather of observing differences. What in our life would be healthier if we were more like the Amish? What about the way we observe Sabbath seems healthier? Is there a happy medium? How do different ways of observing Sabbath affect community? How do they define community?

Plan an activity with the youth (dinner, social gathering, anything to which they can relate). Then tell the youth that you will be doing the activity on the Sabbath and following strict Sabbath rules. How will you decide what the Sabbath rules are for the day? What will need to change? What needs to be done ahead of time in order not to break the Sabbath rules? Because we are dealing with youth, one might expect someone at some point to say, “This is stupid,” referring to strict observances of the Sabbath. If you encounter this, help the youth see what might be “smart” about such observances. Talk about intentional family time, respect for traditions, and help the youth to see that, just because other cultures live differently from how we do, they aren’t “stupid,” just different.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Removing the Yoke (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Using Isaiah 58:9b–14, you will explore with the youth what it means to remove the yoke. A yoke is a device used to keep two animals (usually thought of with oxen) together. At <http://www.tinyurl.com/2unxrzo>, you can find these two definitions: an agency of oppression, subjection, servitude, etc.; an emblem or symbol of subjection, servitude, slavery, etc., as an archway under which prisoners of war were compelled to pass by the ancient Romans and others. Spend some time thinking about what the “yoke” is for you, so you will be prepared to help the youth define their yokes.

Supplies:

- construction paper
- markers
- Bibles or copies of Isaiah 58:9b–14

Read together Isaiah 58:9b–14. Invite the youth to brainstorm definitions of the word “yoke.” Explore with them what might be a yoke in their life that needs to be removed so that they can keep the Sabbath. Talk about the things they can do to help “rise in their darkness.” Once the group formulates ideas, have the youth use the construction paper to make a yoke. You will need two bow-shaped pieces and a cross piece, which can be just a straight piece of paper. On the one bow, ask them to write those things that get in the way of the Sabbath, the “yokes;” on the other bow, ask them to write what they can do individually or collectively to reach out to others.

5 Waking Up with Our Minds Stayed on . . .

Leader preparation: The hymn “I Woke Up This Morning,”

<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong8>,

talks about the singer having his or her mind stayed on Jesus. During this activity you will explore what this means for the youth and come up with some of your own lyrics for the hymn. You will also invite the youth to act out their lyrics, since sometimes our actions speak louder than words.

Supplies:

- copies of “I Woke Up This Morning,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong8> (tune: WOKE UP THIS MORNING)
- newsprint
- markers
- paper and pencils
- musical instruments

If you have a recording of this song, you may play it, or go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/2unxrzo>. This clip is quite lengthy, but you can cut it back and only use what you choose. Encourage the youth to sing this song with some enthusiasm without being disrespectful to the tradition in which it is sung. Talk about the feeling the song brings about and what the singers in the congregation believe as they sing this song.

Change the focus to what the youth have on their minds when they wake up in the morning. Substitute their words for their own experiences, and then have them sing their words and add actions to their words. How does that change

the song? What does it teach them about their lives and their priorities? During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the words were adapted to, “Woke up this morning with my mind on freedom.” How does that alter the meaning of the hymn? What are other things we might have our minds on that relate to our current world situation? After experimenting with this for some time, return to the original words and have the youth sing it with actions that might depict what they mean by having their minds “stayed on Jesus.” When trying to make room for Sabbath in our lives, how does focusing on Jesus make that easier for us? What would make it easier, more difficult?

6 Tug of Rest

Leader preparation: Gather the supplies. Youth are often caught between what their parents/teachers expect of them and what their peers want them to do. This is often also a time when youth are trying to define themselves, but receive conflicting expectations from peers and adults in their lives. For this activity, you will explore what it means to be caught in a tug of war between what needs to be done, what others want you to do, and what the youth would rather be doing. Place a line of tape in the middle of the room. Place another piece about a foot on both sides of the middle piece.

Supplies:

- a long, heavy rope with a sign on the middle that reads REST on one side and DUTY on the other
- masking tape

Read together Mark 6:30–34, 53–56. Explore with the youth how the disciples and Jesus may have felt when they were trying to get away and yet they were constantly followed by the crowd. Divide the group in half and have each “team” take one side of the rope with the sign “Rest/Duty” over the middle piece of tape on the floor. At the count of three, have each side pull the rope until one group gets the sign past the line of tape closest to them.

In what ways is this tug of war like your experience? When have you felt as though you are the rope being tugged by competing “teams”? Invite the youth to describe a time when they didn’t want to do anything, but someone nagged them to do something. Maybe they wanted to read a book, and a parent wanted them to clean their room. Maybe they wanted to go out with a group of friends, and another group of friends tugged at them to do something else. How do they handle these situations? In what situations do they nag their parents to do something for them, when all their parent(s) want(s) to do is rest for a few moments?

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Annoying Little Pests (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review the activity.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- art supplies for drawing pictures
- mural paper (if available) or plain paper that can be taped together to look like a mural

Divide the group in two smaller groups. Invite both groups to create a mural of what Sabbath might mean to them using Isaiah 58:9–14a as their guide. Take Group A to a place where you can talk to them and give them directions. Leave Group B in the room working on a project you want them to finish in a specified period of time. Tell Group A that in addition to making a mural, their task is to do everything they can to interrupt Group B. They should ask group B for help on their own project, ask what they are doing, etc. Try to listen in on their conversations.

