

Working for Justice



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

The connection between fairness and justice issues is natural for children and youth. Many in this age group (ages 5–14) have felt “left out” or have felt that a situation was “unfair.” Young children may be left out of a game or play activity. Teenagers may be left out of sports activities or a conversation with peers. Sometimes, similarities or differences are reasons for being excluded. Scripture includes examples of groups and individuals who are excluded as well. Both Isaiah and Luke call for new ways of treating others. Multiage learning settings provide opportunities for children and youth to discover ways to live inclusively.

About this Exploration

Working for justice is vital in the personal and communal lives of God’s faithful people. God desires and requires the faithful to work for justice. Through it, we creatively level the playing field, break down walls, and nurture environments so that all may experience a whole and holy life. This life is free of oppression, degradation, and exclusion. We encounter stories, interpret scriptures, and participate in activities through which we discover how to engage actively in justice work in the home, church, community, and world.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

*Isaiah 1:1, 10-18**Luke 4:14-21*

Leader Preparation

Read the Isaiah and Luke passages and note the examples of injustice and exclusion named, such as orphans, widows, the poor, and oppressed. Think about times when you were left out, and remember your feelings. Who are the excluded individuals or groups in your community? Reflect on the instruction from Isaiah to “learn to do good; seek justice.” How does this teaching influence your treatment of those around you? Then remember that God’s call is for everyone to be included.

You may be working with children and youth in a multiage setting for the very first time; you may be returning to serve after a “vacation”; or you may be continuing with a group you know and love. The gifts you bring are unique! If you are new to this learning group, plan time in your first gathering to get acquainted. Should you be returning to a leadership role with a group, plan time to “catch up and share news.” If you are continuing in this role, think of a new question to ask your learners—a question you’ve never asked them before.

Multiage settings are an opportunity to model a “family concept” of learning in which all are leaders and learners. Such a learning environment can offer occasions for children and youth to practice just behavior with one another. If this is the first time you have worked with a multiage setting, be aware of the differences in abilities between the five-year-old and the four-

Exploring & Engaging Activities



① Left Out Litany (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Brainstorm several experiences of being “left out,” such as from a game, at a party, or from a conversation. Practice the two phrases of the litany: “I’m left out when . . .” and “God wants us to include you.”

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Gather in a circle, and begin by naming one example of a time when you were “left out.” Write your example on the whiteboard or newsprint. Encourage participants to name other examples of being left out, and add their ideas to the list. Once everyone has the opportunity to contribute, recall for the group that God wants us to include everyone. Move into the center of the circle. Choose an example from the list and say, “I’m left out when . . .” Teach the group to say “God calls us to include you” as they point to the person in the center. Move back into the circle and invite another person to become the leader to choose an example and lead the litany. Continue until all have the chance to lead. Close by speaking the phrase one additional time in unison.

② Move Forward If You . . .

Leader preparation: Brainstorm a list of statements about characteristics and things that contribute to appearance, such as hair color and style, eye color, and clothing color and style. Become familiar with the game instructions below. Consider how the game might be changed so that everyone can move forward. Depending on the variety of suggestions, be prepared to play the game several different ways.

Supplies:

- open space

Gather the group in a line shoulder to shoulder. Give the following instructions: *I will say, “Move forward if you . . .” If the statement applies to you, move forward.* Give an example such as “Move forward if you are wearing socks,” and encourage those wearing socks to make one step forward out of line. Then show participants a simple hand signal, such as a wave, and say, “When I give this signal, move back into line.” Use the signal and have those who moved forward return to the line.

Begin the game with an appearance statement. Once participants move forward, say, “You are in,” and give the signal to return to the line. Continue with several more appearance statements. Mention to the group that the game sometimes leaves participants out as they wait in line. Ask: *How could we change the game so that everyone is able to move forward?* Play the game as modified by the group. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving.

teen-year-old. Some young children may need help with skills such as reading. Those in seventh or eighth grade may be feeling “too old” for the learning group and may need help with group participation; perhaps they can be developed as small group leaders. Flexibility, adaptability, and attention to relationships within the group will support your advance planning.

Think about the learning space and ensure that age-appropriate furniture is available for young children through teenagers. Prepare the learning space so that it is welcoming and attractive.

Prayer: *Holy One, you remind me that the call to justice is also a call to inclusion. Thank you for your presence as I journey with this group and we practice living together in new ways. 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.



3 Scales of Justice

Leader preparation: Become familiar with descriptions of “justice” from a source such as Wikipedia. Download a picture of the “scales of justice” from the Internet, or use the image in the attachment. Gather items of similar weight and items of an obviously different weight. The activity could be enhanced by using an actual scale, if available.

Supplies:

- two items of similar weight
- two items of different weight
- “Scale of Justice,” Attachment: Activity 3
- (optional) scale

Show the group the four items of similar and different weights, and ask the participants to take turns picking up pairs of items, one in each hand. They will “weigh” each item and decide which pair of items is of similar weight and which is of a different weight. Once everyone has weighed the items, ask for opinions. Tell the group that scales are often used to weigh items to discover if they are of equal or unequal weight. Show the group the picture of the scale of justice on the attachment, and mention that the image is a reminder of fairness and equality. Encourage the participants to give examples of showing equality or fairness to others. Mention that finding ways to live with fairness and equality is working for justice. Pass the two items of similar weight from person to person saying, “Show equality; work for justice.”

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Jesus Wants Change (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review the text from Luke 4:14–21. With these ages, consider using a modern version of the Bible such as *Today's English Version* or *The Message*. If your group includes children or youth who are comfortable reading, you might invite a volunteer to read the text.

Supplies:

- Bible
- marker and whiteboard of newsprint

Gather the group and mention that Jesus wants people to change in the ways they treat another. Encourage the group to listen carefully for the changes Jesus announced, and then read Luke 4:14–21 aloud. Encourage the participants to identify what they heard, and list their ideas on newsprint. Add to the list by identifying situations today that need change in the ways we treat one another. Invite participants to find a partner and choose one example from the list. Have each pair then create a skit showing a new way of treating others. Invite pairs to perform their skits for the group. Conclude by giving everyone a round of applause.



5 Fair or Unfair

Leader preparation: Review fair or unfair situations listed on the attachment, and add your own ideas. Prepare the space by creating a continuum line on the floor with masking tape. At each end of the tape line, place a sign with one of these words: “Fair” or “Unfair.” Allow space for participants to place themselves along the line.

Supplies:

- “Fair or Unfair Situations,” Attachment: Activity 5
- two signs on letter-size paper, one with the word “Fair” and the other with the word “Unfair”
- masking tape

Gather the group and explain you will read a number of situations that might be considered fair, unfair, or a combination of both. Show the group the line with signs at either end, and explain that they may use the entire line to respond to each situation. All may share their opinions about each situation—it is not necessary that all agree. Then read a situation from the list, and invite everyone to find a place on the line. Allow participants to explain why each chose a particular place on the line to stand. Continue the process with the other situations. Invite the group to wonder together about how unfair situations might be changed.



6 “Guide My Feet”

Leader preparation: Listen to the tune and become familiar with the words of “Guide My Feet,” through the sheet music on the attachment or from a website such as listed the one listed in Supplies for this activity. Depending on your comfort level with music, you may choose to read the words to the group, invite a volunteer to assist in singing or playing the tune on an instrument, use the YouTube video, or lead the song yourself.

Supplies:

- song: “Guide My Feet,” Attachment: Activity 6; lyrics, <http://www.hymnsite.com/fws/hymn.cgi?2208>; video, <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong20>

Invite the group to listen to the words of the song “Guide My Feet.” Teach the participants the words to the first and second verses. Mention to the group that this song affirms God’s presence with us as we work for justice. Encourage the group to prayerfully name situations in their school that are unfair or in need of justice. After everyone has a chance to contribute, respond to the prayer requests by singing or speaking the first verse as participants move their feet. Then ask the participants to identify situations in their community or the world that are unfair or in need of justice. Sing or speak the second verse in a circle holding hands.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Group Affirmations (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: One at a time, affirm each learner in your group by identifying something unique about each one. Be prepared to model such affirmations verbally for the group.

Supplies: None



Gather the group in a circle, and mention that one way we work for justice is by encouraging and supporting those around us. Explain that making positive statements about one another shows that we value one another. Invite a volunteer into the center of the circle, and model an affirmation statement about that participant. Encourage each learner to follow the pattern with personal statements. The person in the center chooses the next person to be affirmed. Continue until all participants have been in the center of the circle. Conclude with a simple echo prayer: *Loving God, we want to work for justice by encouraging others. Amen.*



8 Hands and Feet Work for Justice

Leader preparation: Think about the ways you use your hands and feet working for justice. Consider ways that the children and youth in your group might use their hands and feet working for justice. Include a modern language version of Isaiah 1:1, 10–18, especially verses 16–17, emphasizing the care of those less fortunate than ourselves. The attachment provides Isaiah 1:10–18 from *The Message*.

Supplies:

- Bible
- “Isaiah 1:10–18,” Attachment: Activity 8
- construction paper of various colors
- pencils
- scissors
- markers or crayons
- large piece of paper
- glue or tape

Invite the participants to look at their hands and feet. Mention that hands and feet are God-given tools that can work for justice or injustice. Invite the group to suggest ways their hands and feet work for justice. Ask the participants to choose a partner and then trace each other’s hands and feet onto construction paper. Once traced, individuals can cut out their hands and feet. Using markers or crayons, participants write or draw ways they use their hands and feet for justice. Glue or tape all of the hands and feet to the large paper and display. Close by saying together, “Thank you, God, for hands and feet!”

After the children finish the tracing project, read Isaiah 1:16–17 from *The Message* on the attachment. Invite the learners to suggest ways they might: “Help the down and out. Stand up for the homeless. Go to bat for the defenseless.”



9 “Vendedora de Piñas”

Leader preparation: Study the painting by Diego Rivera, “Vendedora de Piñas.” Rivera’s work often focused on social issues and the daily hardships of life. What do you imagine about the young girl in this painting? What story might you tell about her?

Supplies:

- artwork: “Vendedora de Piñas” by Diego Rivera, <http://tinyurl.com/FPArt17>

Ask the children and youth to gather around “Vendedora de Piñas.” Mention to the group that the girl appears to be alone. Ask the group to look at the expression on the girl’s face. Ask questions, such as: *How do you imagine she is feeling? Why might she be alone?* Say to the group, *Imagine that the girl is alone because she*



has been “left out” or excluded. Then ask: *What might you say to the girl?* Invite the participants to mirror the posture of the girl in the painting. Conclude with a brief prayer asking God’s help in recognizing and responding to those who feel left out.

Reflect

Think about the ways that you and the group are beginning to engage in just living because of your time together. How did the group show justice to one another as they participated in the activities? What changes might you make as you plan for your next gathering? Give thanks to God for environments where people can live more wholly with one another.

