

Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Discovery

About this Setting

Most people go to church to experience God, but our encounters with the Holy are in the very fabric of our lives. We live as individuals and in relationship to others as family and friends, at work and in the community. Our faith can be nourished in these relationships by becoming aware of God's action and learning how to give witness and testimony to it.

The activities designed for the individual will help a person gain some comfort in sharing one's faith and living out that faith in daily life. The activities designed for the home and family are suggestions for family groups, however you define that, or for small groups who wish to gather to learn more about faith practices. In these suggested activities the participants will practice sharing their experiences of God and the way their faith informs their life with one another. This may help provide greater comfort for venturing out to share those thoughts with others.

The activities for the workplace and community are ways you can witness to your own faith in the larger sphere of daily life. They may help you have more confidence sharing your faith beyond the comfort of home or church.

As with all faith practices, giving testimony and witness require discipline. Some of the activities are low-risk, while others will require more courage. You have to be willing to accept resistance or flat out rejection. Sharing is a two-way street; if you are also willing to listen to others the rewards are great.

About this Exploration

We are a people of story, built on the witness of our Bible and rooted in the testimony of our communities. Discovering the power of giving witness and testimony means recognizing that we each have a valid story, indeed, many stories, and that we can identify God's work within those stories. It takes courage to share one's own story; it takes openness to fully listen to the stories of others. Claiming this practice involves shaping a common language. Sharing our testimonies celebrates enriching traditions of communities and the particularity of personal experiences of grace.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Genesis 24:34–67
Acts 16:16–34

Household and Family Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity



1 Faces of Witness

Supplies:

- artwork: "Blind Feeling" by Diana Ong <http://tinyurl.com/fp-apdo>
- way to display the poster: easel, wall, or computer screen

Giving witness and testimony is about relationships. You can use artwork as a way to understand the faith practice. Look at this picture. Let your mind go and just experience it. What do you see? What does it bring to mind? What smells, sounds, tastes, or sensations do you recall when looking at it? What colors have meaning for you?

Look again. This time consider how the art might speak to you about being a witness. Think of faces in your life. What faces come to mind when you think of God in your life? What faces would you rather not see? What do the eyes say to you? What good news might you share? For younger children: What do you think the face of God might look like? Spend time, and let your mind go where God takes it.

When you are ready, share your experiences with one another. Even small children can remark on what they see. Encourage one another. There are no wrong answers or comments.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for art and for the ways that color and image stir the imagination, the memory, and the heart. Please continue to work in me as I recall this experience in the days ahead. Amen.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

2 Where Did I See God Today?

Supplies:

- paper and pens or pencils
- (optional) colored pencils, markers, or crayons

This activity is better when done on a regular basis. In doing so, it becomes easier to recognize and share experiences of God in daily life. Gather together around the table or in any comfortable setting.

This activity invites each person to think about how God is present in everyday life. Small children can relate a story of a happy time at school, seeing a bird fly, or sharing a toy, for example. Older children might move toward their human interactions. Hopefully, adults will be open to seeing God in the mundane.

You might find it helpful to draw a picture or write about the experience before sharing. Question: Where did you notice God today? God comes to us in many ways. Remember to consider all the senses, including sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell or perhaps a feeling of joy or comfort.

Allow each person to share the God moments, and affirm each one by saying something like “God is good.” After a while this exercise will become natural, and sharing will be easier. Recognizing God in our world is the first step. The act of sharing it is our witness.

It may be helpful to share where you felt God was absent or not in evidence. Teens, in particular, will develop a better understanding of God’s presence when they contrast it to a feeling of absence.

Prayer: (You may use this prayer or one of your own.) *God of all, we are so grateful for your presence in our lives. Thank you for helping us to be open to your many ways of reaching out to us each day. Amen.*

Sending & Serving Activity

③ Take a Walk

Supplies:

- appropriate dress for the setting you choose

Gather together to take a 5–15 minute walk. Choose any location. It may be indoors or outdoors. Before you begin, tell everyone to pay attention to how God is very much active in our world. Pray the following prayer, or one of your own, before starting out.

Prayer: *Loving God, please help us to know you better. We know you are with us, but sometimes we don’t take time to pay attention. We ask for your leading as we do so now. Amen.*

Take a walk and notice all the signs of God in our surroundings. Remember to listen, to touch, to experience aromas, to look in all directions, including up and down, and to experience the moment. After two minutes, you may want to share with one another some of your observations and discoveries. Make sure all get a chance to share if they wish. Continue the walk, and repeat until you are back to your gathering spot.

Each person’s experience of God is special and unique. Children may be the ones who find God in more places. Let your adult minds think like a child’s mind. God is everywhere. Notice.

Close with the following or a prayer of your own.

Prayer: (Hands held up to the sky) *God in the heavens,*
(Hands held down to the ground) *God on earth,*
(Hands hugging self) *God here with me,*
(Hands reaching to another) *God here with you,*
thank you for showing yourself to us in so many ways,
and thank you, God, for the chance to share it with one another. Amen.

Individual and Personal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

④ Review of the Day

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) journal

In order to witness to and testify to God's amazing grace, one must become aware of the ways God reveals divine love. Waking up to that truth is part of the process. In the review of your day, you will spend 10–15 minutes looking back over what happened in the past 24 hours. Bedtime, morning, or any time you can quiet yourself and spend some undisturbed time in prayer is good.

Be still. Read Acts 16:16–34. In this passage Paul and Silas made testimony through song and prayer. The prisoners and jailer witnessed and came to believe.

Ask God to guide you as you reflect on your day. Think about when you felt God's presence and when you didn't. Consider how God has been active in your life over the course of the day. If you have a journal, write down thoughts as they occur to you or at the end of your reflection. Imagine sharing one of these experiences with one other person. How would you say it? What other ways could you use to express what it means to have God in your life?

This process of recognizing God's grace takes some work. You might try it over the course of a week or month and see what you discover.

Thank God for the time spent.

Discerning & Deciding Activity



⑤ Taking Inventory: Ways To Make Witness

Supplies:

- "The Nine Intelligences," Attachment: Activity 5
- (optional) journal
- (optional) paper and writing instruments
- Bible

There are many ways to witness; not all testimony is verbal. In 1983 Howard Gardner proposed that there are multiple intelligences. In his theory, intelligence is not measured only by verbal or mathematical abilities, but can also be measured by musical, bodily, interpersonal, or other abilities. Consider Gardner's nine multiple intelligences (see the attachment) and then make a list of how you might be able to offer testimony using these different intelligences.

Which of these might be most comfortable for you to share your faith? Certainly one difficulty in giving a testimony is discerning how to go about it. As you look at the list of intelligences, in how many categories do you find that you fit?

Read Acts 16:16–34. How did the people in the story witness? In your list, did you recognize the ways people you know witness to their faith?

Sending & Serving Activity

Consider trying one of the ideas you listed. Remember to ask God for guidance and the courage to share and listen to others.

6 Free to Be Me

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) mirror
- (optional) journal
- (optional) paper, pens, art materials

Describe yourself. If you have one, use a mirror or other reflective surface. Look at the person in the reflection. Who is this person? Take a little time and use words, pictures, or whatever you find helpful to express who you are. Who am I in relation to others? To the world? To myself? To God?

If you are like most people, your description did not include being a Christian. Why do you think this is so? Is it avoidance, a reluctance to share this even with yourself, or a base assumption that doesn't get named? If you did include being a Christian, what did you mean by that? Why was it important for you to include that?

How often do you identify yourself as a Christian outside the church setting? Most of us describe ourselves differently depending on our surroundings. For example, at the workplace we might name our profession, job title, marital status, education. At a church meeting we might share where we are from or our family relationships. Maybe at a social gathering for the community you might share where you live, where you work, who is in your household, if you are pet owner, or other pieces of information. Over the phone or via the Internet we might also offer a physical description. When it comes to religious beliefs, many of us tend to keep it secret until we can trust that we will not be judged. We wait until we can gauge the reaction of the recipient. Is this true for you? Why do you think this is (or is not) the case?

Read Matthew 3:13–17 and John 1:1–13. Just as God called Jesus “the Beloved” at Jesus' baptism, so are we called beloved of God through our baptism. Similarly, we read in John that we are called children of God through faith in Jesus. Reflect

on what it means to be a beloved child of God. Then, describe yourself again. Making this witness to yourself is an important step in being able to share with others.

Repeat this activity in different settings such as at school, the grocery store, or a restaurant. How do you describe yourself in this context? Is being a Christian or a child of God part of your self-description? How does claiming this change your view of your relationship with others in these different settings? How does claiming this change affect your attitude and behavior? Reflect on how you make witness to God's love when you are more aware of and are able to claim it in your own life.

Prayer: Father, Mother God, I am your beloved child. Help me to acknowledge it openly so that I may more freely be the me you created me to be. Amen.

Work Place and Communal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity



7 Make a Mandala

Supplies:

- 10" paper circle
- piece of paper with circle drawn on it
- art and craft supplies
- photographs or other items to be used
- "Making a Mandala," Attachment: Activity 7
- (optional) <http://tinyurl.com/3aw3srl>

Creating a mandala is a way to express one's faith outwardly. A mandala is a circular art form. In Hindu and Buddhist tradition the spiritual art often took this form. A very simple mandala is a circle divided into halves, but you can make it more complex. See the attachment for ideas. You might also check out the website in the supply list for examples.

Don't feel obligated to stick with the kind of mandalas you find in your web search. These are just intended to give you a background on mandalas and some ideas and inspiration to get started. The most basic framework you should work with is something within a circle and/or other such basic geometric pattern (or combination of patterns). This framework represents you. Most mandalas are built on a pattern that expands in all directions from the center with no clear top and bottom. Whatever you choose to put within this framework might represent various aspects of your life past, present, and future. It can be as complex or as simple as you like.