As they work, Group A will ask Group B for help along the way. They will ask for someone to help them draw a picture they find difficult, or someone to write in lettering that is more readable than their own. You really don't care if either mural gets finished; you want Group A to be persistent in their pestering and Group B to end up frustrated. If Group B asks to go to a different space to work, allow them to do that if you have the space available, but allow Group A to follow them. This will work especially well if your more artistic youth are part of Group B.

When you feel they can't deal with the frustration anymore, or when the time is nearly up, read Mark 6:30–34, 53–56 together. Ask Group B how they felt when they were constantly distracted from their task. How might Jesus and his disciples have felt when they were trying to get away and they were constantly followed by the crowd? Try to have Group A think about how they would feel if they were Group B. Think about a time when you were wanting to rest and you were interrupted. How did that make you feel? What was the response of Jesus and his disciples? Did they show their frustration? What can we learn from this activity?

8 Candy Bar Boats

Leader preparation: Jesus invited the disciples to get away for some Sabbath. You will talk about Sabbath and getting away and make a “boat” for the youth to experience Sabbath.

Supplies:

- assorted soft candy bars (full size), enough for each person
- toothpicks
- construction paper sails
- decorative materials
- Bibles

Read Mark 6:30–34, 53–56 together. Talk about how Jesus and the disciples were trying to get away. Sometimes when we want to “get away from it all,” it's as simple as finding a quiet place to enjoy our favorite snack. Invite the youth to make candy-bar boats as a reminder to get away to a quiet place. Have the youth decorate the paper sails with something that reminds them of Sabbath. Insert the toothpick through the longest straight side of the sail. Insert the sail into the candy bar to make the boat. Suggest that the youth take home the candy bar boats, find a quiet place to eat their candy bar, and think about what Sabbath means to them.

9 Sabbath Justice

Leader preparation: The text from Isaiah encourages us to look beyond ourselves to the needs of the poor and the oppressed. Your denomination or congregation may support mission partners throughout the world who can share stories of how our church has been present through very difficult times. Search the denominational website to look for links that offer ideas for how to “feed the hun-

gry” or learn about the need for other parts of the world to experience Sabbath. Contact one of the missionaries or your denomination’s global mission staff and seek their ideas or guidance.

Supplies:

- computers, if possible
- Bibles

Isaiah calls the people of Israel to look beyond themselves to the world at large, in particular the hungry and afflicted. As a group, if you can, use the Internet to find your denominational website and look for a place where you can connect to another country in the world and share their story with the congregation. As a group, or as individuals, investigate becoming “e-mail pals” with one of your missionaries. After doing some research, or sharing research you have done and then shared with the group, decide what you want to do that offers Sabbath to brothers and sisters in another part of the world. Share your findings with the congregation as a whole.

Reflect

What was a new learning for you and for your youth? What did the youth teach you about Sabbath? What will be different this week as you move from this time of exploration? See if you can’t find new ways to experience Sabbath in your life.

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Youth of this age are often so absorbed in their lives that they forget that not everyone experiences life the way they do. Today you will want to help them look beyond themselves. This will be an opportunity to help them see that the simple choices they make every day impact our earth, lifestyle of others, our world. For some this will be a big leap, but we hope they will gain some new insights for their living.

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

In these activities you will explore what Sabbath means not just for us, but also for others around the world. If you are able, spend time on the Internet links below to prepare yourself for the activities you have chosen. Constantly ask yourself, “How will this be heard by someone out of work, someone in a developing country, someone whose calendar may not be as full as mine? How can Sabbath be seen, not as something I need, but as something I can give to others?”

One way to introduce this practice of faith is to bring a candle and invite the youth to sit in silence for 1-1½ minutes of guided silent prayer. Be prepared for the youth to giggle and be restless. If you choose to do this each week, you will find them easing into this practice. As the weeks go by, try to increase this time to 5 minutes by the end of the study of this practice.

Prayer: God of Sabbath rest, as I come to be with these youth, help me to see beyond my own needs to the needs of others. Help me to understand that my way of thinking isn't the only way. Guide our time together that we may be more aware of the lives of others in our world and of ways we can reach out and be present. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Paying Close Attention (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: One part of observing the Sabbath is learning to pay attention to life around you and to enjoy the Sabbath in the little things. The group will spend time intently studying something to discover what they may have initially missed. The ideal setting for this is to be outside to study nature. If that is not possible, bring plants or parts of nature or photographs for the youth to study.

Supplies:

- natural habitat, or plants, one for each participant (this can also work with other objects you may choose, or with photographs of any of these things)
- a piece of string cut to 48" for each person

For some people, honoring the Sabbath or keeping it holy means to set aside one day a week. Another way of looking at this is to find little moments in each day when you honor creation or those around you. If you are able to go outside, have each person use a piece of string to mark off a square that is 12" x 12". Invite the youth to carefully observe that square for 3 minutes. Try not to let your mind think about other things, but really look at the object. As you look at it longer, what do you notice that you wouldn't notice just by walking by or glancing at it? How does the object change in your understanding of it, the longer you look at it?

If you are unable to go outside, provide a flower or plant or a picture of a plant or flower or insect or animal for each person.

After the three minutes, gather as a group and discuss your experiences.

