

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

There may be great diversity with this grouping of adults. There might be young adults who are just beginning to recognize the gifts and talents they have to offer. There might be mature adults who are wrestling to find something new or different about themselves in the way of gifts and talents. There might be older adults who are struggling to find ways to use their gifts of ministry as their physical or mental capacities change. As adults, we discover that we have talents in many areas of our lives. Whether in the workplace or in our relationships, whether through reflection or hands-on activities, or whether taking on new job responsibilities or beginning a new hobby, people in this age group have limitless possibilities for discovering gifts that can impact their ministry in the church and community. A willingness to be open no matter where one is in life's journey is important to the invitation and task of discovery.

About this Exploration

Throughout our whole lives we have the opportunity to discover our gifts of ministry. As we listen attentively to God's call and affirmation, identify our own passions, gifts, and skills, and participate in community where gifts are celebrated and shared, our gifts shape the unique ministry we have as we serve God and God's people. The process of discovery may involve prayer, community, scripture, nature, solitude, silence, and openness to the gentle nudging of the Spirit. We may be surprised by the Spirit, as well, and discover new and unexpected gifts along our journey.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Ezekiel 2:1-5
1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Leader Preparation

Discovery takes place all around us and in all types of ways. The discovery of a new song that stirs our hearts, the discovery of a new restaurant that has wonderful food, the discovery of a new author who can make the words on a page come alive in our imagination. The discovery of our gifts of ministry takes place all around us and in many different ways. Pause for a moment and consider how you discovered your own gifts of ministry in the past. How are your gifts still being discovered?

Read Ezekiel 2:1-5 and 1 Corinthians 1:1-9. In this Exploration, we have the chance to consider what it means to be called forth by God with the assurance that we have been equipped for the task or mission or ministry before us. How have you found that God has been beside you, “speaking with you,” just as God promised to Ezekiel? Recall a time when you were able to recognize God’s faithfulness in bringing forth the gift that you needed for a task or mission or ministry so that you were “not lacking any gift.” In the consideration of these texts, we will have the chance to remember that God has been present in the past, that God is present now, and that God will be with us in the future as we continue to be open to gifts of ministry in our lives.

Prayer: Holy One, allow your Spirit to move through me as I recall the discovery of my own gifts of ministry and as I search of new gifts that are yet to be uncovered. Help

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Acknowledging Our Giftedness (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9. Prepare a small worship space in the center of a meeting table or on a small table in the center of a circle of chairs. Place a votive candle in a holder on a colorful cloth, and light the candle before the group arrives. Write this on newsprint or a whiteboard:

What Are You Passionate About?

Display the newsprint or whiteboard where everyone can see it.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- colorful cloth
- votive candle and matches or lighter
- (optional) small table
- markers and newsprint or a whiteboard
- paper and pencils or pens

Greet each person, and invite everyone into the space that has been prepared. When everyone has gathered, invite people to a time of prayer, praying the following prayer (or one like it): *O God, thank you for inviting us into this adventure of discovering our gifts of ministry, gifts that you have given us to share with others and are always encouraging us to use them to serve you and to transform the world. Amen.*

Draw everyone’s attention to the question you posted on the newsprint or whiteboard. Read the question aloud, and invite the group to reflect on it silently for a moment. Invite participants to share their thoughts about the question. Invite a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 to the group. Hand out paper and pencils or pens and invite the group to write down words that come to their mind about discovery of gifts with the following questions in mind. Participants may want a Bible to review the passage on their own while they contemplate.

- What do you find surprising about this text?
- Comforting?
- Challenging?
- Encouraging?

After a time of reflection, invite participants to share their thoughts and feelings. Point out that acknowledging that we are already gifted—“not lacking any spiritual gift”—can seem hard to believe when one is struggling to discover one’s gifts of ministry. Pray a prayer offering thanks for the passions that had been shared. Ask God to encourage each person to further exploration in how his or her passion might be a gift of ministry.

2 Mirror, Mirror

Leader preparation: Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Place chairs in a circle, and put a mirror under each chair. The “Spiritual Gifts Inventory” was compiled by the Rev. Carol Shanks, pastor of Bethel United Church of Christ in Chahokia, Illinois. You can find more information at the church website, <http://www.cahokiaucc.org/>.



me create a space of celebration for others to give thanks for their own gifts. Help me create a space of safety so that new gifts might be explored and discovered among the group that will gather. Amen.

Session Development

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

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

Supplies:

- Bible
- small, hand-held mirror for each person
- “Spiritual Gifts Inventory,” Attachment: Activity 2a
- “Tally of Results,” Attachment: Activity 2b
- “Description of Gifts,” Attachment: Activity 2c
- pencils or pens
- markers

Discovery is a process that happens as we examine ourselves, looking at the gifts, talents, passions, and skills that we possess, along with the discernment of the wider community as they affirm those gifts, talents, and skills. Explain that this activity will invite participants to look at themselves, both literally and reflectively, as they are given the opportunity to explore what gifts of ministry they already possess.

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 to the group. Invite the group to reflect silently on the text for a moment. Have the participants reach under their chairs, pick up the mirrors, and hold them in front of their faces. Invite them to say aloud together, “Mirror, Mirror, in my hand, what gifts of ministry do I have?”