Attachment: Activity 3

Scale of Justice



Attachment: Activity 5

Fair or Unfair Situations

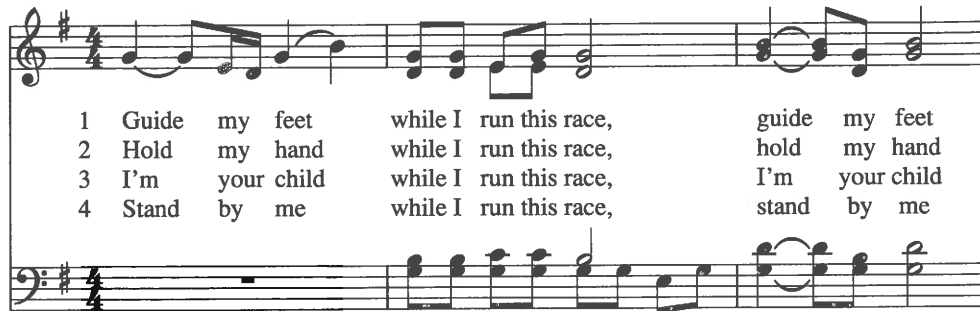
Read aloud each situation. Ask the group to move into their chosen place on the designated continuum line of "Fair" and "Unfair."

- A first grader has a birthday and invites everyone from class to the party.
- Two teenagers are in a store. One takes a package of gum without paying. A store clerk confronts both teens and calls the police.
- A student cheats on math homework by copying a friend's work.
- Twelve-year-old Karen is allowed to stay up until 10:00 p.m. on non-school nights. Younger brother Kevin, who is seven years old, has a bedtime of 9:00 p.m.
- A group of ten friends decide to have apples for a snack. There are only five apples, so they cut the apples in half.
- Nine-year-old Javan must feed and walk his dog each day as well as take out the trash. Six-year-old Keisha's only task is to feed the fish.

Attachment: Activity 6

Guide My Feet

African-American traditional; alt.



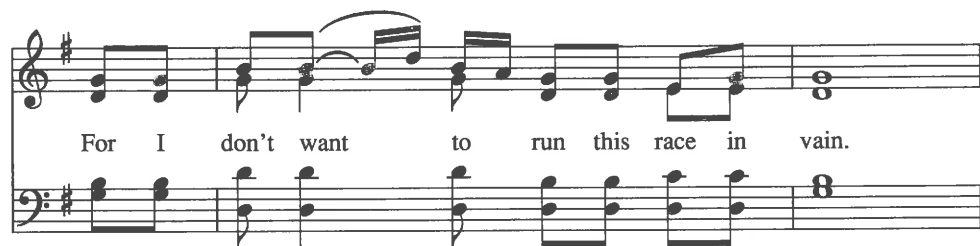
1 Guide my feet while I run this race, guide my feet
2 Hold my hand while I run this race, hold my hand
3 I'm your child while I run this race, I'm your child
4 Stand by me while I run this race, stand by me

Yes, my God.



while I run this race, guide my feet while I run this race,
while I run this race, hold my hand while I run this race,
while I run this race, I'm your child while I run this race,
while I run this race, stand by me while I run this race,

Yes, my God.



For I don't want to run this race in vain.

From The New Century Hymnal, ©1995 The Pilgrim Press. Arrangement: Joyce Finch Johnson
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Attachment: Activity 8

Isaiah 1:10–18
from *The Message*

“Listen to my Message,
you Sodom-schooled leaders.
Receive God’s revelation,
you Gomorrah-schooled people.
“Why this frenzy of sacrifices?”
God’s asking.
“Don’t you think I’ve had my fill of burnt sacrifices,
rams and plump grain-fed calves?
Don’t you think I’ve had my fill
of blood from bulls, lambs, and goats?
When you come before me,
whoever gave you the idea of acting like this,
Running here and there, doing this and that—
all this sheer commotion in the place provided for worship?
“Quit your worship charades.
I can’t stand your trivial religious games:
Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings—
meetings, meetings, meetings—I can’t stand one more!
Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them!
You’ve worn me out!
I’m sick of your religion, religion, religion,
while you go right on sinning.
When you put on your next prayer-performance,
I’ll be looking the other way.
No matter how long or loud or often you pray,
I’ll not be listening.
And do you know why? Because you’ve been tearing
people to pieces, and your hands are bloody.
Go home and wash up.
Clean up your act.
Sweep your lives clean of your evildoings
so I don’t have to look at them any longer.
Say no to wrong.
Learn to do good.
Work for justice.
Help the down-and-out.
Stand up for the homeless.
Go to bat for the defenseless.
“Come. Sit down. Let’s argue this out.” <The Message Permission
line>

Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996,
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Working for Justice



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Conflict is a normal experience for most human beings, including children and youth. Children are aware of conflicts around them and have experienced times when what they wanted did not match something a caregiver expected. Youth often test boundaries with parents and teachers, which may result in conflicted situations. Micah 6:1–8, a Bible Focus Passage for this Exploration, is a reminder that God is in conflict with God’s people concerning issues of justice. Because of a strong sense of fairness, children and youth are likely to respond to Micah’s call to “do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” Often, children and youth instinctively show love and care toward others.

Amos echoes Micah’s insistence that God is interested in justice and not well-meaning offerings. The distinction between charity (well-meaning offerings) and working for justice may be challenging for children and youth. Remember that multi-age learning offers the opportunity for all ages to live together in just ways. The rich image of justice as water and righteousness as a flowing stream will swirl in the imaginations of children and youth.

About this Exploration

Scripture asks what God requires of us and answers the question with marching orders and a road map. It admonishes against oppression, reminds us that we are created in the image of God, and demands that we work for a just world rooted in love. In Jesus we see the embodiment of loving justice, which, like an ever-flowing stream, grows to encompass the whole

creation. We discover God’s disappointment and anger with injustice, God’s care for the poor and disenfranchised, God’s zeal for justice as a way of life, and God’s expectation that we structure our lives and relationships as did Jesus.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Micah 6:1–8
Amos 5:18–24

Leader Preparation

Pour water into a bowl and read the passages from Amos and Micah. Dip your hand into the water. Think about the ways water is a source of life. Reflect on the ways water is connected to issues of justice throughout the world. Dip your hand into the water. Consider situations of conflict you experience with friends and family and situations of conflict present in your community and the world. Remember that God is present.

Dip your hand into the water. Think about the children and youth in your group. Each one is created in God’s image and is called to show God’s love.

Prayer: God of love, you remind me that justice, kindness, and love are closely connected. Walk with me as I work to show kindness and love during our time together. Walk with each of the participants as they find ways to show kindness and love to one another. Amen.

Session Development

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

 **1 Kindness in Action (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Brainstorm a list of ways that children and youth might show kindness toward others in a variety of settings, such as at home (sharing toys with siblings, helping a sibling with homework), at school (inviting a child to join a game, showing a new student to class), and at church (helping an adult carry supplies to fellowship, cleaning up a room after a meeting). If your group is small, consider having participants act out the scenes with a partner.

Supplies:

- Bible

Read aloud Micah 6:8. Ask the participants to echo the following phrases: “do justice,” “love kindness,” and “walk humbly with God.” Explain that Micah connects justice and kindness and reminds us to show kindness to others. Mention that showing kindness is a way of working for justice.

Invite the participants to divide into two groups. Invite them to act out ways to show kindness to others without using words. One group will begin as actors and the other as the audience; then the roles will reverse. The audience will guess the situation being dramatized. Whisper to the appropriate group the situation they will act out, and give each group several minutes to practice. Once the groups are ready, have one group perform the situation and the other group watch. At the end of the pantomime, invite the audience to guess the situation. Have participants change roles and continue to act out situations for one another. Close each performance with a hearty round of applause.

2 Water Meditation

Leader preparation: Review Amos 5:24, and consider how the participants in the group experience water. Remember that most children and youth have positive experiences with water, though some may fear it. Divide the verse into two or three phrases that can be echoed by the group. If there are children or youth in the group who are comfortable reading aloud, invite a volunteer to read the text.

Supplies:

- bowl with water
- towel
- Bible

Gather the group around a bowl of water and invite them to listen to Amos 5:24. Speak the shortened phrases of verse 24, and ask the group to echo the phrases one at a time. Once the group is able to repeat individual phrases, invite them to say the entire verse together. Mention to the group that this Bible passage describes justice and fairness as water that flows like a river that never ends. The right amount of water, like fairness, is important for all people. One at a time, invite the children and youth to dip one hand each into the bowl of water and name one way they have used water recently. Provide a towel to dry hands. After each has a chance to participate, ask them to name a problem caused by too little or too much water. Mention to the group that having too little or too much water can create problems. Having water is important for living. Making sure everyone

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.

names water as a way of showing fairness and serving justice. Ask participants to name a way they can be careful with water so others have enough. Close by saying Amos 5:24 in unison.

③ What Is Required?

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the song “What Does the Lord Require of You?” by Jim Strathdee through an online video, such as the YouTube video listed in Supplies. Notice that the phrases of the song echo Micah 6:8 and may be sung as a round. If “musically challenged,” you might invite a volunteer to teach and lead the song. The original lyrics use “the Lord,” but you may choose to substitute “God.” The word “require” may be unfamiliar to some and could be described with the synonym “need.” Print the words for readers on newsprint or whiteboard. The activity may be extended by singing the song for another group or in another setting, such as worship or fellowship.

Supplies:

- song: “What Does the Lord Require of You?” by Jim Strathdee; video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2Q-xgxMv2A>
- song phrases written on newsprint or whiteboard
- marker
- Bible

Read aloud Micah 6:1–8. Explain that Micah lived many years ago and was concerned because God’s people forgot to follow God’s ways and show kindness to one another. Gather the group and teach the three phrases of the song. Mention that the words to the song are found in Micah 6:8. The first part of the song asks a question and the second and third parts of the song give responses to the question. Invite the group to suggest simple actions for each of the following phrases: “seek justice,” “love kindness,” and “walk humbly with your God.” Once the group agrees on the body movements, sing the song adding the actions. Close with an echo prayer: *Thank you, God, for words and actions that bring justice to the world. Amen.*

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ A Knotty Problem (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Micah 6: 2. There is a problem between God and God’s people that calls for a solution. God calls God’s people to recognize and help solve problems in our community and world. Become familiar with the following game instructions.

A Knotty Problem

Begin by identifying a volunteer who will help the group solve the problem. The volunteer should move to an area away from the group until the group is ready for assistance. Invite the group to gather in a circle. First, everyone extends his or her right hand and holds a partner’s hand. Then, everyone extends his or her left hand and holds a different partner’s hand. An even number of players is essential, so the group facilitator may need to join the circle. Once all hands are connected, encourage the group to further tangle themselves by turning, twisting, moving between, and creating a jumbled mess. After the group is tangled, call the volunteer to help the group become untangled through verbal instructions. With the help of the volunteer, the group should eventually



return to some form of a circle. The game continues as others become the volunteer problem solver.

This activity requires a lot of movement. If you have children or youth who are physically restricted, think about other ways they can participate, such as being an assistant to the volunteer problem solvers.

Supplies:

- Bible
- open space

Mention to the group that prophets, such as Micah and Amos, who spoke for God usually had a difficult job. They spoke challenging messages to God's people. Read Micah 6:2 and say: *There is a problem between God and God's people that calls for a solution. God calls God's people to recognize and help solve problems in our community and world.* Explain that everyone will have the opportunity to be a "problem solver." Then follow the instructions for the game A Knotty Problem.

Once everyone has the chance to be the problem solver, bring the group together to talk about the game. Ask questions such as the following.

- How did it feel to help the group?
- How did it feel to have someone help you?
- What kinds of instructions were helpful?
- What was challenging about the game?

Mention to the group that problems or disagreements are sometimes more easily solved when we ask for help. Working together to find solutions is a way of living fairly and with justice. Invite the group to clasp hands again in a circle and give thanks for problem solvers.