Divide the group into small groups of three or four. Invite the youth to look carefully at the others in their small group. What do you notice that you didn't notice before, such as color of hair or eyes, the shape of the eyebrows or the lips, the length of hair – is there a part, on which side? This is not a touching exercise, just looking. When we pay closer attention to those near to us, we may notice things we don't when we are more focused on ourselves: when they smile more or less than they used to, when they walk faster or slower than they normally do. Can you notice these things about your family members? Sometimes being attuned to the Sabbath is being attuned to those around us so Sabbath (rest, relaxation, calm) can be shared. Maybe we notice someone is more tense than normal. Can we help alleviate their stress so we can share Sabbath together?

2 Exploring Holy

Leader preparation: Look up the word “holy” in a dictionary. Think what it really means for you.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- dictionaries
- thesaurus
- poster board
- markers
- magazines

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.

Jeremiah 17:22 says, “And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your ancestors.” Invite the youth to use a dictionary or thesaurus to see what they can find out about the word “holy.” If the Internet is accessible, go to <http://www.dictionary.com> or <http://www.thesaurus.reference.com> to research the word “holy.” Then invite the youth to write a definition in their own terms.

Invite the youth to make a collage that captures what they think it means to “keep the Sabbath day holy.” Use the poster board and their own drawing or magazine pictures, ads, and headlines. Maybe some in the group would be willing to write a newsletter article with your findings to share your definition with the congregation. Perhaps someone else would prefer to draw a cartoon strip to describe holy. What can the group do to help to keep the Sabbath holy? What about each person? Ask: What are you doing that does not keep the Sabbath holy? What can you change, or do you want to change, about your life to help to keep the Sabbath holy?

③ Feeding the Hungry

Leader preparation: Spend some time with 1 Corinthians 11:17–26. When you think about your community meals, who is invited? How much food is provided, especially for potlucks? What happens with leftover food? How is your church involved with feeding hungry people?

Supplies:

- Bibles
- dirt
- seeds
- a place to plant: either in small cups or, if the church has space and the climate is right, in a designated area outside

As a group read 1 Corinthians 11:17–26. Invite the group to describe the situation Paul addressed in the letter. How do they understand the conflict? Clearly Paul, who wrote this letter, is concerned that the church community in Corinth is not getting along, that some are not showing concern for others in the community who are less fortunate. It sounds as if some of the people are actually going hungry.

Some churches participate in soup kitchens that feed hungry people on a regular basis. Some churches participate in Church World Service CROP (Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty) walks to raise money to address the underlying issues of hunger and starvation. See <http://www.tinyurl.com/alhlf8>. Some churches have food pantries, or take up collections for food pantries. A few churches have communal gardens where they collectively plant, water, and weed the garden and then at harvest time donate the fresh food to a food pantry and/or shelter.

Invite the group to consider beginning a community garden. If it is not possible to plant a garden at this time of the year, make plans to plant a garden when the time does come, and invite the congregation to be a part of this new project. In the meantime, plant herbs that can be grown inside, and give them to a women’s shelter or food pantry so they can have some fresh food or herbs to help supplement their meals. As a way to care for the environment, do not use Styrofoam cups. Recycle old planters.

Invite the congregation to join you in a “planting day” and keep in touch through the newsletter how your plants are growing. Be sure to be clear who will be watering and tending the plants so that they can continue to be healthy.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Carrying Our Burdens (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Explore Jeremiah 17:19–27. This activity focuses on the types of burdens we carry and examines those from a global perspective. When we think about Sabbath and rest, we often think about Sunday and taking time for ourselves, not working. Sometimes keeping Sabbath is important not only for us as human beings, but for creation as well.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint or white board and markers
- “Ways to Reduce our Carbon Footprint,” Attachment: Activity 4

Invite a volunteer to read Jeremiah 17:19–27. With the group, focus on verse 21: “Do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem.” Some may take this literally, not to carry something heavy. But there are all kinds of burdens that we bear, and burdens that we place on our earth. One term for this is carbon footprint. A carbon footprint is a measure of the impact our activities have on the environment. It relates to the amount of greenhouse gases produced in our day-to-day lives through burning fossil fuels for electricity, heating and transportation etc. What do we do that places a burden on our earth? How might we reduce our carbon footprint? Use the handout to stimulate discussion and ideas for taking personal action.

Consider your church’s carbon footprint. What practices in the church might place a burden on the earth? What is your church’s policy and practice related to recycling? If you use bulletins, do you offer a place to recycle them after worship? If you are a country church, do you burn your garbage? If you have fellowship hour, do you use Styrofoam cups or washable mugs? Do you use disposable communion cups or glass cups that have to be washed? For dinners do you use paper or china plates, plastic wear or silverware? If your church is already making an effort to be green in these areas, what else could it do to help the environment?

If there is something you would like to see your church do, how might your group invite the church to embark on a green journey? What recommendations would you make to the governing board? Some suggestions might include: provide recycling bins for cans/glass/plastics or for paper, provide cups for fellowship hour or encourage people to bring a mug from home, sell mugs for fellowship hour and donate the money to a “green” cause in your community. If the group has difficulty thinking of ideas, take a walk around the church to look specifically for areas where your community of faith could work on being greener. Many churches and individuals receive way too many catalogues in the mail. Go to <http://www.catalogchoice.org> to register to cut down on the number of catalogues one receives.

5 Talking about Communion

Leader preparation: If possible, invite the pastor or an elder to speak with the group about communion. Gather the communion supplies and reflect on the meaning of communion in light of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11.