Explain that an inventory of each person’s spiritual gifts might help answer that question. Distribute a copy of the handout “Spiritual Gifts Inventory” to each person, and have the group fill out their profiles. When the profiles are complete, have the group score their inventories using the handout “Tally of Results.” Then give everyone a copy of “Description of Gifts” so they may read more about their gifts. Invite people to share what they were most surprised by, what they found affirming, and what new interests or gifts they discovered. Pray a prayer that offers thanks for the many gifts given to the Body of Christ for helping ministry to take place in the church, in the community, and in the world.

③ What Can I Bring?

Leader preparation: Prior to this activity ask the participants to bring a small object that represents a natural gift, talent, or skill that they feel God has blessed them with. Prepare a small worship space in the center of a meeting table or on a small table in the center of a circle of chairs. Place a pillar candle on a colorful cloth and light the candle before the group arrives.

Supplies:

- colorful cloth
- pillar candle and matches
- (optional) small table
- items from participants representing a natural gift, talent, or skill

Greet each person as he or she arrives. When everyone is there, invite the participants to share the object they brought that represents a natural gift, talent, or skill that they feel God has blessed them with. If someone forgot or didn’t know about bringing an item, suggest that they can describe an item for the group. After each person shares, invite him or her to place the object on the table with the candle.

Engage the group in conversation about their gifts using the following questions.

- What are your favorite ways of using your gifts or abilities to help others or to serve God?
- How do you use your gifts or abilities differently at home, in your work place, in daily life, in the community, or in the church?
- What was it like to choose an object to represent your gift, talent, or skill?



- How do you think that God wants you to use your gifts and abilities more fully to make the world a better place?

Pray a prayer of gratitude for the gifts that are represented in the symbols and objects on the table using the following prayer (or one like it): *Holy One, thank you for the gifts, talents, and skills of your people, especially those gathered in this circle, who have shared with one another today. Continue to encourage us to use our gifts for the greater good of all people. May we be open to fresh ways and new opportunities to use our giftedness to bring about justice and peace. May we be attentive to your Spirit that continues to grow within us. Amen.*

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Look and See, Look and See (Easy Preparation))

Leader preparation: Plan to meet outdoors or in a room with a window and a view of nature. If neither is possible, gather pictures of nature and creation from magazines or the Internet and display them around the room.

Supplies:

- (optional) pictures of nature and creation

Invite the participants simply to look around at the beauty of creation, whether you are outside, looking out a window, or looking at pictures of creation. After a few moments, invite them to consider the following questions.

- What gifts can you see in creation?
- What small gifts are offered by creation?
- What large gifts are given?
- How might we use these examples to examine our own gifts of ministry?
- What gifts of nature are used in the ministry that happens in this church or community?
- What might creation teach us concerning the use of our natural gifts?

Invite participants to share examples of how they are using or might use their natural gifts of ministry. Pray a prayer of gratitude for the gifts of creation and the gifts of ministry that have been given to us by God.

5 Who Me?

Leader preparation: Read Ezekiel 2:1–5. Prepare a way for the group to hear the song.

Supplies:

- Bible
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- song: “Here I Am, Lord” by Daniel L. Schutte (tune: Here I Am, Lord); video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GINNh15cT08>; lyrics, http://hymnlyrics.org/mostpopularhymns/here_i_am_lord.html
- computer with Internet access and speakers

Invite someone to read Ezekiel 2:1–5 to the group. Then invite two people to read the text with one being the voice of God and the other being the narrator, or author, of the text. Invite a third person to read the text in a creative way using emphasis and expression to bring the text to life.



Ask the participants to share what words or phrases pop out for them after hearing the readings. Write their suggestions on the newsprint or a whiteboard. Engage the group in conversation using the following questions.

- What made these words or phrases stand out from the rest of the text?
- How do these words or phrases speak about their own sense of feeling called to use gifts of ministry?
- What do you think are the joys and challenges of being called to be a prophet?
- How have you embraced that invitation by God? How have you resisted it?
- Is God calling you to something new? How does that feel?
- What would make it easier to accept a call to use your gifts of ministry?

Draw the discussion to a close by inviting someone to read the text once again.

Listen to the song “Here I Am, Lord.” Provide each participant with the lyrics, and ask everyone to join their voices together and read the words of the refrain. Pause briefly to allow a time for silent reflection. Invite everyone to sing the song. If the group is familiar with the song, you may wish to sing it without accompaniment.



6 Help Me to See

Leader preparation: Read Genesis 32:22–32. Study the artwork and answer for yourself the questions posed in the activity.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: “Vision after the Sermon” by Paul Gauguin, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401
- (optional) computer with Internet access and projection capability

Invite a participant to read Genesis 32:22–32 to the group. Allow for a time of discussion about the text, offering the following questions.

- When have you felt as if you have wrestled with God?
- What feelings did you have as you struggled to understand what God was saying or where God was leading you?
- Did you ever catch yourself asking for the same thing that Jacob did, a blessing, in the midst of your wrestling or struggle?

Draw the group’s attention to the painting “Vision after the Sermon” by Paul Gauguin. Invite participants to look at the work for a few moments. Share a time of reflection together by offering the following questions.

- What or where are your eyes first drawn too in looking at the painting?
- What feelings come to the surface as you look at this work?
- Look at the observers of this event. What do you notice about them?
- The observers seem to be an important part of this work of art. How are those around us important in helping us discover our gifts of ministry?
- What might be helpful to you, in seeking to discover your gifts of ministry, to hear from others?