5 Use Water Wisely

Leader preparation: Read Amos 5:24, and then think about the many ways you use water each day. Become familiar with simple water use information at the website "How Much Water Does It Take to . . ." (<http://www.watereducation.org/doc.asp?id=1022#HowMuchWater>). Information about water scarcity is also available at the online article "Water Scarcity" (<http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/scarcity.html>).

Supplies:

- pitcher of water
- cups
- gallon jug
- "Your Daily Water Use," Attachment: Activity 5
- white mailing label, approximately 3 1/3" x 4" with quick peel backing
- markers
- (optional) website: "How Much Is Your Daily Indoor Water Use?" <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/sq3.html>

Ask the group to echo the following phrase from Amos 5:24: *Let justice roll down like waters.* Explain that Amos was a prophet who wanted people to value justice. Amos pictured justice as valuable as water in a desert land. Gather the group around the pitcher of cups and water and pour a cup of water for each participant. Invite the participants to take a drink. Mention to the group that water is a valuable resource and a gift from God. It is important that people use water



wisely so that every person in the world has access to life giving water. Without water, people die.

Then show the group the gallon jug, and ask them to guess how many gallons of water are used to brush teeth, take a shower, and flush the toilet. After each guess, tell the group the number of gallons listed on attachment. Ask the group to suggest ways to reduce the amount of water used for these and other water uses. Encourage the group to create “water saver” labels as a reminder to use water carefully. Drink a “toast” to saving water!

Option: If you have Internet access, have the participants take the quiz online at the website “How Much Is Your Daily Indoor Water Use?”

6 Show Kindness

Leader preparation: Read Micah 6:8 and recall a kindness you have received. How might you “pass it on”? Visit the website <http://www.payitforwardfoundation.org/welcome.html> and read about the Pay It Forward Foundation and the multiplication of kindness. Download and print copies of Pay It Forward Coupons.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- Pay It Forward Coupons, http://www.payitforwardfoundation.org/pdf/files/PIFF_cards.pdf
- markers or crayons
- stickers
- Bible

Read aloud Micah 8:6. Ask the participants to repeat the phrases “do justice” and “love kindness.” One way of doing justice is showing kindness to others. The children may be familiar with the 2000 movie *Pay It Forward* starring Haley Joel Osmet. Tell the group about the website for the Pay It Forward Foundation and the way one kind action is multiplied as it is “paid forward.” Together, brainstorm acts of kindness and list them on whiteboard or newsprint.

Then distribute Pay It Forward Coupons and provide access to markers, crayons, and stickers. Encourage the children and youth to create a decorated “coupon.” Using the ideas from the list, invite the participants to choose and, if comfortable, name aloud an act of kindness to complete. Remind the participants that the coupon is given to the recipient of the act of kindness so that kindness can be passed on. Point out the Web address on the coupons, and mention that individuals may post ideas and stories online. Close with the unison affirmation: *We will show kindness.*



Sending & Serving Activities



7 Moving for Justice (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Micah 6:1 from several translations, including *Today's English Version*, and reflect on the opportunities provided by prayer to use your voice and show God a commitment to justice. Review the prayer phrases in the activity description below. Choose a space for this activity that has room for individuals to move. The activity could be extended by inviting additional prayer suggestions.

Supplies: None

Ask the group to echo the following phrase from Micah 6:1: *Come and present your case to the hills and the mountains.* Micah encourages God's people to use their voices for justice. Explain to the group that prayer provides a way to use our voices and bodies to show our commitment to justice. Invite the group to center themselves quietly by closing eyes and taking deep breaths. Once the group is settled, explain that while everyone will be moving during the prayer time, it is gentle movement. Tell the group that you will say a phrase, and then each person will show that prayer with their body and, if they choose, a brief spoken prayer. Encourage everyone to find their space and begin the prayer.

God of justice, we pray and show kindnesses . . .

Pause and allow everyone to express the prayer with body and voice. Continue, with a pause for movement and prayer after each phrase.

God of justice, we pray and show forgiveness . . .

Pause for movement and prayer.

God of justice, we pray and show fairness . . .

Pause for movement and prayer.

God of justice, we pray and show helping . . .

Pause for movement and prayer.

Invite the group to gather in a circle for the final prayer phrase: *God, we pray that we journey with you working for justice.* Pause and allow everyone to express the prayer with their body. Encourage the group to join in a unison *Amen*.



8 "The Sower"

Leader preparation: Review the Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:1–9. Spend time looking at the painting "The Sower," and think about the ways "seeds" of justice spread and grow. The planting portion of this activity may be messy. Setting the pot, potting soil, and seeds on newspaper will help contain the mess. Plan to tend the seeds as they grow.

Supplies:

- artwork: “The Sower” by Vincent van Gogh, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15625&store_id=1401
- Bible
- large clay pot
- potting soil
- newspaper
- bean or other fast-growing seeds
- water

Gather around the painting and planting supplies. Invite the participants to look at the picture and tell you what they see. Mention to the group that the name of the painting, “The Sower,” hints at the work of the figure. Encourage the group to brainstorm how tiny seeds grow into full-size plants like those in the background of the painting. Read Matthew 13:1–9. Explain that the job of the sower is to plant seeds and then care for them so that the seeds grow. Show the group the planting supplies and mention that our work in God’s world is similar to a sower of seeds. We plant seeds of justice through loving actions and help justice grow when we care for others. Invite participants to choose two seeds each. Teach the group this response: “Plant Seeds of Justice; Help Justice Grow.” One at a time, invite participants to plant seeds. Cue the group to say the response. Once everyone has planted, say the response one more time in unison.

9 Random Acts of Kindness

Leader preparation: Reflect on the words from Micah 6:8: “love kindness.” Locate a copy of the book *Kids’ Random Acts of Kindness* by Conari Press. Borrow the book from your local library, or purchase it for from a book store. Choose excerpts that you think will be meaningful for your group. Coach participants regarding sharing and the respectful use of space on the mural.

Supplies:

- book: *Kids’ Random Acts of Kindness* by Conari Press (Red Wheel/Weiser, 1994); available from a variety of stores, including Amazon.com, <http://www.amazon.com/Kids-Random-Kindness-Conari-Press/dp/0943233623>
- large piece of mural paper or pieces of newsprint taped together
- crayons or markers

Say aloud the words “love kindness.” Encourage the group to chant the words together. Mention the words are from the prophet Micah, who reminded God’s people of the importance of showing kindness to one another. Invite participants to find a comfortable place for viewing and listening to the book. Read from the book, and show the group the illustrations. Offer participants time to tell stories of their own random acts of kindness. Invite the group to illustrate their examples of random acts of kindness on the mural paper. Give three cheers for those who show kindness to others. Display the mural where others in the faith community may view.

Reflect

Consider each unique person who makes up your group, and give thanks for their presence during your time together. Did the group experience conflict? How was it resolved? What kind and loving actions bubbled up during the group’s experiences?



Attachment: Activity 5

Your Daily Water Use

Brush your teeth—2-5 gallons

Do you leave the water run or turn it off while you brush? There is no need to keep the water running while brushing your teeth. Just wet your brush and fill a glass for mouth rinsing.

Wash the car—50 gallons

Run the dishwasher—20 gallons per load

Can you fit more dishes in each load to reduce the number of times you run the dishwasher? It only takes 5 gallons per load to wash dishes by hand. Be sure to turn off the water instead of leaving it run for rinsing.

Flush the toilet—3 gallons per flush

To cut down on water waste, put an inch or two of sand or pebbles inside each of two plastic bottles to weigh them down. Fill the bottles with water, screw the lids on, and put them in your toilet tank, safely away from the operating mechanisms.

Take a shower or bath—17-24 gallons

A shower uses 2.5 gallons per minute. Can you turn off the water while you soap up or shampoo your hair, and then turn the water back on to rinse?

Run the washing machine—35-50 gallons per load

Can you wear your clothes more than one time? Can you make sure each load is a full load rather than a small load?

Working for Justice



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

As children and youth grow and learn, there are ample opportunities for making mistakes and trying again. The phrases “I’m sorry” or “Please forgive me” are important because most human beings experience times when another is hurt or a poor choice results in unfortunate consequences. Jeremiah 14:7–10, 19–22, a Bible Focus Passage for this Exploration, reminds us that people make mistakes when trying to live fairly. We look for peace and healing, and discover they are elusive. Sometimes our attempts at justice are more like “wandering” or “trial and error.” The story of the good shepherd and the hired hand from John 10:11–18 points to the connections between choices made by people and the consequences of those decisions. Children are growing in their understanding of the choices they make and the results of those choices. Youth face decisions that may test the values of family against those of their peers. Young and old alike may be challenged to make faithful choices for justice. Still, we are reminded that God is in the midst of all of our choices and we are called by God to keep trying.

About this Exploration

When Jesus bids us come and follow, what does he mean? It means following Jesus in justice work. Disciples are invited to practice their faith by making conscious choices, exploring ideas, and acquiring skills for the lives to which Jesus calls us. The activities in this exploration lead disciples to ask: How do our daily plans and routines show our commitment to working for justice?

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Jeremiah 14:7-10, 19-22
John 10:11-18

Leader Preparation

Sit quietly and reflect on the choices you make every day, such as driving individually or carpooling, purchasing food from farmers markets or chain stores, or adopting a pet from a shelter or breeder. How do your daily activities reflect your commitment to justice? Read the texts from Jeremiah and John. Sometimes making faithful decisions for justice is challenging. Discipleship means continuing to answer the call during challenging times.

Think about the participants in your group and the choices they face every day. The decisions they make on a daily basis are also challenging. As you prepare for time with the group, offer this prayer or your own:

Prayer: God of hope, you call your children to learn and grow. Sometimes learning feels like trial and error. Sometimes growing comes by trying again. Showing care for others and our world takes perseverance. May we continue to answer your call and follow. 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 The Good Shepherd (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review John 10:11-18, and think about the participants in your group. Identify participants who might be willing to be the “good shepherd,” “hired hand,” or “wolf,” as well as those who will be more comfortable in the role of “sheep.” If you have a small group, invite participants to play more than one role. Consider using a version of the Bible such as *Today’s English Version* or *The Message* with this age group. The activity could be enhanced by adding simple costumes or props as available, but these are not necessary. The drama might be shared with another group.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) simple props and costumes

Read aloud John 10:11-18 so the group is familiar with the storyline. Set the stage for the group by identifying the characters: good shepherd, hired hand, wolf, and sheep. Then act as narrator for the story as participants perform. Offer the opportunity for members to take different roles; you can tell the story several times until everyone’s acting needs are satisfied.

Invite the group to talk about the different choices of the good shepherd and hired hand. Mention that as followers of Jesus, it is important to make careful choices. *What situations do you feel so strongly about that you keep trying when there are challenges to face?* Invite the participants to “take a bow.”

2 Paths to Just Living

Leader preparation: Create a “multiple choice” masking tape path in an open space. The path should be made up of a number of “forks in the road” where the group has to make a decision about the next path to take. Create a series of 3” x 5” decision cards similar to: “Take a sack lunch (right) or buy a school lunch (left).” Make one decision card for each fork in the path. The decisions need not be “right/wrong” or “good/bad.” The cards will be read to the group. The group’s decision will determine whether the group takes the path to the right or left. Because there are multiple choices and multiple paths, the game can be repeated several times with different results. At the end of each path, place a card with a different message, such as “Your decisions have led you here” and “We make choices all day long.”

