



## Living Stewardship

### About this Faith Practice

As a way of life, expressed in gratitude, living stewardship is a practice that involves all that it means to live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. It grows out of a deep caring for and joy in who we are as God's created people and the natural world in which we live. Living stewardship is about how we live our lives and how our lives express our values. It affects all of our decisions, especially the ones we make about the natural and human resources entrusted to us for care. Living stewardship is shalom: living in harmony with others and the world. It is about our relationships, liberation, grace, justice, peace, and mutuality as well as our material possessions. As faithful stewards, we are joined by our common gift of life and the reality of finite resources. We recognize that each of us is a mixture of neediness and fullness and so have responsibility to care for each other as we honor the holy in creation and ourselves. As faithful disciples, we are called to live as generous creatures created by a generous God who mutually shares responsibility with us for all creation. Stewardship involves all people because all are connected in mutually covenanted stewardship within God's original intent for 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.

## Living Stewardship

- 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 Living Stewardship and may be ordered by clicking on the links provided.

#### From Imaging the Word Poster Sets:

"Planting" by Rex Goreleigh (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus" by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark ..." by Barbara Reid (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

#### From AllPosters.com:

"Banjo Lesson" by Henry Ossawa Tanner (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters4>)

"Baobab, Okavango Delta, Botswana" by Pete Oxford (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters5>)

"Orion Nebula" by Stocktrek Images (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>)

### Music

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

Jesu, Jesu Fill Us With Your Love, Tune: Chereponi (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>)

Take My Gifts And Let Me Love You, Tune: Talavera Terrace (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>)

God Whose Giving Knows No Ending, Tune: Austrian Hymn (Hymn lyrics: <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6>) (Austrian Hymn tune: <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6a>)

### Scripture

Twelve Bible passages are used with Living Stewardship, two with each Exploration.

Discovery	Deuteronomy 8:7-18	Matthew 2:1-11
Scripture	Genesis 1:26-31	I Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19
Discipleship	Isaiah 55:1-3	Mark 10:17-22
Christian Tradition	Deuteronomy 14:22-29	Acts 4:32 - 5:11
Context and Mission	Isaiah 1:10-17	Mark 14:3-9
Future and Vision	I Chronicles 29:1-19	Revelation 21:10, 21:22-22:5

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# Living Stewardship



## Exploration: Discovery

### About this Age Group

Children and youth will learn much from one another as they discover what it means to live out their stewardship in all of life. A multiage community provides an opportunity for giving and receiving care from one another, sharing in leadership, and participating at many different levels. Learners who think they are “too old” to play, draw, or listen to stories may rediscover the blessing of these kinds of activities through the eyes of younger children. Younger learners often delight in having older children as helpers or role models. Such mutual caring is one way learners may discover what stewardship means to them.

### About this Exploration

For many, stewardship is only or primarily about money and tithing. This Exploration intends to help individuals and churches discover and imagine possibilities of what it means to live into a Christian sense of stewardship that involves all of life. We will explore both what stewardship can mean and how we might integrate it with our life experiences. Because God is still speaking, we listen, envision, and embrace our responsibility as God’s people, drawing upon the stories found in Scripture and the importance of continuing and sharing the story of what it means to be a disciple who is living stewardship.





BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:  
**Deuteronomy 8:7-18**  
**Matthew 2:1-11**

### Leader Preparation

Read Matthew 2:1-11. We usually hear this passage in the Christmas season. What do you notice as you read it in the context of stewardship? What does the word “stewardship” mean to you? Next, read Deuteronomy 8:7-18. Consider the blessings that the text mentions in verses 7-10. What is abundant, joy-filled, and good in your life right now? The scripture urges us not to give ourselves sole credit for success and bounty in life. What does it mean for you to “remember God” when life is good? As you consider stewardship issues with your group, think about how you might care for the environment by minimizing use of paper. If possible, obtain a white board to use instead of paper and markers for group activities.

*Prayer: Holy One, Source of Life, open us to the blessings in our life. Open our hearts to the gifts of children and youth in our group. Help us to respond with compassion and care. Amen.*

### Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation

## Exploring & Engaging Activities

### 1 S.T.E.W.A.R.D.S.H.I.P. (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** On slips of paper clearly print each of the following words (or names of other familiar natural objects that begin with the letters of the word “stewardship”): sheep, strawberries, trees, tiger, whale, water, apple, ants, river, rain, dog, daisy, sea, sunflower, hand, horse, ivy, infant, people, potatoes. Fold the slips of paper and put them in a large envelope, basket, or other container

**Supplies:**

- crayons or markers
- large sheets of drawing paper or unprinted newsprint
- pencils
- writing paper
- large envelope, basket, or other container
- Bibles

Play a game of “Draw That Word.” A learner randomly takes one of the words from the container and draws a picture for the rest of the group. The others try to guess the word. The person drawing cannot speak or gesture. Have a helper to read the word for nonreaders or, if necessary, to help them draw the object. List the words on newsprint or a white board as they are guessed.

Once everyone has had a turn, or most of the words have been drawn, ask someone to read the list aloud. Be sure that you have enough words to spell “stewardship.” Ask: What do these words have in common? Affirm that there are many possible answers. Tell the group that these words also begin with letters of the word “stewardship.” Write the word “stewardship” across the top on a large piece of paper and then, also, write it vertically down the page. Have the learners help you match items in your list to the letters in “stewardship.” Invite the learners to think about what “stewardship” means and what these items have to do with stewardship. Have you ever heard of stewardship? Who knows a definition? Does anyone know what a steward does?

Read aloud Deuteronomy 8:7, and paraphrase verses 10 and 17 (for example, “Do not say, ‘These things are mine and I earned them with my hard work’ but remember God. Bless God and give thanks for all the good things God gives.”) If it has not already been mentioned, add that all of the items in the list you made are things in the world and all of them need people to help care for them or protect them from harm.

Hand out crayons and paper or pens and paper. Have the younger learners draw pictures of things in the world that they already help to take care of. Have older learners write a prayer or poem about caring, using the letters of the word stewardship to begin each line.

### 2 Mine, All Mine: A Drama

**Leader preparation:** Read over the drama and consider how you will help the children and youth act it out.

**Supplies:**

- Copies of the drama “Mine, All Mine,” Attachment: Activity 2



with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

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

Assign parts for the drama. Make sure younger learners or nonreaders are paired with someone who can read. There are parts for five animals—horses, rabbits, groundhogs, prairie dogs, and buffalo (which can be played by individuals or groups)—and a narrator (this part can be taken by the leader or shared by several older children or youth). Have the group prepare and present the drama. The part for the owls is left open-ended. Have the owls begin by making some suggestions; then have all the other children make suggestions for how the animals might work together to solve their problem.

Use the following questions for conversation: Did any of the animals really own their part of the prairie? Do you think they should have divided up things so that some owned the watering hole or the shady places or the grass? Why or why not? Who owns the earth? Do you think there is anything that you as an individual person own? Will you own this forever, are you “borrowing it,” or taking care of it for someone in the future?

Talk about the difference between taking care of something for a while and owning it forever. Refer to Deuteronomy 7:10 and 17, “Do not say, ‘These things are mine and I earned them with my hard work’ but remember God. Bless God and give thanks for all the good things God gives.” Wonder together about some of the ways we can give thanks to God for the good things in our life.

### ③ Make a Stewardship Board Game

**Leader preparation:** Look at a “Snakes and Ladders” or another board game to get an idea of how the game is laid out. Cut pieces of poster board to the size of a “Snakes and Ladders” game board. Rule out the squares on the poster board and number them. You will need one piece of poster board for every two learners. (If you don’t know this game, Google “Snakes and Ladders” game; you’ll find description as well as images of a game board.)

#### Supplies:

- pencils
- rulers
- fine tipped markers
- tokens to use as games markers
- dice

Have learners work individually or in pairs to make a board game similar to a “Snakes and Ladders” game except with gifts and obstacles. Gifts are gifts from God for all the earth to share, such as forests, food, sunlight, clean water. A “gift” gives the player an extra turn. Obstacles in the path pose a problem in the world. For example, “flood caused by global warming” or “poor children who don’t get breakfast.” The learner landing on such a square must suggest a way to address the problem, such as “use cars less and walk more” or “give food to the food bank.” Players can ask others to help with ideas. Encourage learners to be creative. They might even want to create detours for some of the bigger obstacles. Make sure younger learners and nonreaders have helpers or can work in a group that has older children and youth. They might color and illustrate obstacles or gifts while others do the writing, for example. When the game boards are finished, distribute tokens and dice and enjoy playing the games.



## Discerning & Deciding Activities

### 4 Gifts of the Magi: Act Out the Story (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Read Matthew 2:1–11 and plan to tell it to the group, invite an older learner to read, or read it to the group from a children's Bible.

**Supplies:**

- costumes for kings, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,
- gifts (props and costumes are optional)
- staple
- scissors
- crayons
- paper to make crowns

Ask learners to share an occasion when they gave a special gift to someone. Encourage listening to one another. Make sure everyone who wishes to has an opportunity to share an experience. Make simple paper crowns. Decorate them with jewels and gold (using crayons). Tell the story of the Magi who visit Jesus (or have an older learner read or tell it to the group). Recall the gifts that the Magi brought. Note that they were extravagant and unusual gifts. Wonder together why the Magi came to see Jesus and how they felt when they offered their gifts.

Act out the story together by letting learners take different roles and put on different costumes. Someone reads the story and others mime the action. Ask: What gifts do you have to give to others? If you were one of the Magi, what gift would you like to have given Jesus? How could you "give a gift to Jesus" now? If you have not yet done so, note that this Exploration will be talking about stewardship. Ask if anyone knows what this word means. Discuss the idea of stewardship as giving or sharing gifts that we have received from God. Ask: What have we been given by God?

### 5 Islands in the Sun: A Cooperative Game

**Leader preparation:** You may need to relocate your group to a large space to allow room for the islands and the "sunbathers" to move around.

**Supplies:**

- Bible
- newspapers
- a recording of lively music
- sunglasses and sun hats (optional)
- lemonade
- glasses
- ice

Play the game "Islands," which is a bit like musical chairs, as follows:

- Spread sheets of newspaper on the floor to represent "islands" in the sea (start with two sheets of newspaper for each island); be sure there is "ocean" space between the islands.
- Play lively music during which everyone swims and splashes in the "sea."
- When you call out "sharks," everyone finds an island on which to sunbathe. Encourage learners to enter into the pretend game by basking peacefully on their "island."



- Turn on the music, and everyone leaps back into the sea.
- Gradually remove islands and make them smaller by ripping off parts of the paper until everyone has to balance and huddle together to keep out of the sea.

After the game, "cool off" on a new island in the sun—a nice big shady one with lots of space to spread out and enjoy the warm breeze. Serve ice cold lemonade and talk about the game. Talk about what happened: Was it hard to share islands and make room for everyone? Imagine if the world was like a single island floating through outer space, an island that everyone shared together. Read aloud Deuteronomy 8:7–18. Wonder about what God has in mind for people on this little planet we share with other creatures.

### 6 Rake and Run

**Leader preparation:** Plan an idea for your group (see below) that involves service without reward.

**Supplies:**

- tools appropriate for the task, such as rakes, snow shovels, baskets, trash bags, and so forth

Hold a "rake and run," or equivalent, by which you can do a helpful activity for neighbors or older members of the congregation. Make sure it is something that all ages can do. Possibilities (depending on the time of year and the needs of your community):

- rake leaves
- shovel snow
- pick unpicked fruit or berries (for a food bank or for the neighbor)
- pick up litter in a local park (be sure to provide gloves for the children)
- pick up used batteries (printer cartridges or another recyclable item that is not picked up at curbside) and deliver them for recycling

Gather after your work for lemonade and to talk about the experience together. Start the reflection by asking something like: How did you feel doing something needed for no reward?

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 7 Walking a Way of Love: Make a Footprint Path (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Cut out footprint shapes in colored construction paper (left and right feet) or have learners do this as they gather.

**Supplies:**

- colored construction paper
- markers or crayons
- scissors
- magazines and glue (optional)

Invite learners to help make a footprint path leading from your congregation's





worship area to the street (or as close as is feasible). The footprint path will show, in words and pictures, how we can "walk a path of love" in our world. On each footprint, write specific acts of love, ways we can share God's love and God's gifts or ways we can care for other people and our planet. Give all congregation members a crayon as they leave worship. Ask them to choose a footprint idea and commit themselves to acting upon it by writing their initials on the footprint.

Use the ideas plus ones identified by the learners:

- visit someone who is feeling sad
- make a new friend
- bring a smile to someone who is sick
- make cookies for a neighbor
- give a gift of money to a local charity
- help out with a church outreach project
- phone or e-mail someone who needs to hear a friendly voice
- help your family with a chore
- smile at someone you don't know

## 8 Create a Giving Tree

**Leader preparation:** Post the mural paper on the wall at a height easily accessible to all the learners in a part of the learning space that would be good for storytelling. Arrange a comfortable rug or blanket and pillows near the mural.

### Supplies:

- poster: Baobab, Okvango Delta, Botswana by Pete Oxford, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters5>
- bare branch (larger is better)
- a pot with stones
- green, yellow, and red construction paper
- leaf cut-out templates (find them on Google images or draw your own leaf shapes)
- scissors
- single hole punch
- yarn or cord
- markers
- pens or pencil
- crayons

Invite the learners to study the poster and share their impressions and reactions. Encourage them to imagine what it would be like to stand under this tree looking up. Explain that the tree is useful for all kinds of different things. It is a source of water in the desert because its large branches often collect rainwater. It can provide food, medicine, fiber, shelter, and many other things besides. Option: have children and youth find out more about the baobab tree on the Internet (e.g. <http://www.tinyurl.com/yjj4cxk>).

Make a tree that gives almost as much as a baobab tree. Make construction paper leaves by cutting leaf shapes in green, red, or yellow construction paper. Use a hole punch to make a hole in each leaf and tie on yarn or cord so it can be hung on the tree. In this session (and for other sessions): On each leaf write an example of either a gift we receive from God or a gift (or way of caring, sharing, loving) that you can give to others. Encourage learners to make their examples concrete—



some things they could actually do. During other sessions on Living Stewardship, take time to add new leaves to the tree.

Note: The baobab tree is also a place where some communities gather for storytelling. You might wish to use your baobab tree as a storytelling gathering place for your group.

### 9 Filled with Jesus' Love: Music and Watercolor Art

**Leader preparation:** Learn the hymn or arrange for someone to teach it to the participants, sing it to the group, or accompany the group.

#### Supplies:

- copies of the hymn "Jesu, Jesu Fill Us with Your Love" (tune: Chereponi) <http://www.tinyrl.com/FPSong4>
- watercolor paper
- tubes of watercolor paint
- plates or flat dishes to use as palettes for the paint
- brushes
- cups of water for wetting brushes for each learner
- damp towels for cleanup and for hands

You can find the lyrics and hear the tune of the hymn at <http://www.tinyrl.com/FPSong4>.

Teach the hymn "Jesu, Jesu Fill Us with Your Love." Encourage learners to create art that reflects how this song makes them feel. Show them how to wet the paper using water and brush (so that the paper is damp but not soaking wet all over the surface). Create a "wash" using a very wet brush and a very small amount of paint—wash the color over the paper to produce a very pale background color. Then, choose a second color of paint and place a small dot of paint on the wash (while it is still wet). The paint will bleed out in a star like pattern. Repeat with different colors, but do not overwork the art (if too many colors are used it will end up as an overall brown or gray).

## Reflect

It is said that we are given many more blessings in life than we actually recognize. How is this true for you (or not)? Take a moment to count the blessings you receive from your leadership role with children and youth. What gifts do you offer? As you think back over the activities of this Exploration, recall the moments that brought joy or blessing to you or to the children and youth who gather with you. What might you do in future Explorations to increase the joy, community, or insight (or other blessings) that might be gained from this experience together?

As learners share their work with others, encourage them to talk about the song. Sing the song again as a group and ask children to show the art that they have created. Invite conversation about the lyrics of the song. What it might be like to be filled up with Jesus' love? What would it be like to spend time with someone who was filled with love?

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Attachment: Activity 2

**Drama: Mine, All Mine**

**Narrator:** There was a time when none of the animals owned the prairie. Everyone could drink at the watering hole any time of day or night. Everyone ate the roots or the berries or the sweet grass whenever they felt like it. All the animals could run and play in the big wide open spaces under the big wide open sky. Whenever it was hot, there was room under the wide shade trees down by the stream for any animal to lie down in the cool grass. And no one said, "That's *my* spot or *my* field or *my* watering hole." But one day rabbits were out playing in the big wide open spaces under the great wide sky when horses came thundering by.