Supplies:

- communion plate and chalice
- bread and grape juice

Engage the youth in a conversation about communion either with the pastor or an elder. Ask members of the church board to visit your group today and study 1 Corinthians 11:17-26 together. In this letter to the church at Corinth, Paul talks first about how it is important for the community to share its food across social barriers and then immediately moves to instruction about how to celebrate communion. What do you think this says about communion? Who do you think is welcome? Who should be welcome? What is your church's practice of communion? What new insights are shared together?

Share a meal together with the bread and cup. If your tradition doesn't allow children to take communion until a certain age or until after baptism or confirmation, share the bread and cup without the liturgy of communion and talk about Jesus' sharing the bread and cup with the disciples. What does your tradition say about who can serve communion? Does an ordained pastor need to be present? Why or why not?

6 Burden Lifters

Leader preparation: Talk to the pastor or a local service organization to identify a family that "needs their burdens lifted." Perhaps it is someone who recently lost a loved one or a family whose parents have lost their jobs.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Jeremiah instructs the people of Israel not to carry a burden out of their houses on the Sabbath. Sometimes a burden is so heavy it is difficult to carry the burden, but maybe we as a community of believers can help others to lift their burdens. Ask the group to think of ways they can lift a burden for another, and then figure out a way to implement their idea together. Some suggestions might be: take care of a yard for a person who is disabled or elderly, take up donations for someone out of work or who lost everything in a fire, provide childcare for a young couple so they can go out alone for an evening. You and your youth know best your area and the needs people have. If you aren't aware of any, ask your pastor or someone in social work for guidance.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 A Little Too Much Rest (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: People who are in nursing homes or confined to their homes sometimes get too much rest. They often get lonely and would love to be able to get out and work again, or even have a visitor for conversation.

Supplies:

- construction paper
- markers, crayons, etc.

Talk to the youth about folks you know who maybe get too much rest, or who are by themselves most of the time. Think about people who were once leaders in your congregation, but are now homebound or in a nursing care facility. What kind of “Sabbath message” might they like to hear? Using the available supplies, invite the youth to make cards for these people and find a way to deliver them in person, so that they get not only the card, but a visit as well.

8 This Is My Body

Leader preparation: In 1 Corinthians Paul quotes Jesus as saying, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Contemplate what it means for you for the bread to be the body of Christ. What does it mean for you to do “this” in remembrance of Jesus? Some ancient authorities quote Jesus as saying, “This is my body broken for you.” What does that mean for you as a leader? Traditionally this has been thought to be reflective of Jesus’ body being broken on the cross, but he uses a loaf of bread when he says this, not the chalice or any other object. Can bread be shared if it is not broken? Is it possible that Jesus was speaking of something else when he said these words?

Visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/2342962> for a quick bread recipe, or use one of your own. If you do not have time actually to bake bread with the group, make bread to bring with you and send the recipe home with the youth.

Prepare to tell the story “Bread and Salt.”

Bread and Salt

At the School of the Disabled in Yerevan, Armenia, a visitor is greeted with a beautifully presented loaf of fresh baked sweet bread nestled beside a dish of coarse salt and a warm smile spread across the face of a young woman. The young woman has mental retardation. In 1991, when Armenia gained independence from the former Soviet Union, there was little hope for this young woman who had been discarded to live on the streets. Then along came a woman with a vision to open her arms and welcome children abandoned by the system. She gave them a place to go each day, a place to learn and to develop a skill so they could be independent like their country. She struggled to create a center for learning in an impoverished circumstance. In a climate where there was little infrastructure during the transitional government, her sensibilities and hospitality became a refuge for many.

So often during times of upheaval, she would tell visitors, we lose sight of our stories. Our stories shape our reality when they include the incitation of faith. We find inspiration to forge ahead. To lose our stories can shatter our faith journey and our lives.

The photo illustrates this sort of courage in faith that is captured in the practice of an ancient ritual of welcome. To offer bread and salt to a visitor is a symbolic act of offering sustenance for life in the salty tearful times of life. The visitor is invited

to dip the moist sweet bread into the salt, take and eat, and then enter the home. Together the host and the guest share life between them, the most holy of holies.

Supplies:

- bread-making supplies
- photo to accompany story “Bread and Salt,” Attachment: Activity 8

Arrange to use the kitchen so you can bake bread. While you are preparing the dough, talk with the youth about these words of Jesus in the Corinthians passage. Ask: What did Jesus mean? Talk about bread. What happens to a loaf of bread that is never broken? Is it possible to share bread that isn’t broken? Think about that imagery. Ask: What might Jesus have been thinking about when he spoke these words?

Tell the story “Bread and Salt” and display the picture. What does this story say about the importance of sharing bread?

Today you are baking bread for your group or providing a loaf of uncut bread. Are there times when you might want to bake bread for others? Some churches offer fresh baked bread to people who are new to their community, or present bread to church members who are moving away from the community. Does your church do this? Ask: What are some other ways you can think of to share your bread with your church, your community, a homeless shelter, a food pantry? (Many places such as shelters and soup kitchen have rules about what they can accept; check these before making plans.) Would you consider meeting once a month to bake bread for others? Whom could you include in this activity? What other ideas can you come up with? Obviously you may not have time to bake bread from start to finish in one session, but maybe you can bake rolls or muffins instead, or have them in the oven baking while you do some of the other activities for this session.