Supplies:

- 3” x 5” index cards
- marker
- masking tape

Show the participants the paths. Mention to the group that choices will be made along the path by the group. In order to move forward, the group will need to come to agreement. Before beginning the journey, invite the group to make their first decision about how to reach agreement: designate a leader(s) by majority vote or through whole-group consensus. Ask the group to move to the first fork in the path. Encourage them as they make choices, following the paths to an “end point.” Offer the option to play the game again, making different choices. Ask the group to talk about the decision making process, using questions such as the following.

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.

- How did you feel during the game?
- What is challenging about making choices as a group?
- What choices do you make that are difficult?

Close with an affirmation statement, such as “Our every-day choices make a difference.”

Option: This activity is similar to the series of children’s books published in the 1980s called *Choose Your Own Adventure*. The books featured interactive, multiple choice endings. Check with your public library for availability.



3 Embrace of Peace

Leader preparation: Study the painting “Embrace of Peace” by George Tooker. Imagine the events that might have taken place prior to the embrace. The word “embrace” may be unfamiliar to your learners and may be explained using a synonym such as “hug.” Be aware that for some children or youth, an embrace or hug from others may be uncomfortable.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Embrace of Peace” by George Tooker, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401

Gather around “Embrace of Peace.” Invite the participants to describe what they see. *Look at the expressions on the faces. How might they be feeling? Wonder together about what might have occurred before the figures embraced. What colors in the painting are peaceful? What might the figures say to each other after the hug?* Mention to the group that an embrace or hug can be a source of comfort in challenging times. Working for justice can be challenging work. Being a part of a group or community that provides comfort, support, and care helps us continue challenging work. Invite the participants to give a “self-hug” by each wrapping his or her arms tightly around him- or herself. Encourage the group to echo the phrase *I work for justice, and I am embraced by peace* before releasing the hug.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Peace (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the word “peace” and the feeling it creates. Brainstorm words that remind you of peace. Print the word “PEACE” in a vertical column on a piece of newsprint or whiteboard, with space beside each letter for additional words. The group will create an “acrostic poem” using the word “peace.” (If unfamiliar with acrostic poems, you might review the information at the Wikipedia article “Acrostic,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acrostic>.)

Supplies:

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard
- Bible

Invite the group to look at the word “PEACE” that you printed on the newsprint or whiteboard. Ask the participants to identify the letters that make up the word and then say the whole word. Mention to the group that the prophet Jeremiah talked about trying to find peace in difficult situations. (If your learners are old enough to understand, you may want to read some of the verses from Jeremiah



14:7–22.) As followers of God’s way, we keep looking for peace. Ask the group to think quietly about how peace feels to them.

Then invite the group to create words or phrases that describe peace. Each word or phrase should begin with one of the letters of the word “peace.” Act as a scribe, or invite a participant to complete the acrostic poem. Encourage the group to suggest ways to pass on to others their message of peace. At the close, either you, or one of your good readers, can read the phrases one at a time and have the group echo each in unison.

5 Demonstrating for Justice

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the words to “Singing for Our Lives.” You might check out the words on the Holly Near website, <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong21a>. You can hear the song sung on a YouTube video at <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong21b>. Review information from a source, such as Wikipedia, on the topic of “demonstrations.” Brainstorm some reasons for a demonstrating, gathering, and marching, such as for peace, hunger, race relations, and gender equality. As participants create posters, be prepared to offer help with spelling or writing. Remember, not all marches are “against” something; usually they are “for” something—even a race for cancer research can be thought of as a protest “for.”

Supplies:

- song: “Singing for Our Lives” by Holly Near; video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcT3JKNgqHg>
- device to play music, such as an MP3 player, a laptop, or a CD player
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard
- poster board or cardboard
- markers or crayons

Invite the children and youth to respond with a wave if they have participated in a demonstration march. You might want to give an example, such as a CROP Walk for hunger, a Susan G. Komen march for cancer research, or a Martin Luther King, Jr., Day march for civil rights. Encourage those with experience to tell you the reason for the march. Note the difference between a demonstration march and a parade. Speak about demonstrations, and say that demonstrations may include a gathering of people and a march. As a group, create a list of reasons for demonstration marches. Invite participants to create a poster supporting an issue, such as peace, hunger, race relations, and gender equality. Provide time to show and talk about the posters.

Tell the story behind the song “Singing for Our Lives.” Invite the group to sing the song. Then have the group take their posters and demonstrate for justice issues. Take the demonstration to another group or area in the church or on the church property as appropriate.



6 Heifer Project

Leader preparation: Visit the Heifer Project website at <http://www.heifer.org/site/c.edJRKONiFiG/b.201465/> and print their mission information. Watch the short video about Heifer Project International. Review the possible animal gifts at <http://www.heifer.org/site/c.edJRKONiFiG/b.201480/>. Plan for a way to show the video to the entire group. Make copies of the attachment “Help Heifer Project.” Consider asking older participants to lead the animal noise closing.



Supplies:

- video: “How Does Heifer Pass on the Gift?” <http://www.youtube.com/HeiferInternational#p/u/9/-VqMrvvWUgQ>
- equipment to play online video
- “Help Heifer Project,” Attachment: Activity 6

Ask the participants if they have heard of Heifer Project. If so, invite them to tell you something about the project. Using the information from the website, explain the work of Heifer Project to the group. Then invite the group to view the video “How Does Heifer Pass on the Gift?” Ask the group to name some of the animals in the video. Encourage them to name ways Heifer Project works for justice. Tell the group that Heifer Project is helped by individuals and groups who purchase animals or shares of animals. Invite the group to decide how they might help Heifer Project. Distribute copies of the attachment to participants. Fill in the way your group has decided to help so that contributors will know the goal and the purpose of the project. Close by imitating such animal sounds as sheep, cows, bees, chickens, and pigs.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 I’m Sorry (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Consider ways to admit a mistake has been made, including: “I’m sorry”; “That was wrong”; and “My bad.”

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Mention to the group that mistakes are embarrassing, but they can be an opportunity to learn. Working for justice means trying to treat others fairly. Sometimes our actions or words result in hurt or harm. Emphasize that it is important to correct the situation as quickly as possible by admitting the mistake and trying again. Then invite the participants to think about times when something they did or said hurt or upset another person. Ask them to tell you the words or phrases they used in the situation. List the responses on newsprint or a whiteboard. Once the participants have developed a list, say to the group, “Let’s rehearse these responses with one another.” Invite the participants to choose a partner. One person will speak phrases and the other will listen, and then partners reverse the roles. Ask each participant to choose a word or phrase from the list to use when faced with a challenging situation this week. Invite the group to say together, “I’m sorry!”



8 Animal Care

Leader preparation: Brainstorm a list of typical pet animals, such as dog, cat, pony or horse, hamster, fish, and bird. Keep in mind your geographical location. Some participants may live in an apartment building, some may live on a farm, and some may live in a house in a residential neighborhood. Include on the list the kind of care each animal needs. If you are a pet parent, be prepared to tell the group about your pet. Cut out enough “paw prints” for each participant. Some families may be zoo parents, so be prepared for an exotic pet on the list!

Supplies:

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard
- “Paw Print,” Attachment: Activity 8 (one for each participant)
- pencils, markers, crayons
- (optional) website: “World Wildlife Fund,” <http://www.worldwildlife.org/home-full.html>

Invite the group to brainstorm a list of typical pet animals. Encourage them to think outside of their environment to include all types of pets. If you used activity 6, the participants may name some of the kinds of animals provided by Heifer, such as ducks or pigs or sheep. As the animals are listed, leave a blank space next to each to add care ideas. Ask the participants to name the types of care each animal needs and add those to the list.

Mention to the group that taking care of animals is a way of showing our commitment to justice for all of God’s creatures. In one Bible story, Jesus told about a good shepherd and a hired hand and the different ways each treated sheep. The good shepherd cared for the sheep even when it became difficult. The hired hand ran away and left the sheep alone. Encourage the participants to look at the list of care ideas and choose one activity to write or draw on the paw print. Care may be provided for a family pet, the pet of a friend, neighbor, or shelter. Offer time to tell one another about their choices. Send home the paw print promises as a reminder.

Option: To extend this activity, you could talk about how we care for animals in the wild. Working for justice means preserving the biodiversity of species. You might want to explore the website for the World Wildlife Fund, whose motto is: “Building a future in which people live in harmony with nature.”



9 Signs of Peace

Leader preparation: Think about “signs” and their functions. Review the information about peace symbols online, such as the Wikipedia article “Peace symbol” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_symbols). Print a copy of the attachment “Peace Signs.” Consider searching the Internet for additional symbols. Notice the use of fingers making a “V” as one peace sign.

Supplies:

- “Peace Signs,” Attachment: Activity 9
- variety of art supplies, including construction paper, glue, glitter, crayons, markers, scissors, and tissue paper

Invite participants to name the types of signs and symbols they see each day. Ask the group to identify reasons for signs (safety, publicity, naming, information, and messages). Show the group the peace images you printed. Talk about the various peace symbols. These images help people remember that peace is important. As followers of God’s way and workers for justice, we want to remember to live peacefully with one another and with creation.



Then encourage the children and youth to create their own peace signs using the art supplies. Once the participants have completed their signs, encourage them to talk about their work. Invite participants to post their peace signs as reminders to live peacefully with others. Show the group “V” fingers, and invite them to participate in showing signs of peace.

Reflect

As you think about the time with your group, consider how the journey toward just living continues. Which experiences felt like “trial and error”? When were faithful choices made? How did the group demonstrate just living with one another? Remember that God is in the midst of all as we follow God’s way.

Help Heifer Project

Date:

Dear Friend,

Our group _____, has
decided to support the work of Heifer Project International by:

Our goal is: _____

Contributions are needed by _____.

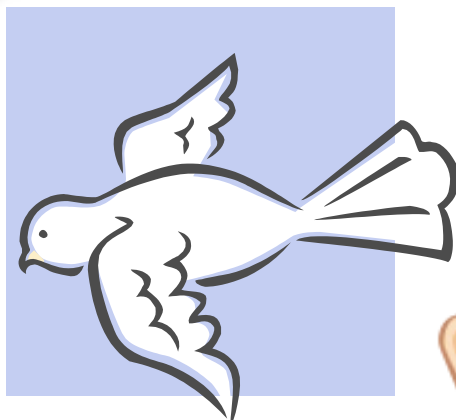
Thanks for your support of this project.

Your friend, _____

Paw Print



Peace Signs



Working for Justice



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

People of a variety of ages are supported by a feeling that God is near. Children are comforted when caring persons are near and transfer that feeling of trust to God. Youth are growing in their understanding of God as a personal friend, comforter, and adviser. The imaginations of children and youth may be attracted to the “superhero” feel of Psalm 34. God watches and even rescues the “good” and is against the “bad.” The psalm concludes, however, with the reminder that God’s care is for all those seeking refuge.

God’s world is strengthened when people live in unity. From a young age, children are aware of similarities and differences. Youth are often seeking peers with similar interests and can be judgmental of others perceived to be different. Children and youth benefit when groups model peaceful living and show ways to reconcile with others. Ephesians 2:1–22 uses the word “peace” numerous times as it calls for the breaking down of dividing walls and creating new structures built on unity.

