



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

When the children in your group were young, they probably were encouraged to say “thank you” for gifts or kindnesses they received from others. Some may also have offered table grace at meals or a thank-you prayer before bedtime. Now that the children are older and are discovering that they are blessed with a variety of gifts, many are willing to share them. They can empathize with the needs of others and, when given the opportunity, find as much joy in giving as receiving gifts. As you plan experiences for this Exploration, choose activities that will help the children discover that gratitude is more than giving thanks for what we receive. It is also thanking God for what we have to share.

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

After you have read the scriptures for this Exploration, study the picture “With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark ...” by Barbara Reid. God saved Noah, his family, and all the creatures on the ark from the flood. They have been cooped up together for forty days and nights. Imagine their joy at being set free again in a world where God is in charge and all creatures are under God’s care! They know they can trust God to look after them in bad times and good, and they gladly “hoot and squawk and squeak and bark” their praise and thanksgiving. In India, Christians once held special thanksgiving services in which members came forward to place their gifts upon the altar. In cities, where people worked for wages, the gifts were usually money. In the villages, people usually offered rice or vegetables. On one occasion, an elderly widow brought an unusual amount of rice and laid it on the altar. The pastor did not know this woman well, but he did know that the offering was much more than she could afford. He asked her if God had blessed her in some special way. She replied, “My son was ill and I promised to bring a large gift to God if he got well.” “I am glad that he has recovered,” said the pastor. “No,” the woman said sadly, “he died last week. Still, I know he is in God’s care, and I am thankful for that.”

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 A Graffiti Board of Blessings (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Cover a display board with several layers of newsprint (so markers will not bleed through), or use a large cardboard box for the graffiti board. Print a title across the top of the board or around the box: Remember what God has done for us, and we say, “Thank you, God.” (This activity will work well around Thanksgiving.)

Supplies:

- Bible
- display board and newsprint, or a large cardboard box (like an appliance box)
- markers

Tell the group: After Moses led the people out of Egypt, they spent forty years in the desert before God brought them to the land God had promised. God cared for them all that time. Now, as they are about to enter their new land, Moses tells them their life will be better now, and he asks them to remember that it was God who made this possible. Then read Deuteronomy 8:7-11a. Read the title on the graffiti board: We remember what God has done, and we say, “Thank you, God.” Comment that this is a good reminder for us, too. Ask the children to think of gifts they have received from God, and write or draw them on the graffiti board. Incorporate these ideas into a litany prayer, using the graffiti title as the response. Variation: Use a display board that is readily accessible to the congregation, or put a graffiti box in the fellowship hall or narthex where people will see it. Let the children start the process by listing their gifts from God. Then encourage them to ask others in the congregation to contribute their ideas, too. Use their responses to develop a litany of thanksgiving, as above, for use in congregational worship. This works especially well around Thanksgiving.

2 What Do You See?

Leader preparation: Take a fresh look at the story of Noah’s ark, especially Genesis 8:1-19, that tells what happened as the flood ended. Some of the children will know this story about how God told Noah to build the ark and gather up all the world’s creatures in it so they would be safe from the flood. They might be able to identify what is happening in the picture, but know the story so you can help them as needed.

Supplies:

- poster: With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark by Barbara Reid, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- newsprint or white board and markers

Give the children a few minutes to look carefully at the picture. Then have them describe what they see in the picture. Ask: What is the story told by the picture? Pretend you are one of the creatures you see. What are you feeling? (Clue: The name of the picture is “With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark ... ”.) Where are you going in such a hurry?

Conclude with something like this: God kept Noah and his family and all the creatures safe from the flood, but finally they saw dry land and clear skies. They had been cooped up together so long that they couldn’t wait to get out of the ark



Prayer: God, who first of all loved me, help me love you too. Let me join with all creatures in praising your goodness and mercy. You alone have brought me to this place and, in good times and bad, have kept me in your care. May I be a channel for your love to touch the lives of the children in my group so they, too, may recognize the gifts that come from you and offer you their joyful praise and thanksgiving. 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.

and enjoy the new life that God gave them. They knew God would continue to care for them, and they knew they had work to do. Perhaps this is the way God’s people felt when they left the wilderness and crossed the Jordan River. A new life waited for them in the land God had promised them when Moses led them out of Egypt, and they were happy, excited, and filled with joy.

3 Gifts for the Baby

Leader preparation: If you have access to a Nativity scene (crèche), bring the figures of the wise ones (Magi), camels, Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus to share with your group. If not, find a teaching picture or several old Christmas cards portraying the journey to Bethlehem and the Magi from the east offering gifts to the baby. Read Matthew 2:1–11. Know the story well enough so you can help the children retell it using the crèche figures or pictures. For this activity, focus on the Magi’s gifts as a generous response to God’s gift of the child who would be the leader they all awaited, rather than the symbolic nature of the gifts. If the children are curious about the gifts, explain that they were all expensive — gold and fragrant oils and ointments. In Matthew’s account, the Magi came from the “east,” which could have meant Persia (Iran), Iraq, or Arabia. In any case, they would have had to travel across the Jordanian desert, take the King’s Highway (the oldest highway in the world in continuous use) north, possibly stopping in Petra. They may have crossed the Jordan River north of the Dead Sea and gone through Jericho up to Jerusalem to ask directions from King Herod. Bethlehem would have been about six miles from the city. If you would like to see pictures of these areas (for example, Wadi Rum desert and Petra), go to

<http://www.visitjordan.com>.

Some of the rocks in the desert have ancient picture writings left by the many caravans that went through there, so it was a well-traveled route. Plan to teach the children the first stanza of “Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You.” Write the words on a chart or whiteboard. You can find the lyrics at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>.

The alternate tune, Holy Manna, may be easier for this age group to learn than Talavera Terrace. The alternate tune is a lively Southern folk tune that is used with other texts, so it is a good one for children to learn. Lines 1, 2, and 4 have the same melody. The first two measures in line 3 are the same as the last two. The melody moves mostly in steps, and the intervals are easy to learn. If you are not comfortable teaching the hymn, ask a choir member or high school girl with a light voice to sing it a line at a time for the children to imitate. Because there is so much repetition, the children may learn the tune quickly.

Supplies:

- Bible
- nativity figures or pictures of the Magi
- hymn “Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You” (tune: preferably Holy Manna)

Comment that the arrival of a new baby is a special time in a family. If you are a parent, share the gratitude you felt for your new baby, and the way other family members and friends brought gifts when they came to visit the child. Children who have younger brothers or sisters may also have memories about their births to share. Then call attention to the nativity figures (or pictures) and explain that this was what happened when Jesus was born, too. Mary and Joseph looked upon this little boy as a gift from God. They began to realize what a special gift he was when angels sent shepherds to see him and strangers, following a star,



from far away came to bring him presents. Ask the children to tell what they know about these strangers and fill in the details as necessary. Conclude with something like this: The Magi knew Jesus was God's most precious gift to us, and they brought the best of what they had as gifts to honor and welcome him. Because Jesus was the best of all the blessings God has given us, we too bring him gifts. (Because the story is so familiar, you might invite the children to tell it as you hold up the figures in the Nativity or point to them in the picture.) From the chart where you have printed the lyrics for the hymn, read the first stanza of "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" with the children and then line it out for them to imitate, as suggested above, singing the whole stanza when they are secure with the melody.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Thank You Poems (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Stewardship begins with gratitude for the blessings we receive from God. This activity provides a way for children to express their gratitude for and appreciation of some of God's gifts. Some of the children may have worked with the cinquain (SING-kane) poem format in school, but it may be new to others. Write the format for a cinquain poem on a chart or board:

- Line 1. One Word — name of a person or thing for which you are thankful
- Line 2. Two Words — describe the person or thing
- Line 3. Three Words — action words that tell what the person or thing does
- Line 4. Four Words — tell your feelings about the person or thing
- Line 5. One Word — a word that means the same as the person or thing mentioned

Make up two examples of your own to display, one involving a person and the other involving something from nature.

Supplies:

- ruled paper
- pencils
- sample cinquains

Begin with these or similar words: God has given us many gifts — family, friends, teachers; music, art, and dance; sports of all kinds; animals and birds; a world full of beautiful things. Now we're each going choose one of those gifts and thank God for it in a poem called a cinquain.

Direct their attention to the chart, as you explain the format and read the examples. Remember to share your own as examples. Then pass out paper and pencils. Have the children number the lines 1 through 5. Then read the format through again, stopping after each line to give them time to write down some words. Let them have additional time to go back over their cinquains to revise or add to them. Be ready to help them with words as needed. When the children are satisfied with their poems, invite any who wish to read them aloud. Conclude with a prayer such as: *Thank you, God, for all these many gifts.*



5 Our Dear God Made Them All

Leader preparation: “All Things Bright and Beautiful” is a hymn that is on most lists of hymns that children should learn, and they love singing it. The tune is called Royal Oak. It is fairly standard in church hymnody, so you should be able to locate it readily; if not, you can find it online, using an Internet search engine. Note that the hymn originally had six stanzas, but hymnals usually print only three or four. The last stanza is related to stewardship, so in case it is not in your hymnal, here it is: *God gave us eyes to see them, and lips that we might tell how great is God almighty who has made all things well.*

Learn the refrain so you can teach it to the children. If you need help, ask a choir member or a high school girl with a light, true voice to visit your group. Prepare three paper panels for your display board and label them with phrases from the refrain: “All things bright and beautiful”; “All creatures great and small”; “All things wise and wonderful.” Make a separate banner headline with this phrase: “Our dear God made them all.”

Lay the paper panels on a large enough table or the floor so the children will have a flat workspace. Provide art supplies for them to use in illustrating each panel.

Supplies:

- hymn "All Things Bright and Beautiful" (tune: Royal Oak)
<http://www.tinyurl.com/ytnale>
- craft paper
- art materials such as magazine and calendar pictures, markers, crayons, construction paper, yarn scraps
- scissors
- glue

Introduce the hymn. Many years ago in Ireland there was a poet named Cecil Frances Alexander. She was a minister’s wife who wanted to help her husband in the church. She decided to write hymns for children that would help them learn about God. One hymn was “All Things Bright and Beautiful.” It tells about how God made everything in the world. Sing or read the refrain. Invite the children to create some pictures to illustrate this part of the song. You can use pictures from magazines or calendars, drawings, words, and other materials to fill each panel. Then put the panels on the board/wall with this heading: Our dear God made them all.

While the children are working, sing the refrain a few times so they will become familiar with it. When the pictures are completed and displayed, gather the children in front of them. Invite them to sing the refrain with you before and after you read each stanza. Be sure to include the fourth stanza (above).

6 What Is A Steward? Unscrambling a Definition

Leader preparation: Older children like new words, and this activity will help them learn the definition of “steward.” Type or write words or short phrases from the definition of “steward” on individual strips of poster board or paper so they can be mixed up for the children to unscramble and put in order. Use this definition: A steward manages and cares for something that is owned by someone else.

Be prepared to give examples of different kinds of stewards, such as:

1. Someone employed in a large household to supervise servants, order sup-



- plies, and keep accounts (a housekeeper or butler)
2. A person who manages someone else's money, for instance, a banker
 3. A person who takes care of seeing that workers are paid and the workplace is safe, such as a shop steward
 4. An employee on a ship, airplane, bus, or train who takes care of the passengers and brings them food, such as a flight attendant
 5. One who manages the food and drink in a restaurant, hotel, or other institution, for example, a wine steward, host/hostess, or manager

Supplies:

- cards with words from the definition of “steward”
- pictures of “stewards” (optional)
- display board or blank wall
- push pins or masking tape

Hold up the word “steward” and pronounce it for them to repeat. Then spell out the letters of the word together. Explain that they can find out what “steward” means by taking the words you have laid out on the table and putting them in the right order on the display board or wall. (If your group is large, you may want to divide them into two teams, give each a set of definition words, and see who finishes correctly first.) When the children have completed this task, read the definition out loud together. Then ask the children to think of examples of people who are stewards. If they need help, give them some hints from the list of examples above. Encourage them also to name persons in your congregation who are stewards (pastor, office manager, custodians, church musicians, church teachers, trustees or elders).

End with a prayer something like this: *All things come from you, God, and we thank you for all these people who manage and care for your gifts. Amen.*

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Grab-Bag Discussion (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Prepare a bag of objects, each of which might suggest to the children something they could do to take care of our world. Include at least one object for each person in your group (plus one more, so even the last person has a choice).

Supplies:

- tote bag or large grocery bag
- objects such as a toy car, water bottle, aluminum can, piece of clothing, aerosol spray can, newspaper, wash cloth, light bulb, foam cup, toothbrush, paper napkin or towel, tree leaf
- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers

Ask each person to choose one object from the bag and tell how it suggests an action of good stewardship (examples might include turn off the lights, carpool or walk, turn off the water while brushing your teeth, recycle cans and newspapers). If your group is small, let them choose twice. Write the children's ideas on a chart and incorporate them into a prayer something like this: *God, you have asked us be good stewards of the world you have given us, so help us remember to (name the actions). Amen.*



8 Being a Steward. Caring for Our Group

Leader preparation: Read John 13:1–20 so you are familiar with the story of the foot washing at the Last Supper. Think about how the children in your group can take turns being helpers in your sessions. Gather and/or prepare the materials for making the towels. Be prepared to sing the refrain of “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” with the children. You can find the lyrics and the tune at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>.

Supplies:

- small towels or fabric hemmed on the sides and fringed on each end
- fabric paints or permanent markers
- display board or chart with markers
- belts (or cords) that children can put around their waists to hold the steward towels when it is their turn
- hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (Tune: Chereponi)

Recall briefly the story of how Jesus washed the disciples' feet at the Last Supper, and how he asked them to serve one another in the same way. Ask: What are some ways we can care for one another when we meet together? How can you help manage what we do? How can you be stewards? Help the children identify jobs they can take turns doing in order to care for the group. For example: passing out and collecting Bibles, getting out and putting away art supplies, cleaning up after art projects, sharpening pencils, putting chairs in order when the session ends, watering plants, etc. Under the heading “We need stewards for ...” list the jobs in a few words, such as: Bibles, art supplies, clean-up, pencils, chairs, plants. Explain that each week the children will take turns being stewards for the group and wear a towel to show their job. Suggest that the children decorate a towel for each steward by writing “Steward of ...” on it and adding an appropriate symbol. Give them towels and fabric paints or permanent markers and let them work alone or in teams, depending on the size of your group. As they work, start singing the refrain of “Jesus, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” and encourage them to join in.

9 Yes or No: Making Choices

Leader preparation: This activity may help the children discover that the choices we make can help or harm God’s creation. Make a list of the ways people care or fail to take care of God’s world. For example:

1. Tossing trash out of the car window
2. Letting the water run when brushing their teeth
3. Keeping the house extra-warm in winter
4. Recycling newspapers, cardboard, cans, and bottles
5. Rinsing dishes under a running faucet
6. Walking or biking instead of driving
7. Using plastic plates and cups
8. Planting a garden
9. Turning off the lights when leaving a room
10. Taking a shower instead of a tub bath

Be prepared to discuss the consequences of each action with the children after they vote “yes” or “no” on whether these are the acts of good stewards.