9 Sabbath and Justice

Leader preparation: Do a search on Google or Bing for information on Sweatshops and learn all you can about sweatshops and how you can raise this justice issue to your youth. Your goal will be to find at least one thing your group can do to help educate your congregation on this issue and one activity that can be done as a congregation-wide effort to educate about sweatshops and becoming greener.

Supplies:

- poster “Out of Work,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Käthe Kollwitz
- Bibles or copies of 1 Corinthians 11:17–26

Display the poster “Out of Work,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Käthe Kollwitz and invite the youth to tell stories about the picture. What are some possible situations that could have elicited this picture? It can be arrogant to talk about how everyone “should” take time for Sabbath when there are so many in our world who must work multiple jobs just to make ends meet. There are some people who must work harder at part-time jobs or day labor just for sustenance. Sabbath is just not an option. In our world there are many people who work full-time only to get home at the end of the day and not have enough money to feed their family. This is not because their families are too big; it is

because their pay is too little to support even the smallest of families. The “winners” in these situations are the employers who pay them too little for the work they do and the people — most of us — who buy the products at lower prices. Often those goods are not available to the poorest of the poor, but to the wealthy.

What can your group learn about sweatshops and how they affect the global economy? Look at the labels of the clothing you are wearing. Where was it made? What can you do as a group to educate your congregation about this issue? Does your church offer fairly traded coffee? As a group can you identify ways to keep this issue in front of your congregation on an ongoing basis? How does this conversation relate to Sabbath?

Reflect

How did these activities reflect on Sabbath and mission? Were you able to look beyond your own Sabbath needs to the needs of others? How will insights gained today affect your Sabbath observance?

Attachment: Activity 4

Ways to Reduce Our Carbon Footprint

<http://www.carbonfootprint.com/minimisecfp.html>

For Individuals

Here's a list of simple things you can do immediately:

- Turn it off when not in use (lights, television, DVD player, computer , phone charger, etc.)
- Turn down the central heating slightly (try just 1 to 2 degrees).
- Turn down the water heating setting (just 2 degrees will make a significant saving).
- Use a timer for the central heating. There is no point heating or cooling the house when no one is home.
- Fill your dishwasher and washing machine with a full load. This saves water, electricity, and detergent.
- Keep an on-going shopping list, and do your weekly shopping in a single trip.
- Hang out the washing to dry rather than tumble drying it.
- Sign up to a green energy supplier, who will supply electricity from renewable sources (e.g. wind and hydroelectric power). This will reduce your carbon footprint contribution from electricity to zero.

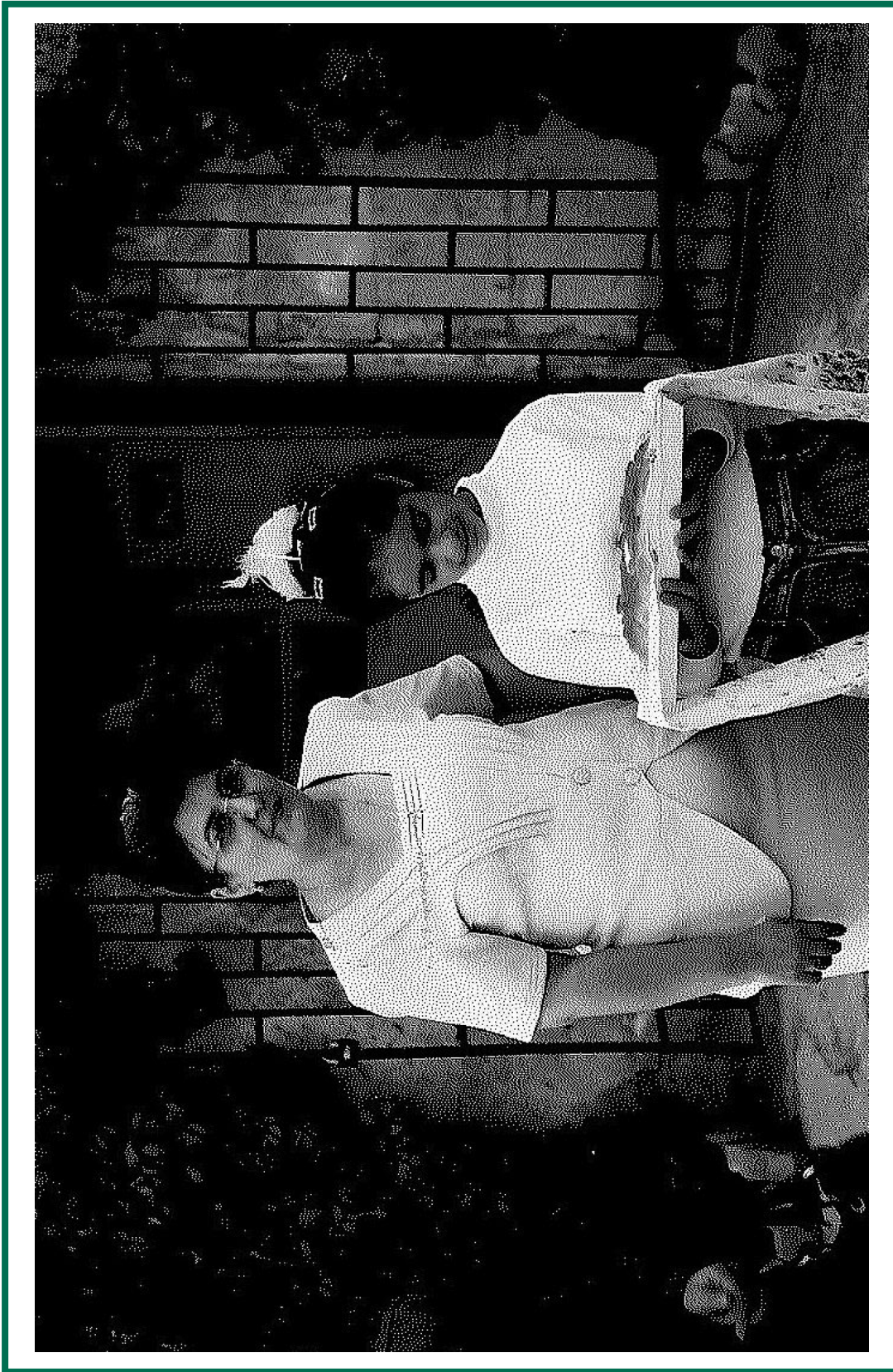
Travel less and travel more carbon footprint friendly:

- Car share to school or practice or any other place you go.
- Use public transportation rather than your car.
- For short journeys either walk or cycle.
- Try to reduce the number of flights you take.
- When staying in a hotel — turn off the lights and air-conditioning when you leave your hotel room, and ask for your room towels to be washed every other day, rather than every day.

As well as your primary carbon footprint, there is also a secondary footprint that you cause through your buying habits:

- Don't buy bottled water if your tap water is safe to drink.
- Buy local fruit and vegetables, or even try growing your own.
- Buy foods that are in season locally.
- Don't buy fresh fruit and vegetables that are out of season as they may have been flown in to your area from another part of the world.
- Reduce your consumption of meat.
- Try to buy only products made close to home (avoid items that are made in distant lands).
- Buy organic produce.
- Don't buy over-packaged products.
- Recycle as much as possible.
- Think carefully about the type of activities you do in your spare time. Do any of these cause an increase in carbon emissions, e.g. health clubs, restaurants, go-karting?

Attachment: Activity 8



Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

This component deals with two very different texts. The psalm is filled with imagery that can light the imagination. The Matthew text is darker and more difficult to interpret, especially related to Sabbath-keeping. Many try to stay away from discussions of death with youth, but youth are often more ready for the discussion than we are as adults. Don't be afraid to break new ground on this topic and allow the youth to question. Remember, we don't always know the answer to difficult questions, but we can always explore the possibilities of our faith together.

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

Spend time with both texts and familiarize yourself with the stories and images. Try to understand for yourself what Joseph of Arimathea was doing and why it was important for him to bury Jesus' body. If this text feels uncomfortable, spend more time with it and explore what makes it uncomfortable for you. Be willing to share your struggle with the youth.

One way to introduce this practice of faith is to bring a candle and invite the youth to sit in silence for 1-1½ minutes of guided silent prayer. Be prepared for the youth to giggle and be restless. If you choose to do this each week, you will find them easing into this practice as the weeks go by. Try to increase this time to 5 minutes by the end of the study of this practice. During the time of silence this week, invite the youth to think of what they would like to do to "get away from it all" and how they might include time for God in that space.

Prayer: God of every part of my life, you were there in the very beginning when I was knit together in my mother's womb. You are the one who lights a way for my path through all the ups and downs of my life, and you are there to the very end, leading me to new life after life here on earth. As I learn with and from the youth in this session, be with us and help us to understand who you are and who we are. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Death and Sabbath (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Unless youth of this age have lost someone in their family, they most likely have not thought or talked much about death and burial. Some feel this topic is off limits; yet, by discussing their feelings and fears, youth are better prepared when (not if) they have to face the death of someone they care about.

Supplies:

- Bibles or copies of Matthew 27:51–66

Read the Matthew text together as a group. Invite initial thoughts from the youth and ask them to describe how this text makes them feel. If they were to choose a color for this text, what would it be? If they were to choose an emotion for this text, what would it be? If they were to strike a pose for this text, what would it look like? If they were to choose a song to interpret the mood of this text, what would it sound like? Ask if anyone has had the experience of the death of someone close to them. What do they think of when they hear about death or dead bodies? Think about Joseph in this text. Why was it so important for him to bury Jesus' body? What are some rituals we follow when someone dies? When might death actually be a gift (try to help them understand that some people suffer so much that death is a release)? If they have uncomfortable feelings about death, is there someone with whom they can talk, perhaps an adult friend or the minister — or you as the group leader? How can the church be helpful to them? This is meant to be somewhat open-ended, in hope that this will lead the youth to continued conversation with family members or other leaders in the church.

2 Sabbath Gifts

Leader preparation: After the death of Jesus and before the experience of the resurrection, the disciples and the community at large were in a lull. The Messiah had died. Whether or not one was a follower of Jesus, the past days had been filled with excitement and activity. Now that he was dead, the crowds had dispersed, and for many it was back to business as usual, which can sometimes be mundane and boring. Both Joseph of Arimathea and the authorities were concerned about what to do with the body of Jesus, but for different reasons. Joseph, out of respect, wanted to place the body in a tomb to offer a proper burial. The authorities, afraid of rumors of a resurrection, wanted to make sure the body was secure in the tomb. This was an unsettling time as the disciples tried to understand what just happened and what was next . . . if anything.