Be creative. You might want to try putting down where you are now and where you would like to be. You could divide your mandala into sections representing you, your family, your church, your community, and the world. Your sections might overlap. Remember to put God in the picture. God might be center, all encompassing or some other expression of how the Holy exists in your world. Whatever is at the center of the mandala is thought to be the most important in one's spiritual life, while things further from the center are increasingly less important.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

Display your mandala at the office or other visible place and when someone asks about it you will have the opportunity to share your faith.

8 Just Thinking of You

Supplies:

- paper and pen and envelope
- note card or greeting card
- addresses and postage

One way we witness to the great love of God in our lives is to share that love with others. A simple note card, greeting card, or little note sent to someone can lift a person from a bad day, help someone through a challenging time, or just give a verbal hug.

Pay attention to the people around you. Select someone you think might benefit from a greeting. Almost anyone will appreciate it. Choose one or more and write a note of encouragement. When you sign the note, say your brother/sister in Christ, or blessings, or praying for you. Then say a little prayer for the person.

Sending & Serving Activity

This is a good activity for someone who is unable to get out or who is having difficulty having enough time to commit to large activities, but wants to be involved. This can be a daily activity.

9 How Do Others Witness?

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) small notebook and pen
- (optional) personal journal

Reflect

In giving testimony and witness, the discovery is in the very nature of the relationship of one or many to God. Giving testimony can be challenging and risky. One must be able to self-reflect and then share that with others. It can make one vulnerable. You can find you are not well received, but more often you will find that others are just waiting to find someone they can talk to about how the Holy has affected their lives. In these activities we hope you can discover what it means to be aware of your own relationship with God and see how others experience it.

As you try to discover more about this faith practice, it would be helpful to observe how others give testimony and witness to their faith. Begin with prayer asking God to make you open to God's presence in the world. As you go through your day pay close attention to people as they share. You may be surprised at how many times you hear, "I have been blessed." Make a note of any Christian symbols you see. Do you hear references to the scriptures? What actions, comments, or ways of living are evident that make you think God is at work?

At the end of your day reflect on these things. Read Genesis 24:34–35. What was the servant's witness? Write in your journal if you have one. Remember to talk to God about your discoveries.

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Attachment: Activity 5

The Nine Intelligences

Howard Gardner first identified and introduced seven different kinds of intelligence in his book *Frames of Mind*.

- *Linguistic intelligence*: a sensitivity to the meaning and order of words. It is the capacity to use language to express what's on your mind and to understand other people. Good with words.
- *Logical-mathematical intelligence*: ability in mathematics and other complex logical systems. It is the capacity to understand the underlying principles of some kind of causal system, the way a scientist or a logician does; or to manipulate numbers, quantities, and operations, the way a mathematician does.
- *Musical intelligence*: the ability to understand and create music. Musicians, composers, and dancers show a heightened musical intelligence. It is the capacity to think in music: to be able to hear patterns, recognize them, and perhaps manipulate them. Good with music, tone, and rhythm.
- *Spatial or Visual intelligence*: the ability to "think in pictures," to perceive the visual world accurately, and recreate (or alter) it in the mind or on paper. Spatial intelligence is highly developed in artists, architects, designers, and sculptors. Good with art and design.
- *Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence*: the ability to use one's body in a skilled way, for self-expression or toward a goal. It is the capacity to use your whole body or parts of your body (your hands, your fingers, your arms) to solve a problem, make something, or put on some kind of production. Mimes, dancers, basketball players, and actors are among those who display bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Good at action, movement and sports.
- *Interpersonal intelligence*: an ability to perceive and understand other individuals—their moods, desires, and motivations. It's an ability we all need. Political and religious leaders, skilled parents and teachers, and therapists use this intelligence. Good at communicating with others.
- *Intrapersonal intelligence*: an understanding of one's own emotions. It is having an understanding of yourself: knowing who you are, what you can do, what you want to do, how you react to things, which things to avoid, and which things to gravitate toward. We are drawn to people who have a good understanding of themselves. They tend to know what they can and can't do, and to know where to go if they need help. Some novelists and counselors use their own experience to guide others. Good at self-reflection.

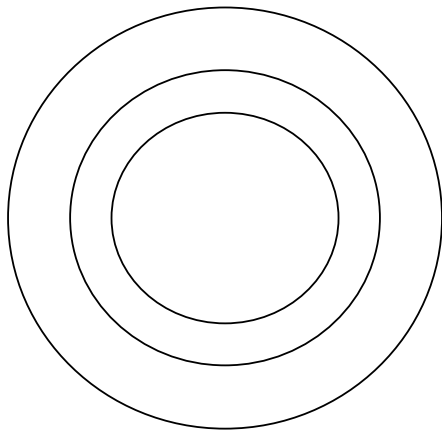
Gardner later added these.

- *Naturalistic intelligence*: Good at appreciating the world and nature. It is the ability to discriminate among living things (plants, animals) and sensitivity to other features of the natural world (clouds, rock configurations). This ability was clearly of value in our evolutionary past as hunters, gatherers, and farmers.
- *Existential intelligence*: the ability and propensity to pose (and ponder) questions about life, death, and ultimate realities.

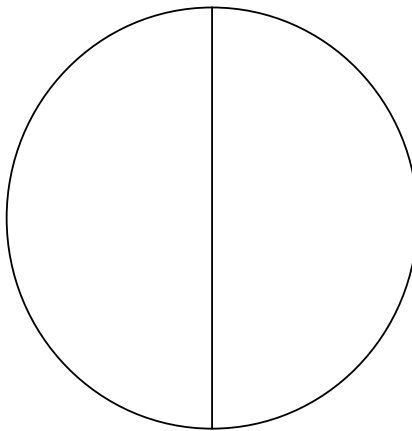
Attachment: Activity 7

Making a Mandala

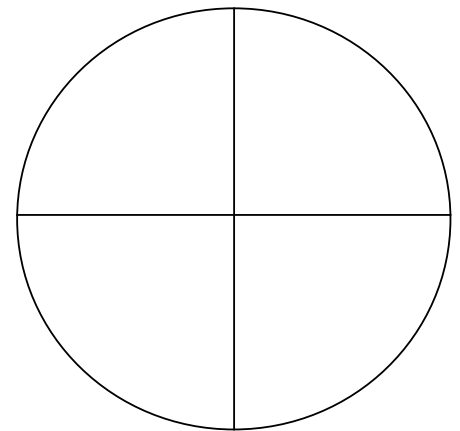
1. Gather your supplies. Decide what size you want to make, and get appropriate paper or a piece of poster board. The circle in a pizza box is a nice size. A 10" circle on standard paper is adequate. If you want to use photographs or picture from magazines, you may want a little larger work space.
2. Begin with the circle.
3. You may add concentric circles or divide into sections



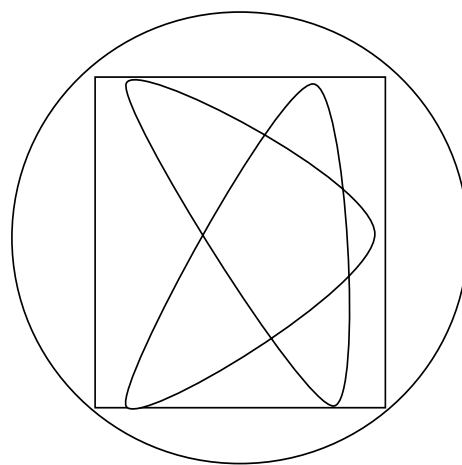
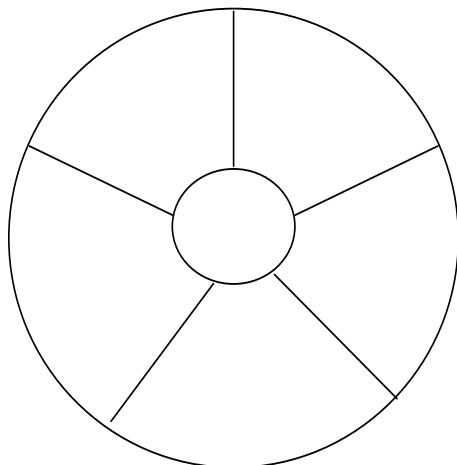
Combination



or



whatever works for you



4. Fill in each space with words, designs, pictures, symbols, or whatever has meaning for you. This artwork is a representation of your own experience, feelings, and self expression.



Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Scripture

About this Setting

As we share our own experiences of God, we join all those who have gone before, like those whose witness occurs in our Holy Bible. The activities suggested may encourage reflection on scripture and how our own testimony adds to that witness.

The activities designed for the individual may help a person gain some comfort in sharing one's faith and living out that faith in daily life. The activities designed for the home and family are suggestions for family groups, however you define that, or for small groups who wish to gather to learn more about faith practices. In these suggested activities the participants will practice sharing their experiences of God and the way their faith informs their life with one another. This may help provide greater comfort in venturing out to share those thoughts with others. The activities for the workplace and community are ways you can witness to your own faith in the larger sphere of daily life and may help you have more confidence sharing your faith beyond the comfort of home or church.

As with all faith practices, giving testimony and witness requires discipline. Some of the activities are low-risk, while others will require more courage. You have to be willing to accept resistance or flat-out rejection. Sharing is a two-way street. If you are also willing to listen to others, the rewards are great.