Supplies:

- ruled paper, one sheet per child
- pencils

Say: God asks us to manage the world and take care of it. That is what it means to be stewards. Every day we make choices that have consequences for our world. Think together about some of the choices we make and decide whether they harm or help the world.

Pass out paper and pencils and ask the children to number the lines on the paper from 1 to 10. Explain that you are going to read ten choices people make. If the choice helps our world, they should write “yes,” and if it harms our world, they should write “no.”

After the children have had a chance to write their answers, go back to the choices, one at a time and let them report how they voted with a show of hands. Encourage them to talk about the consequences of each action.

Close with a prayer such as: *Creator God, give us the wisdom and the will to make choices that are helpful, not harmful, to the world. Help us to be good stewards of all you have given us. Amen.*

Reflect

How effective have the learning activities been in helping the children discover that gratitude for God’s gifts is the basis for stewardship, and that stewardship involves all of life, not just money?

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Living Stewardship



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Like most people, older children prefer certain learning activities to others. Nearly all are physically active and enjoy experiences that involve more than their eyes and ears. Most, but not all, like art projects. Their reading levels vary, but most are eager to find and read verses and stories in the Bible. They also like to learn new words. Most, but not all, are developing writing skills they can use to create original prayers, stories, and plays. They are imaginative, and most children love acting out stories. Some can read music and may sing in a choir or play an instrument.

Take time to get to know the children in your group, so you will be able to choose activities for this Exploration that will be both meaningful and enjoyable ways for them to learn about the gift of creation and their role in caring for that gift.



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

Leader Preparation

After you have read the scriptures for this Exploration, look at the picture “Orion Nebula” as you read the first creation story from the book of Genesis. It states that in the beginning, “the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep.” Then God brought forth light from the darkness, and God saw that the light was good. Different cultures look at what happened next in creation in different ways. For example, the Lakota people in South Dakota use a phrase that doubles as a prayer and a greeting: *Mitakuye Oyasin* (Mee-TAH-koo-yay Oh-YAH-sin), which can be translated as “All my relatives.” This phrase reminds us that, as human beings, we are related to and responsible for all the living and nonliving things in the world that the Great Spirit (Wakantanka or Tunkashila, “Grandfather”) has created. We share Mother Earth together, and what we do and the way we live touches every other creature and thing in our world. (Note: In Lakota rituals, sweet-smelling prairie grass is often braided, dried, and burned as incense on the hot coals of a fire. Its fragrance is thought to bring down God’s blessing on the people. The smoke rising from the fire is thought to carry the people’s prayers to God, as does the eagle that flies the highest of all the birds.)

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Creation “Bingo” (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Duplicate enough copies of the creation “Bingo” cards so there is one for each child.

Supplies:

- Bible
- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers
- creation “Bingo” cards, Attachment: Activity 1
- buttons (shirt or dress buttons), game pieces from a commercial game, or dried beans: twenty-five per card to serve as game pieces, each in a cup or dish
- pens or pencils
- blank caller cards, one for each word you record on the chart
- small basket or box for the caller cards

Ask the children to listen as you (or one or more older children) read the story of how God created the world from Genesis 1:1–2:4, and raise a hand whenever they hear something mentioned that God made. Record each thing or creature they name on the newsprint or a white board. When they get to generic terms such as “creeping things” and “wild animals,” ask for specific examples (for example, ants, snakes, lions, elephants) in these categories. You should end up with at least thirty words on the chart.

Give each child a “Bingo” card and ask each to fill in the blank squares in any order with twenty-four words from the list the group just made. While they are doing this, make a caller card for each word and mix them up in the basket. Give each child a set of buttons (or other game pieces). Play the game as you would “Bingo.” Draw a word card from the basket and say it. If the children have the word on their cards they can cover that square with a button. Continue until one player has five buttons in a row horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. That player should shout “Creator!” and be declared as the winner. (If you have time, you can play this more than once. You could also make this a game they could take home to play with their family.)

2 Making a Hymn Book or a Rebus Hymn

Leader preparation: The creation story in Genesis 1:1–2:3 is the basis for “Creator God, How Grand the Earth,” a new hymn of praise that can be sung to the familiar tune “Forest Green.” One way to teach the text is to involve the children in making a “hymn book.” The hymn text is full of word pictures that the children



Prayer: *Great Spirit, God, Wakantanka, we send these prayers on high, like smoke from sweet grass rises up or eagles mount the sky. Like you, may we respect the earth, the air, the sky, the sea, and treat each living thing as one with our own family. Amen.*

(Excerpt from a hymn "Like Ancient People on a Quest," from *The Song Lingers On: New Hymns for Our Journey of Faith*, by Mary Nelson Keithahn and John D. Horman. © 2003, Zimbel Press.)

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.

can illustrate, either with their own drawings or with pictures cut from magazines, calendars, and other sources. When the book is finished, the children can use it to read and sing the text.

Keeping the long side vertical, print four lines from each stanza on the pieces of poster board, two across the middle of the "page" and two at the bottom, leaving space for illustrations to be added. Punch three equally spaced holes along the left side of each page, so you can assemble it with the loose-leaf rings later.

As an alternative to teach this hymn, the children could make a rebus (a riddle made up of words depicted by pictures or symbols) for the hymn text. Using chart paper, write out each stanza leaving blanks for words (such as earth, heavens, seas, plants, trees, fruit, creatures, sun, stars, moon, etc.) that the children can illustrate with drawings or pictures from magazines and calendars. The children can use this as a song chart later. For either approach, collect pictures that the children can choose from to illustrate each line. Lay the pictures out on a table so the children can look through them easily.

Supplies:

- Bible
- a hymnal with the tune Forest Green
- hymn "Creator God, How Grand the Earth" (Tune: Forest Green) <http://www.tinyurl.com/28qs8xz>
- eight pieces of 22" x 14" poster board (with grid)
- glue
- paper punch
- three 1" loose-leaf rings
- markers
- assorted pictures cut from magazines, calendars, greeting cards, or other sources (for example, Earth from space, people viewing natural wonder or people admiring a new baby, landscape showing sky and land, landscape with water and land, growing plants and fruit trees, farm animals or pets being fed, or food at family table, sun, moon, and stars, pictures of the four seasons or calendar page, fish and birds, animals of all kinds, people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds, children caring for pets, picking up trash, collecting food, visiting an older person, another view of earth from space, people enjoying the world, people singing, examples of people being stewards in various ways)

Open the Bible to Genesis. Explain: Genesis, the first book of the Bible, begins with a story that names all the wonderful things in the world God created for us. Today we're going to learn a hymn that praises our Creator God for the world that we enjoy. It also reminds us that God wants us to take good care of it. God wants us to be good stewards of creation.

Show them the "pages" that are ready to be illustrated. As you read the lines on each page, ask the children to think of ways they might illustrate the words. In pairs or individually, let them choose one or more pages to work on, find appropriate pictures, and glue them onto the blank spaces. Assemble the pages in order and fasten them together with the loose-leaf rings. Use the "hymn book" to sing the hymn to Forest Green. This is an easy tune for children to learn. The melodic range is appropriate and the melody moves mostly by step. Lines 1, 2, and 4 are the same. For the first stanza, sing each line for them to echo, and then sing it as a whole. Sing the other stanzas too so the children can have the fun of using the book they have made.



"Creator God, How Grand the Earth" (tune: Forest Green)

Creator God, how grand the earth you called forth with your voice!
Your handiwork fills us with awe and in it we rejoice.
You separated day from night, the heavens from the earth; you gathered waters
into seas and gave the land its birth.

You filled the earth with plants and trees, all bearing fruit and seeds, and thus
ensured there would be food to meet your creatures' needs.
You caused the sun to shine each day, the stars and moon at night, thus marking
seasons, days, and years forever by your light.

Fish of the sea and birds that fly appeared at your command, with living
creatures of all kinds that creep and walk on land.
Then in your image, by your word, you made us, humankind, that we might care
for all good things that you, with love, designed.

Creator God, how grand the earth you called forth with your voice.
In all its wonders and delights, we revel and rejoice, and yet we know you count
on us to mind the earth for you.
Make us good stewards, tender, wise, and fair in all we do.

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③ Weaving the Colors of Creation

Leader preparation: Make a loom for each child by tying seven or nine 16" lengths of macramé cord between two reasonably straight sticks (a tree branch or dowels) about 8–9" long. Keep the cord evenly spaced along the sticks. Use masking tape to tape both ends of each stick to your table so the macramé cord warp can be kept taut and ready to be woven with the heavy yarn, strips of cloth, and materials from nature such as feathers, grain, grasses. Other small objects such as shells, dried flowers, pressed leaves, and so forth, could be glued onto the weaving when it is finished. Be sure to try doing this project yourself before you introduce it to the children, so you can anticipate any problems they may have and be able to show them a sample weaving. To see what the wall hanging might look like, see Attachment: Activity 3.

Supplies:

- poster: Orion Nebula, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>, by Stocktrek Images,
- two sticks, about 8–9" long and relatively straight (tree branches or dowels)
- macramé cord, enough for seven to nine pieces 16" long for each child
- masking tape
- heavyweight yarn (such as rug yarn) in different colors from creation
- 1" strips of cloth in a variety of colors
- natural materials (feathers, wheat, grasses, shells, dried flowers, pressed leaves)
- glue
- scissors

Children can use small balls of yarn as a shuttle as they weave over and under the warp, or you could wind some knitting bobbins with different colors of yarn ahead of time for them to use instead. Another option would be to have them use large-eyed yarn needles to weave in and out. Since this is a wall hanging, they



can stop and start yarn and fabric strips without having to tie them together.

Show the children the Orion poster. Ask: What does your eye see first? (What colors do you see around it? When light travels through space the rays are bent and the white light separates into all the colors we see in rainbows after a rain, or mist at a waterfall, or sunlight through a crystal. In the beginning, when our world was nothing, God said, "Let there be light!" and there was light, and from that light came all the beautiful colors of creation. That was God's first step in creating our world and everything in it.

Call attention to the different colors of yarn and fabric strips and the natural materials on the table. Invite the children to take those colors and weave them into a beautiful wall hanging that will help us remember the light that came from God at the time of creation, light that gives us all these colors. Each one will be different, as God has made each one of us unique.

Assign each child a loom and show them how to weave the yarn or cloth strips over and under the warp. Explain that later, when they have finished weaving, they can glue on some of the shells, dried flowers, or pressed leaves. Attach a cord to the ends of the top stick to use as a hanger. Display the finished weavings in your learning area while you are working on this Exploration, and then send them home with the children.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Who Owns the Earth and Why Does that Matter? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Genesis 1:26–31 and be prepared to share this scripture with the children. The text of the storybook is an adaptation of words by Chief Seattle, a Native American chief from the Northwest Nations, in treaty negotiations with the United States government.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- a picture storybook, *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky: A Message from Chief Seattle*, illustrated by Susan Jeffers (optional), <http://www.tinyurl.com/249ytve>

Everything we do has a purpose. Give some examples, such as: if we pick up a pencil, our purpose is to write something on a piece of paper; if we put on our coat, our purpose is to keep warm when we go outside. Encourage the children to respond with examples of their own. It's the same for God. There is a purpose in everything God does. Listen to what God is doing in this passage from the book of Genesis, and try to figure out what God's purpose is.

Read Genesis 1:26–31. Help the children find the passage and encourage them to follow along in their Bibles. God has been busy creating the world and everything in it. Now God has done something new. What is it that God has done? What might have been God's purpose in this act? What do you think "dominion" means? God has given us the responsibility to manage and care for the world, but as Psalm 24 reminds us, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it." What difference does it make if you are caring for some-



thing that belongs to you or something that belongs to someone else?

Give the children some examples to consider, such as:

1. It was Audrey's turn to take care of the class hamster during vacation. Her sisters were excited when she brought it home in its cage and helped her put the hamster in a room upstairs. They all kept checking to see if the hamster was all right, but someone forgot to close the door to the room. The family dog got in and killed the hamster. How do you think Audrey felt? What would she tell her teacher? What difference did it make that the hamster belonged to the teacher and not to her?

2. Sam went to the library to borrow a book for one of his school assignments. On the way home some friends asked him to play ball in the park. He laid the book down on a park bench and joined the game that went on until it was getting dark and everyone had to hustle home. He forgot about the book until he heard the rain come down in the night. When he went to get it the next morning, the book was a soggy mess. How do you think Sam felt? What would he tell the librarian? What would happen to his homework? What would his parents say when they found out? What difference did it make that the book belonged to the library and not to Sam?

3. Juanita told her friend Maria about the "Harry Potter" DVD that she had received for Christmas. Maria had been wanting to watch it for a long time and asked if she could borrow it. Juanita let her take it home for the weekend. Maria watched it with her family, and returned it to Juanita in good condition on Monday. Why did Maria take good care of the DVD? How did that make Juanita feel about sharing something she enjoyed with her friend? How did Maria feel when she brought the DVD back to Juanita safely?

When we are put in charge of something that belongs to someone else, we have a responsibility to care for it. When we live up to our responsibilities, the consequences are good. When we mess up, they can be awful. A Native American chief, Chief Seattle, warned us about this many years ago when he signed a treaty with the government that had defeated his people. The earth does not belong to us, he said, we belong to the earth, and we must take care of it. We must not waste or destroy it, or it will be gone forever.

If you have a copy of *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky*, <http://www.tinyurl.com/249ytve>, share it with the children. Otherwise, end with a prayer such as: *Creator God, you have given us the world and everything in it, and asked us to take care of it. Forgive us when we waste your gifts, when we harm your creatures, when we take more than we need. Help us to remember that there will be enough in the world for everyone when we learn to manage and share what you have given us. Amen.*

🔗 The Love of Money Is the Root of All Kinds of Evil

Leader preparation: Read 1 Timothy 6:6–10. Prepare to tell the fable of King Midas as a way of raising the issue addressed in the scripture with the children.

Supplies:

- Bible
- story "The Golden Touch" (see below)

Invite the children to listen to the very old fable that comes from ancient Greece. A fable is a short story that tries to teach us something.



The Golden Touch

Long, long ago there was a king named Midas who was very, very rich. It was said that he had more gold than any other king in the world. One room of his castle was almost filled with gold coins, and Midas loved to sit and count them. He grew so fond of his gold that he loved it more than anything else in the world, even more than his little daughter, Marigold.

One day King Midas had a visitor. He welcomed him and gave him food and a place to stay overnight. The visitor asked what he could do for him in return. "You are the richest king in the world," he said, "what more would you like?"

The king smiled. "I will never be rich enough," he said. "I wish that everything I touched would turn to beautiful yellow gold."

"Your wish will be granted," said the visitor, for he had special powers. "At sunrise tomorrow, everything you touch will turn to gold. But I warn you, your gift may not make you happy."

Midas could hardly sleep that night, and early the next morning he went around touching everything. He touched the curtains around his bed, the roses in his garden, the leaves on the trees, and they all turned to gold. How beautiful they were! Midas worked so hard that he got hungry. He had forgotten to have breakfast. But when he went to pour water into his glass, the water turned to gold, and he had nothing to drink. When he tried to slice some bread, it turned into gold, and so did the meat he tried to eat with his fork. "I'm going to starve," he thought anxiously. He looked so troubled that little Marigold, who had just awakened, came to put her arms around him. Much to his horror, she also turned to gold.