Supplies:

- Bibles or copies of Matthew 27:51–66
- construction paper, markers, pens, stickers, ribbons, glitter, etc.
- list of people who are grieving

The disciples are used to following Jesus around, preaching, teaching, telling the gospel. Now that he is dead, what are they to do? What message will they bear now? They have not yet heard of the resurrection, they are afraid they too may be killed, and they are trying to figure out what the last three years mean in light of what has occurred over these past few days.

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.

Invite the youth to think about their memories of customs of Palm Sunday (some churches still have confirmation or baptism on that day; others may have big processions with palms and fanfare). Encourage them to think about the rest of Holy Week, especially the Saturday before Easter. What are those days like? Are they hectic? Do they feel empty compared to Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday? Invite them to think about what those days might be like if we didn't know to celebrate Easter, if we didn't know what to expect next. In many churches, the Sunday after Easter is referred to Low Sunday, as the church feels empty after being so full and busy on Easter Sunday.

Relate this to the experience of losing a loved one. From the time of death to the funeral, the mourners are busy preparing, making funeral arrangements, picking out flowers and caskets, notifying family and friends. There is usually a time of visitation at the funeral home when people come to express their sympathy. Often a meal is served following the funeral where people gather and tell stories of the deceased . . . and then everyone goes home. Ask the youth to think about how this might feel to the family left behind, especially if it is a spouse whose children are all grown up. This may seem like too much rest to the people who are mourning.

Read the list you gathered from your pastor of those who have lost loved ones. Plan to make a greeting card for them that reminds them that the church is still there for them. If possible, plan a time for some or the entire group to visit them. Before you visit, help the youth know what to say so they do not feel awkward.



3 “Guatemala: Procession”

Leader preparation: Different cultures celebrate high holy days in different ways. What may seem exhausting and a lot of work to one may feel like reprieve and relaxation to another. Do an internet search for “Semana Santa” to learn what other cultures do during Holy Week. Other searches might include Holy Week, processions, etc.

Supplies:

- poster “Guatemala: Procession,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Betty LaDuke

For most Christians, Holy Week is a time to reflect on our spiritual journeys. We begin with Palm Sunday and end on Easter with some sort of celebration, some more elaborate than others. Share with the youth what you have learned by studying Holy Week celebrations in other cultures. Look at the poster “Guatemala: Procession.” Try to bring out all of the images you see in the picture. Think about the work that might be involved for an elaborate Holy Week procession. How does that coincide or not coincide with an understanding of Sabbath?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 A Sabbath Quilt (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Psalm 119:105–112, 129–136, noting all the images.

Supplies:

- paper
- crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Bibles

Read the Psalm 119 verses with the youth and talk about the Sabbath imagery described there. Invite the youth to draw something that reflects the imagery in Psalm 119. If your group is large, divide into small groups and assign each group a different section of the psalm. When everyone is finished, assemble the pieces of paper as you would a quilt. During the week ahead display the “quilt” on the wall for the congregation to see.



5 Flashlight Walk

Leader preparation: The idea for this activity came from the true experience described in the story “Grandpa’s Gift,” Attachment: Activity 5. Read the story. Read the suggested verses from Psalm 119, focusing on verse 105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Gather flashlights. Sometimes local businesses give them away as advertising, so check around.

Supplies:

- story “Grandpa’s Gift,” Attachment: Activity 5
- small flashlights
- Bibles
- a room that can be darkened

After reading the verses from Psalm 119, talk with the youth about using a flashlight. If you hold a flashlight too close to the ground, you can’t see where you are going. If you hold it up higher, although the light isn’t as bright, you can see more area and move around more easily. Imagine what this might be like if you were walking in the woods at night. If you held your flashlight to the ground while walking in the woods, what could happen to you? How would holding the flashlight higher up change your view?

Turn off all the lights in the room, or go to a place in the church where it is really dark. Give everyone a flashlight and have them walk with their flashlights as close to the ground as possible. What is their experience? Now have them hold their flashlights further from the ground. How is that different? Read or tell the story “Grandpa’s Gift.” When we read the Bible, sometimes we hold our “flashlight” (interpretation) too close to the text and miss the full meaning. Reread the text, this time focusing on verse 130: “The unfolding of your words give light; it imparts understanding to the simple.” Ask: When do we focus too closely on what it means to have Sabbath? Are there other religious traditions that we take too literally? How can being too rigid about our faith hurt others? Is it possible to be too loose or liberal about our beliefs? As you consider keeping Sabbath, what about it can be helpful for you and your community? As you consider keeping Sabbath, what about it can be harmful to you and your community?



6 Struggling with Unwanted Rest

Leader preparation: Study the poster “Out of Work,”

<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>.

What does this poster say to you? Look at the expressions of the people in the poster. What are they thinking?

Supplies:

- poster “Out of Work,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Käthe Kollwitz
- Bibles or copies of Matthew 27:51–66

Read Matthew 27:51-66 with the youth with little explanation. Explore with them what this text might be saying about Sabbath. If they do not respond, that is okay; we'll get there eventually. Look at the poster "Out of Work." What does it say about rest? Talk about times when rest might be unwelcome. People who are out of work may feel as if unwanted rest is imposed on them at an inconvenient time. Invite the youth to describe a time when they experienced unwanted rest: detention, suspension, temporarily not able to play sports because of grades or injury, grounding. How does that feel?