About this Exploration

Our lives are part of the tapestry of God's larger story in the world. Scripture contains testimonies of people who aren't perfect, which invites us to tell our stories in response. In John's account of Jesus and the blind man, the man's witness sparked a process that touched on people's relationships, different understandings of God, the role of religious authority, and viewpoints within the community. The healed man's testimony inspired dialogue and, ultimately, transformation. Similarly, our stories may shape other people's response to scripture and draw out their testimonies. The experience of hearing scripture varies according to our experiences, situations, traditions, and settings.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

John 9:1–41

Psalms 116

Household and Family Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

1 Bringing the Bible to Life

Supplies:

- Bibles
- space to act out the scene

Gather the people in your home for a time of sharing. Invite everyone to listen carefully. Have one person read John 9:1–41. Pose these questions: *What stood out to you? What seemed odd or unusual? What seemed normal? With which character do you most closely identify? Why?*

Assign roles and have the group act out the scene. Then pose these questions: *What stood out for you this time? Did someone act out something you didn't expect? When have you felt like one of the characters in this story? How do you think you would have shared this story if you had been healed in this way?* Repeat the dramatization, this time with everyone taking a different role. What did you learn or experience from this perspective?

Share your thoughts and reactions. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to contribute something. Read the passage once again.

Discerning & Deciding Activity



2 Telling Your Story

Supplies:

- paper, loose leaf or plain sheets
- pens, pencils, crayons or markers
- "Poetry Forms," Attachment: Activity 2

Scripture is a collection of many stories of witness and testimony. We each have a story to tell. In this activity we will tell our story by writing or drawing. Spend time thinking about an occasion when you knew God was there with you. Write a story, a poem, or words to a song. You might feel more comfortable drawing a picture. An easy form of poetry for young children is to create an acrostic using the letters of one's first name. See the attachment "Poetry Forms" for an example of an acrostic and for descriptions of several other poetry forms.

Practice testimony by sharing your story with one another. Following each time of sharing, everyone can thank God for being in his or her life. Have the speaker invite another person in the group to tell his or her story. In this way you can practice listening and being witness to another person's testimony.

You may use this prayer or a prayer of your own: *O God, you are active in our lives, and we are grateful for the chance to tell our stories like those who witness to your love in the Bible. Help us to share your love more often. Amen.*

Sending & Serving Activities

③ Write a Psalm

Supplies (optional):

- Bible
- paper and writing instruments
- art supplies
- musical instruments

Psalms are believed to be the songbook of the Old Testament. Read Psalm 116 together. In this case the psalmist is singing out thanksgiving for prayers answered. Consider a time when your prayers were answered. Choose a way to give thanks to God, and work on it for the next 30 minutes or longer if desired. It could be written in the form of a poem, a story, or perhaps lyrics to a song. Maybe your expression will be an artistic creation in visual arts, music, or dance. The activity is an outward witness to the grace of God in your life. Be creative. Share with one another as a form of worship.

Individual and Personal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

④ God Is Still Speaking

Supplies: None

The message of the Bible is that God is love. Only when we live in love where all are welcome and justice prevails is the world anywhere close to what God desires for creation.

The United Church of Christ Still Speaking Ministry calls for a vision of church where God is all-loving and inclusive, where a church welcomes and accepts all just as they are. The church is a place where our mind is nourished as much as our soul, where Jesus the healer meets Jesus the revolutionary, where together we grow a just and peaceful world, and where joining in community is by testimonials, not tests, of faith.

Think about the people you consider to be good examples of being faithful Christians. How does their witness help you in your faith journey? In what way does your behavior and testimony show that God is in your life? How is being inclu-

sive, loving, and accepting a witness to God? How does this add to the witness we find in our Bible?

Ask God to help you to take God's vision for the world into your heart so that you can share it with others.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

5 Heroes of the Bible

Supplies:

- Bible
- website: Heroes Articles (<http://tinyurl.com/3lc9dt7>)
- Bible concordance or Bible dictionary or other Bible reference book

The Bible is a book of witness to God's presence and action in the lives of people and communities. Moses, Deborah, David, Paul, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Joseph and Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the many who testified to being cured or made whole by Jesus are a few of these witnesses.

Look up at least one of the biblical characters named above, or others that you know, in a Bible concordance or dictionary or other reference book. Read the person's story in the Bible. Reflect on that character's story and how the person bore witness to his or her faith. What stands out to you? Why? Is it what the person said or did or who he or she was? What conflict did the person face? How did the person persevere? What witness did the person make?

Consider how you have given testimony and witness in your life. Remember that by accepting Christ into your life you are a living testament to him. Compare to these scriptural heroes. How is your experience similar? How is it different?

You may find you want to read more about one of these biblical heroes. There are several books available for children and adults, or you can follow this link for a series of articles on heroes of the Bible: [Heroes Articles](#).

Sending & Serving Activity



6 Write a Statement of Faith

Supplies:

- "Statement of Faith Samples," Attachment: Activity 6
- writing materials
- (optional) camera

It is a good exercise to write your own statement of faith. It is useful to have to put into words the way you experience God in your life. Our beliefs change over time. Creating a document can be intimidating, but if you remember that it reflects where you are at a specific time and not written in stone, it can be a tool to focus your thinking so that you can share it with another if called upon to do so.

Your statement of faith is personal. It may require a lot of soul-searching. It doesn't have to include everything you believe in detail. It is just the basic statement of your faith. You don't have to share it with anyone. It is for you, so that you might find words to share when you want to make testimony or witness. It may take the form of a credo, which is a set of beliefs, or it may be a statement that reveals your relationship with God. It might be easier to do in pictures, as a poem, in music, or some other creative outlet. The attachment includes samples of creeds and faith statements.

Work Place and Communal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity



7 Movie (or Play) and Conversation

Supplies: None

Organize a night out to go to the movies or to see a play followed by dinner or snacks somewhere to discuss what you saw. Invite everyone into a conversation about the movie/play, encouraging all to listen before speaking and making it clear the goal is not to argue or persuade others to think alike, but to be able to hear and share beliefs. Talk about the moral issues raised in the movie or play. Talk about the positive and negative experiences you notice.

As a person of Christian faith, give examples from the movie or play that support your understanding of a Christian life. *What was offensive or counter to the teachings you learn in your faith tradition?* Remember to allow each person to comment. You might want to discuss how your views are the same or different.

Having such conversations allows you and those with you to find voice for what you each believe. This activity involves some risk, and you should be aware that conversations about religion can be hard. It is helpful to return to the context of the movie or play if the conversation becomes confrontational and to remind one another the goal is to share thoughts, beliefs, and/or testimonies, not convince, change minds, or argue.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

8 Who Are These People?

Supplies:

- note cards or small slips of paper
- tape

If you want to play a game at a work or community party or gathering, this one will be fun. Prior to the gathering write down the name of several persons on small pieces of paper. Everyone in the room should be able to recognize the names, for example, Jesus, Moses, famous political figures, national heroes, or famous actors. Be sure to include people of faith. Then, tape one of the names on the back of each person present. Everyone must now go around and ask people

yes or no questions about who is on their back. They can only ask each person one question. See who can guess it in the least number of questions asked. As the identities are discovered, there is an opportunity to talk about why these persons are known.

Alternatively, you can ask each person present to write the name of a well-known person who has influenced his or her life. Then, the person tapes this name onto the person on his or her left. The game proceeds as described above, and at the end the writer is given a chance to say why that particular person was selected.

Sending & Serving Activity

9 Blessing or Grace

Supplies: None

An important part of testimony and witness is the willingness to hear another person's story. In this activity you will give someone else an opportunity to share his or her own story and add to the total witness of God's grace and blessing in the world.

To prepare, consider a recent blessing. Thank God for it. Seek out someone with whom to have a conversation. When it feels comfortable, share a comment about how you have been blessed or received a grace. Ask the other if he or she has a story about a blessing to share with you. Listen carefully and thank the person for it. Reflect on God's loving connections and how you have been affected by hearing the testimony of another child of God.

Reflect

We are people of story. There is power in the sharing of our stories. Scripture provides a multitude of personal narratives about how God was active in people's lives. Our testimony and witness adds to the full truth of a loving God, and we are blessed to give and receive our stories with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Attachment: Activity 2

Poetry Forms

Acrostic

Write a word, such as your name, in a vertical column. For each letter of the word, write a phrase that fits the theme of the poem. For instance,

Title: God was with me, by Karla

Keeping watch over me
As I played with my friends on the playground
Remembered to be nice to someone I didn't really like
Let someone else go first on the swings
Always with me

Cinquain

Poetry with five lines. Line 1 has one word (the title). Line 2 has two words that describe the title. Line 3 has three words that tell the action. Line 4 has four words that express the feeling, and line 5 has one word that recalls the title. There are at least three different styles:

First style:

Line 1: One word
Line 2: Two words
Line 3: Three words
Line 4: Four words
Line 5: One word

Second style:

Line 1: A noun
Line 2: Two adjectives
Line 3: Three "-ing" words
Line 4: A phrase
Line 5: Another word for the noun

Third style:

Line 1: Two syllables
Line 2: Four syllables
Line 3: Six syllables
Line 4: Eight syllables
Line 5: Two syllables

Tanka

A Japanese poem of five lines, the first and third lines are composed of five syllables and the other lines have seven syllables.

Attachment: Activity 6

Statement of Faith Samples

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

United Church of Christ Statement of Faith (in the form of a doxology)

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust your forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

A Personal Statement of Faith

I believe in God, who is almighty and in heaven.

I believe in Jesus Christ, who is my personal savior.

I believe the church exists to provide community for those who love God.

I believe we are sinners but that God's forgives.

I believe that we will go to heaven when we die.

A Personal Statement of Faith

God is in my life. I am not alone.

God sent Jesus to earth to bring us into love.

If I go to God in prayer, the answers can be trusted.

When I am lost, I turn to God and I will be found.

The church is a gathering of those who believe in God and that God wants us to be a community that loves one another because we are loved.

I come from God and will return to God.



Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Setting

As followers of Jesus Christ the teacher, we are called to share the good news. Living Daily practices will help us become better equipped to testify to God's active presence in our lives in a variety of ways.