"What have I done?" Midas cried. He called to the visitor, who was still in bed, "Friend, you were right. Your gift does not make me happy! Take it back, and I will give you all my gold and all my lands. Take it back and restore my daughter to me."

The visitor saw that the king had learned his lesson. He told him to fill a pitcher of water at the spring in the garden, and sprinkle the water over all the things he had turned to gold, including his daughter, Marigold. Everything turned back to what it was, and King Midas and Marigold sat down to breakfast together. Never had their food tasted so good!

Follow this story with some questions such as these: What was the most important thing in the world to King Midas at the beginning of the story? How did his ideas change and why? What do you think this fable is trying to teach us? Listen to what the Bible says about this. The following is some advice for new Christians.

Read 1 Timothy 6:6–10. When we become greedy and want more and more money and things, it is easy to forget about God and the people we love. Sometimes we do things that are wrong in order to get what we want, and sometimes we don't do the right things we should. This is a problem for people of all ages, even children. For example, some people may want so much to get the highest grade on a test that they will cheat instead of being content with doing their best. What are some other times when we want something so much that we may make wrong choices? (Some other possible issues: Wanting the latest style in clothes, wanting the newest electronic toy, and so forth.) Will they shoplift it from a store, or steal it from a friend, or complain to their parents, or be content with what their family can afford?

Conclude with a prayer such as: *God, help us to enjoy and be content with all you have given us, without being greedy for more than we need. Amen.*



6 Using Our Money — Making a Budget

Leader preparation: Read 1 Timothy 6:17–19. The activity involves making a budget for the money the children have to spend each week. Since families differ in the amount of money they can afford to give their children and the degree in which they let them manage their money, avoid comparisons. Focus on the choices children make in spending, and the need to include the church in their budget. Let the children work on their personal budgets without sharing their personal information with the group. Prepare and duplicate simple budget forms for the children to fill out. They may have other items to include. Remind them that the “Money In” total must be equal to or greater than the “Money Out” total.

Money In	Amount
Allowance	
Gifts	
Earnings	
TOTAL	
Money Out	Amount
School costs	
Needs	
Church	
Savings	
Fun	
TOTAL	

Supplies:

- Bible
- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers
- budget forms
- pencils

Say to the children: We all need spending money. How do you get yours? Allowance? On request for a need? Payment for work? Do you think you have enough? Too much? Too little? How do you usually spend the money you get in a week?

Record their answers on the newsprint or whiteboard. Identify who benefits from each expenditure — the child, friends, family, the church, the poor, God. Why do you make these choices? No matter how much or how little we have, we would be considered rich by many other people in the world, so these words to new Christians are meant for us, too.

Read 1 Timothy 6:17–19. Repeat these words of advice: "Do good, be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share." If we take this advice seriously, what difference would it make in how we spend our money each week? Give them time to respond, and then ask: How can we budget our money so we are sure to have some each week to give for the good works of the church? This is what stewards do! Give the children the budget forms to fill out. Explain that the total received and total spent should be equal, so they should adjust their figures as necessary. To avoid embarrassment, give everyone in the group the same figure, such as \$25. Needs would be things like school lunches, school supplies, and so forth. Money



for church could be for the regular offering or special project. Savings could be for something they want for themselves or gifts for others. Fun covers things to do with money left over. Suggest that the children take their budgets home to talk about with their parents.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 How Can We Be Stewards of God's World? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Put a bookmark in a Bible at Psalm 24:1. Arrange your learning area so the children will have a flat surface to work on and a wastebasket for scraps nearby.

Supplies:

- Bible
- construction paper in a variety of colors
- pencils
- scissors
- marker
- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers
- push pins or masking tape

Give the children pencils and construction paper large enough to outline both hands. Have them look at their hands as you comment: Hands are a wonderful part of our bodies. They come in different sizes and colors and they can do all sorts of things for us, such as ... (let the children finish your thought). Hands can also help us take care of the world God has given us. Think about that as you draw around each of your hands on the construction paper, and then cut them out.

When the children have finished, ask them how many fingers they have on each hand. Suggest they think of ten things they can do to help take care of God's world. Record their ideas on the newsprint or white board in a few words: Recycle cans, turn off the water, turn out the lights, pick up trash, feed the birds, recycle newspapers, give outgrown clothes and toys to the church sale, recycle cardboard, plant a tree, take care of pets, collect food for the hungry, write a letter to a shut-in. Try to come up with more than ten ideas so they will have some choices to make. Help them decide on one or two words that will be a "code" for remembering that act. Then give them each a marking pen (in a color that will show up on their paper hands) and ask them to write on each finger one of these things their hands can do.

When they have finished, help them arrange their paper hands on a display board or wall. Then ask a child to read Psalm 24:1. These words were part of a song the people in Bible times sang when they came to the temple to worship. They were praising God, who created the world and all that is in it. We praise God too in our songs, but also in the many ways we use our hands to care for God's world.

8 We Are Stewards of Our Bodies

Leader preparation: Read Genesis 1:26–31. If we think of humans as part of the group of "living things that move upon the earth," what does it mean to have "dominion" over us? This activity will help the children discover that God wants



us to care for our bodies and minds as well as the world around us. Be ready to suggest some ways we can practice self-care. If there are children in your group who do not like to draw, collect pictures from magazines, calendars, and other sources that they could cut out and use to illustrate their posters.

Supplies:

- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers
- construction paper or poster board
- pencils
- crayons
- markers
- glue
- scissors
- rulers
- pictures and letters from magazines and calendars or photographs

When God created us and gave us life, God asked us to take care of the world in which we live. We are part of that world, so God was also asking us to care for our own bodies and minds. Even though our parents take care of us now, we need to begin taking responsibility for our own health. How can we do that?

With the children, make a list of “Good Habits for Healthy Bodies and Minds.” Record their ideas on the newsprint or white board. Here are some examples from a pediatrician:

- Exercise an hour every day.
- Eat healthy food: fruits, vegetables, dairy, whole grains, lean meat.
- Limit fast food and sugary drinks.
- Watch your weight — limit your portions.
- Get enough sleep.
- Wash your hands often.
- Brush and floss your teeth.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Wear a helmet when you ride your bike.
- Put on your seat belt in the car.
- Use sunscreen outdoors.
- Never smoke.
- Do your homework.
- Practice new skills you are learning.

Let the children choose one habit to illustrate in a poster, using drawings, cut-out pictures and letters, or both, as they desire. Display the finished pictures on a wall in your room or elsewhere in the building, or use a large cardboard appliance box as a “kiosk” to hold them. As the children gather to view their work, pray this or a similar prayer: *God, help us to develop these habits that will help us be good stewards of the bodies and minds you have given us. Amen.*



9 Affirming and Praying for Our Friends

Leader preparation: Caring for the community is one task for Christian stewards, and it begins with prayer for one another. This web exercise will encourage the children to affirm gifts they recognize in others and pray for them. Think about some of these gifts in case you need to help children when it is their turn.

Supplies:

- a ball of yarn (large enough to connect children across and around the circle when unwound)

Invite everyone sit in a circle. Give one child the ball of yarn, and say, “Thank you, God, for ... [child’s name]. Her [his] smile makes me want to smile, too.” Then instruct the child: Hold onto the end of the yarn as you toss the ball to another, but first thank God for that person and name one of his or her gifts, as I did for you. The child who receives the ball of yarn should grab on to the yarn that was unwound by the throw, offer a prayer for the next recipient and his or her gifts, and toss the ball to that child. Repeat until everyone is connected in a web. Then conclude with a prayer something like this: *God, we are glad to be a part of this circle of friends. Help us continue praying for one another as we work and play together. Amen.*

Reflect

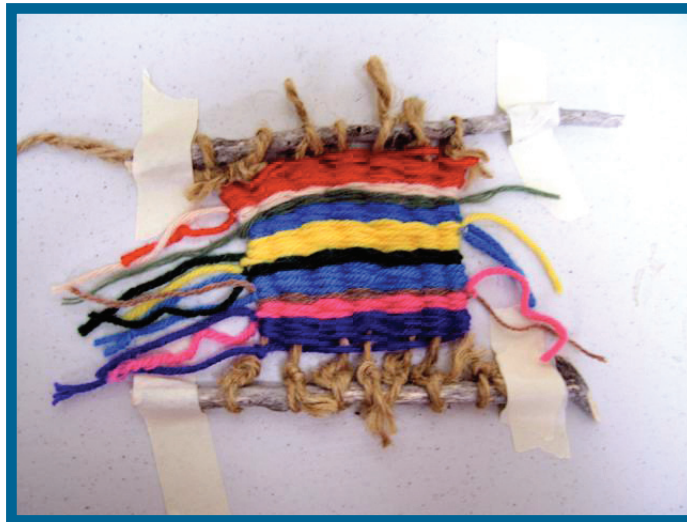
How have these learning activities helped the children explore what it means to be grateful stewards of the world God has created for them? Are they beginning to expand their idea of stewardship to include being responsible for God’s people as well as the natural world?

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Activity 1: In each space, write a word from the chart of things God has created, as mentioned in Genesis 1:1 -- 2:4.

		Creator God		

Activity 3



Living Stewardship



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Older children may have growing responsibilities for household chores, especially where there is a single parent or if both parents work outside the home. They may also care for pets. Many are trying out a variety of activities, both in and out of school, to see what they can do and what they like. Learning new skills, whether in sports or music or dance, usually involves taking lessons, practicing, and participating in tournaments, concerts, and recitals. These same children may be involved in a choir at church, groups such as Scouts or 4-H, and social events like birthday parties. And there is always homework to do. As a result, many children are overscheduled and have to learn to budget their time carefully.

As you plan activities for this Exploration, look for ways to help children discover that time is a gift from God and, as is true of all God's gifts, meant to be spent and invested wisely for the good of all.

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

After you have read the scriptures for this Exploration, look carefully at the picture *The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus* by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>.

A servant has paused in her work to listen to the conversation at the table in the upper left corner of the painting. Who are the people at that table? What is the occasion for their meal? What are they talking about? How will their words affect the servant who is obviously not part of their group? The call to discipleship sometimes comes directly and sometimes by chance encounters with people of faith. In the mid-nineteenth century, in the town of Ahmednagar in India, Krishnarao (KRISH-na-RAH-oh) Sangle persuaded his high-caste Hindu family to send him to a congregational mission school to get an education. While there, he was attracted to the faith and life of his teachers and felt a call to follow Jesus. He knew his family would disown him if they found out about his decision, so he kept his faith a secret from everyone, except his new wife with whom he prayed and studied at night. Finally, Sangle decided he could be silent no longer. He gave up his family, position, and wealth in order to become a preacher. He wrote many hymns in the Marathi language, including the stanza below.

Think about your own commitment to leading your group in this Exploration

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Stories of Two Young Men (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Be familiar enough with Mark 10:17-22 that you can help the children create a drama of the story. Be prepared to read the story of Francis of Assisi to the children, or tell the story in your own words, as suggested below. After the children have heard the stories of these two rich young men, they will compare their responses to the call to discipleship.

On newsprint or a white board draw two circles, leaving room for a square in between. Label the circles "Young Man" and "Francis," and the square "Alike." Draw lines down from each circle to a word block labeled "Different."

Supplies:

- Bibles
- script for Mark 10:17-22 (adapted), Attachment: Activity 1
- story about Francis of Assisi or a picture storybook such as *Saint Francis* by Brian Wildsmith
- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers

Introduce the stories of two young men who discovered that being a follower of Jesus was not easy. Look for ways these young men were alike and how they were different, especially in the choices they made. The first story is about a young man who went to see Jesus. It is found in the Bible in Mark 10:17-22. Have the children find the story in their Bibles. Invite the children to create a drama of the story with a narrator, the young man, and Jesus, and the others be the disciples. Act out the story. You may want to repeat this several times, giving the children the opportunity to take different parts.

Then introduce the story of Brother Francis something like this: The second story is about a young man who lived around eight hundred years ago in Italy, in the town of Assisi.

If you have an illustrated book about Brother Francis, read that to the children. Otherwise, continue to tell this story in your own words:

Francis was the son of a cloth merchant who was very rich. He was a care-free, happy young man who loved to sing and play his lute and joke with his friends. He dreamed of being a knight in shining armor, but when war did come, he was captured and put in prison in another city. He tried to cheer up the other prisoners with his songs and stories, but then he became sick and sad, too. His rich father paid money for his freedom and took him home. He got better, but he still felt sad. His mother said, "Why don't you ride your horse out into the country and get some fresh air?" As Francis rode out of Assisi, he went past a hospital where the lepers lived. People were afraid of them because they were sick, so they had to live by themselves outside the city walls. They were very poor and lived off what they could beg from those who passed by. Francis had always felt sorry for them, but on this day, he did not turn away in disgust when a beggar approached him. He got off his horse, gave his moneybag to him, and bandaged up his wounds. The next day he took blankets, food, clean water, and bandages back to the lepers. Another day, when Francis was out walking near an old church, he heard God's voice: "My church is in ruins. Fix it up for me." Francis was elated. God had spoken to him and asked for his



as you pray his words:

Prayer: Heart and mind, possessions, Lord, we offer unto Thee; All these were thine, Lord; thou didst give them all to me. Wondrous are thy doings unto me. Plans and my thoughts and everything I ever do are dependent on thy will and love alone. I commit my spirit unto thee. Amen.

(The hymn was translated by Alden H. Clark, b. 1878; hence the archaic pronouns. It can be found in the 1958 Pilgrim Hymnal.)

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.

help. Francis needed money to do all these things, so he stole some expensive cloth from his father’s store and sold it, intending to use the money for the poor and to repair the church. His father was angry and dragged him before the bishop. The bishop told Francis to give back the money. Francis said, “I will give the money back, but I will also return all my father has given me.” People could not believe their eyes. Right then and there Francis took off all his clothes, his shoes, and his hat, laid them at his father’s feet, and walked away, naked, singing. He found a simple robe and sandals and began living like the first disciples of Jesus, owning nothing but his coat and depending on others for food. For the rest of his life, he went about preaching of God’s mercy and love, and he begged money from his friends and neighbors to care for the poor and sick and needy.

When the children have heard the two stories, direct their attention to the chart you drew on newsprint or a white board. Ask them how the two young men were alike. Record their answers, and then ask them to list the differences between the two. Then ask: Which young man do you think made the right choice? Let the children voice their opinions, and then comment: There is no easy answer about how we should use what we treasure — our money, our time, our toys. Few of us will choose to give up everything like Francis, but we can all practice sharing as much as we can give to God. Being a steward means making choices that show our love for God and one another, not just ourselves.

2 What Did She Hear?

Leader preparation: Spend time contemplating the painting *The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus* by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, and read Luke 24:1–32 so you will be familiar with this post-resurrection story.

Supplies:

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

Ask the children: Have you ever tried to listen in on a conversation your parents were having in another room? Or tried to hear what your parents and teachers were talking about, especially if you heard your name mentioned? Suggest that this might be happening in the picture. The maid in the kitchen has stopped to listen to people talking in another room. Who are these people? Why are they in that room together? What do you think they are talking about? What do you think she might have heard?

