



Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Intergenerational

Intergenerational Options

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

Familiarize yourself with all twelve activities, four from each of the categories of “Exploring and Engaging,” “Discerning and Deciding,” and “Sending and Serving.” Consider the age of participants and the time available for this event, and choose a group of activities that will meet your needs.

For an event lasting one to two hours, choose three or four activities from the list of twelve. There are enough activities for three or four events! Or, choose a single activity (15–30 minutes) to use as the activity at a community meal or other gathering. Wearing name tags is a good idea, as often older and younger members of a church do not know one another’s names.

Each activity ends with a prayer appropriate for the end of the session.

Gather as a church family to grow together and have fun!

Exploring & Engaging Activities

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

Discerning & Deciding Activities

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

Sending & Serving Activities

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

Intergenerational Leader Preparation

Abraham's gracious welcome of strangers provides insight into how our communities of faith can cooperate together as intergenerational groups to create hospitality. Community-based events require planning in advance. It helps to form a group of three or more people (including various age groups) to assist with the planning. The event planning is an important part of intergenerational work. Adults require patience, since listening to younger people takes more time than just doing the job themselves. Younger people are required to follow through with their commitments, something they may not have experienced before outside of a family or school situation. Your prayer might include: Imagine a family where everyone works together, helping each other, listening to each other, celebrating each one's gifts. Imagine you are sitting around a table together. Picture the face of each person at this meeting. Breathe into this image. Exhale a sense of peace and energy. Repeat this intake and out take of breath three times. End the visualization with these words, "Unto God we give our energy, so that all may benefit from this event." Amen.



Exploration: Discovery

① Soldier's Angels (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation: Inquire of your congregation if any family members are serving in the military and stationed in a war zone. If no one is, call a local congregation or contact a military facilities chaplain who can recommend units and names. Research <http://www.soldiersangels.org> online. This organization helps connect civilian volunteers with individual soldiers. You can select from any number of activities sponsored by this nonprofit organization, including adopting a military person or sending care packages to Iraq or Afghanistan. Important note: not all military people are soldiers. Some are sailors or marines.

Supplies:

- care package items listed on “Soldier’s Angels” Web site
<http://www.soldiersangels.org>

Advertise to the entire congregation by announcements and printed material. Set a date to make a collection. Include the collection in a worship setting where the items collected can be brought forward and blessed by the worship leader and congregation. Organize a group to gather and pack the materials. The US Post Office will provide free packaging and package mailers. Young children can make cards and draw pictures for the recipients. Older children can collect the items for shipping. Older youth can lift and pack the items. Adults can arrange for shipping. An e-mail address can be exchanged if military people wish to contact the congregation when the package(s) arrive.

2 Filling the Ark (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation: Research <http://www.heiferinternational.org>. Provide information for the congregation, making connections with all age groups. “Filling the Ark” is a program designed specifically for intergenerational involvement.

Supplies:

- materials from “Heifer International” including a Leader’s Guide to “Filling the Ark”: <http://www.heiferinternational.org>

Each family can take home a Heifer International bank along with a calendar. Adults can gather the information and speak to the various groups of learners during the education hour. Don’t forget to include adults! Announcements can be made during worship. Form a committee to designate a special donation to purchase animals selected by the children, youth, and adults. Organize specific money-making projects to gather funds for “Filling the Ark.”



Exploration: Scripture

3 Worship Alive! (Exploring and Engaging)

Leader preparation: Organize your group to dramatize the story of Abraham, Sarah, and the three Strangers (Genesis 18:1–15). Gather props and simple costumes. Involve parents and families, including congregational participants who do not have children in the education program. Approach an adult Bible study group to help with advertising. Arrange transportation if you visit a local retirement community.

Supplies:

- simple headdresses for costumes
- props: a small loaf of bread, water in a pitcher, items for table setting, a stuffed animal for the calf, a tent for Sarah

Rehearse the play with or without a narrator. Simple lines can be given to individual actors. Ask other congregational groups if you could come to their place and show them the story of Sarah and Abraham and the three strangers. Ask your worship leader if you could present the drama during a service of worship. Call a local retirement community and ask if the congregation could come and present their drama.