Christian tradition reminds us that God is always near and cares for those in need. Jesus modeled breaking down barriers between people and helped them recall their commonalities.

About this Exploration

In working for justice, as in everything, past is prologue. Christian tradition calls the church to confess its participation in the creation and perpetuation of injustice. It also calls us to celebrate as Christian people who claim and test our heritage through doing the work of justice. Grounded in this history, we follow God's leading and discover new ways to practice our faith working for justice.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Psalm 34:15–22
Ephesians 2:11–22

Leader Preparation

Begin your time of preparation by picturing a wall. Imagine how that wall was built, block by block. Now, imagine dismantling the wall. What do you see once the wall is gone? Read Psalm 34 and Ephesians 2. Think about times you have felt God near, and give thanks. Recall a situation in your life that is in need of peaceful reconciliation, and call on God's wisdom. As you plan for your group, think about ways to break down dividing walls and build unity.

Prayer: God of peace, you remind people to live in harmony with one another. Throughout history you have offered chances to see beyond differences and remember similarities. May this time together offer opportunities to live together in unity. 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 God Is Near (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about types of body movement that might express God being close. Print these six leader phrases of the litany on newsprint or whiteboard: (1) "The eyes of God are watching." (2) "The ears of God are listening." (3) "God hears those who cry for help." (4) "God helps those who are troubled." (5) "God is close when hearts are hurting." and (6) "God helps those who feel discouraged." Print these two response phrases after each leader phrase: "God is near; God is here." Consider asking participants to act as litany leaders.

Supplies:

- Bible
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Speak the "leader" phrases from the Psalm 34 litany that you posted on newsprint or a whiteboard, and invite the group echo the phrases. Mention to the group that Christians have read and sung the psalms as reminders that God is close. Psalm 34 helps us to remember that God cares for those in need. As we work for fairness in the world, God is near. Teach the group the two-phrase response for the litany: "God is near; God is here." Invite the group to suggest body movements for each part of the litany. Practice saying each phrase with the chosen action. Read the litany and encourage the group to speak and show the response. Offer the chance for other participants to act as leader. Invite the group to suggest additional situations needing God's care and offer the group response. Close by saying the litany with the body movements one more time in unison.

2 Give Us Peace

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the tune of "Dona Nobis Pacem" through the YouTube video listed in Supplies below. Notice that it has three parts, so it may be used as a round. The Latin words of the title, "Dona Nobis Pacem" (DOHN-ah, NOH-bees, PAH-chehm), mean "give us peace." If you are "musically challenged," invite a volunteer to teach and lead the song. Print both the Latin words and the English translation on newsprint or whiteboard for readers. The activity might be extended by teaching the song to another group.

Supplies:

- song: "Dona Nobis Pacem," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=379RW1ktp4Y>; sheet music, www.Hymnsite.com
- marker and whiteboard or newsprint

Invite the participants to close their eyes. Say the word "peace" three times, followed by the phrase "give us peace": *Peace. Peace. Peace. Give us peace.* Ask the participants to open their eyes and tell you how they feel when they hear those words. Mention to the group that feeling peace as individuals helps us to live peacefully with others. Then have participants look at the words of the song printed on the newsprint or whiteboard. This song is quite old and has been used

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.

by Christians for centuries. Say the Latin words aloud for the group, and ask participants to repeat the words. In English we might say, “Give us peace.” Teach the three individual phrases of the song. Sing the three phrases one after the other. Invite the participants to close their eyes, sing the three phrases of the song, and welcome a feeling of peace deep inside.

3 Cooperative Obstacle Course

Leader preparation: Create an obstacle course in an open space with clearly marked start and finish lines. Barriers can be created with existing furniture and simple objects, such as rope, plastic bottles, or buckets. Consider making one of the obstacles a large square marked off by masking tape. The idea of this “obstacle” is that the entire group must fit in the square at the same time. This activity requires quite a bit of physical movement. If there are children or youth with physical restrictions, think about ways they can participate, such as coaching the group through the course. The intent of the activity is cooperation. It could easily lead to a conversation about sensitivity to persons with physical restrictions.

Supplies:

- Bible
- open space
- items to create obstacles, such as chairs, tables, rope, plastic bottles, buckets
- masking tape
- piece of rope long enough for all participants to grasp

Show the participants the obstacle course. The goal is to work together as a group to move through the course. All members of the group must pass an obstacle before anyone can move to the next. Everyone wins when the group finishes together. Ask the participants to form a line, one after the other, and grasp the rope with one hand. Invite the group to move forward to the first obstacle. Encourage the group to work together. Meet the group at the finish line.

When all have passed the finish line, ask them to talk about the experience using questions such as these: *How did it feel to work together? What challenges did you experience? What might you do differently?* Mention that a letter written to early Christians (Ephesians 2:11–22) talks about the importance of breaking down walls that separate us from others. God wants us to work together and live peacefully with one another. If time permits, offer a chance to repeat the course. Give three cheers for working together.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Superheroes (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Brainstorm names of superheroes. Create a list of situations when a superhero might be called upon for help, such as a child being bullied at school by an older student, two teens having a disagreement and setting up a fight after school, a sister or brother breaking a favorite toy, and a teen sending a mean text message to a friend.

Supplies: None



Ask the group to name “superheroes,” from both popular culture and faith tradition. Invite the group to respond to questions such as: *What is the job of a superhero? How do superheroes know they are needed? What makes superheroes different from others?* Encourage the group to name and describe a superhero who has the job of working for fairness. Ask questions such as these:

- What is the job of a superhero for fairness?
- What words and actions might be used by a superhero for fairness?
- What might the superhero for fairness do when arriving at the scene of a problem?

Once the role of the “superhero for fairness” has been described, teach the following “cry” to the group: “Help, help, we need your help!” Read a situation to the group. Invite the group to cry for help. Ask for a volunteer superhero to respond to the situation. Continue reading situations and asking for volunteers until everyone has the chance to respond. Offer the opportunity for participants to name situations. Close with a prayer of thanks for those who strengthen God’s world as “superheroes” for fairness.



5 Peace Portraits

Leader preparation: Spend time looking at the shapes and colors in the painting “Kopf” by Joan Miro. Reflect on your reaction to the picture. Describe the expression of “the head.” What feelings do you sense are communicated?

Supplies:

- artwork: “Kopf” by Joan Miro, <http://tinyurl.com/FPArt18>
- mirror
- plain 8½” × 11” white paper
- crayons or markers

Invite the group to meet around the picture “Kopf.” Ask the group to name the colors and shapes in the picture. Explain to the group that *kopf* is German for “head.” Invite the group to brainstorm how the “head” might be feeling. Ask participants to talk about their reactions to the picture. Point out that peace can be communicated in many ways, including expressions on a face. Christian tradition encourages “passing the peace” to others. Show the mirror and invite participants, one by one, to make a peaceful face in the mirror. Distribute paper and markers, and invite participants to create a “peaceful” self portrait. Offer time to show the self portraits to one another. Invite participants to talk about a time a peaceful facial expression might be used. Display the pictures where others in the community may view.

6 Paths to Peace

Leader preparation: Locate a copy of the book *Paths to Peace: People Who Changed the World* by Jane Breskin Zalben. Borrow the book from your local library, or purchase it from a bookstore. The book highlights individuals who worked for others using words and actions. Choose people from the book who you think will be meaningful to your group, keeping in mind to identify those of the Christian tradition. If necessary, ask an older learner to define the word “biography” (“life story”).

**Supplies:**

- book: *Paths to Peace: People Who Changed the World* by Jane Breskin Zalben (Dutton Juvenile, 2006)
- writing paper
- pencils

Invite participants to find a comfortable place for viewing and listening to the book. Then read several biographies from the book, and invite participants to look at the artwork illustrating each biography. Mention that these persons have been identified as peacemakers or heroes because of their work. Christian tradition reminds us that every person has opportunities to work for others using words and actions. Invite each child or youth to write or draw her or his own “life story,” identifying how she or he works for others. Offer time to share the biographies. Close with the unison affirmation: *Everyone can make a difference!*

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Similar and Different (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Brainstorm a list to complete this phrase: “I like . . .” Your list might include broccoli, swimming, math, and rules. Have fun with the list and be prepared to model acceptance of varied points of view. Decide on a simple visible response to the phrase, such as a raised hand.

Supplies: None

Gather the group in a circle. Explain that you will make a statement and each person is to show a response, if appropriate. Give the first example, using a word from your list: “I like . . .” Ask participants to look around the circle for those who share the same opinion. Some participants will have similar responses; others will have a different point of view. Mention to the group that opinions may vary and that God welcomes variety. Continue making “like” statements and inviting responses. Offer the opportunity for participants to act as leaders. Wonder with the group how persons can show respect for similarities and differences. Mention to the group that Christians use the phrase “Peace be with you” when differences create divisions. Invite the participants to say the phrase in unison and then, one at a time, turn to his or her neighbor and “pass” the phrase around the circle.



8 Peace Mobile

Leader preparation: Review information online about the dove as a peace symbol, such as at the Wikipedia article “Doves as symbols” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doves_as_symbols). Choose a dove pattern from the attachment. You may want to enlarge the pattern, or the mobiles could have a variety of different sizes of doves. You can use the pattern to trace on construction paper, or you could make multiple copies of the attachment and have the children color the doves. Or you could leave the doves white. Cut out one dove. Depending on the abilities of the participants in your group, you might need to pre-cut a number of doves. Consider inviting an additional volunteer to assist. This is a good opportunity for older participants to help the younger ones.

**Supplies:**

- dowels or clothes hangers
- string or yarn
- construction paper of various colors
- “Dove Patterns,” Attachment: Activity 8
- model dove (if available) for display
- scissors
- glue
- glitter
- markers or crayons
- hole punch

Gather around the dove (either the cut-out dove or a model) and invite the participants to brainstorm reasons the dove has become a sign of peace. The story of Noah sending the dove to look for dry land after the flood is one reason many people, including Christians, have associated the dove with peace. There is also a dove in the story of Jesus’ baptism. Invite the children and youth to create “peace mobiles” as a visible sign of their concern for peaceful living. Show participants the art supplies, and invite them to trace, cut, and decorate doves. Encourage participants to help one another with the tasks of punching holes, stringing doves, and tying knots. Offer time to show individual mobiles. Celebrate by saying together: *Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*

9 Building and Breaking Down

Leader preparation: Review Ephesians 2:14, 21. Consider using *Today’s English Version* with this age group. Think about the children and youth in your group and imagine the everyday “walls” they may face, such as peer groups that exclude individuals, wearing clothing that is not quite “in,” or disagreements about likes and dislikes. Be ready to name examples as the building blocks in the activity form the wall. Also think about ways that walls between people can be broken down, such as including everyone in group activities, complimenting clothing choices, and affirming varied opinions. Be ready to name examples as blocks are removed from the wall.

Reflect

Recall the conversations and body language evidenced during the group time together. How did participants show one another God’s care? What examples of living peacefully with others did you observe? Pray that God’s world will be strengthened by faithful words and actions.