The activities designed for the individual will help a person gain some comfort in sharing one's faith and living out that faith in daily life. The activities designed for the home and family are suggestions for family groups, however you define that, or for small groups who wish to gather to learn more about faith practices. In these suggested activities the participants may practice sharing their experiences of God and the way their faith informs their life with one another. This may help to provide greater comfort in venturing out to share those thoughts with others. The activities for the workplace and community are ways you can witness to your own faith in the larger sphere of daily life and may help you have more confidence sharing your faith beyond the comfort of home or church.

As with all faith practices, giving testimony and witness requires discipline. Some of the activities are low-risk, while others will require more courage. You have to be willing to accept resistance or flat out rejection. Sharing is a two-way street; if you are also willing to listen to others the rewards are great.

About this Exploration

When giving testimony and witness, a disciple becomes both learner and leader. In response to God's prompting, disciples serve the community through speaking and acting faithfully.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Mark 8:27–38
Psalm 25:1–10

Household and Family Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

① Follow the Leader

Supplies:

- room enough for everyone to see a leader
- Bibles

Being a disciple means following a leader who knows the way and from whom you will learn. In this activity you will play a game of “Follow the Leader” to give you an idea of what that might be.

Choose one person to be “the leader.” That person does some action and everyone else follows it exactly. You may walk around the room, do jumping jacks, or maybe stand on one foot. You need not stand. Have fun with it. When everyone has had a turn to be leader, ask everyone to talk about what it felt like to be the follower or the leader. *When were you happy to follow? When were you hesitant? What made the difference?*

What does it mean to follow Jesus? What in his life helps us to know how to be God’s children? What about when it comes to making testimony? In what ways did Jesus witness to God’s action in his life? As his followers, how can we do that?

Read Mark 8:27–38. Jesus tells his followers how hard it will be to follow him, but he also tells them that the rewards are great. Sometimes following Jesus is difficult, but trust in him helps us continue to do so. Compare your experience in the “Follow the Leader” exercise to the faith journey.

Pray, asking God to be with you on the journey even if it seems difficult at times.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

② You Are the Salt of the Earth

Supplies:

- song: “You Are Salt for the Earth, O People” (tune: Bring Forth, irr. with refrain) <http://tinyurl.com/fp-salt>

Listen to or read the lyrics of the song “You Are Salt for the Earth, O People.” See the link above. The words are a call to actively show to the world that you are indeed a follower of Christ and that what you do and say makes a difference in the world. What stands out for you?

Why is salt important? How can you be salt to the earth? A light on a hill isn’t hidden. What does that mean for how we are to be witnesses in our lives?

What does it mean to be a seed? What is a pilgrim? What does it mean to be a blessed and pilgrim people? Our witness contributes to God's reign of peace, justice, and mercy.

Listen to the song again, or read it aloud. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activity

③ Feed the Poor

Supplies:

- canned goods
- nonperishable items
- website for Feeding America: Food Bank Locator

Following Jesus requires care for those around you in need. There are poor people everywhere. Recognizing poverty is the first step to ending it. Jesus told his disciples to feed the poor. Many churches hold collections for food pantries during Thanksgiving and Christmas, but the need is very great all year round. The website in the supply list has a food bank locator for the United States. To do an online search for Food Banks in your area, use your favorite search engine and type in "food banks" (your city, your state), or use the link above. If there are no food banks or pantries in your area, you might donate to Feed the Children, Bread for the World <http://www.bread.org>, Heifer International, or another international organization whose mission is the ending of hunger in the world. Your local church may know of persons in need of food.

Caring for the poor and those in need is a way to give thanks for your own gifts received and it is a testimony to your understanding of how to follow the Way of Jesus Christ.

Individual and Personal Life Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

④ Modeling the Christian life

Supplies: None

Not all testimony is verbal. Perhaps the greatest effect you have on another person's life will never be known to you. God works through us in our living in God's grace. This activity helps you to put God at the center of your life so that in all your actions you live out the gospel.

Throughout your day begin all activities with a prayer. For instance, say a brief prayer before you step in the shower, before you prepare a meal, before you make a phone call. Even in the most routine activities when you try to live so that you give glory to God, your actions will more closely reflect your faith. A simple prayer will suffice. Make a decision to try this for one day and then to reflect on the process at the end of the day. Was it difficult? How did remembering that God

is with you affect your choices, your encounters with other people, how you did an activity, or your feeling about the activity?

As in all disciplines, it takes time. Don't be discouraged if you found this difficult to do. Any connection with the Holy is prayer and makes you aware of God's presence in your life. The more you do it, the more your life becomes a living expression of faith. It shows. In this you make testimony to what God can do.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

5 Random Acts of Kindness

Supplies:

- small change

One of the best ways to show your faith is simply to be kind to others. Help someone carry something. Pay for someone's coffee in line at the cafe. Put money in a parking meter. Smile. Hold the door for someone. Greet someone who is usually ignored. There are hundreds of random acts of kindness you can do.

As you get ready to leave your home for your daily activities, or perhaps the evening before, think about people you might encounter. Ask God to reveal ways in which you can share the grace you receive. Make a conscious decision to perform at least five random acts of kindness, and head out to start your day. Carry some change or a few small bills with you so that you are prepared.

If possible, at the end of the day share with one other person what you chose to do, what reactions you received, and how you felt. This, too, will help you practice your witness to how God works in your life. Thank God for the experience.

Sending & Serving Activity

6 Forgiveness

Supplies:

- (optional) paper and pen/pencil

A powerful act of witness to our faith is forgiving someone. When we forgive, we are following Jesus. Forgiveness is a key component in the prayer that Jesus taught, "Forgive us as we forgive those . . ." Colossians 3:13 (NRSV) says, "Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

Think of someone who has wronged you. Pray about it, asking God's help to let go of the anger or hurt. Tell that person that you forgive him or her. This may be very difficult, but with God's help you will be able to carry it out. Remember this is about you. You may want to write out what you would say. The person may or may not accept that forgiveness, but it is the act of forgiving that is important. As disciples of Christ we are called to forgive, and in doing so we offer our testimony to our faith.

Work Place and Communal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

7 Stand Up for Someone (Higher Risk)

Supplies: None

Perhaps one of the riskiest ways to witness to the faith is to put yourself on the line for someone else. In the workplace we are often witness to sexist, racist, or just plain mean comments, jokes, or actions. Speaking out, either for a wronged person or against an immoral or inappropriate act makes you vulnerable. However, to give expression to your faith in this way may be a learning moment for someone else. It could help improve a climate for others.

Before going to work, to class, on an errand, or to another situation, take the time to pray for God's guidance. Pay attention to the jokes, comments, and acts you see and hear around you. If they are offensive, make a point of saying so. Notice, especially, if someone is made uncomfortable. Sometimes people repeat jokes without thinking about who might be hurt by it. Many people are unaware of their hurtfulness until they are called on it. If you don't find any instances, thank God for that.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

8 Discipleship in Daily Living

Supplies:

- Bible
- notebook
- (optional) journal

When we take seriously the call to follow Jesus, we become disciples and bear witness to God. How do we do this in day-to-day living? In this activity we will take time to consider this calling to discipleship as we go about our work and existence in community.

Before going to work or to the community activity, read Psalm 25:1–10 and say a prayer for openness and attentiveness. Throughout the day as you go about your daily activities, make note of the ways you interact with others. Be aware of the moral decisions you make each day. In each instance ponder how God intersects this sphere. Write these down and place a check mark next to the encounters where you: 1. remembered that the person was a child of God; 2. treated that person as a child of God; and 3. made what you considered to be a good moral decision. Then consider what Jesus has to say about such things.

At the end of the day, reflect on your new insights and on how you can be a follower of Jesus while living your life in the secular world. Being a disciple is hard work. Jesus requires much of his followers. Figure out the percentage of time you act as a Christian versus the amount of time you don't. Repeat this exercise from time to time.

Sending & Serving Activity

9 Organize a Blood Drive

Supplies:

- Red Cross
- IFRC
- WHO

Belief in Jesus requires caring for others. We can put our faith into action and show our discipleship to others. One such witness is doing charitable work on a larger scale at the workplace or in a community group. Blood is always needed by the Red Cross and similar agencies worldwide. Giving blood can save lives. The links in the supply list are sites that give information about how one can donate blood anywhere in the world.

Most people look for ways to serve others. You can lead the way and give a gift of life to both donors and those who are recipients.

Reflect

We go to church and we read our Bibles and we say we want to follow Jesus. We are in earnest, but then we go about our day, and being a Christian rarely crosses our minds. Often the act of paying attention is the most powerful tool we have to make us aware of God in our lives and to see how we can live accordingly. Spending time in reflection about how we are walking the walk is an impetus to true discipleship. As in all disciplines, giving testimony and witness takes time and commitment. Following Jesus isn't easy, but if we try, our lives are made so much better.



Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Setting

The activities in this setting will help highlight how the traditions of our faith inform our daily living. We will consider several of our Christian traditions and how we can make testimony and witness through them.

The activities designed for the individual will help a person gain some comfort in sharing one's faith and living out that faith in daily life. The activities designed for the home and family are suggestions for family groups, however you define that, or for small groups who wish to gather to learn more about faith practices. In these suggested activities the participants may practice sharing their experiences of God and the way their faith informs their life with one another. This may help to provide greater comfort in venturing out to share those thoughts with others. The activities for the workplace and community are ways you can witness to your own faith in the larger sphere of daily life and may help you have more confidence sharing your faith beyond the comfort of home or church.

As with all faith practices, giving testimony and witness requires discipline. Some of the activities are low-risk, while others will require more courage. You have to be willing to accept resistance or flat out rejection. Sharing is a two-way street; if you are also willing to listen to others the rewards are great.