④ Sing-Along (Exploring and Engaging)

Leader preparation: Gather a hymnal for each person in your group. Ask someone who plays piano or guitar or any other instrument to accompany. Ahead of time make a list of all of the hymn favorites. Include favorites for every age level. When the Sing-Along lags, have this list ready.

Supplies:

- hymnals and accompanists

Meet fifteen minutes before the service of worship for a “Hymn Sing-Along.” Choose an older youth to stand in front and ask for suggestions. Invite those who know the hymn (not necessarily choir people or the usual worship leaders) to stand and lead the selected hymn. Emphasize the theme of each hymn. Encourage everyone to sing, even those who are not in tune. With enough participants, everyone sounds great. This is a model for the work of hospitality for the congregation. With enough participants, the job gets done. Keep a list of the hymn favorites that can be used once each month or when time permits. Encourage your group to sing these songs before or after they get together. Remember, even if some members of your congregation do not read, holding the hymnal makes young ones feel a part of the group—even if the hymnal is upside down!



Exploration: Discipleship



⑤ Praying with Art (Deciding and Discerning)

Leader preparation: Obtain a copy of the poster “The Public Fountain” by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Take time to study the print before introducing to your group.

Supplies:

- poster: <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources> by Manuel Alvarez Bravo
- paper and pencil

1. Display “The Public Fountain” by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Treat the print as a work of art and as sacred opportunity by first asking everyone to take a moment of silence to center themselves.
2. Hand each person a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask the participants to write down what they observe, including everything they initially notice about the work. Size, color, or lack of it, texture, subject, etc are all opportunities for noticing.
3. Pair young children with adults or youth so that the older person can write what the child dictates.
4. After you have given time for writing, ask for people to share their response. Allow each person to speak without being interrupted. Ask the participants to save their responses to one another until after everyone has had an opportunity to share.
5. Ask the learners to notice (in silence) what most attracts or repels them in this print. They can jot down their responses on the paper, or they can just mentally note them.

6. Now ask the piece of work to speak to you, as if it had a voice. Some imaginations may give voice to inanimate objects or to the flow of the water, for example. Encourage each participant to listen carefully and join in a dialogue with the print (silently) if it seems right. Afterward, encourage people to share their experience.
7. Gently place aside the poster. Remember this piece of art is God's gift through the artist and deserves careful treatment.
8. Now pray with the group. Your prayer may sound like: Thank you creating God for bringing this piece of art to our focus. May our understanding of your work in the world and our understanding of ourselves be increased, by encountering art in a prayer-filled way.

6 "Water for the World" (Deciding and Discerning)

Leader preparation: Gather with a group of interested lay people to plan an intergenerational worship event. Invite clergy to participate. This may center on the worldwide "Water Day Celebration" that happens in March. For more information search <http://www.water.org>. The UCC documentary, *Troubled Waters*, <http://www.ucc.org/troubled-waters>, also gives a good overview of the issues.

Supplies:

- a list of the parts of worship used by your faith community, such as call to worship, musical responses, prayers, prayer responses, litany, message, music, affirmations, benediction or sending forth

Plan an intergenerational lay-led community worship with "water" as your theme. Include recent facts about water pollution and shortage from the Web site www.water.org. Emphasize how disciples of Jesus work for all the world and can practice loving the world by supporting good stewardship with regard to the world's use of water. Organize a concert for the day, where proceeds can be sent to water-conscious nonprofit organizations.

Divide the group into small groups and be certain that each small group includes people of various ages. Assign one part of the worship event (from your list) to each group. That group can write, draw, or choose music.



Exploration: Christian Tradition

7 Walking the Labyrinth (Exploring and Engaging)

Leader preparation: Research locations of labyrinths near your worship community. Sometimes community hospitals have a labyrinth or a carpet that can be transported. Some labyrinths have been made of stones and/or canned goods that are later donated to a local food pantry. Two excellent Web sites for ideas and related information are: www.veriditas.org and www.labyrinthproject.com.

Supplies:

- labyrinth
- CD of contemplative music
- CD player
- light refreshments (optional)

Many people benefit from walking the labyrinth. People with disabilities can negotiate most labyrinth paths, or you could provide a finger labyrinth. All ages appreciate participating in the ancient ritual of spiritual walking. This event can be advertised as an outreach to your community, since it is nondenominational and ecumenical in nature. Set the space in a convenient location. Provide quiet music in the background, along with a description of the practice. Offer light refreshments after the walk. Recruit volunteers to help with the space, answer questions, and to keep the walkers spaced apart to avoid confusion. Invite spiritual directors to talk with participants after their walk.