Invite the youth to write a poem about unwanted rest. They might use one of several forms, such as an acrostic, a haiku, or cinquain. A cinquain poem has five lines that follow this pattern:

Line 1: one word (subject or noun)

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

Line 3: three words (action verbs that relate to line 1)

Line 4: four words (feelings or a complete sentence that relates to line 1)

Line 5: one word (synonym for line 1)

A haiku poem has three lines with 17 syllables. The first line has 5 syllables; the second, 7 syllables; and the third, 5 syllables. A Haiku must "paint" a mental image in the reader's mind.

Invite those who are willing to read their poems to the group.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Candles of Hope (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Using Psalm 119 as a springboard, look for the many ways that God's word is a lamp unto our feet.

Supplies:

- multiple colors of construction paper and yellow construction paper
- scissors
- markers
- glue and tape if necessary

Psalm 119:105 states, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." There are many words that show God's love and how God lights the way for us in our lives. Have participants use the construction paper to create an image of something that gives light, such as a candle, flashlight, lantern, torch, etc. Use the yellow paper to make a flame. Have them write words on the image of light that remind them of God's grace and guidance in their lives. If possible, pin the images on a bulletin board or tape them to the wall.

8 Mosaic Candles

Leader preparation: Building on the theme of light from Psalm 119, the group will make mosaic candles to enhance your worship space or to be taken home to create a Sabbath space. Or, give these candles as gifts to church members who are confined to their homes or a nursing facility.

Supplies:

- clear-glass votive cups of varying shapes and sizes
- mosaic grout
- stained-glass cobbles or colored glass or stones (available at any craft store).

Psalm 119 invites images of light that leads our path. We often think of light as white and bright, but sometimes, when we are trying to meditate, different colors help us express a mood or understanding we can't obtain when the lights are too bright. Read the suggested verses from Psalm 119. Talk with the youth about what they think of when they think of God's Word being a light onto their path.

Invite the youth to create candles that will illumine their path or the path of a shut-in. If they are going to give away the candles, send a card with Psalm 119:105 written on it.



9 Unlocking Our Fears

Leader preparation: Spend time with Matthew 27. For the Jewish community, Sabbath is from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, not Sunday. The disciples were filled with grief and fear. Jesus was dead. Now what? He had said he would be raised on the third day, but did they dare believe that? Sometimes Sabbath time is a time to find clarity about the future, to take time to trust that God will be with you, now and in the future. Make copies of the litany, Attachment: Activity 9.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- 4" x 4" squares of paper
- pencils
- fireproof bowl
- matches
- water
- litany, Attachment: Activity 9.

After reading Matthew 27:51–66 together, talk with the youth about what might be going through the minds of the disciples. Their leader is dead, and they are now feeling as if they have been left alone. They are afraid for their own lives and afraid of what the future may hold. Sabbath time is a time to reflect with God on where we are in our lives and where we are going, but sometimes we can't open up the space for God to be with us because we are afraid of what that may look like. If I take time for Sabbath and time to listen to God, I may not hear what I want, or I may hear something I'm not ready for.

Reflect

What did you learn with the youth in these activities? What did you learn about the youth? When you look at light, how will you remember to allow God to be a light to your path? The next time you celebrate Holy Week, will there be a new significance to that story? How will your life be different because of this time together?

Talk with the youth about why Sabbath time might be scary for them. Why do they not like quiet time with God? What might God be saying to them that they don't want to hear right now? Don't force them to share, but invite them to write their fears on pieces of paper. Then invite them to burn the pieces of paper in the controlled fire that has been provided. When all are done, close the session with the litany on the handout. Invite volunteers to read the part of the One Voice.

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Attachment: Activity 5

Grandpa's Gift

When Jacob was in the third grade, the church gave Bibles to the third-grade students. It was the church's custom to have a family member or baptismal sponsor be in attendance to present the Bible to the youngster. Having just moved back near his grandparents, Jacob asked his grandparents to present the Bible to him. On the Friday before Jacob was to receive his Bible, Jacob's grandfather ended up in the hospital with complications of his cancer. Grandpa asked to have Jacob come visit him in the hospital so he could talk to him. Grandpa asked Grandma to bring a Bible and pen light to the hospital.

When they arrived, Grandpa read Psalm 119:105 to Jacob. He asked him to come close to the bed and talked to him about his flashlight. "Jacob, what happens when you hold your flashlight too close to the ground?"

Jacob answered, "You could fall and trip over stuff."

Grandpa responded, "That's right. But when you hold your flashlight up a little, look what happens. You can see your path better. Sometimes when we read our Bibles, we hold our lights too close to the text, and we miss what God is calling us to do. But when we pull our flashlights back a little bit, we can see much more clearly and understand God's Word to us more fully. Tomorrow you are going to receive your first Bible. I hope you will read it with your flashlight away from the text, so that you will be able to see all of the path in front of you, not just part of it."

The next day Jacob received his Bible as it was presented to him by Grandma. Grandpa died the next night, and all Jacob asked of Grandma is if he could have Grandpa's flashlight.

(This is a true story. Credit goes to the Rev. Robert L. Johnston, who until his dying day tried to open the scriptures to those in his presence.)

Litany

One Voice: God comes to us and offers us Sabbath time to be who God calls us to be.

All Voices: Sometimes God comes when we don't want God in our lives.

One Voice: Sometimes we ask for God and can't seem to hear God's voice.

All Voices: Sometimes we hear God's voice clearly and run the other way.

One Voice: Today we hand our fears over to God so that God can help us find our Sabbath way.

All Voices: Today we continue our journey with God, a journey of Sabbath and renewal.