**Horses:** Look out little rabbits, here we come! Watch how fast we are. Watch how we run!

**Rabbits:** Hey, stop that thundering running. You almost trampled us, you crazy animals. Can't you see we were here first?

**Horses:** Ha, ha, ha and neigh, neigh, neigh. Get out of our way you slow and stupid rabbits.

**Rabbits:** How dare you speak to us like that, you proud and annoying horses. Slow down or someone will get hurt!

**Narrator:** But the horses didn't care. They kept on running up and down in the great wide open spaces. They mocked the rabbits,

**Horses:** Ha, ha, ha and neigh, neigh, neigh. Stupid rabbits, stupid, slow rabbits.

**Rabbits:** Well, I never! Did you ever see such a thing? If they carry on like that our little ones are sure to get run over. We must build a fence to protect ourselves.

**Narrator:** So the rabbits built a fence. They chose a part of the prairie near their burrows, and they built a fence all around that part of the prairie.

**Rabbits:** That will keep those stupid, dangerous horses out of *our* part of the prairie.

**Narrator:** The groundhogs were shocked by the fence the rabbits had built.

**Groundhogs:** Will you look at what those rabbits have done.! Look over there. They have built a fence around their burrows. But their fence gets in the way of our burrows. They dig their fence poles into the ground and don't even care that our burrows are in the way. If they keep that up, one of the groundhogs is sure to get hurt. We must build a wall to keep the rabbits out of *our* part of the prairie.

**Narrator:** So the groundhogs built a wall right across the big wide open space of the prairie to keep out the rabbits with their dangerous fences.

**Groundhogs:** There, look at our fine wall. That will stop those stupid rabbits with their stupid fences.

**Narrator:** The prairie dogs were shocked and appalled by the wall the groundhogs had built.

**Prairie dogs:** Will you look at that wall? How could they do such a thing? Now we can't get to the watering hole to have a drink. We will have to build a trench to get to the watering hole.

**Narrator:** So the prairie dogs built trenches under the wall that the groundhogs had built, and while they were at it they also built trenches along the fences that the rabbits had built. And just for fun, they built some trenches to play in because the horses were still running about and almost trampling on the other animals. But this made the buffalo very upset.

**Buffalo:** These trenches that the prairie dogs have built are very dangerous. We might accidentally get our hoofs stuck and break our legs. We will have to build some roads to get to our pastures.

**Narrator:** So the buffalo built roads beside all the trenches to get to the pastures. The horses started running up and down on the roads the buffalo had built, because they were tired of jumping over all the fences and walls that had been built and because they, too, were afraid of getting their hoofs caught in the trenches.

**Buffalo:** Stop using our roads. We built them and they belong to us!

**Horses:** You don't own the prairie!

**Buffalo:** No, but we own the roads, and we say you can't use them. And these are our pastures up here, well away from those rabbits and their terrible fences.

**Horses:** Fine, if you want the pastures up there, then we will have the pastures down in the shade by the stream.

**Prairie dogs:** What about us? We like to rest in the shady places when the sun is hot.

**Horses:** Well, you can't anymore. They belong to us now. You can have the watering hole.

**Buffalo:** Wait a minute there. You can't have the watering hole. We go to drink there.

**Prairie dogs:** Not anymore you don't! It's ours now.

Attachment: Activity 2, page 3

**Groundhogs:** Has anyone considered us? We have hardly any grass in our part of the prairie and no water at all!

**Narrator:** Soon all the animals were fighting and quarrelling and arguing over who owned what and whose was whose and who was allowed to do what and go where. Some animals weren't getting enough grass to eat and some were too hot and some didn't have water to drink and some had nowhere they could play without being in danger of getting trampled by the horses.

**Owls:** Look at all those animals fighting and arguing. No one is having fun anymore under the big wide sky. The trenches and roads have dug up too much of the grass. Muddy water is rushing into the watering hole. The rabbits have used too many trees to build their fences and the prairie is looking terrible and the groundhogs have eaten their grass down to the roots. Soon everything will all be ruined. We must do something.

**Narrator:** So the owls called all the animals together, and this is what they said:

**Owls:** Animals, listen to us . . .



# Living Stewardship



## Exploration: Scripture

### About this Age Group

Multiage groups hear scripture on many different levels: as story; as an ongoing conversation between voices from the past, present, and future; as texts that inform and resonate with daily life; as sacred metaphor; or as one of the ways in which we encounter the holy in our lives. In particular, the text from Genesis, which is used in this Exploration, is multivocal and will touch participants in many different ways. Some may identify with the idea of humans and animals in harmonious relationship. Others may enjoy the story of God as creator, or take pleasure in the patterns and rhythms of this ancient poetry. One gift of multiage groups is the way in which diversity of perspectives and interpretations enriches the whole group. The texts for this Exploration also point to diversity of perspectives. Some in your group may be ready to proudly take responsibility as stewards of creation; others may not be so sure of their own power or giftedness; some may give generously while others may hold on to what they possess. Some may live with a sense of gratitude while others may have to learn how to become deeply satisfied. Honor differences in your group while offering challenges and encouragement to growth.



## About this Exploration

When we hear scripture as a community, we discern its life-giving blessings and reconcile its power to generate wholeness with its history of abuse and its potential for misuse. Scripture gives us a foundational image of God that is relational and embodies differences within the whole. We hear many different voices and contexts within Scripture and are invited to sit with these differences without resolving the tension. Within the context of stewardship, scripture affirms that God blesses each part of creation as necessary for the well-being of the whole. At the same time, our experience, guided by the Holy Spirit, calls us to reject an understanding of dominion as power over creation. Scripture tells us that we are made in the image of God, the Creator and Source of Life, and so invites us to accept the gifts God provides for the enjoyment of all and to embrace "life that is really life" rather than storing up treasures and individual possessions.

### BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

***Genesis 1:26–31***  
***1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19***

## Leader Preparation

The focus scriptures for this Exploration remind us of our place in creation. The texts are both humbling and empowering. We bring nothing with us into this world and take nothing out of it; yet we are created in the image of God and share responsibility for tending and caring for creation. Find a quiet place where you can read aloud Genesis 1: 26–31 and 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19. Take time to ponder the texts. When your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the words of the passage. Write out the text from 1 Timothy and put it in your wallet or purse as a reminder through this coming week. When you come across it, perhaps while making a purchase, consider how you respond to this text and how it speaks to you in that particular moment. Say a prayer of thanks for God's gift of creation and for the participants in your group.

Some art activities take longer than the allotted time. Participants may be frustrated if they are rushed or not allowed to really get into the activity. Consider allowing a longer time for art, giving sufficient time for all to explore the

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Post Office Game: Send a Letter to Yourself (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Prepare a "letter" from the writer to Timothy (see text below) and place it in a sealed envelope.

#### Supplies:

- Bible
- lined paper
- pens or pencils
- crayons
- stamps and envelopes

Play "Post Office" as follows: The group sits in a circle. The letter carrier walks around the outside of the circle saying, "I have a letter for someone. Who is it? Who is it? It's for \_\_\_\_\_ [says someone's name]." At this point the carrier taps that person on the head. The person and the letter carrier must run (or hurry) in opposite directions around the circle. The letter carrier tries to steal that person's spot. Whoever is left standing becomes the new letter carrier. After the game, explain that you are going to read part of a letter that someone wrote to Christians nearly two thousand years ago. Read a letter from the Bible to Christians in the early church, a paraphrase of 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19, such as the following, but feel free to write your own. Depending on your group, you may want to make copies of a handwritten version of this and distribute.

Dear Friends, Being good and being happy is what God wants for us. If we have food and shelter, that is all we need. Some people long for lots of riches and cool stuff, but that only leads to temptation and trouble. Loving money causes all kinds of problems in life. We bring nothing into this world when we arrive and we can't take anything out when we leave. So tell those who are rich not to brag about it and not to put all their trust in wealth. Do good, share with others, and you will have what truly gives life. Sincerely, Timothy

Ask: What do you think the writer of this letter thought made people happy? Do you agree or disagree? Why? Invite participants to write letters to themselves (or to draw a picture, if they are not yet able to write), giving advice about what brings happiness to ourselves and to others. Put stamps and addresses on the letters so they can be mailed to the participants themselves. Then, wait a few weeks and put them in the mail.



technique and get into a creative space. Art practices are an important spiritual practice in themselves and do not always need conversation or “debriefing.” Sometimes it is important to simply let the participants be peacefully engaged with art.

At the beginning of each session with participants, invite them to share stories of gratitude (what made you happy or when did you feel good this week?) and response (what opportunities did you have this week to show care for someone or something?). Make sure everyone has a chance to share an experience or story, but don’t force anyone. Encourage others in the group to listen with care and respect.

*Prayer: Holy One, Source of Life, open us to the blessings in our life. Open our hearts to the gifts of children and youth in our group. Help us to respond with compassion and care. Amen.*

### Session Development

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

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

## 2 Tell a Creation Story

**Leader preparation:** Prepare to tell a story of creation (see below).

### Supplies:

- poster: Orion Nebula by Stocktrek Images, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>

Display the poster “Orion Nebula” and ask everyone to gather around to look at it. Ask them for impressions of the photograph. Ask questions such as: What do you like? How does it make you feel? What do you notice? Ask if anyone knows what it is a photograph of. Use the information below to tell them about the Orion Nebula, or invite older participants to find out information on the Internet and report back:

Nebulae are enormous clouds of dust and gas far away in outer space. Over millions of years, gravity pulls the gas, dust, and other materials together to form larger and larger clumps, which eventually become big enough to form stars and planets. The Orion Nebula is 100,000,000,000,000 kilometers away from Earth. Ask if any of your participants know the word for 100 followed by that many zeros (15 zeroes!); the answer is one hundred quadrillion (which, on the scale of the universe, is fairly close). It is the closest place in the universe to Earth where stars are being formed. But because the Orion Nebula is so far away, it takes light a long time to get from there to here. So when we look at the Orion Nebula, we’re looking at things that happened almost 1500 years ago. Wow!

Wonder about nebulae: For example, I wonder how long it takes for a star to form from a cloud of gas. I wonder what that would look like if time were speeded up. The Orion Nebula is one place that stars are forming now. I wonder what the nebula looked like that formed our own galaxy.

Explain that in the Bible there is a story about creation. It is a story that was written down long before people knew anything about the Orion Nebula. It goes like this (tell the story using the paraphrase below):

God created everyone and everything. When God was done, God blessed them. But to the people, God gave extra responsibility: “You will have children and grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Soon, people will live everywhere on earth. Take care of all the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and the creatures that live on the ground. I have given you plants to eat and berries to pick and trees with fruits and nuts. And all the creatures will have plants and berries and grasses to eat as well.” So, that’s what happened. God saw everything that was made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning on the sixth day.

Ask questions to promote conversation about this story: What do you like about this story? What does it make you think about?

## 3 Create a Different Story of Creation

**Leader preparation:** Read the paraphrase of Genesis 1:26–31 below, or write one of your own, and prepare to tell it to the group. Think of stories you know about creation from the first two chapters of Genesis. Do an Internet search for a creation story from another culture or context. For example, Australian dream time creation stories at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2fo95s7> or Native American creation stories at <http://www.tinyurl.com/25rjj8a>.



**Supplies:**

- paper
- crayons or markers

Tell the Genesis story of creation using the paraphrase below—or in your own words. If participants already know the Genesis story, invite them to tell it to you.

God created everyone and everything. When God was done, God blessed them. But to the people, God gave extra responsibility: "You will have children and grandchildren and great-great-great grandchildren. Soon, people will live everywhere on earth. Take care of all the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and the creatures that live on the ground. I have given you plants to eat and berries to pick and trees with fruits and nuts. And all the creatures will have plants and berries and grasses to eat as well." So, that's what happened. God saw everything that was made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning on the sixth day.

Ask: How does God feel about Earth? What does God want people to do on Earth? Tell another creation story from a different culture or context. Then, invite participants to make up a story of their own about creation. It might begin like this: "Long, long ago, when the universe was very new . . ." Encourage the group to write down the story. If you have time, they could draw pictures to illustrate it. (Older participants could write the story and younger ones can illustrate it.)

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 Happiness Is . . . : A Continuum Exercise (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Make a long line down the center of the learning area (at least 8 feet long, preferably longer) with masking or painter's tape. At one end of the line, post a piece of paper on which you have written a big X and the word AGREE. At the other end of the line post a piece of paper with a big X and the word DISAGREE. Write large so that each can be seen from each end of the line. Write out some statements about happiness such as the following:

- To be happy you have to have lots of money.
- People who are unhappy usually deserve to be unhappy.
- Giving a gift to someone makes you happier than getting a gift.
- If you are kind to someone else, you end up feeling happier yourself.
- Whether you are happy or not is just a matter of luck.
- The richer you are the happier you will be in life.
- Doing good is more important than having lots of cool stuff.
- The only thing we really need in life is shelter and food.
- God really wants us to be happy and enjoy life.

Note: Choose statements that will be easy for participants to understand, but also choose a variety of statements that will lead to different interpretations, not just ones that lead to the "right" answer.

**Supplies:**

- paper
- masking tape
- markers



- crayons and drawing paper (optional)

Gather participants near the central spot on the line. Explain that you will be making some statements. Point out that one end of the line means you agree with a statement and the other end of the line means you disagree. Tell participants that they will have to choose where they are on the line for each statement. If they really strongly disagree, they would go to the disagree end. If they strongly agree, they would go to the agree end. If they are not sure, or sort of agree, or are in the middle, they would choose somewhere along the line. Say that there is no "right answer"; this activity is about sharing different opinions.

Read the first statement. Pretend you are a "roving reporter" on the street; interview a few participants about why they responded as they did. Repeat with a different statement. Continue for five or six times, or until you think the main ideas about happiness have been raised.

Gather back into a circle and use some of the following questions for conversation: Share a time when you felt happy. What was going on that made you feel good? What kinds of things make you happy? Do these things make you happy for a short while or is this a lasting kind of happiness? Do you think God wants us to be happy? What do you think are the most important things a person needs if they are to be truly happy?

If time permits, invite participants to draw a picture of "a happy life."

## 5 Plant Beans

**Leader preparation:** Obtain permission to plant a small plot of beans on your church property. If the area has not been previously tilled (for example, it is a lawn), arrange to have it tilled. If you have only a small property, plan to grow scarlet runner or pole beans against a south-facing wall. Contact your participants to make sure they wear outdoor gardening clothes, boots, rain gear, and so forth, as necessary. Alternative: If you do not have access to outdoor space, use glass jars with moistened paper towels. When the beans sprout, repot them into small containers. Let them grow to a reasonable size before composting them. Reuse the potting soil for other plants (it will have been fertilized by the roots of the growing bean plant).

### Supplies:

- bean seeds, such as green beans, scarlet runners, or pole beans (choose beans that are suitable for growing in your area and avoid hybrid seeds)
- gardening tools and gloves

Plant beans in your outdoor space according to package directions. Explain that beans naturally replenish the soil without use of artificial oil-based fertilizers. They are called "nitrogen fixing plants" and are ideal for making organic fertilizer. Older children or youth might research additional information about why nitrogen is important to replenish the soil and how exactly beans add nitrogen to the soil. Let the beans grow. Check the plot occasionally. Once established, beans don't usually need watering, unless there is a drought. Keep a blog of the bean progress on the church Web site. When the bean plants die back after they ripen, gather the stems and roots into a big pile; cover with dry leaves or sprinkle with a little soil; for quick compost, if it is still warm, cover with black plastic sheeting. Save a few bean seeds for next year's crop. Turn your compost pile over or add to a compost bin. When it becomes soil (can take 3–6 months, depending on the climate), use your bean compost as fertilizer for the grass or a flower bed. Repeat





next year in a different part of the property.

Continue to talk in the group about other ways we care for the planet Earth (including ways to renew the soil). Talk about the ways that the planet Earth naturally renews and restores itself as living things (including humans) are “recycled” back into the earth we come from. Wonder about God’s hopes and dreams for a healthy planet.

## 6 Lindsay's Circle of Care

**Leader preparation:** Copy the story “Lindsay's Circle of Care” (Attachment: Activity 6) and prepare to read or tell it to the group (or invite an older child or youth to read the story to the group).

### Supplies:

- computers with Internet connection
- “Lindsay’s Circle of Care,” Attachment: Activity 6

Tell or read the story “Lindsay's Circle of Care” and have a conversation about “Lindsay's Circle of Care” using the questions that are provided at the bottom of the story. Use the Internet to do some further research. Invite children and youth to work together in teams. Give each team an assignment, such as one of the following:

- Find out about gray squirrels or other local wild rodents that live in your area.
- Locate centers or rescue organizations that help stranded or wounded wildlife in your area.
- Locate information about what to do if you find a wild animal or bird that is hurt or stranded.
- Find out what are some dangers faced by wildlife in your area (perhaps what the most common sources of injury are for local wildlife).
- Find a news story about people helping an animal that was hurt or stranded.