8 Blessing of the Animals (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation: Review liturgy and animal concerns on <http://www.tinyurl.com/2ez7cup>.

Set a date and time for the blessing, and advertise the animal blessing in your community. Talk with various small groups and studies in your community about their animals. Invite a clergyperson to do the blessing (not necessary but nice!). Select music from the hymnal about animals in God's creation, such as "All Things Bright and Beautiful," <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cdamxh>, and "All Creatures of Our God and King," <http://www.tinyurl.com/2bkxkbc>.

Supplies:

- a tent for outdoor blessing (if needed)
- a banner advertising the event
- bowls with water and feathers for sprinkling
- baked dog biscuits (see recipe)
- human cookies — animal crackers are good!
- scarves for pets
- a clipboard to list animal's names
- chairs (if people are to be seated)
- song sheets or hymnals

Recipe for dog biscuits:

Mix together:

3½ cups unbleached flour

2 cups whole wheat flour

1 cup cornmeal

½ cup skim milk powder

1 tablespoon (or 1 package) dry yeast

3½ cups lukewarm chicken or meat broth

Dissolve the yeast in the lukewarm chicken or meat broth. The richer this broth is, the better your dog will like the biscuits. Let yeast broth mixture set 10 min. Then stir in flour mixture. Roll out resulting dough ¼" thick. Cut dog biscuit shapes from dough. Brush biscuits with egg wash. Bake on greased cookie sheets at 300° for 45 min. Turn off oven and leave biscuits overnight to finish hardening. Makes 60 medium-sized biscuits.

Invite people of your faith community and the rest of the community to bring their pets for a blessing in the tradition of St. Francis. Plan a short service. List the names of the pets and say them aloud. Pray for our creation including all living things. If some children or families do not have an animal, encourage bringing stuffed animals. A special blessing can be made for the stuffed animals that remind us of God's love and protection.



Exploration: Context and Mission

9 The Transformational Movie Festival: Not Your Average Drive-in Experience (Deciding and Discerning)

Leader preparation: Check out this Web site for tips about planning a movie event: <http://www.tinyurl.com/26zdybp>. Organize a film night (depending upon choice of film, invite appropriate age groups, providing child care for younger family members). Provide snacks. Gather background information about the film and write discussion questions. Invite volunteers from various age groups to be small group discussion leaders. Advertise the event as community outreach.

Remember that it is illegal to rent a movie and show it without permission. Churches can purchase a license from the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation in order to be able to show these copyrighted movies for either entertainment or education. This license needs to be updated annually and is offered for a reasonable fee at the following address:

Motion Picture Licensing Corporation
5455 S. Centinela Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90066-6970
www.mplc.com

Supplies:

- space where a film can be projected or shown on TV with a DVD
- tables for serving snacks
- napkins and plates or bowls or paper sacks for popcorn
- comfortable seating or floor space for families to bring blankets and pillows
- art experience table with paper and various art supplies including markers, crayons, water colors, pens, pencils

Select a movie that is appropriate for all ages. Advertise a movie night, encouraging people to bring blankets and pillows to lounge on the floor. Young children can make posters of the movie for advertisement. Provide comfortable seating for those who do not lounge!

Briefly introduce the movie. Afterward, divide into small groups for discussion. Provide questions for each group leader. Set up an art experience table for those who prefer to respond by drawing and/or painting.

10 Safe Harbor (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation: This after school program can become an ongoing event. The first event could be scheduled for a weekend or even one evening per week for a month. If it is successful, it can be scheduled more frequently. That's how events become new faith practices!

Make certain that all adult volunteers have background checks to encourage support of safe sanctuary church policies. To insure the background checks are viable, begin planning six to eight weeks before the actual event. Advertise in the community by Internet, bulletin board, or local school newsletter. Contact local schools in person or by phone.