About this Exploration

In addition to the witness of scripture, our faith story continues to be told through the holy and imperfect journey of the Christian church. From the day of Pentecost to the current day people have testified to God's work in our lives and in the world. In this exploration, we will look at how the varied expressions of the Christian tradition over time and around the globe shape our testimony and witness today.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 52:7–10
2 Peter 1:16–21

Household and Family Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

1 I Experienced It Myself

Supplies:

- roll of aluminum foil
- [Bibles](#); this link takes you to a site with multiple versions of the Bible

One very important tradition of the church is sharing through our own stories. Read 2 Peter 1:16–18 from *The Message*. In this version the writer says, "We were there . . . we saw it with our own eyes." Do you think that hearing from someone who actually experienced something is more convincing than just reading or hearing about it secondhand? This is what testimony and witness brings to others. When you share your own experience of God, there is a deeper meaning to another.

Spend time remembering a time when you felt certain that God was with you. Use the aluminum foil and shape it into something that represents that time for you. Use your prop to aid you in telling the story. Take turns sharing.

Discerning & Deciding Activity



2 Let Us Bake Bread Together

Supplies:

- "Recipes," Attachment: Activity 2
- ingredients for the bread or cookies
- oven

The sharing of bread is common in most Christian traditions. People share food when there is a death, a birth, or an illness. We also have a tradition of giving bread in greeting and in saying goodbye. We share bread in communion. This is a direct reflection of the table ministry of Jesus. It is a strong witness to the importance of community and our connectedness with God and one another. The gift of food says, "I care about your well-being, and I recognize that you are part of the body of Christ."

Bake bread or cookies to share with someone. If the bread seems too complicated, try something simpler. The attachment contains as examples a recipe for basic white bread, a simple recipe for biscuits, and one for cookies. Choose a recipe that will work for your family/group. While bread is one of the staples of diet common to many cultures, there are many kinds of bread. Baking can be a great time

of fellowship as you prepare the food together. Persons of all ages can participate.

While you prepare your bread, take time to talk about why sharing bread shows Christian love. Consider someone who may be lonely or could use a visit. Choose your recipient and pray for that person. Then take the bread (or whatever you have prepared) to that person and tell the person that you have been thinking about him or her.

Sending & Serving Activity

③ Praying Out Loud

Supplies: None

Prayer is an important tradition in the life of the church. One way to make testimony to your faith in God is to show thanksgiving. Saying grace before meals is a simple way to remember the gift of life God provides through food. Thanking God in a public place may seem awkward, but the act may remind others to give thanks. Consider using the prayer below or one of your own before your meals every day.

Thank you, God, for the gift of food. Please bless all those whose hard work made this meal possible. May we be nourished both physically and spiritually as we share this meal together. In Christ's name we pray. Amen

Individual and Personal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity



④ Baptism

Supplies:

- artwork: "Baptism" by Hullis Mavruk <http://tinyurl.com/fp-aphm>
- bowl of water
- hand towel

The act of baptism is an open declaration of belief in God. This activity uses art and water as a way to consider how baptism is a testimony and witness to God's great love and grace.

Study the painting "Baptism." Allow yourself to experience the colors, the images, the people and objects. What might the various persons in the scene be thinking? Imagine you are there, too. Why are you there? Where are you? What do you feel, see, smell, or hear? What does it take to step into the river?

If you have been baptized, recall that event. Have you witnessed the baptism of someone else? Was the baptism of a baby or child or of an adult? Sprinkled or immersed? Baptismal font or river?

Put your fingers into the bowl of water. What does water symbolize? Think about baptismal water.

What does it mean to say to the world “I accept Jesus as my personal savior”? Are you willing to say that every day by living your life as if you mean it? Think of ways you might do this in everyday life.

Look at the Mavruk painting again. How does it speak to you? As you go through your day, remember the ideas you considered and try them out. At the end of the day reflect on how you show that you accept Jesus. Take time to pray and thank God for your baptism.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

5 Field Trip

Supplies:

- transportation to a church
- book of Christian symbols or [Christian Symbols](#)

Historically, the uneducated masses were taught about the faith by the symbols, sculptures, and paintings in the churches. Many of the symbols are still seen today. These are an outward witness to God and our faith. Plan to spend some time in a church building. You may go to your own church or visit another church such as a cathedral or basilica in the area. Before going to the church, you might want to call ahead to be certain the building is open for visitors.

Take a walk around the building and note the symbols you see on the outside. Are there statues, words, pictures? Go inside and tour. Make sure you look at the ceiling and floors. Are there stained glass windows? What stories do you see depicted in some way? Which ones do you recognize? Are there some you have not seen before? Look up the symbols in the book, or ask someone who can give you a tour. If you are unable to go to a church, there are many pictures of famous cathedrals/churches on the Internet. Look at some of them and complete the activity. You can even close your eyes and do a mental tour of your church or a church you have visited in the past. By viewing these storytelling artistic symbols you participate in the witness and tradition of the past.

Sending & Serving Activity

6 Wear a Cross

Supplies:

- cross necklace, pin, or button
- types of crosses: [Crosses](#)

The cross is a well-known symbol of Christianity. For some, it is a reminder that Jesus died on the cross. For others, it is a reminder that Jesus was resurrected. One way to witness to your Christian faith is to wear this symbol. There are many ways to wear a cross. You may have jewelry shaped as a cross. Pins or buttons are easily attainable at Christian supply stores. The link in the supply list is an online store, but you might be interested in the informational piece about various crosses and their meanings.

People often wear a cross without thinking about it. Spend time considering what your wearing of the cross means. What is a cross? What does it represent? What is the importance of this to you? Does it make you feel nervous? What will you say if someone comments on your cross?

Take time to thank God for the cross and for all it represents. You may want to reflect on the encounters you had with others because of the cross.

Work Place and Communal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activities

7 Visiting the Sick

Supplies:

- card with envelope and postage
- list of those who are sick or need some special encouragement

Another tradition of the church is visiting people who are sick. Being present to those who are sick can take many forms and is another way of making testimony to your faith. One need not be physically in the same room to be present to another. Cards, phone calls, or letters let people know they are cared for and that they have support in their difficult time. Pray for the person and those caring for them. You may want to create the card yourself.

If someone or a member of their family is ill or having a difficult time, you can make your work group or neighborhood group aware of the situation. It might be a nice gesture to send a card from the whole group. This activity requires that you identify the person or persons in need, make the needs known to the group, and organize the sending of cards. This might spur the members of the group to decide to send flowers or provide some food or run errands for the person or people in need.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

8. Faith on Display

Supplies: None

Not all testimony is verbal. What symbols of the faith do you have with you in your public life? Consider how your possessions reflect who you are spiritually.

Think about your desk, your workspace, or wherever you have your public life. What do the things there say about your faith? What do your possessions say about what you value? What would you be embarrassed to have your pastor/church family see? What reflects who you are as a person of faith? Possessions are not intrinsically bad or evil. How you use them determines what they say about you.

Spend time in reflection about how you use what you have and how some of those things possess you. Would anyone who saw these things know you were indeed a person of faith? Then pray about it, having a conversation with God or with Jesus, and remember to listen as well as talk.

Sending & Serving Activity

9 Reclaiming Religious Holy Days

Supplies:

- Bible

A great tradition of the church is the celebration of the birth of Jesus. This is also a secular holiday celebrated around the world. Think about the ways that the secular and religious expressions are different. Consider how they are the same. Read Isaiah 52:7–10. What do you think it means to spread the good news? What good news can we share at Christmas? Reflect on possible things you can do or say that might give witness to your faith in Jesus Christ during the holiday season. How might you celebrate Christmas differently as a testimony and witness to your faith? Try to put your ideas into practice this year. This is also true for Easter or other church holy days. How can you let others know what these days mean to you?

Reflect

Over the history of the church there have been many ways within the tradition to bear witness to the love of God. Tradition, in addition to scripture, helps us to know how to live out our faith as Christians. As we go through life, many new possibilities will find us, and we will change over time. However, there are many traditions that are worth keeping and through which we can make testimony about God's constant presence.

Attachment: Activity 2

Recipes

Biscuits

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 12 minutes
Total time: 27 minutes

Ingredients:

¼ cup shortening
2 cups self-rising flour*
¾ cup (approx.) milk

Preparation:

Preheat oven 450 degrees F. In large bowl, cut shortening into flour until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. With fork, stir in enough milk to form a soft dough or until dough pulls away from the bowl. Turn dough onto floured surface. With floured hands, knead until smooth, ten to twelve times. Roll dough to ½" thickness. Cut with floured 2" round cutter. Place biscuits, lightly touching, on ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 10–12 minutes. Makes 12–14 biscuits.

*Self-rising flour is all-purpose flour with added salt and leavening (baking powder). Recipes that call for self-rising flour do not call for baking powder.

You can buy self-rising flour, or make your own self-rising flour. For 1 cup self-rising flour use:
1 cup all-purpose flour, 1¼ teaspoon baking powder, and a pinch of salt.

Snickerdoodles

Prep time: 30 minutes
Cook time: 10 minutes
Total time: 40 minutes

Ingredients:

1 cup shortening
1½ cups sugar
2 eggs
2¾ cups flour
2 teaspoons cream of tartar
1 teaspoon soda
¼ teaspoon salt
cinnamon-sugar mixture (1 tsp cinnamon in a ¼ cup sugar)

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly grease a cookie sheet. In a large bowl, cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time. In a small bowl, combine flour, cream of tartar, soda, and salt using a wire whisk. Gradually add flour mixture to shortening mixture until completely combined. Roll dough into balls about the size of walnuts. Dip into cinnamon sugar mixture. Bake 2" apart for 8 to 10 minutes. Makes about 3 dozen cookies.