Gather back in a group to share the information you have discovered. Close with a short prayer of thanks and care for animals, such as the following: *Creator God, we thank you for animals. [Invite participants to name particular animals they know or favorite species.] Help us to care for the animals and keep them safe. Amen.*

## Sending & Serving Activities



## 7 Pretty Planet: Learn a Song with Movements (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Download the song “Pretty Planet” by Tom Chapin, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2a8k8es>, or the song “One Light, One Sun” by Raffi, available at <http://www.tinyurl.com/24s7zfg>.

**Supplies:** None

Assign older children and youth to be leaders for small groups of younger children. Play the song “Pretty Planet” or “One Light, One Sun” for the group. After listening to the words, ask the older children or youth to help their small group



create movements to go with the words and music. When they are ready, have each group perform their actions for the other groups. Invite participants to suggest ways they can help create a beautiful planet for all the earth's creatures.

### 8 Made in God's Image: Paper Dyeing Art

**Leader preparation:** Practice making a picture with oil and water (see instructions below), so you know how it works.

**Supplies:**

- poster: Orion Nebula by Stocktrek Images, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>
- supplies for paper marbling or paper dyeing, Attachment: Activity 8

Read and talk about the passage from Genesis 1:26–31. See Activity 2 for a simple paraphrase of the text. Say: I wonder what it means to think of people being made like God. Look at the poster "Orion Nebula." Notice the color and form of this image. Create pictures like the "Orion Nebula" using paper marbling or paper dyeing using the instructions provided.

Later, invite all to talk about their art, if they wish to do so. Continue the conversation about what it means to be made "like God," if there is continued interest.

### 9 Caring for the Earth: A Tissue Art Activity

**Leader preparation:** Experiment with the ball and tissue paper before the activity so that you have a sense of how it works and how much material you will need to supply. You might need a picture or map of the world as a reference point.

**Supplies:**

- large beach ball or exercise ball (the ball can be reused later)
- paint brushes
- blue and green tissue paper (if possible, obtain a variety of different shades of green and blue)
- water-soluble white craft glue (not Podge or acrylic-based glue)

Create a large planet Earth using the inflated ball. Cover the ball with craft glue (use brushes) and paste on pieces of blue tissue paper; overlap the pieces until the ball is completely covered and no plastic is showing. Then, tear pieces of green paper in the approximate shape of the continents. Paste the continents over the blue tissue using layers of green paper. When the ball is complete, ask participants to sit in the circle and slowly pass the ball from one person to another in turn around the circle. As the ball is held by each learner, invite them to talk about things they love about the planet Earth. Wonder together how God feels about Earth.

Say a prayer of care for the Earth, such as the following: *Thank you, Creator God, for this beautiful planet that is our home. Thank you for mountains and seas, forests and skies, for plants and birds and animals. Keep our world safe, keep it always blue and green and beautiful as it spins through space. Amen.*

Note: to restore the ball, simply wash it in warm water and the glue and paper will come off.

## Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on this Exploration. What new discoveries did you and your participants make together? What were some of the moments of joy and blessing? What were some of the moments of boredom, frustration, or disinterest for you or participants? Say a prayer of thanks for the blessings of your time; say a prayer of thanks for the gifts of each learner in your group. Pray for openness to new insight and discovery as you begin your next Exploration together.

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**Attachment: Activity 6**

**Lindsay's Circle of Care**

"Hey, Carolyn," Lindsay called out. "Do you see that thing on the ground?"

Lindsay pointed to a tiny bundle of grey fur nestled in the grass at the base of the pine tree near the ball field.

Carolyn bent down to look more closely. The tiny creature stirred, but didn't try to run away. It didn't seem able to run, or even move.

"What do you think it is?" Mike came closer to see what the two friends were looking at.

"I think it's either a baby squirrel or a baby rabbit," said Jasmine. She, too, had come to see what the others were looking at.

"Should we take it home?" Carolyn wondered. "Mr. Muscle will try to eat it if we leave it here." Mr. Muscle was Lindsay's large brown tabby. He had been known to catch mice sometimes, and this little creature wasn't very much bigger than a field mouse.

"I don't know," Lindsay hesitated. "If we leave it some animal might attack it, but if we take it home we won't know what to feed it and it might die anyway. My mom says wild animals are better off in the wild."

"My neighbor will know what to do," said Jasmine confidently. She volunteers at the Wildlife Care Center. "You guys stand guard here and make sure Mr. Muscle doesn't get close. I'm going to ask Mrs. Sándor."

In a few minutes, Jasmine was back with Mrs. Sándor right behind her.

"Do you know what it is?"

"What should we do?"

"Is it a chipmunk?"

"You're going to scare it! Don't get so close."

By now there were six children gathered around the little creature, and they were all talking at once. Mrs. Sándor bent down to look.

The children hushed as she stood up.

"It's a grey squirrel," Mrs. Sándor said. "See, look up there. There's Mama watching you."

Sure enough, high on one of the branches sat a large grey squirrel. Her tail was pulled up high across her back and she was chittering angrily at the group.

### Attachment: Activity 6, page 2

"Mother squirrels are good mothers," Mrs. Sandor continued, "But they are sometimes a little careless. She probably pushed it out accidentally when she was tidying up the nest. She'll come down to get it if you let her, but you'll have to protect it so that no animal attacks while she's coming to the rescue."

"We can make circle around the tree and make sure no animals get it," suggested Mike.

"Great idea," said Mrs. Sándor, "But not too close, or she'll be too frightened to come and get her baby."

"We need more kids," said Lindsay. She called to Cleo and her brother Sammy, who were playing on the teeter totter. Several older kids from the ball field came to help, along with Mr. Sándor, who had come to see what all the excitement was about. Soon they had formed a large circle around the base of the pine tree. They joined hands, keeping a close eye out for Mr. Muscle or any other neighborhood cats, and waited quietly. Before long, the mother squirrel started to work her way down the trunk. She crawled down head first, her legs splayed wide apart, her eyes darting from side to side. One of the children sneezed, sending her scurrying up a few feet. But soon she was on her way down again her body moving in nervous little jerks.

"You're very brave," whispered Lindsey, almost to herself.

As soon as the mother reached the ground, she grabbed the little baby with her teeth and started to climb back up the trunk.

The mother squirrel didn't look back—she continued up into the branches and disappeared from sight.

Still looking up into the branches, the group stood for a moment longer, still holding hands in their circle of care. And suddenly everyone was laughing and cheering and clapping their hands.

"Good work, squirrel," whispered Lindsay. "Good work, us."

#### **Questions for conversation:**

- What did you notice in this story? What did you like about it?
- How did the children work together to help the baby squirrel?
- How is this story a story of "stewardship"? (Help the group consider the meaning of the word "stewardship" as taking care of things that belong to God.)
- What are some of the things they did that helped? What might they have done that might not have helped the squirrel? Who would you ask for help if you found a baby animal in danger?
- What did this story remind you of?
- Have you ever helped rescue a wild animal? Have you ever heard of people working together to rescue an animal that was hurt or in danger?

**Attachment: Activity 8**

**Instructions for Paper Marbling and Paper Dyeing**

**PAPER MARBLING**

Note: a very similar technique was used long ago in book binding to make those pretty patterned pages inside the covers of old leather volumes.

**Supplies:**

- waterproof ink in various colors (or powdered poster paint mixed with oil instead of water)
- large shallow trays (e.g., 9" x 9" glass baking dishes, glass pie plates)
- cover ups or painting shirts (the ink stains!)
- light colored blotting paper
- spoons
- lots of old newspaper

**Directions:**

1. Put a few inches of water in the tray.
2. Put a few drops of ink of different colors onto the surface of the water.
3. Stir the water slowly and carefully; the inks will swirl around and make patterns.
4. Place a piece of blotting paper on the surface of the water, and let it lie there for 30 seconds.
5. Lift it off and quickly lay it ink-side-up on a pad of newspaper. Let it dry.

**PAPER DYEING**

**Supplies:**

- absorbent paper such as coffee filters, rice paper, or paper towels
- several different colors of food coloring in different containers
- cover-ups or paint shirts (food coloring stains clothing)
- eye droppers (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Fold a paper sheet into eighths or sixteenths.
2. Dip a corner of the paper into one bowl of food coloring and let the color absorb up into the paper.
3. Repeat with different colors and different corners of the paper; it's okay if the colors overlap slightly.
4. Unfold and let the paper dry on a pad of newspaper.

Alternatively, you can lay absorbent paper on a pad of newspaper and drop droplets of food color onto the paper to make an interesting pattern. This technique allows you to add one color on top of another (but don't go too far and add too much color or it will all turn brown or gray).



# Living Stewardship



## Exploration: Discipleship

### About this Age Group

A multiage group offers an opportunity for older participants to share their individual gifts with others in the group. Older children and youth can give leadership and support; they might explore particular topics in greater depth or take on follow up tasks. They might even have a role in planning group activities. Younger participants can also be models of discipleship for the older members of the group. Young children may respond to opportunities to give, to help, or to serve others with spontaneity and deep generosity, for example. In this Exploration, all ages will be invited to reflect on what it means for them to follow in Jesus' way of compassion, generosity, and mutual care.

### About this Exploration

Generational and experiential differences condition how we perceive, understand, and practice discipleship. Being an intentional disciple of Jesus presumes being a person of faith who embraces life as a journey of discovery and discernment about who Jesus is and what it means to live as a steward of God's creation. Discipleship involves the stewardship of our whole lives even as it enables our stewardship.



### BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

**Isaiah 55:1–3**

**Mark 10:17–22**

## Leader Preparation

Take a few minutes to read the focus scriptures. Isaiah 55:1–3: Do you ever find yourself spending money or expending effort for things that do not genuinely satisfy you? What is the “good life” to which God is inviting you? Mark 10:17–22: Ponder the absurd image of a camel going through the eye of a needle. How do Jesus’ words to the young man speak to your life? What do you feel called to change or to relinquish in order to follow Jesus? How does your leadership with children model discipleship? What joy or satisfaction do you gain from this ministry?

At the beginning of your session, you may want to do an opening ritual that is the same each session. Plan a time to check in with participants or share highlights of their week.

Close each session with a short commissioning prayer, such as the following: *Creator, we give you thanks for all the gifts that life offers us, and for (invite participants to offer their prayers of thanks). We go, as followers of Jesus Christ, to share and celebrate the gifts we have been given. Amen.*

*Prayer: Holy One, Source of Life, Open us to the blessings in our life. Open our hearts to the gifts of children and youth in our group. Help us to respond with compassion and care. Amen.*

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Washing Machine: A Drama Game (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Read the activity instructions. This is a fun cooperative game. Enjoy yourselves! Prepare a movement to illustrate the “washing machine” (see below).

#### Supplies:

- Bible (preferably a children's Bible)

Ask participants to form groups of two or three. Ask each group to find a way to act out the object or situation that you will ask them to depict. They are to perform a single, but repeated, motion. Begin with an easy example, like a washing machine. One person (or two) could be the tub, and the other one (or two) could be the agitator (the big part in the middle of the tub that moves back and forth to wash the clothes). The tub might rock back and forth repetitively while the agitator does a back and forth flailing motion. If you have more people, someone could be the clothes in the machine. Encourage groups to use their whole bodies. Invite groups to be creative but stress that they must make a continuous repetitive motion, like a machine, rather than a series of actions. Next, ask them to add a single sound, repeated over and over to go with their washing machine movement, for example, “chug, chug” or “swish, swish.” Have every small group be a washing machine. Then, ask them to be something else, perhaps a pair of scissors cutting paper, an axe cutting a tree. At first, keep the motions simple and repetitive, adding only one repeating sound. Then, suggest something more complex: a huge camel trying to go through the tiny hole in the top of a sewing needle. Have groups demonstrate their camel/needle for others.

Tell the story of Jesus and the rich young man from Mark 10:17–25 in your own words, or read it from the Bible. Use questions and wondering questions, such as the following, to help participants talk about the story: What did the young man want? I wonder how the rich young man felt when Jesus told him he had to give all his stuff away. What do you think Jesus meant about a camel going through the eye of a needle? I wonder why the man was sad. If time permits, continue playing the washing machine game. Add other scenarios: add some people scenarios, like: people sharing things with each other, kids fighting because they all want the same game, and so forth.

### 2 A Puzzling Passage

**Leader preparation:** Copy the words of Isaiah 55:1–3 (or the following paraphrase; if you have talented writers in your group, invite them to write a paraphrase) onto a large piece of poster board. Download a colored image of a feast from the Internet and paste it onto poster board. (Hint: use an Internet search engine to find images using a word such as “feast” or “banquet.”) Cut the text into jigsaw-shaped pieces and put them into an envelope; do the same for the picture of the food (if you have very young children in the group, don’t cut the pieces of the picture too small).

Isaiah 55:1–3 (paraphrased) “All who are thirsty, come to the water and drink. Come and buy food without money—a priceless banquet. Why spend money on things that don’t fill you up? Why work so hard for things that don’t make you happy? Listen to me; eat the finest food and be happy. Hear me; live your life to the full.



### Session Development

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

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

#### Supplies:

- Bible
- prepared puzzle pieces (above)
- crayons or markers
- heavyweight paper or poster board
- scissors (optional)

Divide into two groups, a group of older and a group of younger participants. Give the older group the puzzle with words and the younger group the puzzle with the camel's picture. Have each group work together to assemble the puzzle. (Option: Give each learner a few pieces of both puzzles and have them work together in silence to put the two puzzles together.)

Ask older children or youth to take turns reading aloud the verses of the Isaiah text. Talk about the passage together, using questions such as: How can people who have no money come and buy and eat? Puzzle together over the passage, inviting different options and questions. Invite the group to wonder what the prophet meant about people working hard for something that doesn't satisfy them? Why do you think the text says “listen to me, that you may live?” Who is the “me” in this text? What promise (covenant) is God making?

Look at the puzzle picture of the feast that the group has completed. What do you see? How does this remind you of the Bible text we just looked at? If there is time, hand out drawing paper, scissors, markers, and crayons. Invite all to make their own puzzles to illustrate the text.

### ③ A Story About a Poster

**Leader preparation:** Spend time looking at this poster and wondering what it says to you. Read the Emmaus story (Luke 24) with the poster in front of you. What is similar? What is different?

#### Supplies:

- poster: The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- newspaper
- masking tape

Put up the poster of “The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus” and invite the group to gather around it. Ask them to spend about a minute looking at the picture carefully. Then, have everyone turn away from the picture (or cover it with a sheet of newspaper taped above the poster so it covers it without putting tape on the poster itself). Ask the group to recall whatever they can from the picture. Ask them to look at it again in silence for another minute, trying to spot any details they didn't notice the first time around. Then, ask the group to talk about what they see in the picture. Be sure that the participants notice the people at the table in the back. Invite the group to imagine that the group in the upper left is Jesus and his disciples. Ask participants to consider: Who do you think this girl might be? What do you think the girl is thinking about? What does her posture tell you? What has just happened? What will happen next? Ask them to work in groups of three or four to tell a story that describes what they think might be going on in this picture.

Gather back the small groups to tell the stories to one another. Tell the group the title of the painting (“The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus”) and explain that at this supper the risen Jesus appeared to his friends after his



death. Use a question such as one of the following to start a conversation:

- Is the girl one of Jesus' followers, do you think?
- What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus?
- How might this girl help or care for Jesus and his friends?
- What gifts might she have to offer to Jesus?

Close with a moment of silence, to look at the poster again. Invite participants to imagine what might it be like to be there with that girl.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities

### 4 Self-portraits of Gifted Kids (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** It is always good for the leader to work through a project before teaching it or guiding others. Try to find the time to do this.

**Supplies:**

- washable markers,
- paper (large sheets if possible)
- masking tape

Hand out paper and markers or drawing pencils. Ask each person to make a "self portrait," using the art supplies that you have provided. Ask the group to sign their names on their self-portraits. Encourage participants to be creative; their portrait can be an abstract or impressionist piece. Perhaps some would rather use words and colors instead of an exact line drawing. The key is to convey a sense of who they are and their individual "style" or personality, and so forth. When the self portraits are complete, post them in the learning area with masking tape. Tape another piece of paper beside each self portrait. Have an "artists' tour" of each portrait. Stop at each one and take a moment to share appreciations of the piece (things the other participants like, appreciate, notice, things the self portrait reminds them of, and so forth.). Encourage positive responses. Then, ask the group to think of some of the gifts this person has to share with the world, things that help them to celebrate, share, and care for the gifts that life offers. Encourage specific, positive comments. (For example: Sammy's jokes help people feel good; Ying helps the younger kids with crafts; Miguel is generous and shares his allowance.) Have participants write their comments on the paper beside the self portrait and encourage them to say out loud the gifts they see in the person while you or an older child records them.