After the children have shared their ideas, explain: The picture shows three men talking over supper in a place called Emmaus. Two of the men were friends of Jesus, and the other was a stranger they had met as they were walking along the road from Jerusalem. The stranger asked them why they were so sad, and they told him, “Our friend Jesus has died. It has been three days since it happened. This morning some women in our group went to where he was buried and said his body was gone. They said angels told them he was alive. We hurried there, but we did not see Jesus. How can that be true?” Jesus’ friends and the kind stranger walked and talked together until they reached Emmaus. The two friends invited the stranger to have supper with them. A servant-girl brought bread and wine to their table and then went back to the kitchen to prepare other food. Perhaps, from her work table, she overheard the stranger’s words when he blessed and broke the bread and gave it to the others. Perhaps she listened to Jesus’ friends exclaim



with wonder as they finally recognized him, “It is the Lord!” And then she saw that the stranger had suddenly vanished!

What do you suppose she thought about all this? What do you think she did next?

Allow time for the children to respond, and then conclude: Perhaps the conversation the servant-girl overheard led her to find out more about this Jesus who once was dead but was alive again. Perhaps she became one of his followers too. Show the children where this story is in the Bible in Luke 24:1–10.

③ Add Movement to a Hymn

Leader preparation: Know the story of Krishnarao (KRISH-na-RAH-oh) Sangle well enough to tell it to the children. Print the words of the hymn “Heart and Mind, Possessions, Lord,” on newsprint or a white board. Practice the movement for this hymn so you will be able to lead the children in the motions. This activity focuses on the text, but if you would like to sing the hymn with the children, you can find the lyrics and tune at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2f6tb4n>.

Supplies:

- Bible
- newsprint or whiteboard with appropriate markers
- copy of the hymn “Heart and Mind, Possessions, Lord”

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2f6tb4n>

Being a follower of Jesus is not easy. Sometimes it seems he asks too much of us. That’s what one rich young man thought in this story. Read Mark 10:17–22 (or recall it, if the children have heard it in another activity). Then tell of another young man who made a different choice.

Many years ago, in the town of Ahmednagar in India, there lived a young man by the name of Krishnarao (KRISH-na-RAH-oh) Sangle. His family was Hindu. They had plenty of money and were highly respected. They could afford to send him to any school, but Krishnarao wanted to go to a Congregational mission school and his family agreed. Krishnarao studied hard, but he also watched his Christian teachers and was impressed by the kindness and love they showed for their students and one another. He liked what he saw and learned more about Jesus, the one they followed. He finally felt called to become a Christian himself. He kept his new faith a secret from his family for a long time, because he knew they would have nothing to do with him if they found out he was a Christian. He married, and he talked with his young wife about being a Christian, but only when they were alone at night so his family would not hear. Finally he could stand it no longer. Krishnarao told his family that he and his wife had become Christians. His family told him he was no longer their son and would receive no more help from them. Krishnarao left his possessions and family behind in order to follow Jesus. He became a preacher and wrote many hymns in his language. A stanza from one of them is printed on the chart (or board). Think about all Krishnarao gave up to follow Jesus, as we read them together.

You may need to explain that the hymn was translated into English more than a hundred years ago when people still used “thee, thou, and thy” when talking to God.



Read the stanza out loud together, and then suggest the children read it again with these motions:

- Heart (*hands over heart*)
- and mind, (*hands touch forehead*)
- possessions, Lord, (*hands, palms down with fingers outspread, left over right in front of body, sweep outward*)
- we offer unto Thee; (*turn hands on sides, palms facing in, bring together, and lift up in front of face*)
- All these were thine, Lord, (*right hand sweeps across body from left to right at the waist*)
- thou didst give them all to me. (*hands, palms in, lowered down in front of face with fingers slightly moving to suggest blessings "raining" down*)
- Wondrous are thy doings unto me. (*hands thrust out in raised position on "wondrous" and lowered to chest on "unto me"*)
- Plans and my thoughts (*turn head to left*)
- and everything I ever do (*turn head to right*)
- are dependent on thy will and love alone. (*bring right hand slightly above top of head and down over the face*)
- I commit my spirit unto thee. (*bow head and cross hands, right over left, on heart*)

Repeat this until the children are comfortable with the movements. If you have access to the Internet, sing the words to the Tamil tune while they do the motions, and encourage them to sing along too.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Map a Story (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38–42, and then practice reading this hymn text aloud.

When Jesus was in Bethany he was a welcome guest within the home of Lazarus, and there he stayed to rest. Good Martha hurried off to cook some food for him to eat; but Mary, searching, found a stool and sat down at his feet. While Mary listened to the words that Jesus had to say, her sister, busy at her work, sent angry looks her way. Said Martha, "Jesus, don't you care that I must work alone? Why do you let her sit and talk, her idleness condone?" "Now, Martha, Martha," Jesus said, "when I come here to dine, don't waste your time on special food. A simple meal is fine. Come, sit with Mary at my side and feed upon my words, that you may fill your mind and heart with all that you have heard."

On newsprint or a white board, write the following, leaving space to record the children's responses:

Characters: What we know about each from the story

Place: here the story happens

Plot conflict and solution: Does the solution cause a new problem?

Conclusion: How does it end?



Check the teaching picture file at your church to find a picture of Mary and Martha with Jesus (optional).

Supplies:

- copy of the hymn “Martha and Mary,” from *The Song Lingers On: New Hymns for Our Journey of Faith*
- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers
- illustration of Mary and Martha with Jesus (optional)

Point out the items on the newsprint or white board and ask the participants to watch for these in the song as you read. Read the first three stanzas of the hymn to tell the story, and then map the story with the children. Ask: Who are the characters in the story? Write the names on the board and ask the children what we know about each one from the story. Record their responses. Then ask where the story takes place, and record their answers. Mention that Bethany was a little town not far from Jerusalem. Lazarus was a brother of Mary and Martha. Next explain: Every story has action. A writer usually starts a story by telling you about the characters and the problems they face. The actions the characters take to solve their problems is called the plot. Which characters have a problem in this story? How do those characters try to solve it? Is the solution successful or does it create more problems? How does the story end? What do you think happens next?

Ask the children: Think of a time when you had several things to do, and had to decide which was more important. What did you consider when you made your choice? After the children have shared their ideas, comment: If we are going to be good stewards of our time, we need to decide what is most important to us, so we can spend our time wisely. Conclude your conversation by reading the last stanza of the hymn as a prayer.

Prayer Sometimes, like Martha, we may be too zealous in a chore, like Mary, leave a task undone for needs we can't ignore. We long to find a balance, God, in living out each day. Help us be faithful in our work, yet take the time to pray. Amen.

(MARY AND MARTHA, 86.86 D (From *The Song Lingers On: New Hymns for Our Journey of Faith*), by Mary Nelson Keithahn and John D. Horman. © Zimbel Press, 2003. Used by permission.)

5 Write a Prayer Litany

Leader preparation: Find and mark Ecclesiastes 3:1 in your Bible. Prepare a chart on newsprint or a white board with the format for the litany, leaving space for children to suggest endings for each phrase:

Unison: God, we thank you for the gift of time ...

Voice 1: time to be ...

Voice 2: time to do ...

Voice 3: time to help ...

Voice 4: and time to care ...

Unison: God, we thank you for the gift of time ...

Voice 5: time to wonder about ...

Voice 6: time to share ...

Voice 7: time to learn about ...

Voice 8: and time to play ...



Unison: God, we thank you for the gift of time. Help us use that gift wisely not just for ourselves, but for others. Amen.

Supplies:

- Bible
- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers

There never seems to be enough time to do all the things we want to do, yet the Bible says ... (read Ecclesiastes 3:1). Invite the children to think about ways we can use God's gift of time, and to ask God to help us make wise choices. Introduce the litany. A litany is a prayer with a line that everyone repeats alternating with lines that one or more individual voices speak. Point to the repeated line in the chart and read it together: God, we thank you for the gift of time. Notice that a prayer for God's help is added the last time it is used. Then ask the children to suggest words to fill in the blanks at the end of each line. (If you have children who like to work independently, you may want to duplicate copies of the format for them to work on alone or in pairs, and have them report their ideas back to the group so you can record them on the chart.) Work together until the children are satisfied that the prayer incorporates their ideas, and then pray it together. Suggest to your pastor that this litany be included appropriately in congregational worship (with recognition of the authors). Budgeting time is a stewardship task for all ages!

⑥ Interview Stewards in the Church

Leader preparation: All congregations have individuals or groups who share their particular talents and skills in service to others. For example, there may be quilters who make banners for the sanctuary and quilts for the needy. There may be cooks who prepare the food and others who serve the meal when it is the congregation's turn to help at the downtown mission. Others may cut down surplus trees, split logs, and haul the wood to families in need of fuel. Still others may work on Habitat for Humanity projects or volunteer at shelters for victims of domestic violence or be involved in mission trips to other areas. Choose people from several of these projects who relate well to children. Invite them to visit your group as mystery guests to answer questions the children will ask to find out what they do as stewards. Have name tags for the guests to wear: Steward #1, Steward #2, and so forth. Explain that after the children have identified their area of work, they will have a few minutes to tell how and why they got involved in their particular projects. At that time they can share pictures of their activities or samples of their work. Plan to help the children write thank-you notes to their guests after they leave.

Supplies:

- pictures of guests at work on projects or samples of their work. (Keep these hidden from view until after their work has been identified.)
- paper, envelopes, and stamps for thank-you notes
- pens or pencils

Before the guests arrive, explain: We are going to have some stewards from the church visiting us today, but you are going to have to find out what they do by asking them questions. Together make a list of questions they might ask. You might be prepared with some good questions as examples.

When the guests arrive, give them their name tags and help them find a seat. (If you have mature students, you might let them be the hosts.) Let the children take turns questioning each one until they have identified what their area of stewardship is.



Give them clues as necessary. When they have found out what each guest does, ask the guests to share any pictures or samples they brought, and tell how and why they chose these projects. They could also mention any ways children could help.

After the guests leave, have the children write thank-you notes to them for coming. Suggest they tell what they liked best about their visit.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Where Do You Stand? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity will help children discover that time is one of the gifts God has given us; learning how to use it wisely is part of good stewardship. The exercise allows for some appropriate physical movement before gathering for a discussion.

Make a list of paired opposite ways children can choose to spend their time. For example:

- A. Have time alone
- B. Have time with friends

- A. Play a game
- B. Read a book

- A. Do homework
- B. Play outside

- A. Watch TV
- B. Practice the piano, violin, or other instrument

- A. Be the performer
- B. Be the audience

- A. Spend money
- B. Earn money

- A. Give a gift
- B. Receive a gift

- A. Play soccer
- B. Go to a Scout camp-out

- A. Help with a project at church
- B. Go to a movie

- A. Do something with my family
- B. Do something with my friends

Post the “A” sign on one wall and the “B” sign on the opposite wall. Clear away any chairs and tables so the children will be able to stand anywhere on the con-



tinuum, an imaginary line from one side of the room to the other. (You could make a real line, using blue paint trim tape.)

Supplies:

- your A and B list
- two big signs, “A” and “B”

Time is one of the gifts we have from God. Invite the children to think about how we use that gift. Imagine that there is a line across the middle of the room. Go and stand in the middle. I’m going to give you some choices. If you really like “A,” go and stand at that end of the line, if you like it just a little better than “B,” stand somewhere on that side of the middle. If you like “B” best go stand at that end or close to it. If you don’t like either or don’t have a preference, stay in the middle of the line.

When the children are in position at the center of the continuum line, read each pair of opposites and let them move according to their preferences. Then gather them as a group, and ask: Was it hard or easy to decide how to use your time? What helped you make your choices? How do you think God wants us to use the gift of time?

Close with a prayer something like this: *Dear God, thank you for the gift of time. Help us to use our time wisely, for the good of all and not just ourselves. Amen.*

8 Sharing Our Gifts

Leader preparation: Children are sometimes reluctant to share their gifts. Read the situations on the following list. Try to anticipate how the children, as a group, might act each one out. Be ready to help them set up the situation, but encourage them to decide how to resolve each one. Here are the situations for role plays:

- Everyone is excited about a musical play they are doing at church except for S. He doesn’t sing or play an instrument. He is a good artist, but no one knows that. How could he use his gifts in the play? What could keep him from doing that?
- T. sang in a small children’s choir in his old church, but now attends a much larger church. He wonders if they need another choir member. Should he join the choir or not?
- R. is an outdoor person and knows a lot about nature. A group of children from the church is going to the nursing home to read to residents, but she is not interested. How could her friends at church involve her in this project?

Supplies: None

Describe each role play situation, one at a time, and ask the group to show how they would play it out. Suggest they try to include everyone in the group in each situation. For example, in the first situation one child could be S. and the others the children excited about the play. How would S. feel when he didn’t think he had anything to contribute? Which of the children will discover his artistic talent and see that he could design a set or make props? Will an adult need to intervene? Let the children try different ways of playing each situation until they are satisfied. Introduce simple props as desired, for example, a sketchpad and pencil for S.



End the activity with a prayer like this: *God, help us to see that we all have gifts and talents, and give us the courage to share them with others. Amen.*

9 Make a Poster

Leader preparation: On a large piece of newsprint or poster board, print the words “God Loves Us” in the center. Draw a circle around the word and then draw lines radiating out from the circle, one for each child in your group.

Supplies:

- newsprint or poster board
- construction paper
- markers
- masking tape

Gather the children in a circle. Ask each to think of two things they do really well. Let them share their talents, and then ask them to name one thing they would like to do better. Finally, invite them to share something they could do that would be helpful to someone else. Comment: God made each one of us unique and different from everyone else. God gave each of us special talents, some things we can do well and others not so well. But God expects us to use the gifts we have to help others. That’s what it means to be stewards.

Give the children each a piece of construction paper and have them tear out a shape. Each piece will be unique. Ask them to use the markers to write their names on their shapes and decorate them to show one or more of their gifts. Then give them circles of masking tape to attach their shapes to one of the lines radiating out from the circle on the poster.

When all the children have attached their shapes, comment: God loves each of us for the unique persons that we are and can become. God expects us to pass that love on by using our gifts to help one another. How can we show that on our poster? (If the children need an idea, suggest that two-way arrow-shaped arcs could be drawn connecting each name shape with another.)

Pray together: Loving God, we thank you for making each of us unique and different. As we discover our particular talents and abilities, help us to use them to share your love with others. Amen.

Reflect

In what ways have the activities helped the children discover that being a steward means making choices about how we use the gifts that come from God, and that these gifts include our time and talents, as well as our resources? Have they discovered that following Jesus requires this kind of stewardship?

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Attachment: Activity 1

A Dramatic Reading of Mark 10:17-22

Narrator: One day Jesus and his friends were walking together. A young man was walking toward them. From the way he was dressed, they could see he must be very rich.

Young Man (*sees Jesus, runs to him, and kneels down*): Good Teacher, what must I do to be with God when I die?

Jesus (*chiding the man*): Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.

Young Man: (*not giving up*): Well, then, Teacher, what must I do?

Jesus: You know the commandments: (*Encourages the disciples to join in as he recites them.*)

Jesus and Disciples: You shall not murder. You shall not be unfaithful to your husband or wife. You shall not steal. You shall not tell lies about others. You shall not cheat. Honor your father and mother.

Young Man (*nodding his head enthusiastically*): I know, I know. I have kept all these laws since I was a child.

Jesus (*smiling at him kindly*): There is one more thing you haven't done. Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor. Then come, follow me.