Pray the following or a similar prayer: *O God of Blessing, as we wrestle to discover our gifts of ministry help us to know the gift of community that surrounds us. Help us to be open to their observations, to their affirmations, to their prayers on our behalf as we seek and search. Amen.*



Sending & Serving Activities

7 **The Truth about Ourselves (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Prepare a small worship space in the center of a meeting table or on a small table in the center of a circle of chairs. Place a votive candle in a candle holder on a colorful cloth and light the candle before the group arrives. If a candle is not available, consider using a Bible to pass around the group.

Supplies:

- colorful cloth
- votive candle and matches or lighter, or a Bible
- (optional) small table
- watch or clock with second hand
- small bell

Explain to the group that everyone will take a turn holding the candle. While they have the candle, the rest of the group will name gifts that are seen and appreciated in the one holding the candle for two minutes. Encourage the group to be as specific as possible in naming the each person's gifts. Tell the group that you will keep time and ring a bell when the candle is to be passed to the next person in the circle. When everyone has had a turn, give thanks to God for all the gifts with which the group has been blessed.



8 **God's Invitation**

Leader preparation: Read Mathew 7:7-8. Think about how this text offers the chance to ask God for gifts of ministry, searching for gifts of ministry in our lives, and to expect to be given a chance to use those gifts as we knock on the door of opportunity where those gifts of ministry will allow us to serve God and others. Recall a time when this sequence of asking, seeking, and knocking happened in your life.

Prepare three sheets of newsprint with one of these words on each sheet: Ask, Search, Knock.

Supplies:

- Bible
- markers and newsprint
- tape
- "God's Invitation," Attachment: Activity 8

Ask one of the participants to read Matthew 7:7-8. Place the three sheets of newsprint in the room where everyone can view them, and explain that you will be writing words or phrases that are shared during the conversation on each sheet. Encourage conversation about the text using questions such as:

- What are some gifts of ministry that you have asked for in the past?
- What are some gifts that you would ask for now?
- Imagine what gifts of ministry you might need in the future.
- How have you searched for your gifts of ministry?
- Where has your search to discover your gifts led you?
- What was most exciting about the search? Most challenging?
- Think about a time when you "knocked" on the door, hoping to discover a chance to use your gifts of ministry?
- Recall a time when someone "knocked" on your door wanting your help in their own discovery.



- What door would you like to “knock” on next? What is preventing you from doing so?

Finish the time together using the handout “God’s Invitation.”

🕒 Opening the Door

Leader preparation: Read 1 Corinthians 1:1–9. Reflect on how this text might be an invitation to open the door to the possibilities of one’s gifts of ministry. Write the following quotation on a sheet of newsprint:

It’s as if we were caught in a darkened vestibule between an old way of being and a new . . . the doors of the past close behind us. The doors to the future are still unopened. Too often we forget that only by enduring our time in the liminal space between those doors, waiting for an opening, can we eventually move freely across a threshold into the future.

—Jane R. Pretat, *Coming of Age: The Croning Years and Late-life Transformation*

Supplies:

- Bible
- prepared newsprint with Pretat quotation
- 8½” × 11” white paper for each participant
- markers, crayons, and colored pencils
- old magazines
- scissors
- glue sticks

Draw the group’s attention to the Pretat quotation. Invite a volunteer to read the quotation slowly, allowing the words to hang in the air. After the reading, pause for a moment of reflection. Engage the group in conversation using the following questions.

Reflect

Discovery is an exciting and challenging process. It is about invitation and encouragement. How has this process of discovery been for you as you have led these opportunities? What have you learned about yourself? What gifts of ministry have you affirmed for yourself, and what gifts of ministry did you discover that were new? Continue to seek opportunities where you can discover your gifts and the gifts of others of ministry.

- Name the adjectives that are in the quote. What do you notice about them?
- How is the image of the door inviting? Frightening? Exciting? Unnerving?
- When was a time that you felt “between the old way of being and a new”?

Distribute the paper and invite the participants to use the art supplies to illustrate their interpretation of the quotation, how it might relate to their discovery of their gifts of ministry, and their feelings of being at the threshold of something new in the future. Explain that they can also use the magazines to cut out words or pictures to illustrate their depictions. When all have completed their work, ask if anyone wishes to share their picture and a few words about what it means for them.

If you are able, display these works of art, along with the quote, in a place for others to see and enjoy.



Attachment: Activity 2a

Name: _____

Spiritual Gifts Inventory

For each ability in the first column of the table below, check the box that most applies to you.

| Ability | Yes, I have positive feelings and/or much enjoyment. Value: 4 | Sometimes, I have neutral feelings and/or modest enjoyment. Value: 2 | No, I have negative feelings and/or no enjoyment or Does Not Apply. Value: 0 |
|---|---|--|--|
| 1. I am able to organize ideas, things, time, and people for more effective results. | | | |
| 2. I receive much joy from working with my hands at various arts and crafts. | | | |
| 3. I find that my skills in building or repairing objects benefits others. | | | |
| 4. I like sharing with other people how God has changed my life. | | | |
| 5. I am able to share words of encouragement with those who are struggling in life. | | | |
| 6. There have been times when I have felt sure I knew God’s specific will for the future, even when others have not been so sure. | | | |
| 7. I am so confident that God will meet my needs that I give to God sacrificially and consistently. | | | |
| 8. I find joy in being a help to someone who can utilize my help and concern. | | | |
| 9. My home is always open to people passing through who need a place to stay | | | |
| 10. When I am asked to pray for others, I feel that my prayers will have tangible results. | | | |
| 11. Oftentimes, I am able to perceive what is in the heart or mind of another person. | | | |

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Attachment: Activity 2a (Continued)