Attachment Activity 2 (continued)

Recipes

Basic Two-Loaf White Bread

Prep time: 3 hours

Cook time: 45 minutes

Total time: 3 hours, 45 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 cup milk
- 2 tbsp butter
- ½ cup warm water
- 2 packages active dry yeast
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 cup of warm water
- 6–7 cups of unbleached bread flour

Preparation:

1. Heat 1 cup of milk and 2 tbsp butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Remove from heat when the butter is melted. Set aside to cool.
2. Pour ½ cup of warm water into a small bowl. Slowly pour yeast into bowl while stirring. The constant stirring while adding the yeast will prevent the dry yeast from clumping. Set the bowl of yeast water aside for about 5 minutes while you work on the next two steps.
3. In a large bowl, add sugar, salt, and 1 cup of warm water. Mix.
4. Check the small saucepan of milk and butter. If the contents are warm to the touch, pour the liquid into the large bowl and mix.
5. Pour the yeast water into the large bowl. It is important that the batter is warm, not boiling hot. Hot liquid, such as the milk you heated up, will kill the dry yeast and prevent the bread from rising.
6. Begin mixing in the unbleached bread flour, one cup at a time. By the fifth cup of flour, the dough will begin to get stiff and it will be difficult to mix it with the wooden spoon. Turn dough out onto a floured board and begin to knead the dough. Continue adding more flour and kneading the flour into the dough until the dough is smooth, not sticky.
7. Next, grease a large bowl with butter. Put the bread dough into the bowl and then turn the dough over so that the top of the dough is now buttered. Cover the bowl with a damp kitchen towel and let the dough rise at room temperature until double in size, about 1 hour.
8. Punch down dough. Turn it out onto a floured board and knead out all the bubbles for about 5 minutes. Divide the dough in half and form each half into a loaf by rolling the dough into a rectangle. Roll the dough up like a jellyroll. Pinch seam closed. Pinch and tuck edges under the loaf.
9. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Butter two loaf pans. Spread a light layer of yellow cornmeal on the loaf pans, if desired. Set loaves in pans, cover with kitchen towel, and allow to rise until double in size, for about a half hour.
10. Bake bread for about 45 minutes or until golden brown. Remove bread from oven and turn out loaves onto a rack or a clean kitchen towel. Allow to cool before cutting.



Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Setting

Mission is the practice of our faith in the world. In living daily practice we can grow our faith greatly by becoming open to the action of God in the larger context of life. We testify to our faith by living it openly and witnessing to the divine presence.

The activities designed for the individual will help a person gain some comfort in sharing one's faith and living out that faith in daily life. The activities designed for the home and family are suggestions for family groups, however you define that, or for small groups who wish to gather to learn more about faith practices. In these suggested activities the participants may practice sharing their experiences of God and the way their faith informs their life with one another. This may help to provide greater comfort in venturing out to share those thoughts with others. The activities for the workplace and community are ways you can witness to your own faith in the larger sphere of daily life and may help you have more confidence sharing your faith beyond the comfort of home or church.

As with all faith practices, giving testimony and witness requires discipline. Some of the activities are low-risk, while others will require more courage. You have to be willing to accept resistance or flat out rejection. Sharing is a two-way street; if you are also willing to listen to others the rewards are great.

About this Exploration

We live in circles of context, one of the richest of which is the local church. This Exploration investigates webs of relationships that call us beyond family, workplace, congregation, or community out to a mission of sharing and listening with all people. Testimony can be a tool for building justice when we engage in dialogue beyond our usual circles. The body of Christ is strengthened when our witnessing is intertwined with those whose situations are vastly different from our own.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Matthew 5:13–20

Romans 8:31–39

Individual and Personal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

1 Web of Life

Supplies:

- ball of yarn

We live in the larger context of community. There are many levels of connection. In these relationships we experience God's mission in the world.

Have one person take the ball of yarn, hold the end of the string, and toss the ball to another person in the room. While doing this, consider those who come to mind when we say the word "mission." Say aloud one way we are connected to others in our lives. For example, you might say, "those who are hungry" or "the kids in my school." When you get the yarn, wrap the yarn around a finger and toss it to the next person. After everyone has held the ball of yarn at least once, continue this activity randomly until you have touched the yarn at least three times (if you have a small group). Have the last person hold the ball after securing the yarn. What do you see? Talk about the result.

This is a nice representation of our interconnectedness. Have one person pull on the yarn. What happened? Try it again in another place. Now, have one person let go of a connection. Then pull on the yarn. What happened?

How is this like the body of Christ? In what ways do you feel connected to one another? What are some of the relationships in your life? Consider your family, people in the church, people in your school or workplace, and people in your community. Think of ways you can reach out to others, to care for those in need, to share your faith and make witness to God's love in the world. Think of ways they represent Christ to you.

We are the body of Christ. "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).

Discerning & Deciding Activity



2 Justice

Supplies:

- "Justice Scenarios," Attachment: Activity 2

Too many people believe that in order to look good or successful they need to put down other people. Contrary to this belief, as Christians and members of the body of Christ, we are interconnected so that when one person's rights are not protected we cannot be whole. When a village suffers from hunger, we cannot be whole. When racism leads to inequities, we cannot be whole. It is our duty, our task to speak out against injustice. The story of Jesus' ministry is full of his work against the injustices he encountered. Every person has worth simply because each is a child of God and God created her/him. We are called to uphold this truth.

Look at the justice scenarios on the attachment and decide what a Christian response might be. Give everyone an opportunity to say how to respond to the situation. There is no one right answer. Talk about the different ideas. In what ways are they in keeping with the mandate from Jesus: "Love as I have loved you"? What risk is involved? How do these responses show witness to the faith?

What can you do to live out your faith? How can you work together to live out your responses in daily living?

Say a prayer asking God to help you do these things.

Sending & Serving Activity



③ Basic Needs

Supplies:

- Bible
- "Assemble a Care Kit," Attachment: Activity 3
- place to shop or get items for the activity ahead of time
- weblinks: [Global Ministries requests](#), [Church World Services kits](#)

When we care for those in need, we express the love of God and witness to our faith. Read Romans 8:31–39. In the hardest times it can seem like God is absent, but God is present in suffering and sends help in the form of compassionate caring brothers and sisters in Christ.

Collect and package various items for those in need. The attachment includes lists for hygiene kits and baby kits. Kits may be sent to Church World Service all year. The contents of each kit have been selected with care based on years of experience to make them as useful as possible, wherever and whenever they are sent.

There are many mission opportunities for persons who want to help people in need. Your denomination's Global Ministries may have recommendations. The United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Global Missions have several additional possibilities for collected and shipped material gifts. You can find out more about these projects by going to the Global Ministries or Church World Services (CWS) websites (see links above). This provides an opportunity to teach the young ones about relief and how they can do something that will help someone who can't get the basic items we take for granted. Make sure that everyone is involved in the shopping and in putting together the kits.

Your participation helps to ensure kits are available for immediate response after a disaster in any part of the world. Local shelters will also welcome this kind of

kit. You may have to do some homework to locate the best place and what to send to local ministries.

Individual and Personal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

④ Missionaries

Supplies:

- articles [Missionary stories](#)

Mission is the work we do as a result of our love for God. Often when we think of mission, we think of missionaries in far-off places. The mission field includes places as near as our own family and as far as the other side of the world. In this activity we will consider the work of those who serve outside their country of origin.

Go to the website by clicking on the link in the supply list. This page will lead you to many articles written by the missionaries in the field. Read one or more of the articles. How are these people witnessing to the faith? One point made again and again is the power of faith displayed by the persons they serve. Some of these people are suffering terribly. How do you think you would be changed by such testimony? Could you do the same given those conditions?

If you could go anywhere in the world to serve, where do you think you would go? Why? Where would you not want to go? Why? How can you participate in this particular form of mission even if you can't go yourself? Pray for those who choose to serve as missionaries on our behalf. How can you be a missionary in your own community? Pray for God's guidance in ways to do mission in your own particular setting.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

⑤ Prayer Shawls or Hats

Supplies:

- materials for knitting, sewing, crocheting, or weaving
- <http://www.shawlministry.com/>
- charity guide: <http://tinyurl.com/3d2aw8o>

Witness and testimony take many forms. We are all given gifts, and some of us are good with knitting or crochet needles or other forms of sewing. There are many occasions where a shawl would provide comfort. There is a special ministry (see link) where the loving production of shawls is combined with prayer for the recipient.

The second link above is a site that talks about knitted hats for people undergoing chemotherapy. There are additional links on that page that give instructions. Some women prefer a turban style or other soft material. Men also benefit from the warmth a head covering provides. Hat patterns can be found at the fabric

store. Check at hospitals to see if they might be able to use these. Many cancer centers are happy to be able to offer a nice hat to their patients when they begin treatments. Perhaps you know persons in your community or congregation who could use this special comfort. Remember to pray for the one who will receive the shawl or hat.

Sending & Serving Activities

⑥ Salt and Light

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper and pen
- (optional) calculator

Read Matthew 5:13–20. There are many opportunities to serve the homeless and hungry in the world. Wherever you are there are people who simply do not have the assets to provide shelter or food for themselves or their families. Charitable agencies around the world are providing food, clothing, and shelter for those in desperate need. Two important international groups are [Habitat for Humanity](#) and [Heifer International](#). You may also find local agencies you can support financially or by volunteering.

The following information on homelessness is taken from the current Homeless World Cup website. (For more information about that group go to <http://www.homelessworldcup.org/>.) There are 1.3 billion people living in poverty around the world; 70 percent are women and girls. The problem is not just homelessness.

Additionally, a UN source stated that there are at least 600 million who live in shelters that are life threatening or health threatening in developing world cities. The following information on hunger is taken from the UN website from a press release from December 2009. (For more information about the UN go to <http://www.un.org/en/>.)