### 5 Computers and Consumers

**Leader preparation:** Arrange for access to computers with Internet connection.

**Supplies:**

- large cardboard box such as an appliance box
- box cutter or sharp knife
- masking tape
- computers with Internet access

Divide the group by ages.





Older children and youth: Go onto the computers and check out this site:

<https://www.adbusters.org/gallery/spoofads>.

Look at some of the spoof ads. Be sure to check out the Nike ad. Which ones do you like? Which ones do you find troubling or disturbing? What do you think is the point of these ads? (Another site you could use:

<https://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/digitaldetox>.)

Make your own spoof ads using images you've found online and your own text. Go to <https://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd>. Exercise caution on this site, though—remember these are *spoofs*, so don't take them literally and "don't try this at home."

Younger children: Make a TV set out of the cardboard box. Make up TV ads with a difference—not TV ads to get people to buy something, but TV ads to encourage people to share, be kind, or make other people laugh and have a good day. How about a TV ad for hugs? Have fun and be creative.

Gather both groups back together for conversation. Invite youth and children to share what they did in their time apart. Ask:

- Do you think we are encouraged to buy things that don't really have much lasting value?
- What does TV and other media say about what is most important to do, to have, to be?
- Read aloud Isaiah 55:1–3. What does the writer of this text think is most important?

## ⑥ Make a "Top Ten" List of Possessions

**Leader preparation:** Read the story of the rich young man in Mark 10:17–22 and practice telling it in your own words. If you have already told the story, think of questions you might ask to help the group recall the story.

### Supplies:

- slips of paper (ten per learner)
- pencils or crayons
- a basket
- Bible

Give everyone 10 slips of paper. Ask them to think of the 10 most important things that they own and to write or draw one item on each slip of paper. Then ask them to imagine that someone who has nothing comes to visit them and they decide to give away one of their things. Which one would they give? Collect the items they give up in the basket. Then, they choose to give one item to a good friend at school. Which item do they give away? Collect the items in the basket. They have to leave home suddenly and they can only take a few things. Ask them to choose five things to leave behind and place them in the basket. Ask participants to look at the two remaining items. Now say: Imagine what it might be like to have to give these up, too. Then, tell the story of the rich young man from Mark 10:17–22. Talk about what kinds of things he might have had that he didn't want to give up. Ask: Why do you think he went away feeling sad? Do you think he wanted to be a follower of Jesus? If you had been there with him, what advice would you have given him?

Option: If time permits, ask participants to find a partner. One person is Jesus and one person is him- or herself, with his or her ten most important possessions. Ask them to pretend to have a conversation between Jesus and the learner about what Jesus wants that person to do.





## Sending & Serving Activities

### 7 Care for the Planet! An Action Project

**Leader preparation:** Plan a recycling activity that your group can participate in to help encourage recycling in your congregation, using one of the ideas below or another idea of your own choosing. Research and plan for one of the options below.

**Supplies:**

- what you need for your chosen activity (for example, markers and poster board for making posters; access to computers for research)

Talk together about the ways that we can live stewardship by helping care for the earth and its resources. Recall that stewardship involves caring for things that belong to others. Ask: Who owns the earth? Introduce an idea such as one of the following—the natural world is a shared resource that all the earth’s creatures share together; thinking of God as creator is a way to help us remember that we do not own the earth, we only share and tend it.

**Recycling Activities—Battery collection:** Locate an organization near your church that collects used batteries for proper disposal (maybe a business supply or hardware store). Help participants decorate a box that can be used to collect used batteries. Ask for volunteers to regularly check the boxes and take used batteries to the recycling location. Set up a roster so all take turns. Participants can make posters to help advertise the collection of used batteries. Older children or youth can research information about why it is important to properly dispose of used batteries. Why are rechargeable batteries a good option to consider? Write an announcement for the church bulletin or prepare a creative announcement to share in church.

**Don’t Drive to Church Sunday:** Plan a Sunday in which everyone in the congregation who is able to walks, bikes, car pools with another family, or takes public transit to church instead of driving. Talk about how cars contribute to global warming and other environmental damage. Use the Internet to plan safe walking or biking routes; research transit schedules; make posters, a flyer, or a post on your church website to advertise options other than driving. Plan a presentation to the congregation; set a “car-free” day for an upcoming Sunday. Make it a goal to have as few cars as possible at the church that day.

**Build a Compost Bin:** Arrange for an adult to help older children and youth build a simple wooden compost bin (or buy one made from postconsumer waste plastic and work as a group to assemble it). Collect some large plastic tubs with lids that can be used in the church kitchen to collect vegetable scraps (not meat or dairy). Decorate the containers with acrylic paint. Make signs to announce the project. Arrange a schedule of people to empty and rinse the compost containers on a regular basis (or after church events). Encourage those who care for the church grounds to compost yard waste.

### 8 Web of Gift and Response

**Leader preparation:** Take a few moments to think of connections you have with the participants in your group. Imagine how this activity might unfold with your group.



**Supplies:**

- two or three large balls of yarn of different colors
- scissors

Invite participants to stand in a circle. Explain that we will be making webs using yarn. The first web will be to show how we are connected to one another in different ways. Ask the group to think of ways that they are connected (live in the same town, are part of the same faith community, use the same libraries, some may go to the same schools or be in the same class, and so forth.). Start with one person. Hold on to the end of the yarn and toss the ball to one person in the circle, saying one way that you and that person are connected. The next person holds on to the yarn and tosses the yarn to a different person while saying how he or she and that person are connected. It is important to remind people to hold on tight to the yarn when they throw the ball on. Continue until the yarn has passed to everyone and a web has been created. Carefully place the web on the ground—everyone take a step back and look at it. Think about how we are connected. If one person is sad, it affects others around them. Invite the group to consider other implications of our connections—how our behavior affects others, how we feel if someone is missing from our group, and so forth.

Create another web showing how different actions of caring can connect. Ask if anyone remembers the movie *Pay it Forward*—this movie illustrates how a single act of care can create a chain reaction. Create your own "pay it forward" web by imagining doing something to care for someone else or the earth. Start with a new ball of yarn and create a new web. One person tosses the ball to someone while saying one thing they could imagine doing to care for that person. The person who receives the yarn thinks of some way they can pass on that care to someone else. Holding on to the end of the yarn, they toss the ball to someone else. Continue until a new web has been created. Stand back and admire the web. Talk about how positive caring actions often inspire others to be more caring too.

Finally, create a web of gifts. This web will show things we might do this week to care for one another or the earth. Toss the ball around the circle as before, with each person naming something they will plan to do this week to care for other people or the earth.

Close with a prayer such as the following: *God of creation, we are connected in a web with one another and with all living things on earth. Help us to enjoy what you have given us. Help us to respond with love and care. Amen.*

**9 “Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You”**

**Leader preparation:** Learn the song "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" or arrange for someone to teach it to the group; you may also want an accompanist.

**Supplies:**

- hymnbooks (or copies of the words) with the song "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" (tune: Talavera Terrace; alt. tune, Holy Manna)  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>
- a loaf of unsliced bread
- bread knife
- napkins
- file cards
- pencils
- crayons



- a small basket
- an accompanist (optional)

Teach the group the song "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" and sing it together. You can find the lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>. Help the group to create some simple actions to go with the song (for example, hands out in front to offer gifts, hands over heart to represent love). Sing it again with actions. Say: We give you thanks for the bread of love, the bread that reminds us how much God loves us. (Pass a piece of bread to each learner.) Say: In return, we share our gifts of love and care.

Hand out file cards, crayons, and pencils. Ask all to write or draw a gift that they have to offer in love to the world. It might be something they do or something about themselves that is a gift. Pass a basket to collect the offering of gifts.

*Prayer: God of Life, The bread of love is shared. The gifts of love are offered. We give thanks with all our hearts. Amen.*

## Reflect

We often use the term "take inventory" or "take stock" as a reflective term. It literally means to "take a look at what is in the storehouse." But it can also be a way of summing up "what's available" for us in any given situation. "Take inventory" of the experience you have had with children and youth in this exploration. What lasting treasure have you gained from this experience—what learning, insight, new skills, inspiration, new faith questions have you been blessed with? As you consider these blessings, ponder how they will help you to serve in new and exciting ways as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

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# Living Stewardship



## Exploration: Christian Tradition

### About this Age Group

Children and youth of all ages need opportunities to love and serve others. Young children may openly express their desire to help or their need to be included; older youth also respond positively to an invitation to share their own gifts. All ages need affirmation that they have something of value to contribute to one another, to the church, to the world, and to God.

### About this Exploration

Our ancestors in faith have given us a rich inheritance of living stewardship. The spiritual practice of tithing is a gift that forms us as a community and provides for all even as it honors God. From tithing as joyful celebration in community among our Hebrew forebears and the “holding all things in common” of the earliest Christian churches, we see that people of faith before us were formed and challenged by God’s call—as we are today—to live generously and compassionately, sometimes at great cost. From the beginning of the church, shaped for stewardship by worship, education, fellowship, and service, as intentional disciples of Jesus, we embrace life as a journey of discovery and discernment about who Jesus is and what it means to live as stewards of God’s creation and as workers for justice, peace, wholeness, and inclusion. Exploring this legacy can inspire us to add faithfully to the tradition through our own acts of generous and compassionate stewardship.





BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:  
**Deuteronomy 14:22–29**  
**Acts 4:32–5:11**

### Leader Preparation

Read Deuteronomy 14:22–29. Notice the practice of tithing (that is, sharing a tenth of what one grows, earns, or produces). Is this how you have usually thought of tithing? How is it different to think of tithing as a community celebration rather than as a burden or duty? Do you tithe? Consider what it might be like to set aside 10 percent of your income for a month and to share it in some celebratory way with your community, including those in need. Read Acts 4:32–5:11. What puzzles you about this story? What troubles you? What hope do you see in this text? Reflect on why the early church might have chosen to preserve this story within the tradition.

*Prayer: Holy One, Source of Life, Open us to the blessings in our life. Open our hearts to the gifts of children and youth in our group. Help us to respond with compassion and care. Amen.*

### Session Development

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

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Move to Music (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Read Acts 4:32–36 and prepare questions to ask the group (see below for ideas).

**Supplies:**

- a recording of lively music

Explain that you will shortly be reading a passage from the Bible. Then you will play some music. Everyone will mill about while the music is playing. When the music stops, you will call out a task. Everyone will do that task with the person closest to them. Option: Some participants may wish to assign tasks for the group. If so, invite them to do so.

Read aloud Acts 4:32–36. Put on the music. Pause intermittently and give a task such as one of the following:

- Name three private possessions that you own.
- Tell about a time you shared something with someone else.
- Make a body sculpture (stationary pose using just your bodies) that shows the idea of praising God.
- Talk about someone that you are close friends with.
- Talk about what it means to be of “one heart and soul” with someone else.
- Name two things the believers sold to give money to the poor.
- Make a body sculpture that shows the idea of fields and houses.
- Think of one reason the believers wanted to share what they had.
- Make a body sculpture that shows the idea of people sharing with one another.
- Name two things you could share with others.
- What did the believers tell other people about Jesus?
- Name one thing about Jesus that you could tell someone else.

### 2 Make a Timeline

**Leader preparation:** Gather information about the history of your congregation and the history of your denomination (date founded, major events over the years, mission involvements over the years and currently, and so forth).

**Supplies:**

- a length of twine that can be strung across the learning area or along one wall at a height all can easily reach and see
- clothes pins
- file cards
- markers

Invite participants to help make a timeline of the Christian tradition by creating file cards for key dates and events. Include key dates and events within your denomination and congregation and other events, such as the following (these early dates are only approximate); CE means the Christian era; BCE means before the Christian era:

## Living Stewardship



MULTIAGE

take 90–120 minutes.

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

- birth of Jesus (sometime around 4 BCE)
- crucifixion of Jesus (sometime around 30 CE)
- writing of Paul's letters to the early Christian churches (sometime around 50–70 CE)
- gospel writers begin to write down the story of Jesus to share with others (sometime around 70 CE)
- Christianity spreads to India (50 CE)
- Christianity reaches northern Europe (Wales, Scotland—500 CE)

Wonder about what the earliest Christians told others about Jesus, and why they thought it was important to share this good news. Recall the story from Acts 4:32–36 or tell it to the group if you have not yet done so. See Activity 4 for a paraphrase of this passage.

### 3 Sing a Hymn with Seniors

**Leader preparation:** Invite some older members of the congregation (for example, seniors, an adult Bible study group) to join your group for this activity. Ask them to teach the group the hymn "God Whose Giving Knows No Ending" (tune: Austrian Hymn or Hyfrydol) and talk about stewardship with the group. You can hear the tune at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6> and find the lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6a>.

Be certain that the guests know what you are asking for before they come to your group so that they can be prepared. Suggest that they tell a story about an experience of giving or stewardship from their own childhood. Arrange for an accompanist. Prepare a snack for the group.

#### Supplies:

- hymnals (or copies of the words) with the hymn "God Whose Giving Knows No Ending" (tune: Austrian Hymn or Hyfrydol)
- a snack (be sensitive to allergies)

Ask your guests to introduce the hymn "God Whose Giving Knows No Ending" and teach it to the children. Then, all sing it together. Ask your guests to share a little bit about what stewardship means to them and how they offer gifts of themselves—their time, talent, and money—to others. Do any of them tithe? Invite them to tell stories and share examples of stewardship from when they were children. Ask: What does it mean to them to "offer up ourselves in praise." Encourage participants to ask questions and share their own ideas and experiences about stewardship, giving, and sharing. Ask for volunteers from your participants to help serve the snack to your guests and one another.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 Tell a Story of Giving and Receiving (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Spend some personal time exploring this poster, thinking about what it has to say to you about discipleship.

#### Supplies:

- poster: The Banjo Lesson by Henry Ossawa Tanner, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters4>





Put up the poster of “The Banjo Lesson” and invite the group to gather around. Do not reveal the title of the painting. Invite everyone to look without saying anything. Then ask everyone to think of one word that describes this picture. Share the one-word answers. Ask questions such as the following to talk about the picture: If you were there in that picture, what would you be doing? What might you be feeling? Invite the group to imagine what might be going on. What is the story behind the picture? For example: Who is the little boy? Who is the old man? What are they doing together? What happened just before this scene took place? What will happen next? Option: Divide into groups to make up stories about the picture.

Talk about the picture as a scene of receiving between people of different ages. Who is giving something in this scene? What are they giving? Who is receiving something? What are they receiving? Invite multiple interpretations. If it isn't suggested, ask participants to consider how the little boy might be giving something to the old man. What tradition might the old man be teaching the little boy? What do you learn from older people (such as grandparents) about God or about being part of the church? Do you think it is possible for us to give something to others just by being there? What gifts can we give to God or others without “doing” anything?

### 5 Passing the Word

**Leader preparation:** Prepare a paraphrase of Acts 4:32–36, or use the following one. Practice telling the story to the group.

#### Supplies:

- blank sticky mailing labels, squares of paper and masking tape, or construction paper
- hole punch
- yarn
- markers or crayons

Tell the story of Acts 4:32–36 in your own words or as follows:

The believers gathered to talk about Jesus. They gave thanks for all that he had taught people of love, of God, and of the way to live. If someone had never heard of Jesus, they told that person stories. Some of their favorite stories were . . . [invite the children to suggest stories about Jesus.] Some of the believers were rich; they owned houses and land. Others were very poor. The believers who had lots of property sold it and shared the money with the poor. Then, everyone had enough and no one had too much. A man sold a field that he owned. He came and laid the money at the feet of the apostles. His name was Joseph, but everyone called him Barnabas—a name that means “son of encouragement.”

Talk about what the word “encouragement” means. Wonder together why everyone called Joseph that name. Ask participants to think of another word that the disciples might have been called sons or daughters of, for example, “love,” “hope,” “sharing,” “kindness,” “generosity.” When everyone has a word, ask each learner in turn to pass the word around the circle by turning to the person next to you and saying the word; they say it to the person on the other side of them who passes it on to the next person until the word has traveled back to the person who started it. Ask them to choose a word that they would like to be called a son or daughter of. Note: it doesn't matter if two people have the same name. Ask everyone to make a name tag using that word (encourage older participants to help those who can't write). Decorate the name tags. Put them on. Then, mill about the room talking to one another and saying hello using the name each person has



chosen, like this, "Hello, daughter of kindness," and so forth. Gather back to talk about how it felt to be called by a new name.