Name: _____

| Ability | Yes, I have positive feelings and/or much enjoyment. Value: 4 | Sometimes, I have neutral feelings and/or modest enjoyment. Value: 2 | No, I have negative feelings and/or no enjoyment or Does Not Apply. Value: 0 |
|--|---|--|--|
| 12. I am able to motivate people into getting things done. | | | |
| 13. I enjoy doing things to comfort people during sickness or times of problems and/or anxiety. | | | |
| 14. When I am singing, I feel a great sense of joy. | | | |
| 15. I would enjoy being involved in an instrumental music presentation. | | | |
| 16. I appreciate being called on to do things for other people. | | | |
| 17. I have enjoyed relating to a certain group of people over a long period of time, sharing personally in their successes and failures. | | | |
| 18. I feel that I can communicate biblical truths to others so that they are helped. | | | |
| 19. When important decisions need to be made, I sense a confidence in God's guidance. | | | |
| 20. When I use my ability to write, I know others will learn and grow from it. | | | |
| 21. I am able to plan and administer programs which will be of benefit to others. | | | |
| 22. I enjoy the times that I am able to create beautiful items with my hands. | | | |
| 23. I enjoy the work necessary for gardening, landscaping, and other projects. | | | |
| 24. I feel comfortable telling others how God has changed my life. | | | |

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Attachment: Activity 2a (Continued)

Name: _____

| Ability | Yes, I have positive feelings and/or much enjoyment. Value: 4 | Sometimes, I have neutral feelings and/or modest enjoyment. Value: 2 | No, I have negative feelings and/or no enjoyment or Does Not Apply. Value: 0 |
|--|---|--|--|
| 25. I am able to talk with and build up those who are having difficulties in life, whether they are in despair, sorrow, or not sure of themselves. | | | |
| 26. When in a group, I am the one others often look to for vision and direction. | | | |
| 27. I am ready to forego certain privileges in order to give money to God’s work. | | | |
| 28. When I serve the Lord, I really don’t care who gets the credit. | | | |
| 29. I enjoy inviting visitors and guests (strangers) home to dinner after Sunday morning worship. | | | |
| 30. I take prayer requests very seriously and pray until the answer comes. | | | |
| 31. I have the ability to discover new truths for myself through reading or observing situation first hand. | | | |
| 32. I am able to lead small and/or large groups of people into making decisions. | | | |
| 33. I enjoy helping and working with those people who are ignored by others. | | | |
| 34. In the area of vocal music, I enjoy performing alone and/or in a group of singers. | | | |
| 35. When playing an instrument, I intuitively sense where the music is flowing, rather than relying completely on a written musical score. | | | |
| 36. When other people ask me to lend a helping hand, I feel special. | | | |

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Attachment: Activity 2a (Continued)

Name: _____

| Ability | Yes, I have positive feelings and/or much enjoyment. Value: 4 | Sometimes, I have neutral feelings and/or modest enjoyment. Value: 2 | No, I have negative feelings and/or no enjoyment or Does Not Apply. Value: 0 |
|--|---|--|--|
| 37. I feel comfortable in leading a small group in Bible study. | | | |
| 38. I find it rewarding to teach people more about the Lord. | | | |
| 39. When a person has a problem, as a Christian I can frequently see what is best to do. | | | |
| 40. I find pleasure in composing and writing paragraphs and stories for the growth of others. | | | |
| 41. I can easily delegate important responsibilities to other people. | | | |
| 42. I find joy in having a beautiful lawn, flowers, and shrubs which are properly placed and cared for. | | | |
| 43. The repair and maintenance of things comes easily to me. | | | |
| 44. It is easy for me to talk to other people about life and/or spiritual matters. | | | |
| 45. I am able to speak words of encouragement to those who are troubled, discouraged, or not sure of themselves. | | | |
| 46. I am able to trust in the reliability of God when all else looks dim. | | | |
| 47. I am content to maintain a lower standard of living in order to financially benefit God's work. | | | |
| 48. When I do things behind the scenes and others are helped, I am joyful. | | | |
| 49. I am able to provide food and/or lodging graciously and willingly to people who are in need. | | | |

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Attachment: Activity 2a (Continued)

Name: _____

| Ability | Yes, I have positive feelings and/or much enjoyment. Value: 4 | Sometimes, I have neutral feelings and/or modest enjoyment. Value: 2 | No, I have negative feelings and/or no enjoyment or Does Not Apply. Value: 0 |
|--|---|--|--|
| 50. I find myself praying when I could be doing other things. | | | |
| 51. Through study or experience, I have been able to discern the wisest course of action to take in major decisions. | | | |
| 52. When a group I am in is lacking organization, I tend to step in to fill the gap. | | | |
| 53. Sometimes when I help people out, I know they may not even say "thank you," but I still enjoy helping them. | | | |
| 54. I enjoy singing familiar Gospel songs with a group of fellow Christians. | | | |
| 55. I know my performance of instrumental music has been a blessing to others. | | | |
| 56. I respond cheerfully when asked to do a job, even if it seems menial. | | | |
| 57. I enjoy leading small groups of people, especially when I am able to show genuine care and concern for them. | | | |
| 58. I enjoy helping others learn things about scripture that aid in building them up. | | | |
| 59. I can intuitively arrive at solutions to fairly complicated problems. | | | |
| 60. I am able to put my thoughts and ideas into positive, written form. | | | |
| 61. I am able to set goals and objectives, and then make plans to reach them. | | | |

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Attachment: Activity 2a (Continued)