Narrator: When the young man heard Jesus' words, he was shocked, and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

(*As the Narrator speaks the Young Man shakes his head sadly and walks off slowly, his head down.*)

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Most children in this age group have not yet developed a real sense of history, but they love stories about faithful Christians from the past and present who can serve as models for their own lives, in both the church and the wider community. They also look up to older youth and special adult friends in the church who practice their faith regularly with joy and commitment.

Congregational worship is one place where children can learn about the mission of the church and the importance of stewardship. Stories, hymns, scripture, sermons, mission moments, special offerings, and the weekly offering all speak of our tradition of grateful giving for the work of the church. However, older children may or may not participate in worship with their families, and, if they do, they may not be present for the whole service. If your congregation has a tradition of special mission projects, you may want to look for ways to share that history with the children in your activities.

As you plan this Exploration, think about ways you can introduce the children to persons from the Bible, the history of the church, and your own congregation who can serve as models of good stewards for them.



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

After you have read the scriptures for this Exploration, look at the picture *The Banjo Lesson* by Henry Ossawa Tanner, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters4>. What is happening in the picture? What is the relationship of the adult to the child? How do they feel about each other? What is the adult sharing with the child: Banjo techniques? A favorite song? A love for music? The warm feeling of being loved? How do you share with children what is important to you? When actor Matt Damon was a child, his mother placed a magnet on their refrigerator bearing a picture of Gandhi and this quote: “No matter how insignificant what you do may seem, it is important that you do it.” His mother was involved in all sorts of causes, and from the age of twelve Damon began sending a little bit of his \$5 weekly allowance to support one of her concerns. As an adult, he focuses on the need for clean water and sanitation in places like Africa, India, and Haiti through <http://www.water.org>, one of several organizations he helped found. In an article he wrote for *Parade* magazine (October 11, 2009), Damon commented, “I can’t think of any more

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1. What Is a Tithe? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Deuteronomy 14:28–29. As stewards of land that belonged to God, the Israelites were required to offer one-tenth of what the land produced at the annual harvest festival, or in this case, every third year. The Levites were priests, not farmers, so they benefited from the tithe, along with widows, orphans, and resident aliens who had no land to work. Note that this passage raises the issues of regular giving and the purpose for giving, as well as what to give.

Since some children may not yet have dealt with fractions in math at school, this activity uses real money to help children learn the concept of the tithe. If you have a larger group, consider dividing them into teams and give each team a set of money to use.

Supplies:

- Bible
- one dollar, ten dimes, one hundred pennies

The people in the Bible looked upon land as a gift from God for them to manage and use, but not own. The land belonged to God. Every year at harvest time, the people were to give a part of what they had raised as a thank offering to God for the use of the land. As you read these verses from Deuteronomy, look for answers to these questions: How often should we give? How will our offering be used? How much should we give? Read Deuteronomy 14:28–29 and then discuss. Comment that whether the people were asked to give every year or every third year, the command was to practice regular giving. Explain that the offering was used to help the people who did not have land to farm for one reason or another. Define “tithe” as one-tenth of what you have, and then do the following exercise to illustrate the concept in a more concrete way:

Lay out a dollar bill, ten dimes, and one hundred pennies on the table. Explain that they are equal in value. Point to the ten dimes and ask: If I had these ten dimes and wanted to give one-tenth of my money to God, how many dimes would I give? Then point to the pennies and ask: If I had one hundred pennies and wanted to give one-tenth of my pennies to God, how many pennies would I give? Go on to a few more examples, such as: If I grew ten pumpkins, how many would I give? If I baked thirty cookies, how many would I give? Then let the children come up with some other “If I had ... I would give ...” examples to make sure they have grasped the concept.

Conclude with something like this: Today, some of us give 10 percent of what we



important a value to instill in our children than the desire to help others.” He went on to challenge readers to educate themselves on the needs of the poor around the world, especially children, and then to give what they can, encouraging others to do the same.

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

Prayer: God, whose giving knows no ending, guide and direct me as I plan activities for this Exploration that will help children discover how people from the past and present have been moved to give joyfully of themselves and their possessions for the needs of others. May what we experience together inspire the children to make giving and sharing a regular and joyful part of their lives too. 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.

earn for the work of our church. Some of us give more and some less. The important thing is that God has given us everything that we have, and we need to show our gratitude by giving back a part of that gift to God on a regular basis.

2 God Loves a Cheerful Giver

Leader preparation: Read Deuteronomy 14:22–28 and 2 Corinthians 9:7–8. This activity will emphasize the joy in giving that is evident in these passages. It will require the use of a digital camera, and a printer (preferably color) that can print 8" x 10" pictures from a flash card or memory stick. (Pictures from the camera could also be downloaded to a computer connected to the printer.) If you are not comfortable using this technology, find someone in the congregation to help you. (Remember, your children may be experts.)

Mark off the size of the pictures you will print (either 8" x 10" or 5" x 7") on the posters so the children will know how much white space they have for the title and borders. Find out when the stewardship campaign is scheduled in your congregation and suggest to the planners that they use the posters the children will make (giving appropriate recognition to the creators).

Supplies:

- Bibles
- digital camera, printer, and photo paper
- poster board, 11" x 14," one for each team
- pencils
- markers
- glue

Sometimes people feel that giving to the church is a burden. They don't really want to do it, but they feel they have to, so they give, but not joyfully. The book of Deuteronomy paints a different picture. It says that once a year, God wants us to bring part of what we have earned to God to help those who have no one to care for them. It also says to do that joyfully. Eat together and have a good time. Be glad that you have something to share.

Explain that in the past, a “mission festival” was held in many of our churches and it was always a joyful time. On a Sunday when the harvest was in, the people gathered to worship and listen to guest speakers. They all brought their favorite foods to share for dinner, and there was more than enough for everyone. They visited and laughed and sang, and they all gave an offering from what they had earned that year. This was not the regular Sunday offering that helped pay for heat and light in the church, the pastor's salary, and supplies for the church school. This was a special offering for the mission of the church, and everyone gave joyfully, glad they had money to share with those in need at home and far away.

Have the children find 2 Corinthians 9:7 in their Bibles. This is advice Paul gave to new Christians. Read the passage together and then suggest that they work in teams to create some posters on the theme “God Loves a Cheerful Giver.” Use the digital camera to take pictures of each team as they pose, with happy smiles on their faces, while putting money in the offering basket or a special project box (such as Habitat for Humanity or a local food pantry), passing the offering plates in worship, setting the plates on the worship center, putting food in a grocery cart for the food shelf, and so forth. While the pictures are being printed, let the children write “God Loves a Cheerful Giver” on the poster and add decorative borders around the picture area as desired. When the pictures are ready, help the



children glue them in the space provided. Save the pictures to display around the church during your stewardship campaign.

③ What Does a Steward Look Like?

Leader preparation: Provide Bibles, each with a marker at one of these passages: Luke 21:1–4 (the widow who gave her last two coins); John 6:2–11 (the boy who shared his lunch); Acts 9:36–39 (Dorcas, who sewed clothing for the poor); Acts 16:13–15 (Lydia, who invited Paul and his friends to stay in her home; and Acts 11:29, Romans 15:25–26, and 2 Corinthians 9:5–8 (congregations at Antioch, Macedonia, Achaia, and Corinth that collected offerings for the church at Jerusalem when there was a famine). Be prepared to introduce each story with a sentence. For example: Jesus was in the Temple when this poor widow came in. A young boy was part of a crowd of people who had gathered on a hillside to hear Jesus preach. Dorcas was a widow who lived in Joppa. Lydia was a wealthy businesswoman who lived in Philippi. The churches had all heard that Christians in Jerusalem were hurting because of a drought and famine in their land. If you choose for the children to create a wall or bulletin board display, provide drawing paper, markers, crayons, or colored pencils. You will also need the display title printed out in large letters to use as a banner over the display. If possible, obtain some pictures of people in our congregation to add as present-day examples (such as a quilting group, a prayer shawl group, Habitat for Humanity workers, youth at a bowl-a-thon for Big Brothers/Big Sisters, multigenerational group splitting and stacking wood to take to Lakota reservations for winter fuel, serving a meal at a soup kitchen, and so forth).

Supplies:

- Bibles, marked as directed
- Bible background books or teaching pictures of characters mentioned in the scripture references
- drawing paper and markers, crayons, pencils
- pictures of your own church members at work on stewardship projects

From examples in the Bible, we know that people have shared their gifts from God in different ways. There are many kinds of stewards, and a tithe is not always money. Give each child one of the Bible passages to read. (If you have more children, let them work in teams. If you have a small group, use only one of the last three readings, or let some children read more than one passage.) Then choose the following option that best fits the children’s learning styles:

- **Charades.** Ask each child (or team) in turn to name the character(s) and then pantomime how each was acting as a steward. Ask the other children to identify the action; then ask the children if they know people in your church who practice the same kind of stewardship. Be ready to offer hints, if they have trouble in identifying people.
- **Drawing for the Display Board.** Using the Bible background books and storybooks as references for the dress and setting, have the children draw pictures of these biblical stewards on separate sheets of paper. Encourage them to make the drawings large enough so they can be seen from a distance. Put the pictures together on a display board or wall under the title “A Steward Is Someone Who Shares God’s Blessings.” If photographs or drawings of people in your congregation at work on sharing projects are available, incorporate them into your display.



End either activity with a prayer such as: *Thank you, God, for faithful stewards in the Bible and in our church. Make us good stewards too. Help us to find ways to share what we have with others who are in need. Amen.*

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 We Are All Relatives (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: On newsprint or a white board print these Lakota words: *Mitakuye Oyasin*. Below this phrase write the phonetic pronunciation: mee-TOCK-oo-yay oh-YAH-sin. Below that, write “We Are All Relatives.”

Be sure that you can locate the “Index of Composers, Authors, and Sources” in your hymnal. Be prepared to play the melody line for the hymn tune, *Lasst uns Erfreuen*, or arrange for someone to come in to do that.

Supplies:

- hymnals containing “All Creatures of Our God and King” (Tune: *Lasst Uns Erfreuen*), <http://www.tinyurl.com/382dwr3>
- newsprint or white board, prepared as directed
- picture of Francis of Assisi (optional)

The circle has always been important to Native American people like the Lakota. When they lived in tepees, their homes were round and arranged in a circle. They still dance in a circle at powwows, and they often build their community buildings and churches in the round. The Lakota think of their family circle as more than mom, dad, and children. It is all the relatives — aunts and uncles, cousins, grandparents, persons who have been adopted or married into the family. It is all the people who gather together around the fire. But that’s not all. They think of all creatures as their relatives — animals, birds, insects, fish, everything that lives and breathes. Even “Mother Earth” is part of the family circle — plants and trees and all growing things, streams and lakes and rivers, mountains and plains. The Lakota people like to say, “*Mitakuye Oyasin*: we are all relatives,” because we have all come from the Great Spirit, *Wakantanka*. Have the children say the Lakota phrase together.

If you have a picture of Francis of Assisi, show it to the children as you tell about him:

In a different place and time, Brother Francis had a similar idea as the Lakota. He lived in the town of Assisi in Italy, more than eight hundred years ago, and spent his life caring for “all his relatives.” Some of them were people who were cast out by others because they had a disease called leprosy. Other people were afraid they would catch the disease, but Francis brought the lepers food, bandaged their wounds, and sang to them of God’s love. Francis helped many other people too. He loved the outdoors and all the creatures in it, and often preached to them, calling the animals and birds his brothers and sisters. We all come from God and are meant to care for one another. Near the end of his life, Francis was very ill, but before he died he wrote a song in which he praised God for Brother Sun, Sister Moon and the Stars, Brother Wind, Sister Water, Brother Fire, Mother Earth, and even Sister Death. He also praised God for people who forgave one another and lived in peace. The hymn “All Creatures of Our God and King” (“To You, O God, All Creatures Sing”) is based on his song. Francis wrote his song in his own language, but William Draper wrote an English version for a children’s choir festival about a hundred years ago, and children have loved to sing it ever since.



Pass out the hymnals and help the children find the "Index of Composers, Authors, and Sources." Explain that the names are listed alphabetically and have them look for Francis of Assisi under "F." Have the children report on the dates he lived and the page number of the hymn he wrote. After they have located the hymn, have them look at the text to see how many "relatives" Francis called upon to join in praising God, their Creator. Ask them what word is repeated over and over in the hymn, and explain that this word, "Alleluia," means "Praise God." Have the children listen to the joyful melody line as it is played on the piano, and then sing the first stanza of the hymn together. (If there are children who are inexperienced in using a hymnal, explain that to sing stanza 1, you read the first line of words in every line of music, and then go back to the beginning for stanza 2 and read the second line of words throughout, etc. It may help them to follow the words with their finger as they sing.)

Conclude something like this: *Mitakuye Oyasin*. We are all relatives, created by God to praise God and care for one another.

5 Finding and Sharing Our Gifts

Leader preparation: Look carefully at the poster and reflect on what it says to you about gifts and giving.

Supplies:

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

Display the picture. Ask the children what they see happening in it. Help them focus on the way a gift from God is being shared with questions like these: Who are the people in the picture? How are they related? (Grandfather/grandson? Teacher/student? Neighbors?) What is the gift they are sharing? (Love of music? Skill at playing the banjo? Time together? A desire to learn? Friendship?) Who is giving and who is receiving that gift? How would your thoughts about the picture change if you knew the man was getting old and forgetful and lived alone, or if you knew the boy's family had no money for banjo lessons?

Encourage the children to make up their own story about what is happening in the picture. Conclude: God has given each of us many gifts, and we can help one another discover what they are and how to share them.

6 Who Is in Our Circle?

Leader preparation: Note that "Celt" is pronounced "Kelt." Be prepared to teach the hymn refrain to the children or arrange for a high school girl or choir member to come in to help. The tune is a folk melody from Ghana and the words were written by a Scottish missionary.

Supplies:

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

Invite the children to stand in a line, one behind the other. Then have them turn to the right, join hands, and move to the left, so the first and last persons can join hands, forming a circle with everyone facing in. Then say: We were standing in a straight line, and now we're standing in a circle. How is a circle different from a line? Where else in the world and in nature do we find circles? Long ago, whenever they were afraid or alone, some Christians, called the Celts, would stand with their arms outstretched and turn around, drawing an imaginary circle around



themselves. It was their way of remembering that they were always surrounded by God’s love. Let’s try that now. (Lead the children in this action; then continue.) The circle, with no beginning or end, reminded them of God, who was always there with them.

Have the children sit down in place, and continue: We live in many different circles where we feel safe and loved and cared for. Our family is one. What are some others? The remarkable thing about being a Christian is that the more we learn about following Jesus, the wider our circles grow. We begin to think of our neighbors near and far as our sisters and brothers, no matter how different they are from us. We are all in the circle of God’s love and meant to love and care for one another. So let’s stand again, stretch out our arms, and draw another circle around us, but this time imagine that our fingers are reaching out all around the earth as we pray together: *God, we stand safe and secure in the circle of your love for the world you have created and all of your creatures. May we joyfully share all you have given us with one another, as good stewards of your love. Amen.*

If the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” is new to the children, teach them the refrain to sing and read the stanzas for them. If they are familiar with the hymn already, they will enjoy singing the stanzas, too. You can find the lyrics and tunes online at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 I Need, I Want, I Have (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Poverty is not a stranger in North America. Be sure that you know the children in your group before you do this exercise so that you can be sensitive to their feelings. If some come from middle income or more affluent homes, they may not be aware that others in the group may live in homeless shelters, eat free breakfasts and lunch at school, and take backpacks of food home from school for the weekend. Lower income children may be reluctant to share their situations. This exercise will help the children identify basic needs and alternative uses for the money their families spend on “extras.”