## 6 A Sharing Celebration

**Leader preparation:** Ahead of the session, contact the participants' parents or guardians as well as participants. Invite each child or youth to bring a contribution such as a food item or beverage; also ask them to bring something that can be used to decorate your learning space. You as the leader need to bring a contribution as well. The idea is to share within the group whatever is provided by everyone. Make known any allergies or food sensitivities in the group. Encourage participants to bring something they purchased with their own allowance, or something that they make themselves. The contribution does not have to be elaborate. Prepare to tell a paraphrased version of Deuteronomy 14:22–29.

### Supplies:

- napkins, cups, plates

Decorate the learning space with whatever is provided and set out the contributions of food and drink. Tell the group the scripture from Deuteronomy 14:22–29 in your own words or using the paraphrase that follows. The people of Israel escaped from slavery in Egypt. It took them a long, long time to travel through the desert to reach the land of Canaan. There they built houses and planted trees. They grew grain for bread and grapes to make wine. Their trees produced olives, figs, and pomegranates and other sweet, juicy fruit. Life was easier now, but they never forgot how hard their life had been as slaves in Egypt. Every year, when the first fruit ripened on the tree and the grain was harvested to make bread, they held a celebration to share and to give thanks to God. They took one tenth (they called this a tithe, which means one tenth) of what they had grown and carried it to the Temple. If they lived too far away, they sold one tenth of their crop and carried the money with them to buy food and drink. At the temple, everyone had a wonderful party. They ate and drank what the people had brought. Poor people who had no land, widows, and orphan children all came to the party. It didn't matter who had a little or who brought a lot—everyone shared and celebrated and gave thanks to God.

Invite conversation using the following questions: What did the Israelites do with the first crops they grew each year? I wonder why this was important to their community. I wonder what the party was like. Encourage all to use their imaginations. Who was included in the party? I wonder why this was important.

Suggest that the group invite other people to share their celebration. If there is another group meeting at the same time as yours, send an invitation for them to join you, or save some of your food to share after the service with a group or program in the community, another group in the congregation, or their own families. As you eat what has been provided, say a prayer of thanks for what has been given.



## Sending & Serving Activities

### 7 A Meditation on "The Banjo Player" (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Choose a favorite piece of music, one that fits the feeling you have about the poster "The Banjo Lesson." Listen to the music as you prepare the learning area and put up the poster.

**Supplies:**

- a recording of quiet peaceful music (it would be especially nice if you could find some banjo music),
- candle with holder and matches
- poster The Banjo Lesson by Henry Ossawa Tanner  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters4>

Display the poster of "The Banjo Lesson" and ask the group members to look at it carefully. Invite participants to pair up and pose as the old man and the little child in the scene, in whatever way they want to. Put on a recording of quiet music; invite participants to hold their position for about 20–40 seconds (depending on the age and attention span of the group, while concentrating on noticing how it feels). Then, switch roles and repeat for another 20 seconds or so.

Light a candle. Ask participants to sit in a comfortable position and close their eyes. Ask them to imagine that they are being held by Holy Love the way the old man is holding the child—tenderly and gently, with great care. Say: Feel the love that holds you and surrounds you. Feel the love of God and let it seep into your bones. You are not alone; you are being held with love and care. God is holding the world in love and care.

Next, ask all to imagine that they are holding Love the way the child is holding the banjo, tenderly and gently, with great care. Say: The gift of Love is mine and yours. This gift is ours, always. Let's share the gift; let's hold the world in love and care.

### 8 Sharing the Bread

**Leader preparation:** Read the directions for cutting up a loaf of bread and make sure you are clear what to do.

**Supplies:**

- See "Sharing the Bread," Attachment: Activity 8 directions.
- long loaf of bread or ten equal slices from a sliced loaf
- bread knife
- ten plates
- knives, forks, napkin
- table cloth
- glasses of water

Invite the group to help set the table with ten place settings, places, cutlery, table cloth and so forth. Invite participants to imagine that all the people of the world have been invited to a banquet. Follow exactly the directions on "Sharing the Bread," Attachment: Activity 8 for cutting and distributing the bread.

Questions for conversation: Where would you prefer to sit if you were invited to this banquet? Is it fair? What could you do if you were at one of the places where



there was lots of bread? What would you do if you were at a place with very little bread? How do you think the bread should be divided up? Explain that this bread represents the way that the world's resources and possessions are divided up (things like houses, cars, money, food, clothing, and so forth.). Older youth might want to convert the distribution of the bread into percentages or ratios or check websites for statistics on global distribution of wealth. Some get a lot and some get almost nothing. Ask: Are things shared fairly in the world? Why or why not? How do you think things should be shared in the world?

Read Acts 4:32–35. Talk about what the first Christians did to help make sure everyone had what he or she needed. What do you like about this way of sharing? What questions do you have about it? What might we do to help make our world more fair?

Share the bread in the group, distributing it fairly to whomever wants some.

### 9 Buy a Chicken (or Hope) for People Living in Poverty

**Leader preparation:** Find out about the Heifer Project at <http://www.heifer.org> or the Canadian Food Grains Bank at <http://www.foodgrainsbank.ca> or a mission project of the United Church of Christ at <http://www.ucc.org/make-a-gift>. Select four or five projects that support the world's poorest people to present to your group for consideration. Arrange for computer access (with Internet) so that youth and older children can research projects of interest to the group.

**Supplies:**

- construction paper
- markers
- calculator
- pencils
- computer with Internet access

## Reflect

The passages from Deuteronomy and Acts are both descriptions of something that happened a long time ago, but both also offer a vision of the “realm of God”—a time of sharing, compassion, justice, and love. This vision of God-time spans all time. It is both past and future, and it can also be experienced in the present. As you think back over the activities of this Exploration, when did you notice the “realm of God” being lived out? What moments of love, connection, or joy do you recall? How were you able to share your gifts with the participants? What hopes or vision do you have for your next Exploration together?

Find a project of interest to the group, something that supports the world's poorest people, doing Internet research if necessary. Set a target amount for fundraising. Make a poster with bar graph (thermometer) that announces what you want to achieve and divides your goal into ten equal amounts. Consider how the group can raise the money to meet the target (for example, baking cookies for sale at coffee hour, sharing a part of their allowance each week, holding a gently used book and toy sale, doing extra chores at home or for church members to raise money). Play out the numbers and do some calculations. If everyone in the group contributed a tithe (10 percent) of their allowance, how much could you raise in a month? If everyone contributed one week of allowance, how much could you raise? How many months would it take to reach your goal? Set definite plans that everyone is comfortable with (write them down so that they can be shared with parents and caregivers and worked on in future weeks). Plan a single start-up activity that gets the project going. Assign tasks and responsibilities.

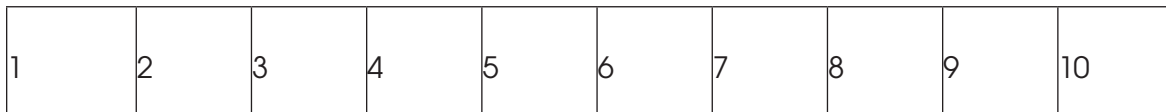
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Attachment: Activity 8

### SHARING THE BREAD

**Step 1:** Cut a long loaf of bread into ten equal pieces (or use ten equal slices of a sliced loaf)



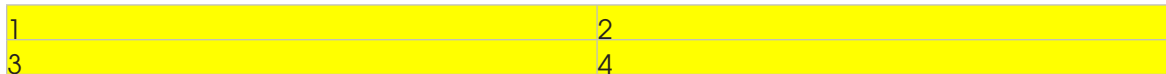
**Step 2:** Set aside seven pieces



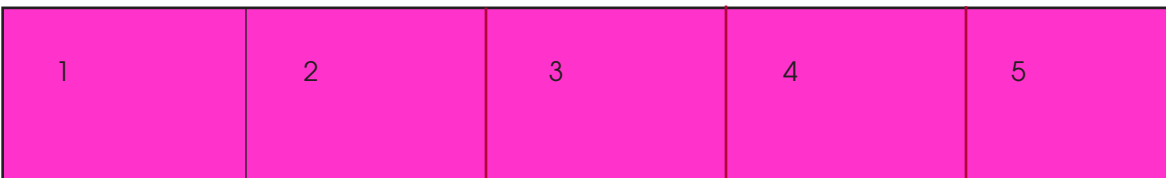
Take the remaining three pieces and



... cut one piece (8) in half



... cut one piece (9) in quarters



... and cut the last (10) of those ten pieces into five

**Attachment: Activity 8, page 2**

**Step 3:** Put out ten plates. Number the plates from one to ten. Distribute the bread as follows:

plate 1	plate 2	plate 3	plate 4	plate 5	plate 6	plate 7	plate 8	plate 9	plate 10
8-1/2 pieces (all the red pieces)	3/4 of a piece (a green piece and a yellow piece)	1/4 of a piece (1 yellow piece)	1/4 of a piece (1 yellow piece)	1/4 of a piece (1 yellow piece)	1/5 of a piece (1 purple piece)	1/5 of a piece (1 purple piece)	1/5 of a piece (1 purple piece)	11/5 of a piece (1 purple piece)	1/5 of a piece (1 purple piece)

Source of information: A study by the World Institute for Development Economics Research at United Nations University reports that the richest 1 percent of adults alone owned 40 percent of global assets in the year 2000, and that the richest 10 percent of adults accounted for 85 percent of the world total. (See World Distribution of Household Wealth report at United Nations University; OR the wiki article on distribution of wealth: <http://www.tinyurl.com/2pp7oe>)



# Living Stewardship



## Exploration: Context and Mission

### About this Age Group

The multiage learning group offers a rich and unique opportunity to create a community of learners because it is not bound by the usual expectations of age-based learning. This can be very freeing because there is much less need to compete; often, participants in multiage groups feel that there is more space to simply be themselves rather than living up to expectations of their peers—or told to always “act their age.” An important dimension of this component is its focus on stewardship as joyful participation in community rather than as a burdensome personal obligation. Children and youth are often joyful givers of themselves, their talents, their love, and their resources. Activities in this component help participants experience the joy and celebration of being part of a particular learning community as well as part of the worldwide family of God’s people.

### About this Exploration

We live in relationship with God and one another in a world created and sustained by God. The Scriptures help us to discover how God means for us to live as stewards within a grateful community that goes beyond rituals to serve the needs and celebrate the potentials of our neighbors near and far with extravagant grace and generosity.



### BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

**Isaiah 1:10–17**  
**Mark 14:3–9**

## Leader Preparation

Take a moment to think about how you think we are called—as followers of Jesus—to respond to God’s love in the world. Jot down one or two ideas. Read Isaiah 1:10–17 and Mark 14:3–6. How do these passages speak about how we are called to be? Read “About This Exploration.” How do the ideas about stewardship expressed there compare with these scripture passages or with your own thinking about what we are called to do? Pause for a moment of silence, saying a prayer for yourself and for members of your group as you begin this Exploration.

*Prayer: Holy One, Source of Life, open us to the blessings in our life. Open our hearts to the gifts of children and youth in our group. Help us to respond with compassion and care. Amen.*

## Session Development

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

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Role Play: Imagine a Conversation with God (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Read the following paraphrase of Isaiah 1:10–17 (or prepare your own short and simple version of this text).

**Supplies:** None

Read or tell a paraphrase of Isaiah 1:10–17, such as the following. Invite participants to imagine that their congregation has called a meeting to talk with God about something God has said to them. Ask for volunteers to have an imaginary conversation between God and people. Select three volunteers, one of whom is willing to play the role of God. Have them sit in a small circle, while other members of the group watch. Explain that everyone will get a chance to participate if they want.

“Listen to me,” says God. “I am very bored with your church services. Sunday after Sunday it’s the same thing. I am sick of your hymns and chants. I am not in the least bit interested in your sermons or announcements. I can’t stand the way you light your candles and take up the collection every week. I don’t even listen when you pray your prayers.

“Instead of all that, I want you to change your ways and stop hurting one another. Stop being mean and making fun of other people. Start being friends with those who have no friends. Stand by those who are considered losers, stick up for those who are picked on, give generously to those who don’t have enough, and start doing what is good. That’s the kind of worship I’m interested in—love and gentleness, kindness and fairness.”

Invite the other two volunteers to reply to God. If they get stuck, encourage others who are watching suggest what might be said. Then ask: What does God say next? Encourage a variety of viewpoints by asking someone else from the group to step into the conversation and take a different point of view (in which case someone from the initial group steps out). Also, anyone can step into the circle to replace God to suggest other things that God might say.

After the role play, talk about what the writer of the text from Isaiah (that is, the person who originally wrote down these words) thought God wanted people to do. Ask questions such as: What does the passage suggest is the most important for people to do? How do you feel about worship in our church? What would you like our church to be like?

### 2 Story: Soundscape

**Leader preparation:** Spend time with Mark 14:3–9. Read it several times so you can respond as participants work through this activity.

**Supplies:**

- a variety of items to make sounds with, such as broken pieces of a clay flower pot, spoons and plastic dishes, water in a basin, a singing bowl or gong, a whistle

Ask a learner who is a good reader to read Mark 14:3–9. Invite the group to make a list of key events in this story. Help participants plan a way to retell the story using only sound effects. For example, the sounds of cutlery clanging against



church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

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

dishes to show a meal happening, clattering of broken pottery pieces for the breaking of the jar, water poured from a jug into a basin for the pouring of the perfume, a whistle or drum beat to show the crowd's reaction, slowly rubbing palms together (the whole group doing this) to show the act of wiping Jesus' feet, soft humming or gong for Jesus' words of response, and so forth. Invite suggestions; record the agreed upon sounds for each section of the story and then assign roles. Have the whole group "retell" the story using only sounds. Talk about the story using the following questions:

- Why did this woman give Jesus such an expensive gift?
- How did Jesus feel about what the woman did? What did he say?
- How did his friends feel? Why do you think his friends might have been angry about what happened?
- If you were there, what would you say to this woman? What might you ask her?
- If you could give Jesus a really special gift, what would you like to give him? Why?

### ③ Make a Model of Your Community

**Leader preparation:** Make preparations to create a model of your town or community. Think about the key features of your town or region that you will want to highlight. Look at the instructions and suggestions in "Make a 3-D Model of Your Town," Attachment: Activity 3. You are not going to make an exact, architectural model; what you are going to build is a map of services provided for others.

#### **Supplies:**

- instructions: "Make a 3-D Model of your Town," Attachment: Activity 3
- plasticine, clay, or play dough
- figures and materials for making a model of your town or region
- a large sheet of plywood that can serve as a base for the model
- plastic toy figures of people and animals (hobby stores and model railroad stores are good sources)
- thread or yarn
- instructions on Attachment: Activity 3

Work together to make a model of your town or community. On the plywood sheet, label important places that people go to in your town or community to receive help or care from others (e.g., food bank, clinic or hospital, churches, community resource center, animal welfare center, vet, etc.). Make labels to show some of the needs or concerns in your community and stick these near plastic toy figures (one need or concern per figure). Tie thread or yarn to the toy figures and attach the other end of the thread to a place in your community that meets that need (e.g., "sick person" could be linked by thread to the clinic or hospital; "hurt animal" could be linked to an animal rescue shelter; and so forth). Invite participants to be creative in making the links. A sick person might also need friends at church to visit or pray for them, and so forth.



## Discerning & Deciding Activities

### 4 Write a Letter to the Church Council (or Board) (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** As you think about Isaiah's words (Isaiah 1:10–17), consider what you might put in a letter to your church leaders, based on this text. What are some ideas you would include as contemporary examples of "justice, rescue, defend, and plead"? Your participants may need some "pump priming" to come with ideas or plans that could actually be done through the church (for example, visiting people in nursing homes, providing transportation for people who are housebound but would love to go to church, tutoring for children after school, advocacy for immigrants, and so forth).

**Supplies:**

- copies of the paraphrase of Isaiah 1:10–17 (see Activity 1 on p. 39 of this section)
- crayons or markers
- paper

Read or tell the story from Isaiah 1:10–17. Invite the group (or small groups, if your group is large) to write a letter to the church explaining what they think is important for the whole congregation to do in response to Isaiah's letter, especially in verse 17. Include ideas from the group about things they as youth and children might do as well as ideas they have for adult members of the congregation. Some children might want to draw pictures to go with the letter. Mail it, or ask for time to present to the council, making sure they understand that the participants expect a response.

### 5 Find Out about Church Activities

**Leader preparation:** If you are not familiar with the activities of your congregation, invite another church member to team up with you in leading or preparing this session. Make arrangements for a "church tour" and ensure that you will not disturb other groups in the places you visit.