Name: _____

| Ability | Yes, I have positive feelings and/or much enjoyment. Value: 4 | Sometimes, I have neutral feelings and/or modest enjoyment. Value: 2 | No, I have negative feelings and/or no enjoyment or Does Not Apply. Value: 0 |
|---|---|--|--|
| 62. I find joy in painting pictures or in making handcrafted objects. | | | |
| 63. I find joy in lawn care and other outside maintenance. | | | |
| 64. When I share my faith with others, I see positive results in their lives. | | | |
| 65. I often share words of comfort, cheer, or encouragement with others. | | | |
| 66. I really believe that God will not let me down, even though everything around me seems to be falling apart. | | | |
| 67. I really enjoy giving my time and treasures to God's work. | | | |
| 68. I am able to assist key leaders to relieve them of detail work, so they can get back to their main job. | | | |
| 69. When people visit me at home, I am confident they feel good about being there. | | | |
| 70. I regard prayer as one of my favorite spiritual exercises. | | | |
| 71. I am able to pick up on important biblical truths that benefit myself and others. | | | |
| 72. People look to me as a leader when things need to be done. | | | |
| 73. I enjoy working with those less fortunate than me. | | | |
| 74. I am able to lead others in singing. | | | |

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Attachment: Activity 2a (Continued)

Name: _____

| Ability | Yes, I have positive feelings and/or much enjoyment. Value: 4 | Sometimes, I have neutral feelings and/or modest enjoyment. Value: 2 | No, I have negative feelings and/or no enjoyment or Does Not Apply. Value: 0 |
|---|---|--|--|
| 75. I enjoy using my instrumental music talents for the appreciation of my friends and to the glory of God. | | | |
| 76. I enjoy being a follower more than a leader. | | | |
| 77. I have brought friends or relatives back to faith who have strayed away. | | | |
| 78. I enjoy teaching children or adults about God’s love. | | | |
| 79. If one of my friends is faced with a problem, I am able to sort out what God’s will is for them. | | | |
| 80. I enjoy writing words that will be of benefit to those who read them. | | | |

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Attachment: Activity 2b

Name: _____

Tally of Results

Now that you have finished responding to the statements in your Spiritual Gifts Inventory, tally your results. Record the numerical value of each statement on the grid below.

- Any statement you checked the **Yes** column is given the value of **4**.
- Any statement you checked the **Sometimes** column is given the value of **2**.
- Any statement you checked the **No** column is given the value of **0**.

| Value you assigned to Statements 1 through 80 | | | | Total value of row | Gift |
|--|----|----|----|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 21 | 41 | 61 | | Administration |
| 2 | 22 | 42 | 62 | | Craftsmanship (Arts/Craft) |
| 3 | 23 | 43 | 63 | | Craftsmanship (Manual) |
| 4 | 24 | 44 | 64 | | Evangelism |
| 5 | 25 | 45 | 65 | | Exhortation |
| 6 | 26 | 46 | 66 | | Faith |
| 7 | 27 | 47 | 67 | | Giving |
| 8 | 28 | 48 | 68 | | Helps |
| 9 | 29 | 49 | 69 | | Hospitality |
| 10 | 30 | 50 | 70 | | Prayer |
| 11 | 31 | 51 | 71 | | Knowledge |
| 12 | 32 | 52 | 72 | | Leadership |
| 13 | 33 | 53 | 73 | | Mercy |
| 14 | 34 | 54 | 74 | | Music (Vocal) |
| 15 | 35 | 55 | 75 | | Music (Instrumental) |
| 16 | 36 | 56 | 76 | | Serving |
| 17 | 37 | 57 | 77 | | Shepherding |
| 18 | 38 | 58 | 78 | | Teaching |
| 19 | 39 | 59 | 79 | | Wisdom |
| 20 | 40 | 60 | 80 | | Writing |

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Attachment: Activity 2c

Name: _____

Description of Spiritual Gifts

The inventory has given you a tentative evaluation of your gifts. This is a guideline for you to follow when you experiment with the gifts and determine the specific gifts with which God has blessed you.

Administration:

The gift of administration will benefit you in understanding and setting goals for various groups and organizations. It will give you direction in making plans to achieve those goals. You will be able to plan programming, work with facts and/or figures, and see that goals and ideas are accomplished.

Scriptural References: I Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:8, Acts 6:1-7.

Craftsmanship (Arts/Crafts):

This gift or glorified talent will give you the ability to use your hands, thoughts, and mind to further God’s Kingdom through artistic, creative means. You may also serve as a trainer for others to develop their abilities in this area.

Scriptural References: Exodus 31:3-11, Ezekiel 27:4, I Chronicles 4:14.

Craftsmanship (Manual):

This gift or glorified talent will give you the ability to use your hands and ideas in the areas of maintenance and upkeep of God’s physical blessings.

Scriptural References: II Chronicles 34:9-13, I Chronicles 4:14, Ezekiel 27:4-9.

Evangelism:

The gift of evangelism will give you the power to share the Good News of the love of Jesus with the lost, in such a way that those with whom you share will come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Scriptural References: Ephesians 4:11, Acts 5:42, Acts 8:5-8, Acts 13:42-43, Acts 11:20-21.

Exhortation:

The gift of exhortation will allow you to speak words of comfort, encouragement, admonition, or counsel to members of the Body of Christ in such a way that they will be strengthened and built up.

Scriptural References: Romans 12:8, Acts 14:21-22, Hebrews 10:25.