Develop a checklist of items that will be relevant to the children in your group. For example:

- More than five shirts or tops
- Meat every day
- Time to relax
- Television
- Air conditioning
- Clean water
- More than two pairs of shoes
- Ice cream
- A garden
- Christmas presents
- Eating at McDonald’s
- Three meals a day
- A house to live in
- A bed
- Candy



- Magazines
- Books
- Bible
- Dishwasher
- Garbage disposal
- Bath every day
- Sodas
- Pets
- More than five games or recreational toys
- Soccer ball
- Baseball glove
- Musical Instrument

Supplies:

- checklist
- buttons (or poker chips in three colors) one set for each child
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers
- information from one or more of these:
Church World Service, <http://www.churchworldservice.org>
Heifer Project, <http://www.heifer.org>
Habitat for Humanity, <http://www.habitat.org>

Distribute the checklist. As you read the list, invite the children to make a decision about each one. Do you need it? Do you want it? Do you have it? You can make your choice by putting a chip or button on the table. Pass out the poker chips or buttons and explain which color is for Need, which is for Want, and which is for Have. Go through the list quickly, without allowing time for the children to compare responses.

Next, ask the children to name the items from the list that every child needs to live, and record their answers on the newsprint or white board. Explain that many children around the world feel lucky to have one meal a day and one change of clothes. Many do not have clean water to drink or safe homes. Give some examples of the work of Church World Service, Heifer Project, and/or Habitat for Humanity to meet the needs of children.

Then ask the children to list things they could do without so they could give the money they saved to one of these projects. (For example: Drink water instead of soda, do without meat one meal a week, eat less candy, don't ask for expensive toys or clothes, and so forth.) Living more simply is one way of being a good steward.

Close with a prayer something like this: *God, whose giving knows no ending, make us generous people too. Whether we have a little or a lot, help us to share what we have with those who have less. Amen.*

8 Stewards Remember to Share with the Hungry

Leader preparation: In November 2009, Feeding America reported that 49 million Americans were at risk of hunger, including 17 million children. This was a 36 percent increase over the prior year, reflecting the high unemployment rates in the recession. As you explore the idea of gleaning, be sensitive to the possibility that some of the children in your group may be part of these statistics.

(Note: Feeding America was formerly called Second Harvest, a term related to



the biblical concept of gleaning. It is a national organization that solicits food corporations and others for donations of food and money, and coordinates distribution to state food banks for use in local agencies. For information on your state, go to <http://www.feedingamerica.org> and type your zip code or state into the Food Bank Locator. You will find facts such as population, poverty and food insecurity rates, types of agencies distributing food, programs, and the number of volunteer hours given each year. You can learn more about this organization at <http://www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica>.)

In this activity, the children will each make a blue and white tassel to take home as a reminder to follow the commandments of God, specifically the law about sharing what we have with the poor, as set forth in Deuteronomy 24:19–22. These verses apply the law of gleaning not only to grain but also to olive trees and vineyard grapes as well. Some of the children may have heard the story of Ruth (Ruth 2), in which Naomi’s daughter-in-law helped them survive by gleaning in the fields of Boaz. Children who live in rural areas may know about projects of groups, such as the Future Farmers of America, who sometimes glean in cornfields after they have been combined, or farmers who plant “God’s Acre” with a crop that is harvested for the poor. Perhaps members of your congregation bring excess produce from their garden to church to share. Perhaps your church offers a food pantry for needy families.

Practice making one of the tassels the children will make:

1. Wind some yard around a piece of cardboard that is a little wider than the tassel is to be long.
2. Double a piece of the same yarn and thread the two ends into a large-eyed yarn needle, making a loop at the other end. Slip the needle through the wound yarn, close to the top of the cardboard, and then double back through the loop and pull the thread tight.
3. Cut the yarn at the bottom of the cardboard and slip the cardboard out of the tassel.
4. Make sure the binding yarn is still tight; then take the needle and yarn straight through the center of the tassel and fasten with a good knot. Fluff out the yarn so the tassel is full and straight. Trim it so it is even at the bottom, as necessary.

Bookmark these scriptures in Bibles for the children to read: Deuteronomy 24:19–22 and Numbers 15:37–39.

Supplies:

- Bibles, marked at Deuteronomy 24:19–22 and Numbers 15:37–39
- blue and white yarn, precut in at least six-yard lengths total per person
- heavy cardboard cut in pieces as wide as the desired finished length of the tassel, one per child
- yarn needles (large-eyed), one per child
- scissors

Begin by recalling with the children some of the laws God gave to Moses for the Hebrew people: Love God, love your neighbor, honor your parents, do not tell lies about anyone, do not steal, do not envy what your friends have, be faithful to your husband or wife, do not kill, rest on the Sabbath. Explain that there was another law that was also important, the law about gleaning. Have the children find and read together Deuteronomy 24:19–22. Give some examples (see above) of



gleaning today. In Bible times, a widow without a husband and children without a father had no one to provide food for them. An immigrant from another place had no land on which to grow food. God gave this law so God's people would share what they have grown or earned with people who are in need. Introduce the tassel project. God found a way to make sure the people remembered the laws Moses had given them. Let's read Numbers 15:37–39 together and see what that was. Invite the children to make blue and white tassels to remind us to follow God's command to share part of what we have with those who need our help.

Give the children yarn, cardboard, and yarn needles and show them how to make the tassels. The younger children may need help threading the yarn needles. Encourage the children to take the tassels home as a reminder that God's stewards share with those in need.

9 Stewards Encourage One Another to Give

Leader preparation: Read the stories of Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 4:32–5:11, but plan to focus on Barnabas in this activity. Feel free to ignore the Ananias/Sapphira story altogether. Children from families who are reluctant givers to the church might find the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira disturbing. This activity is based on what Barnabas did.

Make up "Barnabas Award" certificates that contain the following information. (Certificates can be designed easily on the computer; there are templates that can be used as well; or you could purchase certificates from an office supply store).

BARNABAS AWARD (Acts 4: 36–37)

Presented to _____ for encouraging us to share our time, talents, and resources in the church by _____

Thank you, [name of your group]

Duplicate (or find) enough certificates for each child to have one to decorate and fill in the name of a recipient. Be prepared to help the children identify some possible recipients as needed. If possible, arrange for the children to present their certificates during congregational worship.

Supplies:

- Bible
- "Barnabas Award" certificates with envelopes
- pencils or pens
- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers

Open the Bible to the book of Acts and explain that it contains stories about the early followers of Jesus. Then tell the story of Barnabas something like this:

The first followers of Jesus shared everything they had with one another. They shared their memories of what Jesus said and did. They sang psalms and hymns together. They sold their property and possessions and brought the money they received to their leaders, who were called apostles. The apostles gave the money to people according to their needs, and no one went hungry. One of the believers who sold his land was Joseph, from the island of Cyprus far away from Jerusalem. When he brought his gift to the apostles, they gave him a new name. They called him "Barnabas," which means "one who encourages," because his gift encouraged others to share too.



Ask the children to think of generous people in your church who have encouraged others to share their time and talents and possession too.

For example:

- a quilter who encouraged others to join her in making quilts for the needy and banners to make the sanctuary beautiful
- a knitter who encouraged others to join him in knitting caps and mittens for needy children and prayer shawls for the sick
- a teenager who recruited friends to join him in collecting money for the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program

Print the names of the people on the chart or white board, with a short phrase describing their contributions. Be sure to have as many names as there are children in your group so they can each choose one and fill out a “Barnabas Award” certificate for that person. Put each certificate in a separate envelope labeled with the name of the recipient.

If there is time, ask the children to think how they can encourage others by their actions.

Close with a prayer such as: *God, we thank you for the example of Barnabas and all the others we know who encourage us to share your gifts with others. Help us to be generous givers, too. Amen.*

Reflect

In what ways have these learning activities helped the children learn about stewardship from the examples of different people of faith in the past and present?

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Children ages 7 to 11 may not have a great concern for justice, but most have a growing awareness that life is not always fair. Some children may have lost a parent through death, divorce, or desertion; others may have moved often or experienced a change in lifestyle for economic reasons. Still others may have engaged with their family in mission or service projects. They are learning how important friends can be in times of need.

Older children are responsive to suggestions and eager to please. They are willing to try new things, unlike youth, who are often afraid to risk failure in front of their friends. They like to be involved in concrete giving projects and may contribute ideas from their experiences at home, in school, or in community groups. They are often generous in sharing what they have with others. If you hope to involve the children in planning and doing a special mission project as part of this Exploration, be prepared to commit some extra time to it. If it will happen away from your meeting place, you may need to recruit parents to help with transportation. Be sure to follow your congregation's policy regarding parental permission for the children's participation.



About this Exploration

We live in relationship with God and one another in a world created and sustained by God. The scriptures help us discover how God intends us to act as living 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

After you have read the scriptures for this Exploration, look at the picture *Planting* by Rex Goreleigh

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

What does the painting say to you as you plan activities to help the children in your group live into the faith practice of stewardship?

From an early age, children learn about giving and receiving. “What do you want for Christmas?” they are often asked, rather than “What do you want to give for Christmas?” One grandmother found a way to plant the seeds of giving in her grandchildren. Each year she took the children individually on a shopping trip to buy Christmas gifts for their parents and one another. The children’s parents provided a set amount of money for each child to use, and the grandmother helped them stay within this budget. At first, the children’s own likes and interests colored their choices, but gradually they were able to find creative gifts that were also appropriate. After lunch or dinner with their grandmother, they wrapped the presents together and put them under the family tree. When Christmas came, the children watched with delight and pride as their gifts were opened and received with appreciation and enthusiasm. These children are

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Reflecting on Scripture (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Isaiah 1:10–17, using *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* as well as the NRSV Bible. This passage is paraphrased in simpler terms below. As the children reflect on Isaiah’s words from God, help them discover that the problem was not with the acts of worship themselves, but that the people who came to worship were more concerned with showing off than living as good neighbors outside the Temple.

Supplies:

- Bibles (NRSV and The Message)
- newsprint or white board, with appropriate markers (optional)

Paraphrase the scripture with words like this: Isaiah was a prophet who spoke God’s word to the people in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. This is what God told Isaiah to say: “You are disobeying God just like the evil people in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah did long ago. God is not fooled by your sacrificial offerings, your celebrations, and your songs and prayers. God cannot stand to listen to you, because God knows that when you leave the Temple, you are doing selfish, dishonest things and treating your neighbors unfairly. Clean up your act, and then come to worship! Say no to doing wrong things. Learn to do good. Be just and fair. Help those in need, the homeless and hungry, the children without parents and the women who are alone.”

Ask the children questions such as: Why didn’t God accept the people’s offerings and songs and prayers? What was wrong with their celebrations? What was God trying to tell the people through Isaiah? Do you think Isaiah’s message from God to our church today would be the same or different from this one?

Invite the children to write a contemporary version of Isaiah’s message for your church. For example: “You entertain the congregation with Christmas pageants and praise bands and choirs. You buy fancy new clothes for Easter and Christmas. You decorate the church with flowers and banners. All this means nothing to me unless you show by your actions outside of church that you love me and love your neighbor.”

Perhaps their paraphrase could be shared in a worship service in church.

2 An Extravagant Gift

Leader preparation: Read Isaiah 1:10–17 and Mark 14:3–9. Make copies of the dramatic reading for the children. Write the third stanza of the hymn, “Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You” on newsprint or white board. You can find the lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>.

Living Stewardship



now generous young adults, who continue to make giving to others a part of their lives. The seed that was planted and nurtured has borne fruit.

Prayer: God, as I plan activities for this Exploration, let me find ways to help the children see that, because your love has touched them, they, too, have love to give away. May the experiences we have together help the children discover the joy of sharing God's blessings with others, and may that discovery be the beginning of a life-long habit of grateful giving. 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.

Supplies:

- Bible
- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers
- copies of the script, Attachment: Activity 2
- hymn "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" (tune: Talavera Terrace; alt. tune Holy Manna), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>

Introduce the dramatic reading about a woman who went uninvited to a dinner and did a very strange thing. It's a story from the book of Mark, but there are stories like it in the books of Matthew, Luke, and John, too.

Assign parts to the children, choosing your best reader for the storyteller, or take that role yourself. If you have more or fewer children to cast, divide or combine parts as needed.

Read the script together, and then talk about the story: Who do you think this woman was? Why would she risk coming to the home of a leper? Why would she bring Jesus such an expensive gift? Why did she pour it on Jesus' head? Why did the disciples scold her? Jesus accepted her gift graciously and defended her. Why?

After the children have shared their ideas, have them read the script again expressively, and act it out, if possible. Close by calling their attention to the hymn stanza on the newsprint or whiteboard. Read the stanza together as a prayer. Then, if the children know the tune, sing it together. Or sing it to the alternate tune Holy Manna, which the children may already know. It is an easy tune to teach, as lines 1, 2, and 4 are the same melody, and, in line 3, the first two measures are repeated in the second two.)

3 Water, Water Everywhere and Not a Drop to Drink

Leader preparation: Collect ten one-gallon jugs with lids and fill them with water. Make sure the lids are secure, especially if you do the relay indoors.

You can find examples of Church World Service "Water for All" projects at <http://tinyurl.com/24xns3q>.

Supplies:

- 10 one-gallon jugs filled with tap water

If weather permits, hold this Water Jug Relay outdoors so the children have to carry the jugs at least 25 feet. If you need to be indoors, perhaps you can use a hallway or the fellowship hall for the relay.

In some countries like Kenya, 5 gallons of water may be all the water that a family would have to use in a day. (Some of our toilets use that much for one flush!) And the water probably would not be piped into their homes. Two out of every ten people in the world have to walk almost a mile to get water that may not be safe to drink without boiling it. The average distance an African villager must walk to a water source is 5 miles (8 kilometers).

Divide the children into two teams, and give each team five one-gallon jugs of water. Have them position half their team members at the starting line and the other half at the finish line. The first person from each team will carry their five jugs, one or two at a time, to the finish line, and the second person will carry the jugs back to the third person waiting at the starting line. Continue in this manner until all team members have had a chance to carry the jugs. The team that



finishes first is the winner. Be sure to make use of the water in the jugs after the relay. Water trees or plants or grass in the church yard, for example. Also, recycle the plastic jugs.

When the relay is over, gather the children in a circle and reflect on their experience. How would you like to carry water like that every day? It is hard work. Then tell a story using one of the examples from the Church World Service website.:

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 A Children's Choir and Stewardship (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Prepare to tell this true story about how a children's choir got involved in a stewardship project:

A Children's Choir and Stewardship

Every year the children's choir went Christmas caroling at the homes of older church members and shut-ins. They sang a few carols and left a small box of homemade cookies at each home. One of their regular stops was at the home of Bill, an older man who lived alone in a rooming house above a downtown store. As the children climbed the steep stairway to find his room, they notice the dingy, dark halls and the lone bathroom at the end of the hall. When they knocked on Bill's door and started singing for him, other men came out in the hall to listen, and looked longingly at the box of cookies they left. The children wished they had brought more cookies. So the next year when they caroled for Bill, they brought extra boxes for these men, too. They were all men who, for one reason or another, lived alone in this dreary place without friends or family. The children thought how hard it must be for them at Christmas, so the next year they made Christmas stockings out of paper bags for them, and filled the stockings with small gifts as well as cookies. The men greeted them with smiles.