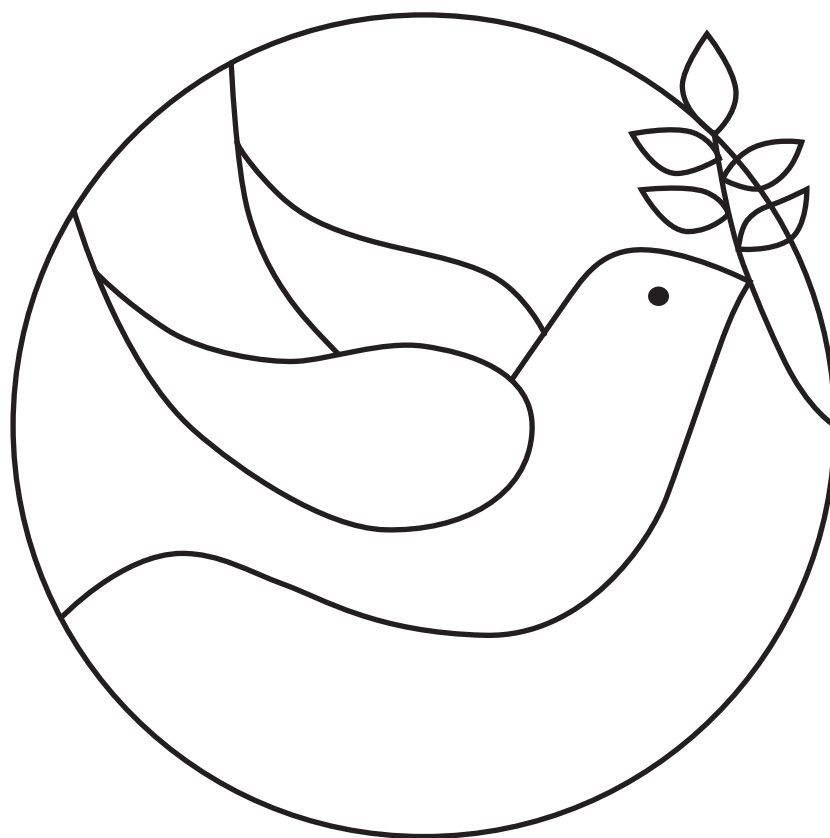
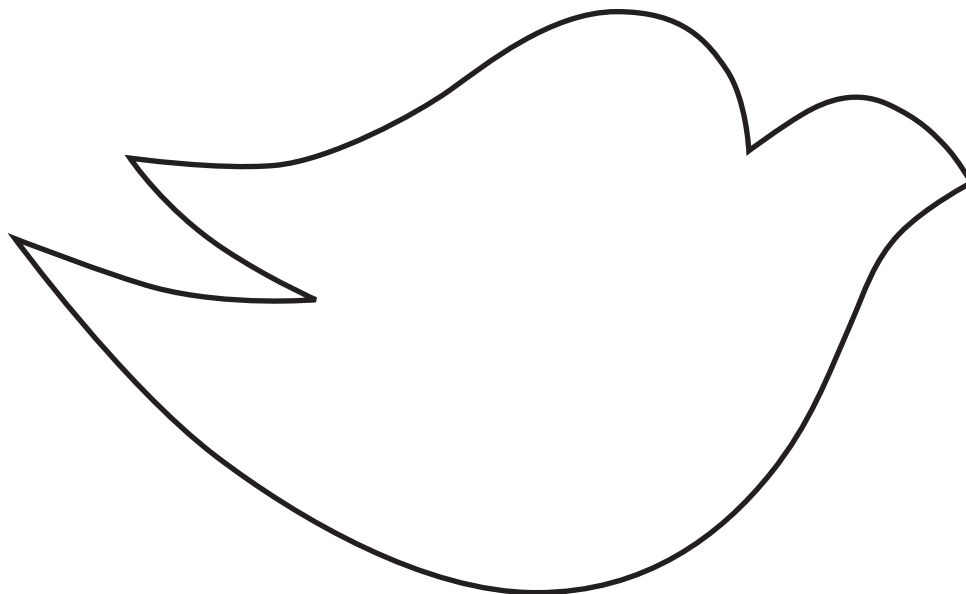
Supplies:

- building blocks (alphabet blocks, Legos®, shoe boxes)
- Bible

Gather around a pile of blocks. Have participants slowly build a wall. As each block is placed, name an example of a situation that separates people. As blocks are added to the wall, invite participants to suggest ideas that separate people. Once the blocks are used up, invite the group to sit quietly for about 30 seconds simply looking at the wall. Then take away one block as you name a way walls between people can be broken down. Invite participants to suggest ideas as blocks are taken off the wall. Once the wall is gone, invite the group to sit quietly for about 30 seconds looking at the open space. Wonder together about how life changes when walls between people are broken down. Mention that a letter written to early Christians reminds us that Jesus wants us to live together as one. Read aloud Ephesians 2: 14, 21. Close by asking the group to echo the following phrases: *Jesus is our peace. Jesus ties us together.*



Dove Patterns



Working for Justice



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

God's love for all people sets the stage for the work of justice. Children's abilities to extend loving actions to others are directly related to the love and nurture they experience through caregivers. Youth are drawn to admired adults and seek their guidance and support. The behavior of children and youth toward others is often influenced by friends and peers. A multiage setting provides opportunities for children and youth to be supported by one another into becoming expressions of love and concern for others.

Remembering that God is the creator of each and every person is vital to the work of justice. The text from Proverbs reminds God's people that rich and poor alike are created and blessed by God. Common culture teaches children and youth to value wealth and stuff. Children and youth will benefit from opportunities to show generosity and share with others. Romans 13:8-14, a Bible Focus Passage for this Exploration, is a reminder of one of the most essential rules for God's people: "to love your neighbor as yourself." Children and youth are invited to wake up to a new day and live with respect for one another. As God's people, take God's love and pass it on.

About this Exploration

All are created in the image of God, children of God, unique and diverse in our own context. Jesus imagined a different reality from the one in which he lived; Jesus imagined the realm of God, rooted in love and justice. When working for justice,

we see the face of God in others around us. God is angered by injustice, and we are called to respond. When we explore context and mission, we wake up to the just and unjust realities of our local communities and world—and are called to action.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

**Proverbs 22:1–2,
8–9, 22–23
Romans 13:8–14**

Leader Preparation

Say your name aloud three times and remember the words from Proverbs 22:1: “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches.” Name and picture the participants in your group, and recall that each one is a gift from God. Say the phrase “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Extend your mental imagery to family members, friends, and colleagues. Say the phrase “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Finally, give thanks for others you do not know by name but who are also loved by God. Say the phrase “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Prayer: Loving God, you remind me that all of creation is a gift from you. Whether rich or poor, young or old, weak or strong, your people are to be treated fairly. I am grateful for time with this group and opportunities to affirm your love for all people. 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Treasure Hunt (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Write each word of the phrase “love your neighbor as yourself” on a separate piece of paper. Hide the pieces of paper around the space. Value each participant by offering everyone an opportunity to both hide and find the treasure. If you have a large group, make several sets of the five pieces of paper.

Supplies:

- five pieces of paper
- markers
- Bible

Tell the group that there is hidden treasure to be found in the room. Encourage the participants to work together to find all five pieces of paper and bring them back. One at a time, hold up part of the treasure. Say the word aloud and ask the group to echo. Invite the group to work together and put the words of the phrase into the correct order. Encourage cooperation and positive communication. Say the phrase aloud and invite the group to echo. Mention to the group that these words from the Bible remind us to show love and respect to others.

Read aloud Romans 13:8–14. Ask the group to name ways to treat others with respect. Offer the opportunity for volunteers to take turns hiding the treasure. Put the phrase back together each time the treasure is rediscovered. Close by reading again Romans 13:8–14 and with a prayer giving thanks for God’s love and ways to show God’s love to others.

Option: If you make more than one set of words, when the children find the papers they will need to figure out the phrase. That may be a task for the older children in the group.

2 “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love”

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the song “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love.” You might use some alternative language for verse four, such as “Loving puts us on our knees, showing our faith by our deeds, serving the neighbors we have from you.” *The New Century Hymnal* explains: “This African folk melody was presented to the church at Chereponi, Northern Ghana, by Ghanaian musicologist A.A. Mensah when United Church of Christ missionaries, Al and Sue Krass, were serving there.” The word “missionary” may be described as someone who teaches and helps others. Invite a volunteer to teach and lead the refrain if you are “musically challenged.” This activity could be extended by teaching the song to another group.

Supplies:

- song: “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (lyrics: Tom Colvin, alt.; music: Chereponi, Ghanaian folk song, adapt. Tom Colvin); lyrics and audio, <http://www.oremus.org/hymnal/j/j015.html>

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

Teach the refrain of the song to the group. Invite the participants to create actions for the phrases “fill us with your love,” “show us how to serve,” and “the neighbors we have from you.” Mention that this song comes from Ghana, a country in Africa. It was shared with United Church of Christ missionaries. The song reminds us that God calls us to love and serve others. Read the words of verse two for the group, and invite the participants to sing the refrain with the actions. In the same way, read verses three and four and encourage participants to respond with the refrain and actions. Ask the group to describe “neighbors” and ways to show love to neighbors. Sing the refrain of the song with actions one more time.



3 “Shotgun Third Ward #1”

Leader preparation: Study the painting “Shotgun Third Ward #1” by John Biggers. The setting is a neighborhood in Houston, Texas, called the Third Ward. A “shotgun house” is a narrow rectangular home, usually no more than 12 feet wide, with rooms arranged one behind the other and doors at each end of the house. Think about your neighbors and give thanks for them.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Shotgun Third Ward #1” by John Biggers, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401

Gather around the picture and ask the participants to describe what they see.

- What colors are used by the artist?
- What might the adults be saying to each other?
- What might the children be doing?
- How do you feel when you look at the poster?
- Where do you see loving actions in the poster?

Invite the participants to talk about where they live and persons that live nearby. Mention that God wants us to “love our neighbors as ourselves.” Treating others with respect and acting in loving ways is working for justice. Encourage the participants to close their eyes and picture a neighbor or friend. Ask the group to echo the following prayer: *Dear God, you love all people. Thank you for neighbors of all shapes and sizes. Help me to remember to love my neighbors. Amen.*

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Caring Neighbors (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about times as a child or teenager when you were bullied, put down, or teased or when you observed another person experiencing these circumstances. Brainstorm a few examples of situations when children and youth may experience teasing or bullying—for example, name calling, mean text messages, bullying, physical threats.

Supplies:

- white paper
- markers or crayons

Ask the participants to make a face if they have ever been teased or called a mean name. Invite them to talk about how they felt. Invite the participants to describe how a caring friend or neighbor might respond if someone is being bullied or put down. If anyone has experienced another’s intervention in a time when he or



she was bullied, invite sharing. Provide time for everyone to respond. Mention to the group that treating others with respect is a way of loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Invite the participants to dramatize some of the situations they described. Participants can show two ways of responding: a caring friend or neighbor response, and an uncaring response. Distribute paper and markers and ask the participants to draw a situation showing how a caring neighbor would respond if someone is being treated badly by others. Offer time to talk about the pictures. Display the art in an area where others may view.



5 Wants and Needs

Leader preparation: Review the list of wants and needs on the attachment. Add ideas of your own. Create a sign with the word “Want” and another with the word “Need.” Print copies of the handout “Help Us Help Others.” Keep in mind that the group may decide to adopt a need from the list, such as “friends,” rather than a need associated with donations.

Supplies:

- “Wants and Needs,” Attachment: Activity 5a
- “Want” and “Need” signs
- Bible
- “Help Us Help Others,” Attachment: Activity 5b

Invite the group to look at the signs and identify the word on each sign. Ask the group to define what each word means. Tell the group you will read an example of something a person might want or need. Read from the list on the attachment “Wants and Needs,” and ask the participants to respond with a loud “yes” if the example is something that all people need.