Faith:

The gift of faith will allow you to see with confidence what God’s will is for your life and, more importantly, for the Body of Christ you are a member of. You will have no fear of moving ahead, even through everything around you seems to be holding you back.

Scriptural References: I Corinthians 12:9, Romans 4:20-21, Acts 27:21-25.

Giving:

The gift of giving will allow you to give liberally of your treasures and time. As you give, you will experience much joy and satisfaction.

Scriptural References: Romans 12:8, Mark 12:41-44, Malachi 3:10, II Corinthians 8:1-7.

“Spiritual Gifts Inventory” compiled by The Rev. Carol Shanks, www.cahokiaucc.org. Used by permission.



Attachment: Activity 2c (Continued)

Name: _____

Helps:

The gift of helps will give you the opportunity to help other members of the Body of Christ grow in their service. You will feel needed as you relieve others of tasks that are burdening them.

Scriptural References: I Corinthians 12:28, Romans 16:1-2, Mark 2:3-4.

Hospitality:

The gift of hospitality will give you the opportunity to be open and caring to those in need. You will enjoy having people in your home and will feel good as you provide food and lodging.

Scriptural References: I Peter 4:9-10, Acts 16:15, III John 1:5-8.

Knowledge:

The gift of knowledge will give you the ability to use information and ideas you have learned and thought out for the well-being of the Body of Christ. Your sharing of your gift of knowledge will allow the church to become healthy and grow.

Scriptural References: I Corinthians 12:8, I Corinthians 13:8, I Corinthians 13:2.

Leadership:

The gift of leadership will allow you to be a goal setter and leader of God’s people. They will look to you for guidance and direction. Your leadership will bring glory to God and growth to His church.

Scriptural References: Hebrews 13:17, Acts 7:10.

Mercy:

The gift of mercy allows you to reach out to people who are in need. Your words of care and concern, your actions, will aid in building up those who may have physical, mental, or emotional problems. The things you will do will allow those you serve to see the love of Christ in you and through you.

Scriptural References: Romans 12:8, Acts 9:36, Luke 10:33-35.

Music (Instrumental):

This gift or glorified talent will allow you to play an instrument in such a manner that it will bring praise to God and build up those around you.

Scriptural References: I Chronicles 16:42, Psalm 150:4-5, Isaiah 38:20.

Music (Vocal):

This gift or glorified talent will allow you to use your voice to sing praises to the Lord in such a manner that those around you will feel strengthened and built up.

Scriptural References: Colossians 3:16, II Chronicles 5:12-13, Nehemiah 12:42, James 5:13.

Prayer:

This gift or unique role will allow you to pray for other members of the Body in such a way that your prayers will be of benefit to them. You will enjoy praying regularly and, perhaps, for extended periods of time. You will be able to see frequent and specific answers to prayer that many of your fellow Christians who do not have the gift cannot see.

Scriptural References: James 5:14-16, Colossians 4:12, Acts 6:4, Acts 12:5, Ephesians 6:18.

“Spiritual Gifts Inventory” compiled by The Rev. Carol Shanks, www.cahokiaucc.org. Used by permission.



Attachment: Activity 2c (Continued)

Name: _____

Serving:

The gift of serving will allow you to see things that need to be done. Often these are tasks overlooked by others, especially those in leadership positions. Assuming the role of the servant will bring you much joy and will build up the Body of Christ.

Scriptural References: Romans 12:7, II Timothy 1:16–18, Romans 14:18–19.

Shepherding

The gift of shepherding (pastoring) will give you the ability to reach out and care in a spiritual manner for an individual or for a group. You will serve as one who is a counselor, an encourager, a shepherd. You will see that God's Word is fed to those in your care and you will also feel a responsibility for the general well-being of the individual or group.

Scriptural References: Ephesians 4:11, I Thessalonians 5:12, Acts 20:28.

Teaching:

The gift of teaching will give you the ability to share knowledge with members of the Body (children and/or adults) that will serve in building them up in Christ. Your teaching will aid the growth and health of the Body of Christ.

Scriptural References: I Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:7, Ephesians 4:11, Acts 20:20–21.

Wisdom:

The gift of wisdom will allow you to have a special understanding of situations which arise in people's lives. You will be able to offer counsel and advice. As you do this, the Body of Christ will become healthier and grow.

Scriptural References: I Corinthians 12:8, Acts 6:3–10, I Corinthians 2:6–16.

Writing:

This gift or glorified talent will allow you to put your thoughts and ideas into words that will be meaningful and relevant to those who read them. As they are read, people will find guidance, knowledge, courage, or edification.

Scriptural References: Psalm 45:1, Philipians 3:1, Jude 3:1.



Attachment: Activity 8

God's Invitation

A Litany for God's People Who Are Asking, Search, and Knocking

One: O God, you invite us to discover our gifts of ministry.

All: We ask now that you show us the gifts we have to offer your people.

One: You encourage us to search and to seek out the gifts of ministry we have and that we need in providing for those around us.

All: We search now for the gifts that will help us to be faithful disciples.

One: You listen for us at the door.

All: We are knocking, waiting for the opportunity to use our gifts in ministry with and for others.

One: We come asking, searching, and knocking.

All: Make us bold in our asking, diligent in our searching, and persistent in our knocking so that when the door is open, we are ready and equipped with gifts of ministry. Amen.

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Stories are a familiar way people share what is happening in their lives. Therefore, young and old persons will be able to relate to how people have related to the world around them through story. There will be those who can recall the stories with great clarity, as they learned the characters and plots from their youth. There will be those who are new to the study of scripture who will be unfamiliar with the narratives. The activities of this Exploration are designed to help anyone participate in the discovery of insights held within the stories of scripture.