Supplies:

- volunteers
- pencils, paper
- newsprint or white board and markers
- space for short spans of physical activity
- tables, chairs

Invite youth, young adult, and adult volunteers to provide an after-school program for youngsters. Some volunteers can be tutors. Some can supervise games or art activities. Some can be available for conversation. Provide healthy snacks and short activities between study sessions. Youth may be able to earn community service points by participating.

Advertise the event in your community as “Safe Harbor.”



Exploration: Future and Mission

⑩ The Story Tellers (Exploring and Engaging)

Leader preparation: Research Reverend Bill at www.revilly.com. Engaging the community with impromptu theater (it looks impromptu but actually requires planning and rehearsing) is distinctly part of the emerging Christian church and appeals to youth.

Supplies:

- small groups of interested people, all ages
- paper and pen
- contact information of group members

Discovery: Luke 19:1–10; Hebrews 13:1–8, 15–16
Scripture: Genesis 18:1–15 (21:1–17); Isaiah 25:1–9
Discipleship: John 13:1–17, 31b–35; Acts 2:42–47
Christian Tradition: Mark 14:22–25; 1 Peter 4:1–11
Context and Mission: Romans 12:9–18; John 6:1–21
Future and Vision: Luke 14:15–24; Mark 10:13–16

Plan to tell the scripture stories used in the six Explorations of “Forming Community: Giving and Receiving Hospitality.” You can tell the story in a biblical setting or in a contemporary setting. Organize a small group for each story. Meet once per week for rehearsals. If needed, include rehearsal time during your congregation’s education time. Have each actor provide his or her own costume for the event. Include props and scenery that can be quickly changed and transported. Arrange a time and location for “Story Tellers” appearance. This could be an impromptu event during fellowship hour, during small group studies during the week, a planned but exciting interruption during worship, in the parking lot as people come in to worship, in the narthex before worship, or as a part of a larger community-wide event.

⑪ Practicing Discernment (Deciding and Discerning)

Leader Preparation: Discernment is often seen as an individual practice. Learning discernment as a group process requires practice. Read through the activity so that you are comfortable leading. If you have a large group, recruit additional

leaders as necessary to form groups of about 10 or 12 participants. Gather supplies and prepare the space.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint or a white board and markers
- a comfortable room with chairs for all participants
- a table where participants can work on art projects
- a low table in the center of a circle allows for some participants to sit back while others work at the table
- simple art supplies: colored pencils, crayons, modeling clay and/or water-color paints and paper.
- snacks (optional)

Welcome the participants as they arrive. Invite them to find a comfortable place to sit. Show them the art supplies and invite those who wish to do so to play with the supplies provided. Tell them that they do not have to produce finished artwork, but can just play with the supplies while the group discusses. Invite the adults to assist children and to play with the media themselves.

When all are comfortable, tell them that your group has the task of thinking of a way for your church to demonstrate hospitality. Remind them that the church has long used prayer as a way of discerning what God is calling it to do. Have them find 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, and invite someone to read the verses. Invite the group to think of the gifts that others have brought to the group. Go around the group naming each individual and inviting the group to name the gifts that person brings. You may need to give simple examples: “Kyra has a cheerful smile.” “Jason is good at solving problems.” List these different gifts on newsprint or a white board. When each person has been recognized and gifts have been identified, remind the group of all of the gifts your group has. Ask them to think how these gifts might be used to help your church extend hospitality to others. Tell participants they might have ideas they want to share in words, or they might want to draw or sculpt their ideas. Allow a few minutes of quiet for thinking.

Invite the participants to share their ideas. Record the ideas so that they can be reviewed later.

Reflect

Intergenerational events, when planned well, bring together a community of faith. We learn the language of our faith community by participating in group events of hospitality. Since the first century, people have recognized faith communities by how they treated one another, in ways not seen in secular settings. The giving and receiving that is so necessary to make an event possible embody what Jesus shows and tells us in the Gospels. As we invite the stranger, serve the least among us, work together in spiritual formation, we become “The Church.”

As a group decide on one or more ideas that can be accomplished by your group. Identify the steps it will take to implement the idea. What resources are needed? What timeline will you establish? How will you recruit volunteers? How can you involve more people in implementing this idea? Discuss how your group will follow up on their ideas.

Invite those who wish to do so to display any art they have created. Close with a brief prayer and snacks, if desired.