Then read aloud Romans 13:9–10, and remind the group that God calls us to love our neighbors in a particular way. Working for justice means making sure that God’s people have what they need. Ask the group to “adopt” one “need” shared by all people. Brainstorm ways to help with that need. Have participants fill in the “Help Us Help Others” handout as appropriate. Close by inviting the group to echo the prayer *God needs us to love our neighbors*.



6 Stone Soup

Leader preparation: Download a copy of the story “Stone Soup.” Make copies of the stone image for each participant.

Supplies:

- story: “Stone Soup,” <http://stonesoup.media.officelive.com/story.aspx>
- large pot
- “Stone Images,” Attachment: Activity 6
- hats, scarves, shawls
- 3” × 5” index cards
- pencils and markers
- (optional) large stones and permanent markers

Tell the “Stone Soup” story to the group. Mention that God calls us to be generous and share with others. We work for justice when everyone contributes helpfully to problem solving. Then invite the participants to act out the story using the props and costumes provided. Invite one participant to be the “traveler” and the



rest to be “villagers.” Ask the villagers to name an imaginary ingredient as they contribute to the soup. Provide the chance for everyone to have the role of traveler and villager. Ask the group to brainstorm a list of ways to share with others. Distribute “stones,” and ask each participant to write or draw his or her choice on the stone. Encourage the participants to demonstrate sharing during the week. Bless the stones with the words: “Give generously.”

Option: If you can gather enough medium-to-large sized stones, give one to each participant. Distribute permanent markers and invite them to write a word on the stone.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 God Made Me, God Made You (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Practice saying the two response statements: *God made me. I am loved.* and *God made you. You are loved.* The activity may be extended by inviting participants to name family, friends, and acquaintances followed by the response *God made you; you are loved.*

Supplies:

- Bible

Gather in a circle. Read Proverbs 22:1–2, 9. Remind the participants that everyone comes from God and that God loves everyone. Mention to the group that God calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves. One way to do that is through the words we say to one another. Teach the group these two statements: *God made me. I am loved. God made you. You are loved.* Tell the group that, one at a time, each participant will be invited to say his or her name aloud, followed by *God made me. I am loved.* All the other participants will repeat that name and say *God made you. You are loved.* Practice the process with the group by saying your name and the statement and coaching the other participants to respond. Cue the first participant and continue the pattern until everyone has taken a turn. Invite the participants to talk about how it felt to receive the message from the group, as well as how it felt to deliver the message to others. On the count of three, invite all participants to say their names aloud—all at once—followed by the response *God made us. We are loved.*

8 Love Your Neighbor

Leader preparation: Watch a video showing American Sign Language for “love,” “your,” and “neighbor,” such as on the American Sign Language website (<http://www.lifeprint.com/index.htm>). Find each word using the alphabetical list on the site. Practice the three signs so that you can teach them to your participants. Print the words “Love your neighbor as yourself” on newsprint or a whiteboard and display. This activity could be extended by having the group teach the signs to another group.

Supplies:

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard
- Bible

Gather the group around the phrase written on the newsprint or whiteboard: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Read the words aloud from Romans 13:9b–10, and ask the group to echo. Mention that Jesus believes that this rule or command-



ment, along with loving God, is the most important commandment, and it is important to remember. Communicating love through words, as well as actions, is one of the ways of responding to God's call to love all people.

Then explain to the group that persons with hearing impairments may use sign language to communicate. Teach the participants the three signs for "love," "your," and "neighbor." Once the participants learn the signs, encourage them to put the three signs together in the phrase "Love your neighbor." Form a circle and "pass" the sign language message from one participant to the next. At the close and in unison, say the words and show the signs for "Love your neighbor."

9 Sharing Bread

Leader preparation: Arrange to meet in a kitchen with an oven for this activity. Research organizations in your community that work for justice with the hungry, such as a food bank. Print copies of Proverbs 22:9 for each participant with the name of at least one hunger organization. Provide access to water and soap, and model appropriate hygiene procedures for food preparation. Arrange to share bread with another group. Don't forget to provide an alternative for those with wheat allergies.

Supplies:

- Bible
- packages of refrigerated biscuits or bread sticks
- cookie sheets
- spatula
- copies of scripture (Proverbs 22:9) and hunger organization name
- paper plates

Invite the participants to wave their hands if they have eaten bread during the last 24 hours. Bread, along with other food, provides energy for our bodies. Read aloud Proverbs 22:9. Mention that scripture reminds us of God's call to share generously with others. Have participants wash their hands. Distribute two pieces of dough to participants, one for themselves and one to give to another person. Invite them to form the dough into their own unique shapes. Place the dough shapes on cookie sheets and bake. As the bread bakes, talk about local organizations that work for justice with the hungry. Practice saying "We share generously." Remove the bread from the cookie sheets and place on individual paper plates. Take the bread to another group. Ask participants to distribute the bread as they say, "We share generously." Say a prayer of thanks and eat the bread. Send the scripture home with participants saying, "Share generously with others!"

Reflect

Consider the ways the members of the group treated one another during their time together. In what ways did they show love for neighbors? What opportunities were created for sharing with others and demonstrating generosity? How is God's love being passed on?

Wants and Needs

The newest version of PlayStation

Shoes

An HD television

Food

iPod

Pets

Cell phone

Friends

Laptop computer

Place to live

Lunch at McDonalds

An education

Water

Help Us Help Others

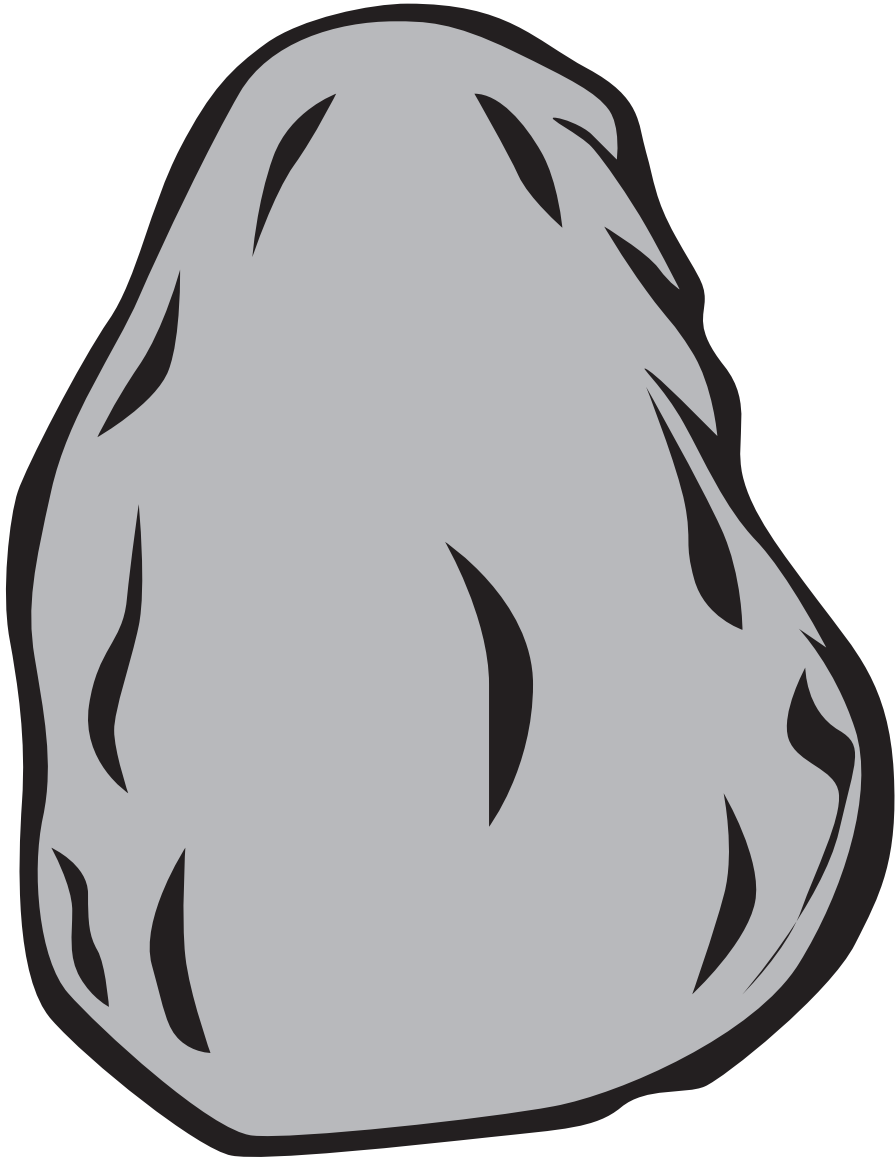
Our group is working for justice by meeting the basic human need for:

You can support our work by:

Contributions are needed by _____ .

Thanks for working with us for justice and fairness!

Stone Image



Working for Justice



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

It is likely that children and youth have experienced times when they saw someone in need. It may be a person on a street corner with a sign asking for food, a person in front of a store with a kettle and a bell collecting coins, a friend who needs to talk, or a classmate who needs help with homework. Depending on the circumstance, children and youth may or may not have responded to the requests. In Matthew 25, persons of a variety of ages are reminded of opportunities to respond to the needs of others. As the text indicates, some will respond to the need, and others may be unaware of the need. Multiage and intergenerational settings provide opportunities to develop sensitivity to the needs of others.

The text from Isaiah begins with the admonishment to “Shout out, do not hold back!” The natural exuberance of children and the passionate opinions of youth are supported through opportunities to voice their concerns about righting wrongs and working for fairness and justice. This passage also lists a number of ways for God’s people of any age to respond to the needs of others. These verses offer concrete thinkers real examples as they move forward into more faithful ways of living in right relationship.

About this Exploration

Imagine a world where all are in right relationship with God, with other human beings, and all of God’s creation. Jesus calls us to help create this future where we live out God’s love in all that we are and all that we do. We do justice because we are

inspired by God’s vision of healing and reconciliation, restoration and wholeness, and abundance for all. As a people of hope, we accept the call to be God’s hands and feet. In this Future and Vision Exploration, we are challenged to stay focused on this hope as we live out God’s call to do justice.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Matthew 25:31–46
Isaiah 58:1–14

Leader Preparation

Read both scriptures for this Exploration and notice the similarities in the examples given regarding persons in need: food, clothing, healing, and hospitality. Think about times you have noticed the need(s) of another person. Answering the question “When did I?” from Matthew 25 may lead to examples of faithful responses to human need, as well as the recollection of times when need went unnoticed. Give thanks for the times you were able to respond. Remember that both of these passages call all of God’s people into a future where God’s love is evident in all that we are and do.

Prayer: God of hope, you invite your people to respond to the needs of others. As I plan and prepare for time with this group, may I be mindful of the needs of these participants. May our time together be an opportunity to grow in sensitivity to those around us. 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Shout Out (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review Isaiah 58:1a—“Shout out, do not hold back!” On newsprint or a whiteboard print the following:

What do we want?
Justice!
When do we want it?
Now!

Supplies:

- Bible
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Read Isaiah 58:1a to the group—and read it with feeling. Mention to the group that these words remind us that God wants us to speak up, to speak out when we see something unjust, unfair, or wrong. Identifying unfair situations is a way of righting wrongs. Read the words of the chant to the group.