**Supplies:**

- copies of old congregational newsletters, announcements from the worship bulletin, church magazines

Arrange for older children and youth to take notes during your tour. Tour the church building (or places convenient to visit) and take note of what activities take place in those parts of the building. Gather back in your learning area and make a list of all the things that your church does, such as provides space for community groups to meet, eats meals together, worships, and so forth.

Show the magazines and newsletters that you have gathered. Make a list of other things that your church does. Ask participants to decide which activities are joyful and celebratory (like the woman pouring out special perfume, in the story from Mark 14:3–6). Draw a star beside those activities. Ask which activities are sharing or loving actions (like the care for widows or the poor in Isaiah). Draw a heart shape beside those items. Ask: Is our church an "Isaiah church" that God loves? Do we care for others or do we need to work on that?





## 6 Experience the Smells of Things

**Leader preparation:** Prepare a tray of five to eight different scented items, each in its own covered dish: a variety of substances with strong scents such as freshly ground nutmeg, freshly grated lemon peel, freshly grated orange peel; apple juice heated with ground cinnamon, a piece of brown bread, a cotton ball dipped in vanilla extract, and so forth, and, if there are no allergies, some of the following: a dab of hand lotion, a cotton ball dipped in rubbing alcohol, a cotton ball sprayed with cologne, an incense stick, fresh crushed mint or peppermint oil, lavender, a spoonful of peanut butter. Cover the tray with a cloth to keep it out of sight of the group.

### Supplies:

- blindfolds
- scented items (see list in leader preparation)
- olive oil or light mineral oil
- an eye dropper
- a clean zip lock bag for each learner
- cotton balls

Invite participants to sit in a circle and put on a blindfold. One at a time, uncover one of the scented items and pass it around the group. Keep the rest covered. Explain they cannot touch or taste the item. They must only use their noses to smell it. After each item has passed around the circle, ask the group to identify it. Have participants remove blindfolds to check their guess, smelling again if they like. Begin with a different person in the circle for each item until all the items have been guessed.

Ask questions such as the following:

- Which was your favorite smell of the ones we smelled today?
- What did this smell remind you of?
- What are some of your other favorite smells?

Read the story of Mark 14:3–9. Ask what they think “nard” is (a very expensive perfumed oil made from an Indian plant that smells a bit like incense). Imagine the smell in the room when the woman poured out all her expensive perfume. What did Jesus think of what she did? How might you have felt if you had been there?

Give everyone one or two drops of oil in their palm. Ask them to feel it with their fingers. Explain that oil, besides being a perfume, was sometimes used to rub onto someone’s skin to make them feel better. Give everyone two cotton balls and a container. Put a few drops of oil onto each cotton ball; ask participants to find a scent that they like and add it to the baggie so that they can take the smell home with them

Option: Make jars of flavored oil to take home as gifts. See “Make a Gift of Flavored Oil,” Attachment: Activity 6.





## Sending & Serving Activities

### **7 Reflect on an Image of Tenderness (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader preparation:** Look at the poster "Planting." How does this image make you feel? Where are you in the poster?

**Supplies:**

- poster Planting by Rex Goreleigh, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>

Put up the poster "Planting" and invite all to gather around to take a look. Ask people to share whatever they notice. Ask questions such as the following:

- How does this picture feel to you?
- Does this picture remind you of anything? If so, what does it make you think of?
- What do you think is happening in the picture?
- What do you like about this picture?

Imagine this is a picture about God's care for the world. How does this picture tell us what God feels? Now, imagine that you are the plant and God's hands are caring for you. How do you feel? Gather in a circle, standing together if possible. Ask participants to cup their hands the way the hands are cupped in the poster. Say: Pretend I am going to pass something very special around the circle. Each person must take it in his or her hands, very carefully, and pass it on to the next person. Pass something "pretend" that is light such as a soft, fluffy feather around the circle. Pass something "pretend" that is heavier, such as a beautiful glass ball. Invite others to choose something special to pass around the circle. Close by passing an imaginary baby bird or a butterfly (do this only if the mood is right and you think they will protect the imaginary creature; don't do this if they are feeling silly or acting up, in case the creature gets hurt. Even though this is only imaginary, it can be upsetting!).

When the bird or butterfly comes back to you, let it go (release it with your hands). Say this prayer: *Thank you, God, for all the special things in our world. Help us to hold them in our care as you do. Amen.*

### **8 Learn a Song to Share**

**Leader preparation:** If you have not yet used the song, learn "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love" (tune: Chereponi) or "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" (tune: Talavera Terrace), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>. You will need to arrange to teach one of the songs to the group. Arrange for an accompanist and for a setting or occasion when the group can perform the song for others (perhaps for a local seniors group or in congregational worship). Alternatively, you might choose another song that is a favorite with your group.

**Supplies:**

- hymnbooks (or copies of the words) with the song you have selected
- rhythm instruments (optional)

Teach the song you have chosen to the group or sing it together if you have used it before. Help the participants to rehearse so that they can share this song with another group. Explain the occasion that you have chosen.



Option: Help the group make up actions to go with the song or have some of the children use rhythm instruments as accompaniment.

Perform the song at the chosen time and place.

### 9 Make Guidelines for a Community of Care

**Leader preparation:** Think about the kinds of guidelines that are most important for you, in your leadership with your group. How do you show care for the participants?

**Supplies:**

- large sheet of paper
- poster board
- markers

Invite all to make a list of guidelines for a community of care, such as the following:

1. Everyone is listened to.
2. No one gets laughed at.
3. Everyone participates.

List the ideas as participants state them. Talk about why these things are important to your group. Do you think these are good rules to live by? Should we post them in our room? Should we post them in the church where all can see? Decorate the list as a poster and put it up in your learning area—or on a bulletin board of the church.

## Reflect

Consider which activities in this Exploration were highlights for you. Which ones seemed to be highlights for the learners? What made these activities meaningful or special? As you look back on what has seemed to be important, consider what might be worth doing again in future Explorations. Which activities would you change or not do again? Why?

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**Attachment: Activity 3**

**Make a 3-D Model of Your Town**

The following directions offer some ideas for how to make a model. Depending on time, you can prepare most of this ahead of time. Make your model as elaborate or simple as time, skill, and your group's interest level allow.

- 1.** Draw an outline of your town on the plywood, marking any hills, lakes, valleys, and so on. Or glue a town map onto the plywood and work directly on this surface.
- 2.** Mould the clay over the plywood or map base to make a rough landscape of your town or region, showing major hills, roads, valleys, and so forth. If you are using a hardening clay, do not go more than 4 inches thick or it will not dry well. Let the clay dry at least 48 hours before painting.
- 3.** If you are using a base that will harden, paint the base to show areas of green space, forests, roads, lakes, and so on. If you are using animator's clay or Plasticine, use clay of different colors.
- 4.** Make trees from scrunched-up tissue paper and pipe cleaners or play dough, or use trees and bushes from a children's building set; make fences with pipe cleaners or strips of cardboard or borrow fences from a play farm set. You can also use small toy figures of people, animals, cars, and other objects.
- 5.** Use small wooden blocks or blocks from a children's building set (such as Legos) for buildings or make them by folding construction paper into small box shapes taped together with transparent tape.
- 6.** Make signs or labels for buildings using sticky-backed labels printed or decorated with markers.

### Attachment: Activity 3, page 2

#### **Modeling clay options:**

Use a prepared modeling clay that does not dry when exposed to air, or make a modeling compound. If you use a plastic modeling compound that does dry and harden on exposure to air (such as Plasticine), you can have the learners make the base themselves. Plasticine is hard to work with, however, and animators' clay is somewhat expensive. A prepared product such as Play Dough is not recommended because it will form cracks and fissures when it dries. You can make a cheap and very durable and paintable base using sawdust or sand (see the following recipes), but these will have to be prepared ahead of time in order for the base to be usable in your activity. Sawdust clay can be painted with tempera paint, acrylic paint, or poster paint when it is dry. Sand clay does not take poster paint well but can be painted with acrylic paint.

**Sawdust Clay:** Use a ratio of 2 cups of fine sawdust to 1 cup of dry wallpaper paste. Mix the dry wallpaper paste and sawdust together, then slowly add water, stirring it until the mixture is the consistency of clay. If it ends up too runny, add a little more sawdust. If it is too hard, add more wallpaper paste. Alternatively, you can use white flour instead of the wallpaper paste in the same 2:1 ratio. Depending on the size of your model you may need 6–8 cups of sawdust, which can be obtained from a business that cuts lumber.

**Sand Clay:** In an old cooking pot, mix together 4 cups clean sand, 2 cups of cornstarch, 2 teaspoons alum (from the spices department of grocery stores), and 2 cups of cool water. Cook on the stovetop with the burner set at medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. The mixture will eventually thicken and become lumpy, like thick cookie dough. Remove from heat and knead the clay well. Note: Clean the pan, utensils, and surfaces with soap and water before the mixture dries. The sand will scratch pots or utensils.

## Make a Gift of Flavored Oil

### Supplies:

- Clean jars or bottles with tight-fitting lids
- Sunflower, canola oil or safflower oil (avoid oils such as peanut oil or olive oil that go rancid quickly)—BE SENSITIVE TO ALLERGIES
- Ribbon
- Bunches of fresh or dried herbs such as thyme, rosemary, basil, tarragon, oregano, cilantro, marjoram, chives, dill, mint, parsley, bay leaves, or savory (but not garlic); peppercorns or dried hot peppers look nice but the oil will be quite spicy

Heat the oil for a few minutes in a double boiler (heat until it feels hot to touch, but not to boiling temperature) or in the microwave, or in a jar placed in a basin of water in a slow cooker.

Pour oil into the jars; let cool slightly so that it will not burn the learners.

Invite learners to choose some spices that smell nice to them and to add bunches of spices to the warm oil, arranging them in the bottles in an attractive arrangement. Crumple and bruise fresh herbs slightly before adding them to the oil to help the smell and flavor blend in with the oil.

Tie a bow around the neck of the bottle.

After the herbs are placed in the oil, keep the bottle in a cool, dark place for about a week to let the herbs infuse (share their scent and flavor) with the oil.

Use in salad dressing or as a marinade for fish or poultry.



# Living Stewardship



## Exploration: Future and Vision

### About this Age Group

Children and youth may seem to be “present-tense oriented,” living more in the here-and-now than in the more anxiety-ridden world of adulthood. This present-tense orientation can be an important gift, a tuning in to the gifts and blessings of life as lived rather than as anticipated. However, children and youth often have rich imaginations and creative inventiveness that moves beyond seeing things as they are to envisioning how they might become. Youth may have a growing awareness of how human beings have destroyed or misused the created world that God entrusted to our care and may have a clear and prophetic vision of how we can live as stewards of our planetary home. It will be important to create spaces in the conversation for vision, imagination, and hope, as well as for prophetic insights from children and youth.

### About this Exploration

As we move into the future, a clear vision of where we are headed emerges out of our understanding of stewardship. This growing understanding will be enhanced as we consider far-ranging questions like: What kind of persons do we want to be? To what purpose do devote our lives? What are our core values and beliefs? That vision will also benefit by wrestling with more immediate questions such as: What choices and decisions are we making every day in our use of the money, time, talents and abilities, the environment, and other resources that have been entrusted to our care? Living stewardship comes down to individuals and the communities of which they are a part. It also involves acting in new ways; growing out of our reflections



on how we are living our lives and the journey we are on; discerning the messages that we've received throughout our lives from culture, family, and God; experiencing ourselves in community; and deciding our next explorations.

**BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:**  
**1 Chronicles 29:1–19**  
**Revelation 21:10;**  
**21:22–22:5**

### Leader Preparation

Make a list of some of the core values that you hold—things that are vitally important for you and that guide your everyday living. What vision or purpose directs your life? Read the two focus passages for this Exploration: 1 Chronicles 29:1–19 and Revelation 21:10, 22–22:5. What do you hear in these passages that gives you a sense of hope or purpose for your daily living? What are your visions or hopes for the future? Consider how you will offer leadership with the children and youth in your program. How does what you do with the children—your presence and care, your own story, your faith, your experience, the activities you prepare—connect with your sense of hope, vision, or purpose in your life? Pray for each of the children in your program that they might find hope and purpose in their own faith journey.

*Prayer: Holy One, Source of Life, open us to the blessings in our life. Open our hearts to the gifts of children and youth in our group. Help us to respond with compassion and care. Amen.*

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### **1 Future Perfect: An Imaginary Field Trip (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader preparation:** Post signs in your learning space to indicate key landmarks in your community, such as a shopping mall or market city hall, or farmland, if you are in a rural area. Then list school, bus station, river, and so forth. Prepare to tell a paraphrased version of Revelation 21:10, 21:22–22:5.

**Supplies:**

- construction paper to make signs for key landmarks
- markers

Share a paraphrased excerpt from Revelation 21:10; 21:22–22:5, using your own words or the following:

I saw a vision of a city blessed by God. It is a beautiful city. A crystal-clear river flows through the city. There is a tree that bears fruit all year round, a different kind of fruit each month. Its leaves heal anything that hurts and its fruit feeds everyone who is hungry. There is nothing in that city that causes harm—no pain and no darkness. No one has to shut the gates at night to keep out danger. They don't need a place to worship because everybody already knows God up close and personal. They don't need any lamps because God is all the light they need.

Ask questions such as the following to invite conversation: What would it be like to live in a place like that? What else would you like to be there? What else do you think God would hope it would be like in that place? Invite participants to take an imaginary tour through your community, visiting the different landmarks you have posted in the learning area and recalling what that place is like. At each stop invite conversation about questions such as the following: How is our community like the vision of that city blessed by God? How is it different? What do we hope our community could be like? What can we do to help build a loving, peaceful community?

#### **2 Imagine a Joy-filled World: Pictures with Clay**

**Leader preparation:** Study the poster to look for as many details as you can find. Put away the poster for a day, and then look at it again. What did you miss the first time?

**Supplies:**

- poster: With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark . . . by Barbara Reid  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- small pieces of plywood or heavy card
- modeling clay or animators' clay
- Bible

Note: A carpenter or handy person may have wood scraps your group can use. Pieces need to be approximately 8" x 8" but don't need to be uniform size.



### Session Development

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

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

Put up the poster and invite the children to gather around it. Look at the picture. Invite the children to notice what they see in the picture. Ask them to see if they can figure out what materials the artist used to make this picture. Ask: What do you think is the feeling that the artist is trying to convey? If the whole world felt like this picture, what might the world be like? Invite participants to create a picture of their idea of a city of joy and delight, using modeling clay and paint on plywood or heavy card. Encourage all to look at the poster again and notice how the colors are blended. Ask older participants to consider what our faith says about a world of joy and hope. What can we do to help create joy for others?

### ③ Build a Temple: A Cooperative Task

**Leader preparation:** Divide the supplies into equal piles so that each team of four has the same type and quantity of “building materials,” including at least thirty toothpicks and twenty-five fruit pieces or candies. Put each team’s supplies in a bag or bowl; set aside some extra treats to eat. (Note: Check for allergies before you gather your supplies.)

#### Supplies:

- toothpicks
- an assortment of dried fruit (cranberries, raisins, candied ginger) and soft, brightly colored candy pieces such as gum drops, licorice sticks, small pieces of soft jellied candy (candy must be soft enough to skewer with a toothpick)
- bags or bowls

Divide the group into teams of three or four (mixing ages so that teams have both younger and older participants). Give each team a set of toothpicks and candy “building” materials. Say: Teams will have ten minutes to build a tower using their supplies. Towers will later be “judged” for their beauty, their height, and their strength. So teams can decide to go for the most beautiful building, or the tallest, or strongest, or all three. However, team members are not allowed to talk to one another. Ready, set, go . . . (If you are really going to judge the towers, you might ask a pastor or other church leader to do that.)

When ten minutes are up, stop the work and gather up the leftovers. Invite participants to show their creations. Admire their strength, height, beauty, and so forth. Encourage conversation about the task: How did your group communicate without talking? How do you feel about the way your group worked together?

Introduce 1 Chronicles 29 by explaining that King David gave a lot of treasure of his own, and then took up a special collection to help build a temple for God. Invite participants to listen to what was given. Ask older participants—especially if you have any math whizzes—to keep a list of the quantities as you read. Look at the final totals together. (A talent weighs about 100 pounds; a daric is a gold coin weighing about 1/4 ounce.)

Read 1 Chronicles 29: 2–9. Invite participants to imagine what such a quantity of precious metals and jewels might look like. Talk about why David might have wanted to collect such precious things together. Wonder about what the temple might have looked like when it was finished. Compare it (in a humorous way) to the temples the group built. Reflect on how amazing it must have been for all those people to share so much for something they believed was important. Ask: When we take up a collection in our church, what do we collect? What do we do with the money (or food or other offerings) that are collected? Have you ever done something to cooperate with a group of other people to build or create something good together? What did you do? Share some treats with the group as you talk.



## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 If We Had a Million Dollars (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Review the decision-making task and prepare the money and role cards.

**Supplies:**

- green paper, cut into dollar-sized pieces (100 pieces for each group), or fake money from a store
- copies of the roles from "If We Had a Million Dollars," Attachment: Activity 4
- scissors
- file cards
- markers

Give each group a stack of pieces of paper. Say that each piece is worth \$10,000 (a total of \$1 million). Ask the group to decide how they will spend their money. Give older children role cards with their priorities. Explain the task and read the instructions to the group. Give the group a time limit (perhaps 15 minutes) to reach a decision.

After a specified period of time or when the group reaches a decision, end the activity. Talk about the decision-making process. Ask questions such as the following:

- How did you feel about what your group decided? Or, how did it go in the group? How did you feel about this?
- What was hard about this task? What went well?
- What things did your group agree about? What did you not agree about?
- How was this activity like "real life"?
- What kinds of things help people to agree on what is important?
- If you were playing a role, how did you feel about your character? How is this person similar to or different from you?
- What are some of the things that people can do to make a difference in the world?

### 5 Imagine a Tree of Life

**Leader preparation:** Look at the poster "The Baobab Tree." Imagine yourself in the scene. What sounds do you hear? What do you feel?

**Supplies:**

- poster: Baobab, Okavango Delta, Botswana by Pete Oxford  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters5>

Put up the poster. Encourage participants to imagine what it would be like to stand under this tree looking up. Ask: What might you see? What might this feel like? (Ask if anyone has been to the Tree of Life at Animal Kingdom in Florida; that is a giant (though not real) baobab tree. If anyone has, see if they will tell about it. Pictures can be found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cfo8sy>. Have participants close their eyes and imagine the sounds they might hear, as they stand under the Baobab tree. Explain that the tree is useful for all kinds of different things. It is a source of water in the desert because its large branches often collect rainwater. It can provide food, medicine, fiber, shelter, and many other things besides. Option:





have children and youth find out more about the baobab tree on the Internet, for example, at <http://www.tinyurl.com/yjj4cxk>. Share a paraphrased excerpt from Revelation 21:10, 21:22–22:5 such as the one used in Activity 1.

Invite the group to imagine what that tree of life was like. Ask them to find a comfortable position near you on the floor and close their eyes if they like. Slowly read or say the following, with lots of pauses for all to use their imaginations.

Imagine that you are standing beside the tree of life. *(Pause)*

Sit down comfortably beneath the spreading branches of this great, beautiful tree. *(Pause)*

Look up at the sky, at the sun shining through the leaves. Notice how peaceful and calm it feels here. *(Pause)*

Take a couple of deep breaths and let go of all your worries. *(Pause)*

How does it feel to sit under this tree? *(Pause)*

What does the fruit on the tree look like? What color is it? *(Pause)*

Imagine taking a great big juicy bite of this fruit. What does it taste like? *(Pause)*

Take some healing oil from the tree and rub it on your hand. *(Pause)*

Notice how good it feels. *(Pause)*

What kind of hurts might be healed by this tree? *(Pause)*

Now, wrap your arms around the tree or lean against the trunk. Smell the bark. *(Pause)*

Feel the rough texture against your hands or your cheek. Notice how good and comfortable the tree feels. Let go of your worries. *(Pause)*

Know that you don't have to be afraid. *(Pause)*

Take another moment to enjoy the time under the tree of life. *(Pause)*

Then, when you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the group.

Ask everyone to take a deep breath, stand, stretch, and shake out their arms, hands, fingers, feet. Invite participants to talk about what this experience felt like or what they thought about while sitting under this imaginary “tree of life” (but do not force anyone to share if they do not want to—it's fine if this experience remains private).

## 6 Saving the Birds: Action Research

**Leader preparation:** Do an Internet search for information on a “Lights Out” program near you (programs to reduce nighttime lighting of high rise buildings in an effort to help prevent migratory birds from hitting the buildings). Go to a site such as <http://lightsout.audubon.org>, or search via an Internet search engine with the key words “lights out” and “migratory birds.” Find out what volunteers can do to help protect migratory birds that strike high rise buildings.

### Supplies:

- poster: With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark . . . by Barbara Reid  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- crayons or markers
- pencils
- paper

Post a copy of the poster of the painting by Reid, “With Hoof and Squawk and Squeal and Bark . . .” Invite the group to look at the poster. If you have not used this picture before, ask them what they notice. What do you like about this picture? How does this picture make you feel? If you have, simply recall the story of Noah and the flood and how humans and animals were saved by God.





Ask: In the story of the ark, what did Noah do to save the birds and animals? What are some of the things that people can do to protect or care for wildlife? Share information you have located about Lights Out programs to prevent migratory birds from hitting high rise buildings. Invite participants to work in groups of two or three to create their own illustrated story about someone or some group working to save a wild creature or group of creatures that are in danger, such as a group working on a Lights Out program (or helping clean up birds fouled by an oil slick, a dolphin caught in a fishing net, and so forth).

Option: Consider how your group might participate in a project to help local wildlife (such as volunteering for a morning with a group that rescues migratory birds that strike high rises or making posters for a Lights Out campaign). Plan an action project in which everyone can participate.

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 7 Vision of a Future World: Body Sculpture (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Prepare some simple examples of how a body can be shaped to convey an idea, so that you can explain the activity to the group.

**Supplies:**

- camera (optional)

Help the group make a collective sculpture, as follows. Ask for two volunteers to be the sculptors. The rest of the group is the clay. The sculptors shape the "clay" into a statue by gently moving people's bodies or asking them to move into a particular position. Practice with a simple idea, using just one person, such as "make a statue of a child playing with a balloon." Then, make a complicated statue using many bodies. Ask the sculptors to create a statue of a problem in our world that you would like to change. When the sculpture is finished have everyone "freeze" in position. (Take a picture to post on the wall.) Have people take turns stepping out of position (the sculptors take their places) so that everyone has a chance to look at the sculpture.

Then talk about how you could make a statue of this problem being fixed, solved, or changed. Have two new sculptors make the new statue. Again, give everyone a chance to see the new statue. (Take another picture to post on the wall—before and after.) Or, work collectively to create a sculpture of "our hope for a future world."

### 8 Change the Rules of the Game

**Leader preparation:** Recall what it was like for you to play this game as a child, if you did so, or arrange to play the game with some friends before the activity.

**Supplies:**

- sets of the game of Monopoly (one game for every five to eight children)

Set up one or two games of Monopoly (depending on the group size) as though the game is already in progress and the properties have been distributed. Have one player doing well (two houses on the most expensive properties and full sets of another "good" property, one player doing moderately well, and at least one player doing poorly (not much money, only a few properties). Invite children to take a seat at one of the places around the table (make sure you have enough



spots set up for everyone to play). You may want to ask some children to be observers and take notes of what happens.

Have children play a few rounds and then give groups time to talk about what is happening and how they feel. Invite them to suggest what may happen in the game and who is likely to win. Now say that they can change the rules however they want to make the game fairer. They could, for example, have those who are doing well share with others, have all those who want to do so form a "cooperative" and pool all their resources. Invite creative suggestions. Explain that the game was first invented by a Quaker named Lizzie Maggie who patented a game called "The Landlord's Game" (patent #748,626, US) issued January 5, 1904. She invented the game to explain how rents make property owners richer and those who rent them poorer. She knew that this can be hard to understand, so she made up a game to show what happens and what can be done about it.

Ask questions such as:

- Do you think the game Monopoly is anything like the real world?
- What do you like about playing Monopoly? What don't you like?
- What do you think would make the game of Monopoly feel more fair?
- What do you think might make the real world more fair?

### 9 Make a Connection: A Tangle Game

**Leader preparation:** Imagine how this activity will go. What are some of the ways your group helps its members to feel welcome or cared for?

#### **Supplies:**

- a large ball of yarn (choose a medium weight—something that you can break with your hands but that doesn't snap easily)
- a teaspoon
- scissors

Tie the end of the yarn securely to a spoon handle. Have everyone stand in a circle. Explain that each person must thread the spoon and yarn through themselves in some way (through a sweater sleeve, through a shoe lace or belt loop, under a bracelet or watch band, but NOT AROUND THE NECK). As each person receives the spoon, each should share something he or she likes about this group or a way the group helps them to feel cared for. Pass the spoon to the first person. That person loops the yarn through something, says what they like about the group, and passes the spoon on to the next person around the circle. Continue until the yarn and spoon have gone all the way around the circle, connecting everyone. Now, as a fun challenge, ask the group to leave the learning area together without breaking the yarn, and to return as a group. When you have gathered back in the learning area, use scissors to disconnect yourselves from the yarn. Gather in a circle to reflect on the experience. How did it feel to be connected together by the yarn. Ask: How does our care for one another help everyone to feel a part of the group? Notice that while group members are not literally tied together by string, God's spirit of love and care joins the group together.

### Reflect

Remind yourself of some of the visions and hopes you heard from all in this Exploration. What do you celebrate? How have these ideas strengthened your faith or hope? How can you let the participants know of your appreciation for the gifts they have given you? Wonder about future Explorations you will have with this group. What will you do again, because it was joyful or seemed particularly meaningful? What will you do differently in future activities together?

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## **If We Had a Million Dollars: A Decision-Making Task**

**Instructions for leader:** Invite most of the group to just “be themselves” when deciding what to do with the money. Encourage them to talk about what they want to do and give reasons for their ideas. Invite the group to be creative and to come to a decision everyone feels okay with. Give older children and youth a role such as one of the following to play. Children need to be at least ten years old for a role to work well. Provide those who are playing a role with a name tag (write the name of their role printed in large letters on a file card, fold it so it stands up in front of them or affix with masking tape).

**Instructions for the group:** Your group has a million dollars that you inherited from a very rich uncle. The terms of the uncle’s will say that you must reach an agreement that everyone in your group is happy with before the lawyers will give you the money.

**ROLES** (*cut these apart and give them to children and youth who are ten or older*)

### **Marvel Goodworker**

You, Marvel, are very concerned about children in the world. You know that millions of children around the world die all the time from diseases that could easily be prevented with vaccinations and providing clean water. You would like the money to be spent on child health in poor countries—vaccinations, health care, digging wells for clean water, creating jobs for poor families, and housing.

### **Holdan Peacekeeper**

You, Holdan, are very concerned about peace in the world. You would like the money to go toward peacekeeping and reconciliation in places around the world where there is war. However, you also want to keep peace in the group, and you encourage people to compromise and make agreements.



### Attachment: Activity 4, page 2

#### **Dontbee Hopeful**

You, Dontbee, are very frightened about the state of the planet and are worried about the future. You do not really think there is much point in spending your group's money right now. You suggest investing it safely and waiting until the economy improves before deciding what to do.

#### **Bee Happy**

You, Bee, think the group should give away the money to make as many people happy as possible. Give to friends, neighbors, and the local school—whomever you first meet— as long as people enjoy themselves. You would, however, like to use a small amount of the money to have an “end of the world” party for your group (just in case this happens soon).

#### **Carter Treehugger**

Your highest priority, Carter, is to protect the environment. You believe that this is our first responsibility. A healthy environment will also help to protect the poor by providing more access to food, healthy drinking water, and employment. You want the group to use the money from an organization to begin cleaning up the planet and stopping pollution.

#### **Antie Friendly**

You, Antie, like people. You like your group, and you like group harmony. You help the group come up with creative solutions that satisfy the different concerns and interests of group members. You do everything you can to help the members of your group come to an agreement, make compromises, and feel good about what the group decides.

#### **Wantit All**

Wantit, you think the group should enjoy the money yourselves, saving only a small amount for charity and dividing up the remainder among the group members to spend as they wish. You would like to buy a nice boat with your share of the money, so that you can sail around the world.



# Living Stewardship



## Intergenerational

### About this Setting

Intergenerational experiences are rare in our North American society, although they used to be more common and still are the norm in many parts of the world. Faith communities are one of the few places where people can experience being part of a “village” where children can experience nurture and care from adults who are neither their parents nor paid professionals; where adults and youth can be part of the “whole village” that it takes to raise a child; and where all ages can learn and grow together. An intergenerational event offers an opportunity to focus on this unique dimension of being church, by intentionally bringing together all ages. There is no one right way to create a positive intergenerational experience, but careful preparation is key (so that younger participants do not have a lot of “empty” or unfocused time). It is also important to encourage interaction across age groups and to invite a spirit of mutual playfulness and creativity so that older participants do not participate only as helpers or observers. This setting offers an “intergenerational event”—a workshop style experience for all ages, including children, youth, and adults. Activities are designed so that all ages can participate and take something meaningful from the experience (although what a teen or five-year-old or adult will take from the experience may be very different). Because of this wide age span, participants will engage in learning activities in a variety of ways and at many different levels. Group members will learn from one another and assist, challenge, or inspire one another. Children may become “teachers” for youth or adults, helping them to participate more playfully or spontaneously. Adults and youth may share experiences or ideas that may stretch and enlarge the worldview of younger participants, and children will also have important ideas and experiences to share. It will be important for leaders to be open to the variety of gifts, spirituality, wisdom, and experiences present in the group. The activities in this component are written as if there were a single leader. Ideally, however, you will have youth and other adults sharing in the leadership of the intergenerational event.





### About this Faith Practice

As a way of life, expressed in gratitude, living stewardship is a practice that involves all that it means to live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. It grows out of a deep caring for and joy in who we are as God's created people and the natural world in which we live. Living stewardship is about how we live our lives and how our lives express our values. It affects all of our decisions, especially the ones we make about the natural and human resources entrusted to us for care. Living stewardship is shalom: living in harmony with others and the world. It is about our relationships, liberation, grace, justice, peace, and mutuality as well as our material possessions. As faithful stewards, we are joined by our common gift of life and the reality of finite resources. We recognize that each of us is a mixture of neediness and fullness and so have responsibility to care for each other as we honor the holy in creation and ourselves. As faithful disciples, we are called to live as generous creatures created by a generous God who mutually shares responsibility with us for all creation. Stewardship involves all people because all are connected in mutually covenanted stewardship within God's original intent for creation.

### Intergenerational Options

These activities may be used to build an intergenerational event for the commencement or conclusion of your series on "Living Stewardship" (up to 3 hours). Or the activities may be used independently (15–20 minutes each), interwoven with age-specific activities throughout the series. An intergenerational event might be used during a time of year that is already set aside as special, such as Advent, Kwanzaa, Lent, Vacation Bible School, or forty days of prayer for children.

Familiarize yourself with all twelve activities, Consider the age of participants and the time available for this event, and choose a group of activities that will meet your needs. For an event lasting 1–2 hours, choose three or four activities from the list of twelve. There are enough activities for three or four events! Or choose a single activity (15–30 minutes) to use as the activity at a community meal or other gathering. Wearing name tags is a good idea, as often older and younger members of a church do not know one another's names.

Each activity ends with a prayer appropriate for the end of the session. Gather as a church family to grow together and have fun!

### Intergenerational Leader Preparation

As you prepare to lead this intergenerational experience, read Genesis 1:26–31 and consider how you have heard this passage before. What stands out as you read it now? You will be gathering with a group of all ages, each entrusted by God with the care of creation, each equipped for the task with particular skills, resources, passion, and energy, and each made in the image of God the Creator. What are your hopes for this event? What gifts, commitment, or resources do you bring to your role as leader? How does the knowledge that you are made in God's image empower you for this ministry of leadership?

*Prayer: Creator God may your Spirit blow through us as it did at the birth of creation. Keep us attuned to your presence and alert to your wisdom. Help us to honor one another as bearers of your holy imprint. Inspire us as we seek to share the gifts you have entrusted to our care. Amen.*

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

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



## Discerning & Deciding Activities

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

## Sending & Serving Activities

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



## Exploration: Discovery

### BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

***Genesis 1:26–31***  
***1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19***

### 1 Make a Stewardship “Connection” (Discerning and Deciding)

**Leader preparation:** Imagine the kinds of gifts participants might mention and consider how they might interconnect. Reflect on what gifts you offer for care of the earth.