About this Exploration

Scripture is the story of God's people, a collection of stories about people and communities trying to capture their experiences with God. Through the stories passed down through the ages, new readers are invited to explore how God has invited people to discover the gifts of ministry that belong to them. Scripture offers a unique opportunity for each person to engage in the unearthing the God-given talents and skills they have to offer to others.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

1 Kings 3:3-15
Mark 1:14-20

Leader Preparation

Read the Bible Focus Passages for this Exploration. One story has a leader asking for wisdom; another story tells of calling. What words or thoughts come to the forefront for you as you read the stories? How does God interact with the people within the stories? Take a moment to reflect on how you have been called to lead this Exploration on the faith practice of Discovering Gifts of Ministry through scripture and what you might need to ask of God to help you in your leading and in your own growth through this experience.

Prayer: Holy One, as I offer my leadership to this group of people, help me to have wisdom and insight to guide this study of scripture, the story of your people. May this be a chance for each person in the group to learn more about you, more about the sacred stories, and about themselves. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Follow Me! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Mark 1:14-20. Think of several easy tasks that you will use in the game “Simon Says” as part of this activity.

Supplies:

- Bible

In this story in Mark, Jesus invites several people to follow him. In the familiar children’s game Simon Says, the participants are asked to “follow” the leader by doing just as they have said, but only when “Simon says.” Invite the group to stand and play a few rounds of this game, with you as the leader calling out the commands: “Simon says, touch your nose.” “Simon says, turn around.” You can choose four or five tasks to have them do. Be sure and use at least one task without saying “Simon says.”

Read Mark 1:14-20 aloud. Invite the group to reflect on how Jesus invited these men to follow him and they did so, calling them away from what they had known and from what they were doing. As you have conversation about how Jesus called these men to follow him, invite the group to share how God has called them to drop their “nets” and follow in a different direction. How has this opened up new possibilities for gifts of ministry?

2 Scripture’s Lens

Leader preparation: Read Psalm 38:9-10. Reflect on how these words speak about longing and how this might intersect with discovering gifts of ministry. Collect a bunch of old eyeglasses to use in this exercise.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- old reading glasses

Invite the participants to choose a pair of glasses. If a participant already wears glasses, ask him or her to remove them. Have the participants try to read Psalm 38:9-10. Engage the participants in conversation using the following questions.

- How does having glasses on, or not, help or hinder your ability to read?
- How can having a different set of “lens” help us to discern our gifts of ministry?
- In what ways does scripture provided that set of lens?
- How have your eyes have been opened to see their own gifts of ministry?

Close this activity by praying the following or a similar prayer: *God who knows our longings, open our eyes to see the possibilities revealed through the wisdom of your Word that invites us to discover our gifts that we offer. Amen.*

3 Receiving the Call

Leader preparation: Invite several people to be a part of a panel, including one clergy person, if possible, to come to the group to talk about their “calling” to their profession.



Session Development

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

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

Supplies:

- invited guests

Throughout the stories of scripture, “calling” is an important way God’s people have learned to hear God’s invitation to be a part of what God is doing in the world. Whether it has been to be a doctor, a stay-at-home mom, a teacher, or a pastor, calling has been that invitation to participate in what we are passion about.

Have the invited guests describe their “call stories” about how they recognized the summons to do something specifically with their gifts and talents and skills. After the panel has had an opportunity to share their stories, invite conversation and questions. If time permits, ask others in the group to talk about their “callings.”

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 The Word Made Real (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read John 1:1–5. Take note of how the word “Word” is used in this scripture text. The author’s use of “Word” refers to Jesus, God’s “Word” made evident in the world. Reflect on how in your life the word/Word has been made real as you sought to discover your own gifts of ministry. Think of others that have made the “Word” more real for you in experience the presence of God.

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper
- pencils or pens

The stories of scripture are made with ordinary words. Yet, in John 1:1–5, the author invites the reader to take note of the “Word” made flesh, made real in the life and ministry of Jesus. Ask one of the participants to read this scripture text. Invite discussion using the following questions.

- What does “Word” mean for you in this passage?
- How does the “Word” bring life for you?
- How can the word of scripture bring life?
- How might our “word” speak life to another?
- How is our “word” linked to our gifts of ministry?
- Describe how you practice being the “Word” for another.

Have the participants write a “word” to describe how they are practicing gifts of ministry, thus being the “Word” for another. Invite the participants to then share their words with the group.



5 Role Models

Leader preparation: Read 1 Kings 3:3–15. Acquire “Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: “Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner, <http://www.art.com/products/p10286254-sa-i677605/henry-ossawa-tanner-the-banjo-lesson.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=6ce32fa19f9d47aaa58758970c9f0162&searchstring=banjo+lesson>



Have someone from the group read 1 Kings 3:3–15. Display “Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner. Role models can be very important in helping us develop our sense of personhood. Through their examples we can see how we want to copy the pattern they have lived in their lives. In this scripture story, David is a role model for Solomon in the way that David loved God. Invite members of the group to talk about the role models that have been important in their lives. Welcome conversation around the following questions.

- How have these individuals helped to provide guidance?
- How have these individuals set a pattern of living that makes one want to pattern their own lives after theirs?
- How are we being role models for another generation, or how are we not?
- What are lives saying to those around us?
- How does this artwork depict what has been discussed about role models?
- Who is the role model in this picture? Put the other character in the place of the role model. How does that change your perspective?
- How does this picture suggest that gifts of ministry are fostered through role models?