What do we want?
Justice!
When do we want it?
Now!

Invite the participants to echo each phrase. Explain that this is a call-and-response chant. The leader asks the questions and the group responds with the answers. Practice the justice chant a few times, acting as leader, and encourage the group to respond. Offer the opportunity for all participants to act as leader. Then ask the participants to brainstorm examples of unfair situations they experience at home, at school, in sports activities, or with friends. Invite the participants to suggest words or phrases to respond to the situations. Close by leading the chant one more time.



2 “Tar Beach II”

Leader preparation: Spend time looking at the picture “Tar Beach II” by Faith Ringgold. Reflect on the statements: “If I could fly, I would . . .” and “My dream for a world lived in fairness is . . .”

Supplies:

- artwork: “Tar Beach II” by Faith Ringgold, <http://tinyurl.com/FPArt16>

Gather around the picture, and invite the participants to describe what they see. Call attention to the figures on the roof, the flying figures, the images around the border, and the bridge. Mention to the group that this picture shows a dream. Invite the participants to look at the buildings, and talk about how they are similar and different from buildings in your area. Explain that, in a dream, Cassie flies above the city escaping unfairness. Mention to the group that dreams are a way of imagining new ways of living. One at a time, invite the participants to finish the following statements: “If I could fly, I would . . .” and “My dream for a world

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.

lived in fairness is . . .” Ask all to close their eyes, take a deep breath, and quietly give thanks for dreams that create new ways of living.



3 Litany

Leader preparation: Practice the litany phrase “Shout out, do not hold back!” with the following actions:

- “shout out”—both hands cupped around the mouth
- “do not hold back”—both arms extended forward with palms up

Brainstorm justice issues important to your group, such as taking care of animals, conserving water, or being kind to others.

Supplies:

- “Litany,” Attachment: Activity 3
- Bible

Teach the participants to use a “strong” voice to say the response phrase “Shout out, do not hold back!” Once the participants are comfortable with the phrase, add the actions. Mention to the group that the prophet Isaiah reminded God’s people of the importance of showing fairness to others. Remember Isaiah 58:1a, and remind the participants that Isaiah encourages God’s people to “shout out.” Read the Litany on the handout, and encourage the group to use strong voices and actions in the response, which is printed in bold, black ink.

Extend the litany by inviting participants to complete the following: “I work for fairness by . . .” Encourage the group to say and show the response. In closing, repeat the Litany with the actions one more time.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Sheep and Goats (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review the story “Sheep and Goats” as written in the activity description. Be sensitive to your participants, especially if you choose to read the passage from the Bible, because it has some very harsh language. You are not interested in participants being afraid of Jesus or hell. You want them to understand that God cares for everyone and expects all who are God’s children to care the same.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) video: “Godspell pt. 13: Goats and Sheep,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjO1LZVgBf4> (start at minute 2:41)

Mention to the group that the Bible reminds people how to show fairness to others. Sometimes people act with kindness and caring. Other times, people don’t notice someone in need or don’t know how to respond. If your group is old enough, you could invite them to read the story out loud from Matthew 25:31–46. Otherwise, or in addition, you could tell the story “Sheep and Goats” as follows. Invite participants to play the parts of sheep and goats.



Begin by saying:

All the people were called together. One at a time, the people were divided into two groups.

*Divide the participants into two groups saying, "You are a sheep"; "you are a goat."
Say to the sheep:*

I'd like you to be on my right side.

Say to the goats:

I'd like you to be on my left side.

Pause and allow time for participants to move. Turn to the sheep and say:

You are invited to a special place. When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat. When I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger, you welcomed me. When I didn't have clothes, you gave me something to wear. When I was sick, you cared for me. When I was in jail, you visited me.

Invite the sheep to make a confused face. Say:

The sheep were confused. They asked, "When did we do these things?"

Invite the sheep to echo the question. Say:

When you did it for any of my people, you did it for me.

Turn to the goats and say:

I'm frustrated with you! Go away! I was hungry, you didn't give me anything to eat. I was thirsty, you didn't give me anything to drink. I was a stranger, you ignored me. I needed clothes, you didn't give me anything to wear. I was sick and in jail and you didn't care for me.

Invite the goats to make a confused face. Then say:

The goats were confused. They asked, "When? What are you talking about?"

Invite the goats to echo the questions. Say:

When you failed to help any of my people, you failed to help me.

Say to each group:

God calls us to respond to those in need.

Repeat and reverse the two groups. Ask the participants to talk about how they felt as a sheep or goat and then the other. Encourage participants to act out a time when they responded to another's need. Offer the opportunity to guess the situation. Talk together about ways to be more sensitive when responding to those in need. Invite the group to echo the phrase God calls us to respond to those in need.

Option: Show the YouTube video of the parable of the sheep and goats from a production of *Godspell*.



5 Dream Justice

Leader preparation: Brainstorm a list of justice issues that might be of concern to your group and community, such as bullying, homelessness, and environmental concerns. Print the words to the song “Dream God’s Dream.” If you have access to a recording of the song, you might play the music as the mural is created. Cut sheets of paper into 8-inch squares. The activity could be adapted by using squares of fabric and fabric markers to create a fabric quilt. Involve a volunteer to sew the squares together.

Supplies:

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard
- white paper 8” × 8” squares (2 per participant)
- markers or crayons
- large piece of mural paper
- tape or glue
- song: “Dream God’s Dream” by Bryan Sirchio, <http://justiceseekers.ning.com/profiles/blogs/878277:BlogPost:15211>; video, <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong19>; lyrics, <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong19a>

Read the words to the song “Dream God’s Dream.” Encourage the children and youth to name an issue from the song, such as clean water or safe air, and list it on the newsprint or whiteboard. Once issues from the song have been identified, brainstorm additional justice issues for the list. Allow everyone to contribute. Remind the participants that God calls us to respond when we see a need. For each issue on the list, invite the group to suggest responses. Write those ideas next to the issues.

Then give participants two sheets of paper and access to markers. Ask them to create two pictures: one picture to show the issue, and the other to show a possible response. Once the pictures are complete, tape or glue them to the large paper to create a “dream of justice.” Invite the children and youth to tell about their drawings. Display in an area where others can view.



6 Community Organization

Leader preparation: Research an organization in the community that responds to the needs of the hungry, homeless, or ill. If possible, arrange for a person involved with the organization to meet with the group. Display the name of the organization and a list of ways that individuals and groups might participate in its work. Be aware that this activity offers the group the opportunity to make choices about how to respond.

Supplies:

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard
- “Serving in the Community,” Attachment: Activity 6

Read the name of the organization aloud to the group. Ask participants to respond with a hand wave if the name of the group is familiar or “yes” if they are involved in the work of the group. Ask the invited guest from the organization to talk about the organization. If there is no guest, provide participants with the information you have collected. If group members are involved in the work of the organization, offer time for them to tell about their experiences. Mention to the group that scripture reminds us of the importance of responding to the needs of others. God calls us to show fairness to others, including the hungry, homeless, and sick. Remind participants that opportunities to work for justice are all



around us. Invite the group to develop a plan for participation in the work of the organization. Have them use the handout to gather support in the community. Give thanks for the opportunity to serve.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Acts of Justice (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Print the word “JUSTICE” in a vertical column on a large piece of newsprint or on whiteboard, allowing space to the right side of each letter.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- paper
- pencils

Ask the group to look at the printed word—JUSTICE. Invite the participants to identify the letters that make up the word as well as the whole word. Count the letters in the word. Ask the group what “justice” means, or remind them that the word “justice” may be described with words like “fairness” and “equality.” Showing fairness to others is part of everyday living. Invite the participants to think of action phrases that begin with each letter of the word “justice,” such as “join a cause” or “use kind words.” Fill in the spaces following the letters with their suggestions. Remind the group that the word “justice” has seven letters and a week has seven days. Distribute paper, pencils, and markers, and encourage the participants to create a reminder list or drawing of seven days of justice actions. Bless the justice actions with these words: *Show justice each and every day.*

8 Person-to-Person Relay

Leader preparation: Gather 10–12 items representing ways to effect justice issues, such as a can of food, blanket, soap, dog toy, aspirin, glasses, socks, a reusable water bottle, hand sanitizer, a reusable shopping bag, and so on. Avoid breakable items because participants will be passing them from person to person. Brainstorm instructions for passing items: between the legs, hand to hand, over the head.

Supplies:

- 10–12 items representing ways to effect justice issues
- two bags or boxes

Show the items and ask participants to name each item as you lift them up. Mention to the group that simple items, along with our bodies, can work for fairness. Place all the items in one container, leaving the other empty. Then ask the group to form a single line, one person next to another. Place the container with the items next to the person at one end of the line and an empty container next to the person at the other end of the line. Explain to the participants that the goal of the game is to carefully pass each item from one person to the next as instructed by the leader as well as to name the item and its possible justice use as it comes to you. No one may repeat a use. When the item reaches the end of the line, it will be placed in the empty container. You give the instructions for passing the first item. Continue the process until all items have moved from one container to the other.

Before all the items are transferred, stop the relay and rearrange people so that



some have to do the same objects again. You may also change the method of passing. When the relay is complete, ask for feelings about the changes. *Did anyone feel cheated or treated unfairly? Why?* Note that working for justice is never easy but the end is for all to be treated freely. Close with applause with the hands that work for justice.

9 Justice in Motion

Leader preparation: Choose music that will allow participants to move expressively. The song suggested in the Supplies list is a good one for movement. You can talk about using our whole bodies as we work for justice.

Supplies:

- song: “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFuZ6LPDYOc&feature=player_embedded#!
- device to play music, such as a CD player, MP3 player, or laptop computer
- upbeat, joyful music
- open space

Mention to the group that we use our minds, hearts, and bodies when we work for fairness and justice. Our bodies are a gift from God. When we reach out to others in love and journey with others in respect, we act as God’s hands and feet in the world.

Invite the group to listen to the music. After some time, encourage the group to move their hands in a way that expresses reaching out to others. Invite the participants to experiment and partner with one another to create additional expressions. After some time, encourage participants to move their feet in a way that shows traveling on a journey. Invite the participants to cooperate and create additional expressions. After some time, invite the group to create a circle and use their bodies to demonstrate ways of living in right relationship. Close by saying a blessing for hands and feet, minds and hearts that make God’s love real in the world.

Reflect

How have dreams of faithful living become more real during the time the group has been together? What signs do you see of sensitivity to the needs of others? How are participants responding to the call to be God’s hands and feet as they work for justice? Give thanks for times when God’s love is made real by God’s people.

Litany

based on Isaiah 58

Leader: Say to God's people; "You've forgotten fairness!"

All: **Shout out, do not hold back!**

Leader: You think only of yourselves and not about others.

All: **Shout out, do not hold back!**

Leader: Remove chains from those locked up for no reason.

All: **Shout out, do not hold back!**

Leader: Free those who are oppressed.

All: **Shout out, do not hold back!**

Leader: Share food with everyone who is hungry.

All: **Shout out, do not hold back!**

Leader: Give shelter to the homeless poor.

All: **Shout out, do not hold back!**

Leader: Give clothes to those in need.

All: **Shout out, do not hold back!**

Serving in the Community

Date:

Dear friend,

Our group is working for justice. Together we decided to support the work of

We invite you to help us. Please tell us how you will help.

I will help by:

Thank you.