#### Supplies:

- a large ball of yarn (choose a medium weight—something that you can break if you pull hard your hands but doesn't snap easily)
- a teaspoon
- scissors

Tie the end of the yarn securely to a spoon handle. Invite everyone to stand in a circle. Explain that each person must thread the spoon and yarn through themselves in some way (through a sweater sleeve, through a shoe lace or belt loop, under a bracelet or watch band, but NOT AROUND THE NECK). As each person receives the spoon, each should share one or two ways in which they help to care for the gifts and resources that God has entrusted to us by giving money, time, or talents. Start by looping the spoon with the yarn through some part of your clothing. State a way you offer gifts of time, money, or talent. Pass the spoon with the yarn to the next person in the circle. That person loops the yarn through something, states a way they share, and passes the spoon on to the next person around the circle. Continue until the yarn and spoon have gone all the way around the circle and everyone is connected. Note: All the people who have received and threaded the yarn through themselves will need to pay attention and continue to help pass out the yarn around the circle.

When the yarn and spoon have traveled all the way around, ask the group to leave the learning area and reenter, without breaking connection. This will be challenging and requires the group to cooperate. When you are safely back in the learning area, use scissors to disconnect yourselves from the yarn. Gather in a circle to reflect on the experience. Invite the group to recall the different gifts people in the group can offer one another and our world. Even though we are not connected as we were with the yarn, we are still connected in other ways as



we care for one another and our world. Invite the group to suggest some of these connections. Ask: How does what someone does in one way connect with what someone else is offering? (Suggest particular examples, based on what the group has shared. For example, someone might give money to help an organization working with the poor, while another might help protect the environment by recycling, but both are working to care for God's creation).

### 2 Washing Machine: A Drama Game (Easy Preparation) (Discerning and Deciding)

**Leader preparation:** Prepare a movement to illustrate the "washing machine" (see below).

**Supplies:**

- Bible (preferably a children's Bible)

This is a fun cooperative game. Enjoy yourselves! Ask participants to form groups of three or four. Ask each small group to find a way to act out the object or situation that you ask them to depict by a single repetitive motion. Begin with an easy example, such as a washing machine. One person (or two) could be the tub, and the other one (or two) could be the agitator (the big part in the middle of the tub that moves back and forth to wash the clothes). The tub might rock back and forth repetitively while the agitator does a back and forth flailing motion. If you have more people, someone could be the clothes in the machine. Encourage groups to use their whole bodies. Invite groups to be creative, but stress that they must make a continuous repetitive motion, like a machine, rather than a series of actions.

Next, ask groups to add a single sound, repeated over and over, to go with their movement, for example "chug, chug" or "swish, swish" for a washing machine. First have every small group be a washing machine. Then ask them to be something else: perhaps a pair of scissors cutting paper, an axe cutting a tree. Remind participants to keep the motions simple and repetitive and to add only a single repeated sound. Then, suggest something more complex such as a train. Gather in a circle. Read aloud Genesis 1:26 or share a paraphrase such as the following: God said, let us make human beings in our image, just like me. Let them care for the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. Let them tend the cattle. Let them protect the wild animals and the snakes and insects. Let them care for all the creatures that I have made.

Have participants think of ways that we care for the creatures of the planet. Return to the small groups and have each group create a movement and sound that depicts one way people can care for the creatures of the earth. Give each group an opportunity to present their sound/movement creation.



## Exploration: Scripture

### 3 Tell a Creation Story (Exploring and Engaging)

**Leader preparation:** Read the following paraphrase of Genesis 1:26–31 or write one of your own, and prepare to tell it to the group. Do an Internet search for a creation story from another culture or context. For example, see Australian *dream-*



time creation stories at <http://tinyurl.com/2fo95s7> or Native American creation stories at <http://www.tinyurl.com/25rjj8a>.

### Supplies:

- poster: Orion Nebula by Stocktrek Images  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>

Put up the “Orion Nebula” poster and ask the group to gather around to look at it. Use the following information to tell the group about the Orion Nebula. Nebulae are enormous clouds of dust and gas far away in outer space. Over millions of years, gravity pulls the gas, dust, and other materials together to form larger and larger clumps which eventually become big enough to form stars and planets. The Orion Nebula is 100,000,000,000,000 kilometers away from Earth (on the scale of the universe, that’s fairly close). It is the closest place to Earth where stars are being made. But because the Orion Nebula is so far away, it takes light a long time to get from there to here. So when we look at the Orion Nebula we’re looking at what happened almost 1500 years ago.

Explain that in the Bible there is a story about creation. It is a story that was written down long before people knew anything about the Orion Nebula. Tell the story using the following paraphrase:

God created people to be like God. God blessed them and said to them, “You will have children and grandchildren and great-great-great grandchildren. Soon, people will live everywhere on earth. Take care of all the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and the creatures that live on the ground. I have given you plants to eat and berries to pick and trees with fruits and nuts. And all the creatures will have plants and berries and grasses to eat as well.” So, that’s what happened. God saw everything that was made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning on the sixth day.

Ask questions to promote conversation about this story: What do you like about this story? What does it make you think about? Tell another creation story from a different culture or context. Then invite the participants to work in small groups to make up a story of their own about creation. It might begin like this: “Long, long ago, when the universe was very new . . .” Encourage each small group to practice their story so that they can tell it to the whole group.



## **4 Reflect on an Image of Tenderness (Exploring and Engaging) (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader Preparation:** Spend a few minutes in silence with the poster “Planting” and consider how this image speaks to you today.

### Supplies:

- poster: Planting by Rex Goreleigh, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>

Put up the poster “Planting” and invite participants to gather around to take a look. Ask people to share what they notice in this picture. Ask people to form groups of three to talk about it. Suggest a question such as one of the following for them to talk about: How does this picture feel to you? Does this picture remind you of anything? If so, what does it make you think of? Gather back in the whole group. Invite the group to imagine this as a picture about God’s care for the world. Pause for a moment. Then say: Imagine that you are the plant and God’s hands are caring for you. How do you feel?



Gather in a circle, standing if possible. Ask participants to cup their hands the way the hands are cupped in the poster. Say, “Pretend I am going to ‘pretend’ to pass something very special around the circle something that we must care for. Each person must take it in their hands, very carefully, and pass it on to the next person.” Do not say what it is, but pass something light such as a soft, fluffy feather around the circle. Ask people to say what they imagined they were passing. Next, pass something heavy but very fragile, such as a beautiful glass ball. Again, ask people to say what they imagined they were passing. Invite other participants to choose something special to pass around the circle. Close by passing an imaginary butterfly, have it alight on one finger then carefully transfer it to your cupped palms. When the creature returns around the circle to you, let the butterfly go (release it with your hands) at the end.

Say a short prayer such as the following: *Thank you God, for all the special and beautiful things in our world. Help us to hold them in our care as you do. Amen.*



## Exploration: Discipleship

### ⑤ Sing a Song and Respond with Watercolors (Exploring and Engaging)

**Leader preparation:** Experiment with watercolor paints. If you have not used watercolors before, ask someone to show you some basic watercolor techniques or invite a painter from your church to do this activity with the group. Arrange for an accompanist or someone to teach the group the hymn.

#### Supplies:

- watercolor paints
- brushes
- cups of water
- flat dishes or plates to use as palettes
- masking tape
- damp towels
- hymnbooks with the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (tune: Chereponi), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>

Teach the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love.” Invite conversation about the lyrics of the song. What might it be like to be filled up with Jesus’ love? What would it be like to spend time with someone who was filled with love? How do we show the love of Jesus in our world? Encourage participants to create art that responds to this song in some way. Show them how to tape the paper to the work surface by putting strips of masking tape all around the edge. Wet the paper using water and brush (so that the surface of the paper is damp but not soaking wet). Create a “wash” using a very wet brush and a very small amount of paint. Paint the color over the paper to produce a very pale background color. Then choose a second color of paint and place a small dot of paint on the wash (while it is still wet). The paint will bleed out in a star-like pattern. Repeat with different colors but do not overwork the art (if too many colors are used it will end up as an overall brown or gray). Leave paintings taped in place until they dry so that the paper doesn’t curl.





If participants wish to share their art, after the finished paintings are hanging up, take a tour of the pieces that have been created. Sing "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love" again.

 **6 Self-Portraits of Gifted People (Deciding and Discerning, Sending and Serving) (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader preparation:** Take a moment to reflect on what it means to see yourself as "made in God's image."

**Supplies:**

- washable markers
- charcoal or drawing pencils
- paper (large sheets if possible)
- masking tape

Set out paper and markers, charcoal, or drawing pencils. Ask each person to make a self portrait using the art supplies that you have provided. Have everyone sign their self portrait. Remind the group that as creatures who are "made in God's image," who we are reflects the creativity and giftedness of the Holy One. Encourage participants to be creative—this portrait can be an abstract or impressionist piece, or they can use words and colors rather than an exact line drawing of themselves. The key is for people to try to convey a sense of who they are, their individual "style" or personality, and so on. When the self portraits are complete, post them in the learning area with masking tape. Tape another piece of paper beside each self-portrait. Have an "artist's tour" of each portrait. Stop at each person's self portrait and take a moment to share appreciations of the piece (things the other participants like, appreciate, notice, things the self-portrait reminds them of, and so forth.) Encourage positive responses. Then, ask the group to think of some of the gifts this person has to share with the world, things that help them to celebrate, share, and care for the gifts that life offers. For example: Sammy's jokes help people feel good; Ying helps the younger kids with crafts; Miguel is generous and shares his allowance. Encourage specific, positive comments. Have participants write their comments on the paper beside the self portrait or have people say out loud the gifts they see in each person while a leader records them.



**Exploration: Christian Tradition**

**7 Take a Tour of Your Church (Exploring and Engaging)**

**Leader preparation:** Gather information about the history of your congregation and the history of your denomination (date founded, major events over the years, mission involvements over the years and currently, pastors). Plan a tour through the building or arrange for someone to act as a "tour guide" for the group.

**Supplies:** None

Tell the story of Acts 4:32–36, as follows:

The believers gathered to talk about Jesus. They gave thanks for all that he had taught people of love, of God, and of the way to live. If someone had never heard of Jesus, they told him or her stories. Some of their favorite stories were . . . [invite the children to suggest stories about Jesus]. Some



of the believers were rich; they owned houses and land. Others were very poor. The believers who had lots of property sold it and shared the money with the poor. Then, everyone had enough and no one had too much. A man sold a field that he owned. He came and laid the money at the feet of the apostles. His name was Joseph but everyone called him Barnabas—a name that means “son of encouragement.”

Talk about what the earliest Christians did (told others about Jesus, cared for people who were poor and sick, worshiped and prayed together). Ask: What kinds of things do we do as a church family? Invite older members of the group to share memories of the way your church has helped to care for others and the world over the years.

Take the tour of your church building. Have fun. Pretend you are tourists visiting a historic site. As you visit the different spaces, talk about what goes on there. Ask participants, both old and young, to share special memories they have of something happening in that part of the building. Ask: What does our church family do to care for one another and our world?

### 8 Share a Meal (Sending and Serving)

**Leader preparation:** Invite others to help you with the meal (and with leadership in this event); this is not something you should do single-handedly.

#### Supplies:

- ingredients for a simple meal (something that does not require a lot of time to cook, such soup made ahead of time, or make-your-own sandwiches)
- supplies to decorate the tables

Recall with the group how the earliest followers of Jesus shared their possessions and worked together so that everyone had enough to eat, shelter, and care. At their community meals, they remembered how Jesus had shared bread and wine with his friends at the last supper and told them to do this in remembrance of him. From the shared meals of the early Christian community, we get our communion celebration. The meal is an act of justice-making—an act of sharing equally with everyone. Prepare and eat a simple meal together. Make sure that everyone has a role to play in the meal preparation or setting up and decorating the tables.

Before you eat, invite participants to say aloud things for which they are thankful as well as concerns they have for themselves, for other people, and for the world.

Alternative: Say a prayer of thanks before the meal; give thanks for the food and for those who prepared it. Invite God to help you discover ways to care for one another and the world around you.



## Exploration: Context and Mission

### 9 Saving the Birds: Action Research (Discerning and Deciding, Sending and Serving)

**Leader preparation:** Do an Internet search for information on a "Lights Out" program near you. "Lights Out" programs work to reduce nighttime lighting of high rise buildings in an effort to help prevent migratory birds from hitting the build-



ings. Go to a site such as <http://lightsout.audubon.org> or search the Internet with the key words “lights out” and “migratory birds.” Find out what volunteers can do to help protect migratory birds that strike high rise buildings.

### **Supplies:**

- poster: With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark ... by Barbara Reid  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- crayons or markers
- pencils
- paper

Post a copy of the poster of the painting by Reid “With Hoof and Squawk and Squeal and Bark . . .” and invite the group to look at the poster. Ask participants: What do you like about this? How does this picture make you feel? Remember the story of Noah saving animals from the flood? What did Noah do to save the birds and animals? What are some things that people can do to protect or care for wildlife? Share information you have located about Lights Out programs to prevent migratory birds from hitting high rise buildings. Invite participants to work in groups of two or three to create their own illustrated story about someone or some group working to save a wild creature or group of creatures that are in danger, such as a group working on a Lights Out program (or helping clean up birds fouled by an oil slick, a dolphin caught in a fishing net, and so forth. You can also find lots of images to go along with these incidents.) Talk about how your group might participate in a project to help local wildlife (such as volunteering with a group that rescues migratory birds that strike high rises or making posters for a Lights Out campaign). Plan an action project in which everyone can participate.

Alternative: If you have access to computers with Internet connection, have participants do this research themselves.

## **10 Caring for the Earth: A Tissue Art Activity (Sending and Serving)**

**Leader preparation:** Think about what the balls might look like when completed. How will you help the group to work together on this project? Consider the anticipated (or possible) size of the group so that you prepare sufficient supplies. This activity will not work well if groups are too large or too crowded together. If your group is large, have several balls and supplies (about one small ball for every three to four participants or one large ball for every five to six participants).

### **Supplies:**

- large beach ball or exercise ball (the ball can be reused later)
- paint brushes
- blue and green tissue paper (if possible, obtain a variety of different shades of green and blue)
- water-soluble white craft glue (not Podge or acrylic-based glue)

Create a large planet Earth using the ball. Cover the ball with craft glue (use brushes) and paste on pieces of blue tissue paper; overlap the pieces until the ball is completely covered and none of the plastic is showing. Then tear pieces of green paper in the shape of the continents (approximate shape is fine). Paste the continents over the blue tissue using layers of green paper.

When the ball is complete and dry, have participants sit in the circle and slowly pass the ball from one person to another in turn around the circle. As the ball is held by each person, have them say one thing they love about the planet Earth.



Wonder together how God feels about Earth. Say a prayer of care for the Earth, such as the following: *Thank you, God, for this beautiful planet that is our home. Thank you for mountains and seas, forests and skies, plants and birds and animals. Help us to find ways to work together to keep our world safe; help us to keep it always blue and green and beautiful as it spins through space. Amen.*



## Exploration: Future and Mission

### **⑩ Vision of a Future World: Body Sculpture (Discerning and Deciding) (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader preparation:** This activity does not require any outside supplies but it will help if you can offer some examples or ideas to illustrate what is meant by "body sculpture." For example, show the group how an arm can be gently shaped to form a tree branch by lifting it up, curving it slightly, separating the fingers, and so on. "Practice" some possibilities in your imagination.

**Supplies:** None

Help the group make a collective sculpture as follows: Ask for two volunteers to be the sculptors. The rest of the group is the clay. The sculptors shape the "clay" into a statue by gently moving people's bodies or asking them to move into a particular position. Practice with a simple idea, using just one person, such as "make a statue of a child playing with a balloon." Then, make a complicated statue using many bodies.

Ask the sculptors to create a statue of a problem in our world that they would like to change. When the sculpture is created, have everyone "freeze" in position. Have people take turns stepping out of position (the sculptors take their places) so that everyone has a chance to look at the sculpture.

### Reflect

Remind yourself of some of the gifts (inspiration, hope, ideas, new learning) that you gained from this intergenerational experience. Recall some of the highlights of the session. What leadership or gifts did the participants share? Pause to give thanks to God for the gifts life offers. What do you celebrate? How has this experience enriched your faith or hope? How can you let the participants know of your appreciation for the gifts they have given you? What will you do again, because it was joyful or seemed particularly meaningful? What will you do differently in future events of this kind?

Then, talk about how you could make a statue of this problem being fixed, solved, or changed. Have two new sculptors make the new statue. Again, give everyone a chance to see the new statue.

Alternative: Have people work in small groups to create a sculpture of "our hope for a future world."

### **⑪ Sing a Song With Movement (Sending and Serving)**

**Leader preparation:** Arrange for an accompanist; if necessary, arrange for someone to teach this song to the group.

**Supplies:**

- hymnbooks (or photocopies) with the song "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" (tune: Talavera Terrace), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>

Teach the song "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" and sing it together. Invite the group to make up simple actions to go with the words to the song. Plan to sing this song in a congregational service of worship.