Later, back at the church, one of the older girls in the choir had an idea. "Let's ask our parents to help us cook dinner here at the church for the men who live above the store. We'll ask Bill to invite them." The choir children and their parents began making plans. On the day of the dinner they cooked the food together, set a beautiful table, and waited for their guests. Imagine their disappointment when only one man came, Bill. As they sat down to eat together, Bill explained that the men in the rooming house didn't go to any church, and they were afraid to come with him. They didn't think they had proper clothes, and they weren't sure they would know to act in a church. The children and their parents looked at one another, and they looked at all the food they had prepared, and then one said, "Well then, why don't we take our dinner to them?"

And that's just what they did. They found containers in the kitchen, packed up dinner for each man, and took it to the rooming house. The men were happy to have the meals, and took them back into their rooms to eat. The children returned to the church with their parents a little wiser, but happy, too, that they had found a way to share their meal after all.



Supplies:

- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers

Tell the children this true story, and then ask: What can we learn from the experiences these children had with stewardship? Write their responses in simple words on the chart or board.

Then pray: *God, whose giving knows no ending, help us to keep all we have learned in our minds and hearts as we plan our own giving projects as stewards of your love. Amen.*

5 What Can You Do with Two Pennies a Meal?

Leader preparation: This activity introduces the children to a hunger project that can involve them personally. It could be a group project, but would be more effective as an all-church effort. If you would like to initiate this in the congregation, be sure to obtain permission first from your pastor, Christian education director, and/or mission/stewardship board or committee.

Read the story of the poor widow's gift in Luke 21:1–4, and be prepared to read or tell it to the children, along with the story of the "Two-Cents-a-Meal" project. Gather the needed supplies and provide a table for the children to use.

Supplies:

- Bible
- a small box or can for each children to decorate and use as a container for the pennies
- stickers
- ribbons
- pictures of children
- labels
- scissors
- markers
- glue
- copies of the following poem

If everyone gives two pennies a meal,
and continues to share every day,
we can buy food for those who have none
here at home or in lands far away.

Today put a box on your table.
Remind those who eat there to give
just two cents a meal for the hungry
who need food in order to live.

(Adapted from a longer poem used in Warner Memorial Presbyterian Church, Kensington, Md., in their "Two-Cents-A-Meal" mission program.)

Add a border design around the poem for the children to color and a note to parents that says something like this: Between 13 to 18 million people die from hunger each year; 75 percent are children. Read this poem with your children. Encourage your child to share with you in the joy of giving and helping by adding two cents a meal to the container they are bringing home. On the third Sunday of each month, please bring your pennies to the worship service.



Read or tell the story of the poor widow's gift in Luke 21:1–4. Then tell this story:

A woman who lived in the southern United States heard this Bible story in church on the day people were asked to give two cents a meal to help feed the hungry. The woman said to herself, "I don't have much money to live on, but I can do that. I can give two cents a meal." And she did. People in other churches heard about this project and copied the idea. One church in Maryland asked the children to decorate boxes or cans for their families to use as offering boxes on the table where they eat. The families brought their pennies on the third Sunday of every month to put in a little red wagon that the children pulled down the aisle. The pennies soon turned into dollars that were given to food pantries, soup kitchens, places for homeless men and women and children to live, and other places in their community that served the needy. They also gave some of their money to hunger projects that churches were doing in other countries. In less than twenty years, the church has raised over \$40,000 with their two-cents-a-meal project! When everyone helps and works together, see what can happen!

Read this hymn stanza as a prayer: *In plenty we're all quick to give, but slower when cupboards are bare. God, move us to share in your work, to show by our gifts that we care. Amen.*

(From "Song of Two Widows" in *Time Now to Gather: New Hymns for the Church Family*, by Mary Nelson Keithahn and John D. Horman. Abingdon Press, 1998. Used by permission.)

Help the children use the materials provided to decorate offering containers. Send home the containers, along with the poem and message to their parents.

6 All in God's Time

Leader preparation: Display the picture *Planting* by Rex Goreleigh. Duplicate copies of the Prayer of St. Francis, arranged for choral reading on Attachment: Activity 6. Prepare to tell the story of Brother Francis (see below). Decide how you will divide the children into two groups for reading the prayer antiphonally.

Supplies:

- poster, *Planting* by Rex Goreleigh, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- Prayer of St. Francis, Attachment: Activity 6

Show the picture to the children and offer some wonder statements:

- I wonder how long it will take the little seedling the woman is planting to grow into a big, tall tree?
- I wonder if she will still be around to see it when it is fully grown.

Sometimes we have to wait a long time to see results from our work. Sometimes we never get to see the results, but we still have to do what we can for God.

Tell this story:

Brother Francis left his fortune and family behind to answer the call to do God's work. He traveled around preaching and teaching about God's love, and helping the poor and the sick. Others joined him. They lived like brothers in a family and shared in his work. When Francis heard that Christians and Muslims were fighting over who would be in charge of the Holy Land



where Jesus had lived, he decided to go there himself and ask them to stop killing one another. It was a long journey, but Francis finally found the sultan who was the leader of the Muslims and talked with him about making peace. Neither the sultan nor the Christian leaders agreed to his proposal, and the fighting and killing continued. Francis and the brothers who had come with him went home sad. They understood that our efforts don't always produce results right away, but that did not stop them from working for peace. Today, more than eight hundred years later, there are still people who carry on the work of Brother Francis for peace all over the world. Some live together as brothers, as he and his friends did, and some are people living ordinary lives, but they all try to follow his example. They pray for peace. They care for the poor and the sick. They see that people are treated fairly. They are concerned for the environment and take great delight in all of creation. They are good stewards for God.

Introduce the Prayer of St. Francis as one that is like a prayer the followers of Brother Francis used. Divide the children into two groups and have them read the prayer antiphonally.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 A Game of Charades (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity is based on the hymn "God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending." You can find the lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6>, and hear the tune at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6a>. The hymn has four stanzas, but the children will use only the first stanza as a closing prayer. They will explore phrases from other stanzas by playing a game of charades.

Write each of these actions on individual cards, number them as indicated, and put them in a basket for the children to draw. (Adapt these as you like for your situation.)

- 1 Singing in the choir
 - 1. Playing an instrument in worship
 - 1. Setting the table or picking up used dishes at a church dinner

- 2. Buying cans of food and putting it in church box for people who are hungry
 - 2. Making an offering box and putting money in it
 - 2. Packing up out-grown clothes for a church sale

- 3. Passing the offering plates in worship with a smile
 - 3. Visiting an older friend in a wheelchair and giving a hug
 - 3. Shoveling snow for an older neighbor and being invited in for cookies and cocoa

On newsprint or white board write and number these phrases from the hymn text:

- 1. Skills and time are ours for serving,
- 2. Open wide our hands in sharing.
- 3. Lend your joy to all our giving.



On another chart, print the first stanza of the hymn as a poem.

Supplies:

- hymn "God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending" (Tune: Austrian Hymn; alt. tunes: Hyfyrdol, Beach Spring)
- cards, prepared as directed above
- newsprint or whiteboard with appropriate markers

Gather the children around the hymn stanza and read the poem as they follow along. Explain that sometimes poets refer to events in only a few words, without details. That is true in the second line. Ask them what these words are talking about:

- "Nature's wonders"
- "Jesus' wisdom"
- "Costly cross"
- "Grave's shattered door"

Read the stanza again together. Invite the children to look at some words and phrases from the other three stanzas of this hymn. Say: They are written on the chart, and numbered because they are clues for a game of charades. Alone or in pairs, take turns drawing out a card with an action to act out for the others to guess. No talking is allowed. Be sure to show us the number on the card with your fingers so we can find the right clue on the chart to help us guess what you are doing.

Play the game until all have had at least one turn. Then close by reading the first stanza of the hymn again as a prayer.

8 A Picture and a Project

Leader preparation: Depending on your local situation and the time of year, arrange for the children to help plant a tree or flowers in the church yard, or pot some green plants for the learning area. Work with the appropriate committee so that your planting fits into the landscaping plans of the church. Also, be sure that the children get recognition for their work and gift. If you work indoors, cover your workspace with newspaper to make cleanup easier. Notify parents ahead of time that children should wear work clothes to this session.

Supplies:

- poster, Planting by Rex Goreleigh, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- tree or plants
- potting soil and pots or a place to plant outdoors
- tools needed for the planting project

Display the picture "Planting." Ask the children to describe what they see in the picture. What is the woman doing? What is she putting into the ground? Who will help it survive and grow?

The trees and green plants that God created have an important job to do in this world. They keep the soil from washing away during hard rains. They provide shade from the sun and shelter for birds and animals. Many provide nuts and fruit for us. Best of all, trees and green plants take out carbon dioxide from the air and put back the oxygen that we all need to breathe. When too many trees die or are cut down, this balance is upset and the climate begins to change all around



the world. We need to help God take care of our world, and one way we can do that is to plant trees and shrubs and green plants of all kinds.

Explain to the children how they can help with the planting. When they have finished, have a prayer together such as: *God, we have planted this tree [these plants] to keep our world green and beautiful and healthy. Help us remember to take good care of it [them] for you. Amen.*

9 The Water We Use and Need to Conserve

Leader preparation: This activity focuses on one of our most precious natural resources — water. Two good sources for more information about water use and conservation are:

<http://www.eo.ucar.edu/kids/index.htm> — The National Center of Atmospheric Research (NCAR), Boulder, Colorado, offers “Kid’s Crossing the Classroom” with hands-on activities, including “Water, Water, Everywhere” that shows the water cycle on earth.

<http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/index.html> — U.S. Geological Survey Web site, “Water Science for Schools,” has an Activity Center with questionnaires, opinion surveys, and challenge questions on water use and conservation.

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

Write these facts about our water use on newsprint or a white board:

How Much Water Do you Use?

- Bath: 50 gallons
- Shower: 2 gallons per minute
- Teeth brushing: 1 gallon
- Hands/face washing: 1 gallon
- Dishwasher: 20 gallons/load
- Dish washing by hand: 5 gallons/load
- Clothes washing (machine): 10 gallons/load
- Toilet flush: 3 gallons
- Glasses of water drunk: 8 oz. per glass (1/16th of a gallon)

Supplies:

- newsprint or white board with appropriate markers
- plastic 1-gallon milk jug
- scratch paper and pencils for children to figure their water consumption

Explain: Water is one of our most important resources. It keeps our planet cool and it keeps our bodies cool. We need water to live. There is about the same amount of water on earth now as there was millions of years ago, yet there are many more people. Most of the water (almost 97 percent) is salty and unfit for drinking. Another 2 percent is frozen in ice caps and glaciers, leaving just 1 percent of the water for all of our needs. Most people in the world used to live on farms or in small villages, but more and more people have moved to cities. Cities need water, and sometimes they have to go far out in the country to get it. Farmers in the country need that water to grow food. Industries like mining and manufacturing use water, too. As the number of people in the world grows and our planet gets warmer, many worry that we won’t have enough water for all our needs. Let’s look at how much water we use each day.



Hold up the empty milk gallon jug to give the children an idea of how much a gallon is. Direct the children's attention to the chart and read through it together. Give them paper and pencils to figure out how many gallons of water might be used daily in their homes. After they have shared their totals, comment: The average person in the United States uses 50 gallons of water a day. Your total does not include water for cooking or cleaning or washing the dog. People differ in the amount of water they use for different things. You may use more water than your brother to wash dishes by hand. You might leave the water running while you brush your teeth, but your sister might not. If you live in a newer house, your toilet and shower will probably use less water than if you live in an older house. A dripping faucet can waste up to 2,000 gallons in a year!

Water is one of the resources God has asked us to care for. Invite the children to think of ways to be good stewards of water. Ask the children for their ideas on how we can conserve and protect our water and list them on the chart or board.

For example:

- Turn off the water while you brush your teeth.
- Take a short shower instead of a bath.
- Don't let the water run all the time while you are washing or rinsing dishes.
- Don't let the water run until it gets cold enough to drink. Instead, fill a pitcher and keep it in the refrigerator.
- Ask your parents to fix any dripping faucets.
- Use a broom instead of a water hose to clean your sidewalks.
- Water your lawn early in the day.
- Don't throw trash in lakes and streams.

If you would like to extend this activity, the children could each choose one idea as the theme for a poster that they could make and display around the church.

Reflect

In what ways have these learning activities helped the children discover that stewardship requires time and effort and that sometimes we have to wait a long time to see results?

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A Dramatic Reading of Mark 14:3–9

Storyteller: Jesus was in Bethany with his disciples. They were sharing a meal with a man named Simon in his home.

Voice 1: How unusual! Simon was a leper.

Voice 2: Most people were afraid to eat with someone who had this awful disease.

Storyteller: A woman came with a stone jar filled with an expensive, sweet-smelling oil. She poured the oil over Jesus' head.

Unison: The other people in the room could not believe what they saw.

Voice 3: I think I've seen that woman with Jesus before.

Voice 4: Was she one he healed?

Voice 4: How could she waste that precious oil on one person, even if it was Jesus?

Voice 5: We could have sold that oil for good money, and given the money to the poor.

Voice 6: Doesn't that woman remember the prophet Isaiah said helping the poor was the most important thing we could do for God?

Storyteller: Jesus looked at his friends.

Jesus: Why do you criticize her for anointing me? The poor will always be with you. You can be kind to them whenever you wish, but you will not always have me. This woman has served me well. She has anointed my body for burial before I die. God understands her gift, and people will long remember what she has done.

Attachment: Activity 6

The Prayer of St. Francis

All: God, make us stewards of your peace:

A. Where there is hatred,
B. let us bring love.

A. When someone has hurt us,
B. let us forgive.

A. When others doubt,
B. let us share our faith.

A. When many despair
B. let us offer hope.

A. Where there is darkness,
B. let us bring the light of your compassion and mercy.

A. Where there is sadness,
B. let us sing a joyful song of your love.

All: O God, our Creator and Ruler,

A. We ask that we may not so much seek to be comforted
B. as to comfort others;

A. to be understood,
B. as to understand;

A. to be loved,
B. as to love;

All: for it is in giving that we receive, it is in forgiving that we are forgiven, and it is in dying that we are born to live forever with God. Amen.

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

Pictures like the photograph of the baobab tree can stimulate interesting and meaningful conversations with older children. The children in your group may recognize the tree as the “Tree of Life” in Disney’s movie *The Lion King*, or they may have seen one like it if they have visited Disney’s Animal Kingdom. However, they may not know of all the ways the tree provides for the creatures around it.

Comparing the tree to the church requires analogous thinking that may be difficult for the youngest in your group, yet they should be able to grasp the idea if you emphasize that we are the church, and what we give of ourselves and our possessions provides for the needs of others.