The Sixty-fourth General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously reaffirmed that hunger constituted an “outrage” that required urgent measures for its elimination. The Assembly adopted an updated text on the right to food, which described as “intolerable” the fact that, partly due to the food crisis, an estimated 1.02 billion people were now malnourished despite the planet’s ability to produce enough food to feed the world.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau World Population Clock (<http://www.census.gov/main/www/popclock.html>) there are 6,868,585,956 people in the world as of this writing. Using the preceding statistics, do the math. How many homeless persons per 1000 are there? What percentage of the world population lives in life threatening or health threatening conditions? What percentage of the world population is malnourished?

Make a graph that shows this. Tell people about it. Remember, you are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world. Maybe people will be moved because, as salt enhances the taste of food, as light illuminates, you have revealed the problem.

Work Place and Communal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activities

7 Talk to People as People

Supplies:

- Bible
- song “Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos’” (tune: Siyahambra, irr. South African song) <http://tinyurl.com/fp-siyahamb>

Read Matthew 5:13–16. Then sing or look at the words to the song “Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos’.” There are two components in giving testimony and witness. We share the good news of God’s abiding love, and we receive it. By giving testimony we can be light to someone else, and by witnessing to the faith we can also walk in God’s light by seeing God’s active presence in others.

An important part of caring for others in mission is restoring their dignity as persons. People who live in poverty or suffer through some crisis or who are considered “lower class” are often treated as subhuman. Many of those who have lower paying jobs are treated poorly, almost as invisible. A “thank you” for their work is, unfortunately, a rare occurrence. One very simple way to lift them out of that status is to speak to them with respect and kindness, using a person’s name if you know it. A greeting with eye contact can lift the spirits of a person usually treated as part of the furniture.

Acknowledge the people you encounter throughout your day, such as the parking lot attendant, the maintenance person, the cleaning person, the cook. Greet them, ask them how they are, and listen when they respond. At the end of the day reflect on the number of people with whom you made contact. Was it more or less than usual? Did you meet people you had never noticed before or ignored? What was their reaction? What was yours? Where was God in these encounters? Pray for them and for your continued openness to the whole family of God so we all will be walking in the light of God together.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

8 What Do They Need?

Supplies:

- phone numbers or e-mail addresses for charitable organizations in your area
- list of community groups

A good way to witness to God’s amazing love is to share that love with those who are less fortunate. The first step is recognizing that all persons are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Step two is finding out what they need. Step three is helping satisfy those needs.

Create lists of needed donations. Ask God to guide you. Select an organization in your community that aids those in need and ask what supplies they need on a regular basis. Make a list for that organization, along with its address, telephone

number, and the name of a contact person. Then contact community organizations to which you belong or have some association that may wish to help with donations. This could be at your workplace. Distribute the lists and encourage donations. In this way your efforts can be multiplied.

Sending & Serving Activities

9 Food Glorious Food Crop Walk

Supplies:

- website: [CROP WALK FAQ](#)
- information from the Church World Service website
- materials obtained from Church World Service

As we try to live out our faith we are reminded that we live in a global village and that we are all part of the body of Christ. As such we are affected by the suffering and the joys of all our parts. If we pay attention it becomes very clear that hunger is a major problem in our world. While there is enough food to feed everyone in the world twice over, people are still starving. Doing something to make a difference is testimony to the faith. It is a loving response to Jesus, who said, "If you love me, feed my sheep." There are many ways to be fed, but it is hard to experience the other ways if you are hungry.

Many churches and individuals participate in CROP Walks each year. Originally, in 1947 when CROP originated, the acronym stood for Christian Rural Overseas Program. Plan to organize a CROP Walk at your office or in a community group. The weblink in the supply list takes you to the CROP Walk site, where many questions will be answered.

You will need to talk to your boss or community leader about planning. You might want to share how this is part of your faith.

Reflect

Sometimes it is a challenge to see oneself as a missionary. When we accept Christ and the awesome, incredible, and all-encompassing love of God into our lives, the only response is to love. This is God's mission on earth, to share the divine love through our love of one another and all creation. Mission, or the work that comes from faith, is a testament to that faith.

Attachment: Activity 2

Justice Scenarios

A group of kids is teasing one child about clothes. Each has something to say. They are saying mean things, and the child looks as if about to cry.

You are at work or at school and you hear someone telling an ethnic joke.

A homeless person asks for a handout, and you overhear someone say, “Things like that shouldn’t be allowed here.”

A woman tries to make a comment at a meeting and is interrupted by a man saying, “How like a woman.”

You see an adult in a public place violently hit a child.

Someone throws trash out of a moving car on the highway.

You read about a company that is dumping waste material into the river.

You find out that the working conditions of the people who make your favorite shoes are terrible.

Attachment: Activity 3

Assemble a Care Kit

To assemble a Hygiene Kit you will need:

- 1 hand towel measuring approximately 16" x 28" (no fingertip or bath towels)
- 1 washcloth
- 1 wide-tooth comb
- 1 nail clipper
- 1 bar of soap (bath size in wrapper)
- 1 toothbrush (in original packaging)
- 6 Band-Aids®

Please do not add toothpaste to the Hygiene Kit. Toothpaste that has an extended expiration date will be added to Hygiene Kit shipments just prior to shipment. Seal all items in a one-gallon plastic bag with a zipper closure.

To assemble a Baby Kit you will need:

- 6 cloth diapers
- 2 T-shirts or undershirts (no onesies)
- 2 washcloths
- 2 gowns or sleepers
- 2 diaper pins
- 1 sweater or sweatshirt
- 2 receiving blankets (one can be a hand-knitted or crocheted baby blanket)

All items should be new. Wrap items inside one of the receiving blankets and secure with both diaper pins.

Go to the Church World Service website for information about shipping costs and shipping addresses: [Church World Services kits](http://www.cws.org)

Giving Testimony and Witness



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Setting

As we practice giving testimony and witness on a daily basis, we not only experience the change in the here and now, but we also add to the future of our world as people of God active in that world. God's vision for us is amazing and we have the chance to be part of it. God is still speaking, and we have hope for a bright future. All we have to do is pay attention.

The activities designed for the individual will help a person gain some comfort in sharing one's faith and living out that faith in daily life. The activities designed for the home and family are suggestions for family groups, however you define that, or for small groups who wish to gather to learn more about faith practices. In these suggested activities the participants may practice sharing their experiences of God and the way their faith informs their life with one another. This may help to provide greater comfort in venturing out to share those thoughts with others. The activities for the workplace and community are ways you can witness to your own faith in the larger sphere of daily life and may help you have more confidence sharing your faith beyond the comfort of home or church.

As with all faith practices, giving testimony and witness requires discipline. Some of the activities are low-risk, while others will require more courage. You have to be willing to accept resistance or flat out rejection. Sharing is a two-way street; if you are also willing to listen to others the rewards are great.

About this Exploration

A glimpse of God's realm becomes possible every time we practice testimony and witness. In this Exploration we move daily to express the presence of God through language, symbols, and rituals, as we increase our hope and vision for ourselves and future generations. By sharing our experiences of God's love day to day, we pass on the all-encompassing grace that sets a foundation for the church of tomorrow. Acknowledging that the practice of testimony and witness is an ongoing process, we focus our attention upon God's continuing revelation, as we move toward the future "kin-dom" (the realm of God where all are kin).

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18
Philemon 1:1–25

Household and Family Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

1 Picture This

Supplies:

- Bible
- camera
- poster board
- (optional) journal
- computer to download pictures

Read 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18. We can trust in God for our future. Imagine what the world would be like if everyone knew God's love, trusted in God, and lived a life of care for the whole creation. Try to use the medium of photography as a way of witness.

Spend time in prayer so that you might be open to God. You will be taking pictures either inside or outside that represent how we as a people interact with God today. Also, choose images that represent what it might be like if tomorrow we woke up and everyone trusted in God and was living a life of caring for the whole creation. Be creative—the images need have meaning only for you. You can explain them later. As a group decide on a plan to take the pictures. Will you take them individually or together? When you have finished taking pictures, create a poster to express and/or contrast what you witness today and what you hope for tomorrow. Some will be self-explanatory, while others will require a caption or even a full explanation. Share with one another.

Where did you see God while doing this activity? What did you learn that was expected? What did you find that was unexpected? In your part of the world, how are we doing as a people? How did you think this activity was a witness to God's presence and activity in the world?

Say a prayer for the future. Thank God for the ways we are moving on the right path, and ask God to be a guide for continuing on the path to the future that is full of God's love.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

② Hope for the Flowers

Supplies:

- book *Hope for the Flowers* by Trina Paulus. Purchase a copy for yourself, or you can read it online at: <http://tinyurl.com/4yrruq9>.
- Bible

Read *Hope for the Flowers* together and talk about it, using the discussion starters below.

- This little book is called “a tale partly about life, partly about revolution, and a lot about hope.” In what way is it about revolution?
- What responses do you have to the pillar of caterpillars, and what’s at the top? Does the experience of climbing to the top feel familiar to you?
- Where, if anywhere, is God in the story? Does the story speak to you about priorities, about changing anything in your life?
- Stripe gets restless, while Yellow is content with their life together. Which kind of caterpillar are you?
- What kinds of sacrifices does Yellow make in order to learn to fly? How are her sacrifices different from the ones Stripe makes? What does this say to you about the decisions and choices you make in your own life?
- The temptation to “climb the ladder” applies to children and teenagers as well as adults. How does society encourage us to step on others in order to get ahead? How can we be countercultural in our choices to live differently?
- Read Mark 16:1–8, about the resurrection of Jesus. In what way is *Hope for the Flowers* a resurrection story?