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 such as: 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 like: 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

After you have read the scriptures for this Exploration, look at the picture Baobab, Okavango Delta, Botswana by Pete Oxford,

<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters5>.

In the semi-arid savannah regions of Africa, the baobab is called the "Tree of Life." It is one of the oldest life forms on the continent; some trees date back to the birth of Christ or even earlier. When it is cut down it will grow again from its roots. The baobab gives of itself to sustain the animal and human inhabitants of the area. The tree is capable of storing hundreds of gallons of water that can be tapped during dry periods. Its leaves can be used as condiments and medicines. The flowers, which bloom for only one day in midsummer, provide nectar for hosts of insects and bats and produce the "monkey fruit" rich in vitamin C that is eaten by humans and animals alike. Mature trees have large trunks that are often hollow so animals and humans can use them as living space. The root-like branches of the tree with their hollows, dents, and bloated stems also provide shelter for smaller ani-

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 No More Tears (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Revelation 21:1-5. These verses are the first part of a vision of a world renewed and recreated by the power of God's love and justice. The poetic metaphors in this passage and the verses that follow are too abstract for children to understand, so this activity focuses on a more concrete hope: God's promise that a time will come when there will be no more tears.

Supplies:

- Bible
- bottle of Johnson's Baby Shampoo, with the label "No More Tears" (optional)

Ask the children how many had their hair washed with Johnson's Baby Shampoo when they were little. Why was that? The motto for shampoo product was "No More Tears." Ask the children to think about what else makes us cry besides getting soap in our eyes. For example, babies cry because they are hungry, wet, or lonely. Young children cry when they are hurt, angry, or afraid. Teenagers cry when their feelings are hurt, their friends move away, or they lose a game. Adults cry when bad things happen to them or to people they love. Sometimes people cry when they have no food, home, or job.

Have the children find Revelation 21:1-5 in their Bibles. Explain that this last book of the Bible is about God's dream for us. God dreams of a time when there will be no more tears and people will treat one another with love and justice, as God has always treats us. We can each help that time come by the choices we make, by being good stewards of all the gifts God has given us.

2 Making a "Stained Glass" Symbol

Leader preparation: Read Revelation 21:5-6a. These verses are part of a vision of a world renewed and recreated by the power of God's love and justice. The poetic metaphors in this chapter and the next are beyond comprehension by children (who tend to being very literal), so this activity focuses on the symbolic use of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet for God's presence as our life on earth begins and when it ends. Cut enough "frames" from black construction paper so there are two for each child. Allow 1-1/4" for each side of the frame. Print the symbol pattern, cut it out, and trace around it with a white or yellow pencil on the paper that is left when you remove the center of the frames, making one symbol per child. The children will cut out the symbol later. Cut 9" x 12" pieces of tissue paper, two per child. Make up a sample picture ahead of time so you can anticipate where you may need to help the children in this project.

Living Stewardship



mals and birds. The bark of the tree is fire resistant and can be used for cloth and rope. Why would the baobab tree make a good symbol for the church? How does it model for us what it means to “live into” stewardship?

Prayer: God, whose giving knows no ending and whose love knows no bounds, be with me in my planning and preparation for this Exploration. May the activities we do together help the children begin to develop a vision of the church’s mission and their part in it as faithful stewards now and in the years to come. 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.

Supplies:

- Bible
- picture of the entwined Greek letters alpha and omega, Attachment: Activity 2
- 9" x 12" black construction paper, two pieces per child
- Alpha and Omega symbol pattern
- white or yellow pencil
- tissue paper in variegated colors
- rubber cement
- scissors

Open the Bible to Revelation 21 and explain that this last book in the Bible has a wonderful message from God. God says, “I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end. Just as I was with you when you were created, I will be with you when your life on earth ends. I will always be your God, and you will always be my children. I will love you forever.”

Show the children the picture of the Greek letters. Explain that they are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, like the “A” and “Z” in our alphabet. Then show them how Christians have put the two letters together to make a symbol to remind them that God was always with them. Show them the “stained glass” symbol you have made as an example of what they are going to make in this activity.

First, have them glue the tissue paper onto both of the frames, making sure that it covers all the open area. Leave one frame with the tissue paper side up. While that dries, have them cut out the symbols you have drawn on the black construction paper. Then show them how to center the symbol onto this frame and glue it onto the tissue paper. Finally have them glue the second frame (tissue paper side down) on top of the first frame. (The symbol will be between two layers of tissue paper.) Punch a hole in the center of the top edge of the frame and add a piece of yarn or string for a hanger so the children can hang their pictures in a window where the light can illuminate them.

Close with a prayer such as: *God, we are glad we can always count on you to love and care for us always. Amen.*

3 Make a Trifold for Your Worship Center

Leader preparation: Read 1 Chronicles 29:1–19. This is a lengthy account of how King David, by his own example, encouraged the leaders of the new nation to join him in offering their treasures for the temple that David’s son Solomon would build. In this account, David stresses that they are all simply giving back what God had given them, and they do so freely, with great joy. This activity will focus on one sentence from David’s words: “For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you” (v. 14b).

Supplies:

- plastic tablecloth or newspapers
- pieces of foam board, each 11" x 14"
- yardstick or 2-foot ruler and X-acto knife
- masking tape or plastic tape
- pictures from magazines, calendars, and catalogs illustrating God’s gifts
- All-in-one glue, sealer, and finish (such as Modge-Podge)
- paint brushes
- scissors
- 1 Chronicles 29:14b printed on paper



Use the foam board pieces to make a trifold base for a worship center. Use an X-acto knife to cut one piece in half vertically to make two pieces each 5-1/2" x 14." Tape these pieces along either side of the whole piece to make a trifold that will stand alone. Be sure to leave a slight space (c. 1/8") between the foam boards so the sides will fold easily. Use a strip of tape on both the back and the front of the boards. Print the following words horizontally on a 5" x 7" piece of paper that will fit in the center of the trifold: "All things come from you, O God, and of your own have we given you."

Collect enough pictures from magazines, calendars, catalogs, and photos that illustrate God's gifts to us, so the children will have some choices of what to use.

If you do not have a worship center in your meeting area, find a small table or a cardboard carton to hold your offering basket and the trifold when it is finished.

Tell the scripture verse in abbreviated form, focusing on David's willingness to give of his treasures for the temple Solomon would build, how he encouraged leaders of his people to do the same, and his prayer of dedication, especially 1 Chronicles 29:14b. Use the printed version for the activity, which includes "O God," so you can use it when you teach the offering response later.

Cover your workspace with a plastic tablecloth or newspapers. Invite the children to make a trifold for the worship center. Choose pictures that illustrate some of God's gifts, arrange them on the trifold so the whole area is covered, and glue them in place. It's all right to overlap them and have them face different ways.

When the children have finished, add the printed words to the middle panel. Then brush over the whole surface of the trifold panels with the sealer, and let dry.

After the children have helped clean up and have washed their hands, gather in front of the trifold and read David's words together.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Stewards Care for One Another (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: For a change of pace, use this game of Double Tag that will help children reflect on how it feels to be those who are needy and those who are caregivers. Plan to meet in a fellowship hall or outdoors where there is plenty of room for the children to run and move.

Supplies: None

The game of Double Tag is played like Tag, except two children are "It." One is "Hurting" and the other is "Caring." The other children move around the room trying to avoid being tagged by "Hurting." As soon as they are tagged, they cannot move until "Caring" tags them. Let the children take turns being "Hurting" and "Caring," involving everyone if there is time. Then gather them together to reflect on the experience.

Ask: How did you feel when you were tagged by "Hurting" and had to wait for "Caring" to come? How did you feel after you were tagged by "Caring"? How did you feel when you were "Caring" and were able to help someone move again? Listen to the children's thoughts, and then ask: What do you think this game tells us about stewardship?



5 Making a Prayer Wheel

Leader preparation: This activity may encourage the children to practice being stewards of relationships. Make a prayer wheel ahead of time so you can anticipate any problems the children may have with the project.

Supplies:

- large paper plates, one per child
- cardboard or tag board with spinner traced on it
- brass fastener, one per child
- scissors
- rulers
- markers and pencils

Say to the group: Being stewards involves more than money. It is being grateful for our blessings from God and answering the call to care for God's world. People are part of the world. One way we care for our family and friends, near and far, is to pray for them. Introduce the prayer wheels and explain how they will help us remember to thank God for those we love and pray for them.

Give each child a large paper plate and a ruler. Have the children use the rulers and pencils to divide the plates into six equal sections like a pie. In each section ask them to write the name or draw a picture of one or more persons who are important in their lives. Suggest that they also include persons they don't know well (such as hungry children, homeless people, people in war or disaster areas) in at least two of the sections. Give each child an arrow-shaped cardboard spinner to cut out and attach to the center of the plate with a brass fastener. Explain to the children that every day they can spin the arrow and then pray for the person(s) named in that section, thanking God for them and asking God to bless them with whatever they may need.

Conclude by letting each child try out the prayer wheel and offer a prayer.

6 The Tree of Life Is Like the Church

Leader preparation: Keep Revelation 22:1-5 in mind as you lead the children in this activity. Write these simple facts about the baobab tree on individual cards for the children to read aloud to the group. Be prepared to expand on these facts as the cards are read.

1. The baobab tree is one of oldest trees in Africa. Some trees date back to the time when Jesus was born.
2. The tree grows in the semi-arid grassland areas. These areas are called "savannahs," and they do not get much rain in a year.
3. The baobab tree is called the "Tree of Life."
4. When the tree is cut down, it will grow again from its roots.
5. The tree can store water in its trunk that people can use. During a rainy season the tree can store gallons of water that people can tap in dry seasons.
6. The leaves of the trees can be eaten. They are used to flavor foods and as medicines.
7. The tree has flowers that bloom just one day in the middle of summer. They provide nectar for insects and bats, and produce "monkey fruit" that is high in vitamin C and can be eaten by animals and humans alike.
8. Older trees often have large hollow trunks. They are so big that animals and even people can live in them.



9. The branches look almost like (upside-down) roots of the tree. Sometimes the baobab is called an “upside-down tree.” The branches, with their hollows and dents, provide shelter for smaller animals and birds.
10. The bark of the tree will not burn. It can safely be used to make cloth and rope.

Supplies:

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

Display the picture of the baobab tree and ask the children to describe what they see. How is the tree like other trees? How is it different?

After the children have shared their observations, mix up the fact cards and put them in a basket for the children to draw out in turn until all the cards have been used up. Then have the children read the cards in numerical order as you call out the numbers.

Some people say the baobab tree reminds them of the church. Why would they think that? Let the children share their ideas, but help them focus on the ways the tree and the church help people live.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Just Say No to Plastic Water Bottles (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity uses a list of questions and answer cards explaining the problems created by the use of plastic bottles. Use the following list as a master key, and write each answer on a separate card. Place the cards in a basket for the children to draw.

Q. How much oil does it take to make a plastic bottle?

A. Enough to fill one-fourth of the bottle.

Q. How do plastic bottles affect global warming?

A. Greenhouse gases are given off when they are made and when trucks carry them to stores.

Q. How much water does it take to make a plastic bottle?

A. Three times as much as it takes to fill the bottle.

Q. How much of the cost of bottled water is the bottle itself?

A. 90 percent.

Q. How many plastic bottles are never recycled?

A. Eight out of ten.

Q. What are the two things that pollute our beaches most often?

A. Plastic bottles and plastic bags.

Q. What is in plastic bottles that can get in the water and make us sick?

A. Chemicals.



Q. How many bottles of water does the average American drink in a year?
A. 167.

Q. Why are plastic bottles so bad for our world?

A. Plastic bottles are always with us. They are not biodegradable. They break down into smaller and smaller pieces that get into our soil and water.

Prepare “Pledge Cards” for this sentence for the children to complete after they have matched the questions with the answers and discussed ways to react to this problem:

Since God wants me to care for our world, I will_____.

Supplies:

- list of questions with answers
- answer cards, prepared as above
- small basket to hold the answer cards
- pledge cards and pencils
- newsprint or white board and markers

Many of the things that threaten to harm our world in the future are things we make and use now. Plastic bottles are one of these things. Invite the children to draw one or more answer cards from the basket, depending on the size of your group. If your group is large, some of the older children could share with you in asking the questions. Explain: I will read each question, and anyone who thinks he or she has the correct answer on the card you drew from the basket can tell us what it is. If it is the right answer, I'll put my thumb up, and if it's wrong my thumb will go down, and someone else can try to answer the question.

Go through the questions in any order. When you have finished, ask: What do you think we can do about this problem? Record the children's answers on the newsprint or white board. Then pass out the pledge cards and ask them to complete the sentence with a promise to do one thing to help solve the problem of the plastic bottles.

Some possible examples:

I will ask my parents not to buy bottled water.

I will recycle every plastic bottle.

I will not throw plastic bottles into a river (lake, ocean).

8 Earn Money for a Mission Project

Leader preparation: For children to be meaningfully involved in fund raising for mission, the project needs to be something they can readily understand and one in which even a small amount of money can help. For example, one goal might be to earn money for stamps to use on cards to let people who are ill or grieving know that people in the congregation were praying for them. Baking cookies to sell at coffee hour is a project that could support a goal like this.

Arrange for the children to use the church kitchen for this activity. If possible, involve the parents or grandparents in providing cookie dough and helping. Arrange for an announcement in the Sunday bulletin and newsletter about the sale and how the proceeds will be used.

**Supplies:**

- cookie dough, mixed up and ready to shape and bake
- nonstick baking spray
- baking pans, spatulas, and spatulas
- small paper plates
- plastic wrap

Gather in the kitchen and have all the children carefully wash their hands. Show the children how to shape, slice, or roll and cut out cookie dough and then bake them. Package the finished cookies two or three to a plate, and cover each plate with plastic wrap. Let the children sell the cookies at coffee hour. Have them count the proceeds afterward and figure out how many stamps the money will buy.

9 Help with a Mission Meal

Leader preparation: If your church takes a turn at providing meals at a mission in your community, arrange for the children to prepare some of the food. They could use box mixes or a simple recipe to stir up and bake brownies, muffins, cupcakes, or cookies that could be frozen until needed. If possible, give the children an opportunity to help when the meal is served. Depending on the age and size of your group, you may want to enlist the help of some parents or grandparents to work with teams of two or more children on each batch.

Supplies:

- box mixes and/or other ingredients
- cookie sheets, baking pans, or muffin tins
- nonstick baking spray
- containers for storing baked goods
- hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (Tune: Chereponi)

Tell the children about the feeding program at the mission and how your church takes a turn at providing the dinners. Explain: We are part of our church, too, so we’re going to help by preparing the dessert for the meal.

Have the children wash their hands carefully before going to work at their assigned stations. While they wait for their products to bake, tell them more about the “neighbors” who come to the mission. Sing “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love,” especially stanzas 2, 3, and 4 with the refrain. While the baked goods are out of the oven and cooling, let the children help with cleanup. Store the baked goods as needed.

Alternative: If you do not have time for the children to do the baking, the cookies or cupcakes could be baked ahead of time (again, ask for help from parents or grandparents) and the children could frost them and put them in containers for the freezer or immediate use.

Reflect

How have these learning activities introduced the children to a variety of forms that stewardship can take, and given them some opportunities to be part of the church’s work in the world? How have the activities helped the children discover that they share in the responsibility for their future?

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