Sending & Serving Activities



③ Hugs

Supplies:

- YouTube video “Free Hugs”
- “Safe Hugs,” Attachment: Activity 3

Wouldn’t it be a wonderful place to live, where you knew that others cared about you? Bearing witness to the truth that we are all one in God is a powerful testimony of our faith.

Look at the video and discuss with one another what you think. What do you think a hug represents? Do you think you could do this? In your family? At your church? On the street like this guy? What response did he get? What kind of response do you think you’d get?

Try it. Practice with one another. Share the feelings you experienced when you give a hug and those you experience when you receive one. What can you say? You could say “God bless you,” “You are a beloved Child of God,” or say nothing and let the act of kindness speak for itself. This is a high risk endeavor because

it requires you to reach out and make physical contact with someone else. One person may enjoy a hug, but another may not. If you approach it as an invitation, it might be better received. Alternatively, a pat on the shoulder or the hand or a handshake might be more comfortable for some. Physical contact with another individual may seem difficult, but the results may be surprising. Remember to ask the person if he or she would like a hug before giving one and pay attention to body language indicating that touch is not wanted. The handout shows safe hugs and suggests alternatives. If someone would rather not be touched, respect this.

With children be aware of the issue of good touch/bad touch as well as safety around strangers. Do not place children in situations of discomfort or danger.

Every day you encounter persons who may gain much from human contact. Be careful and safe (see attachment). You may have to step outside your comfort zone for this one. Begin in a relatively safe place, like church. There are many elderly persons who really appreciate a hug. It is often easy to find someone who could use a hug. With prayer those in need will become obvious. If you do this activity as a family, you add a level of protection.

When we give another person a hug we imitate the love, caring, and inclusiveness God has shown for us. It is another way to share our faith and show other persons how much God loves them.

Individual and Personal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity



4 Create a Time line

Supplies:

- paper and writing instruments or
- string and note cards with clothespins or
- Post-it notes
- (optional) journal
- “Sample Time lines,” Attachment: Activity 4

Our faith develops over time. This faith practice may not appear to be something easy to do, but if you look back over your faith journey, you will notice many times when you have made testimony or witness to God’s active presence in your life.

Begin with your early childhood experiences of faith and make a time line, marking turning points, milestones, and experiences that made an impact on you—either deepening faith or causing you to rethink your beliefs. Your time line may be straight or curving (see “Sample Time lines,” Attachment: Activity 4). You may choose to put the events on post-it notes and place them on a bulletin board or wall. You could stretch a string across your room and add events on note cards attached with clothespins.

This spiritual autobiography will reveal the importance of events in your life in the past and present and help you to be more mindful of God in the future. It will also help you to see that you already have made witness and have been able to show the love of God active in your life to others. It is important to remember

that, even in those times when you didn't feel God's presence or felt a definite absence, God was still at work.

Giving witness and testimony is an outward sign of faith and also serves to strengthen your own understanding of faith. A dynamic faith is a healthy faith that shows God's work is active and constant.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

5 Letter to Future Generations

Supplies:

- paper and pen
- (optional) journal
- (optional) digital camera or video recorder

We witness to God in our lives in the here and now, but what we say and do now can and will impact others in the future as well. Our actions today will be experienced by persons in the future. What do you want your life to say to those yet to come or to those who are young and encounter you today? Spend time considering what you believe and how you want to live that out in your life so that those who come after you will know what God meant to you.

Find a place that is a good place for reflection. Spend a little time thinking about who God is to you, how Jesus fits into your thinking, and how you want to live a life that reflects those beliefs. Write these thoughts in your journal or on the paper. It might be more comfortable for you to draw a picture or create a poem. Another way to record your present state of faith is to take pictures or record a video statement or a dance or anything that expresses your thoughts. Be creative, but try to be honest about your understanding of God in your life. This may take a while.

Put your document away and pull it out again in a month or some other time frame that you set. Review it at that time and see if there are changes in your life as a result of having done it. If you wish to share it with someone, do so. If you want to put it away again, you can add comments or insights. This is a good long-term activity that will help you in several ways: 1. You have to organize your thoughts in order to document them. 2. You will have found a way to articulate your faith to someone else. 3. You can make it a self-evaluation tool by making testimony to yourself.

Thank God for the time spent.

Sending & Serving Activity

6 What in the World?

Supplies:

- local newspaper or other news source

As we ponder what the future could bring if we are true to God's vision, it is helpful to see where we are in the community where we live. Skim your local newspaper and read a few stories. How does this view of the world show us in contrast to the world envisioned by God for us? Is there justice? Do we care for one another? Are we one body in Christ?

Take the articles and place them in two categories: God's vision versus the world's vision. What would you say to the parties in the stories to let them know God's good news?

Work Place and Communal Life

Exploring & Engaging Activity

7 Pass It On

Supplies:

- small box (1"–2") or a small block of wood
- wrapping paper with bow

Take the empty box or piece of wood and wrap it in the paper, complete with bow. Think about how God has gifted you today. Pass the box to someone else, explaining that the box contains a blessing. You can share how God has blessed you today and that you want to share that blessing with the person. The box is not to be unwrapped, but passed along in the same way. Perhaps the box will return to you in the course of the day or perhaps you will not see it again.

Option: You may want to write a prayer to put in the box so that you are not passing an empty box. Also include instructions for rewrapping the box and passing it on to someone else.

Later, reflect upon the experience. Pray for the persons who will receive the gift.

Discerning & Deciding Activity

8 Fair Trade

Supplies:

- websites: [Find Fair Trade](#), [Fair trade clothing](#), [WFTO](#)
- Bible

Read Philemon 1:1–25. In the letter Paul implores Philemon to accept his former slave Onesimus as a brother in Christ. How does this expression of Christianity, where there is no longer slave or free, but only brothers and sisters in Christ, inform our understanding of justice?

As we look to a future of justice and fairness for all, we must evaluate how many places and situations in the world are unfair and unjust now. Brainstorm ways you can work toward a more just world.

What are some issues that keep us from being a just world? How does the over-consumption of resources in the Western world hurt others in the world? Exploitation of small farmers is a serious injustice. One way to help overcome this is by using fair trade products. Purchasing these products helps insure that the farmers receive a fair price for their goods. Farmers are just one group who are exploited. What others can you name? What actions can we take to help ensure justice in these situations?

When coffee is served at the workplace or in a community gathering, insist that fair trade coffee is used. This coffee is available in many places (see the “Find Fair Trade” link in the supply list). Check the labels when purchasing coffee. Many stores carry fair trade products.

9 Care Survey

Sending & Serving Activity

Supplies:

- telephone
- phonebook
- computer
- (optional) notepad

Research care agencies in your local area. You might check with churches, seminaries, larger agencies, the Internet, or a phone book. Make a list and include the name, address, phone number, and e-mail address of the agency. Find out what they offer, who is served, how many are served, and how you can help. Once you have compiled the list, consider the following: Were you aware of these agencies? Do you think they are making a difference? Is there anywhere you wish to volunteer or donate?

Make the list available to various groups in your community with which you are affiliated. You might share the list with coworkers, your church, a community group, or a neighborhood group. In this way you could encourage others to participate in community service as your faith calls you to serve others.

Reflect

We must live our lives in such a way that those who encounter us will know that we follow Christ and that we love God so much that we share that love freely. In this way we will make testimony that will touch the lives of others in the present and in the future. Hearing another person’s story enriches our lives, too.

Attachment: Activity 3

Safe Hugs

The gift of touch is one that can offer healing, peace, and support.

Touch can also cause confusion, fear, and shame. We want to be especially careful with our children and youth. We want everyone to feel loved and cared for rather than uncomfortable.

CONSIDER: Why do you touch?

Do you touch to share God's compassion and care?
(In our free hugs activity this should be the only motivation for touch.)

CONSIDER: How would you like to be approached?

Always ask permission first. Would you like a hug? Open your arms, let the other person initiate the hug.

CONSIDER: What kinds of touch are appropriate?

You can judge from the person's reaction. If they pull away, stop.

Here are examples hugs that are appropriate for this activity. In all instances people share human touch but there is nothing that can be misconstrued as unsafe. Keep hands off the chest. It is never appropriate to touch below the waist.

A-Frame hug—In this kind of hug there is no full body contact. Your contact is confined to the shoulder area, keeping the torsos separated.

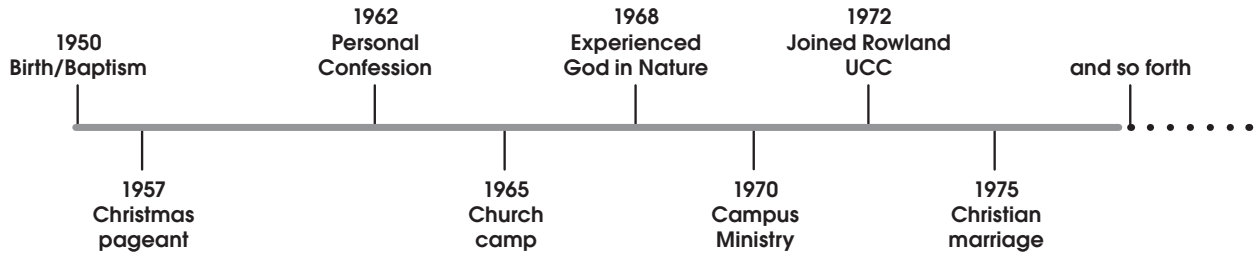
Sideways hug—As it sounds, it is a hug given with one arm, with persons side by side.

Touch on shoulder or back—Some people are uncomfortable with a hug but will accept a shoulder or back pat.

Handshake—Some will offer their hand as a sign that they don't want a full hug.

Attachment: Activity 4

1. Simple Time line



2. Decade Time line



3. Period of Life Time line



4. Complex Journey Time line