Close this activity by praying the following or a similar prayer: *Gracious God, who gives us role models to help guide us, thank you for their wisdom and guidance in our lives. Help us, through our own gifts of ministry, to be role models for others. Amen.*



6 Beauty in Diversity

Leader preparation: Read 1 Corinthians 12:1–11. Look deeply at the painting “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” by Gustav Klimt. When considering our gifts of ministry, how might this painting also help us to appreciate the diversity of those gifts? What flower represents your gift?

In setting up the room for this exercise, make sure that a copy of the artwork is available for all to see.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” by Gustav Klimt, <http://www.art.com/products/p15177883-sa-i3715775/gustav-klimt-farm-garden-with-sunflowers-c1912.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=55eedd136d4049bcaab8f63c70afd3e3&searchstring=klimt+farm+garden+with+sunflowers>
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- (optional) packet of flower seeds for each person

Ask the participants to take a few moments to look at “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” (c.1912) by Gustav Klimt. Invite them to share their first impressions, and record these responses on the newsprint or whiteboard. Invite someone to read aloud 1 Corinthians 12:1–11. Invite the group to consider how the scripture passage might be seen in the images from this artwork using the following questions.

- Do some gifts hold more beauty than others? Why or why not?
- Do some gifts of ministry seem to fade into the background? Why or why not?
- What flower/plant might you assign to your gift of ministry?
- How do you think it adds to the garden?

If you have chosen to have seed packets, distribute them to the participants encouraging them to go and plant the seeds and to watch their own garden grow, reminding them of the beauty of a variety of gifts of ministry.



Sending & Serving Activities

 7 **Storytelling in Song (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Go to the Book of Psalms. Read several of your favorites. Read several new ones. What rhythms do you notice in the words? What emotions come through in the words penned by the authors? What feelings bubble forth for you as you read the psalms? How might these poems, prayers, and laments of the early church speak to discovering gifts of ministry today? Think about these things as you prepare for this exercise.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Poetry, prayers, and laments can speak to our minds, hearts, and spirits differently than reading or hearing words often can. The Bible includes an entire section of poetry and songs: the Book of Psalms. The psalmists write beautiful words concerning creation, about death and destruction, and wrestle with life's most difficult challenges. Throughout the psalms the authors tell the stories of their lives and the lives of God's people. Joys and challenges, life and death, discovery and searching are all a part of these pieces.

Invite several of the participants to read aloud the following texts: Psalm 23, Psalm 40:1–8, Psalm 139, or Psalm 150. Invite everyone to contribute to the conversation using the following questions.

- What themes are there in these works?
- What feelings come through in these psalms?
- What life situation is the author dealing with in these works?
- What might be a situation or event from your life relating to what the author is saying?
- How can these psalms offer you comfort or assurance as you seek to discover your gifts of ministry?
- In Psalm 150 there are a variety of instruments offering praise to God. How might this offer a picture of our variety of gifts being used as an offering to God?
- If you were writing a psalm today, what would it be about?

Write the responses on the newsprint.

Close by reading Psalm 100 together.

8 **Casting Nets**

Leader preparation: Read Mark 1:14–40. Secure some fishing equipment to use as props in setting up the room, such as: fishing pole, tackle box, and fishing net. Obtain an inexpensive fishing net and cut out shapes of fish. Hang up the net so that the cutout fish can be placed in it.

Supplies:

- Bible
- inexpensive fish net
- “Fish Cutouts,” Attachment: Activity 8
- markers
- fish hooks (bent paper clips)



In this story, Jesus invites people to leave what they are doing and to begin doing something in a different way—to take their gifts and skills and use them in a new way. Invite one of the participants to read Mark 1:14–40. Encourage the group to recognize that God has called them because of the gifts that they have for ministry.

Hand out several fish cutouts to each participant from the attachment. Ask them to think about the gifts of ministry that they see in one another. Invite them to write those gifts on a fish, place a hook in them, and place their fish in the net.

Close your time with a prayer of thanksgiving for all the gifts and skills of ministry that are being offered to the community as you “fish for people.”

9 Go and Do

Leader preparation: This exercise focuses on Matthew 28:19–20, where Jesus is rather specific with his instructions to the disciples about what to do with the gifts that they have: go, make, baptize, teach, and remember. Think of how you have been a part of this commission in the past. Think of how you are a part of it now by leading this exercise.

Write each one of the verbs—“go,” “make,” “baptize,” “teach,” and “remember”—on a separate sheet of newsprint, writing large enough for the words to be seen by all. Hang the sheets around the room for all to see.

Supplies:

- Bible
- prepared newsprint
- markers
- tape or sticky tack

Ask someone to read Matthew 28:19–20 for the group. Introduce the verbs that are a part of the instructions given to Jesus’ followers in this story, indicating that they are listed on the newsprint around the room. Invite the participants to begin naming some of the gifts, talents, and skills that they have or that the community has as they relate to each of the five verbs. Invite them to write their responses under the appropriate verb.

Invite discussion using the following questions.

- What areas have a lot of items listed? Why do you think this so?
- What may be areas where it appears that more gifts, skills, or talents might be needed?
- What ministries might the church add to enhance its commitment to these five aspects of discipleship?

Conclude with this or a similar prayer: *Commissioning God, help us to go, to make, to baptize, to teach, and to remember as we are your disciples, gifted for ministry in the world. Amen.*

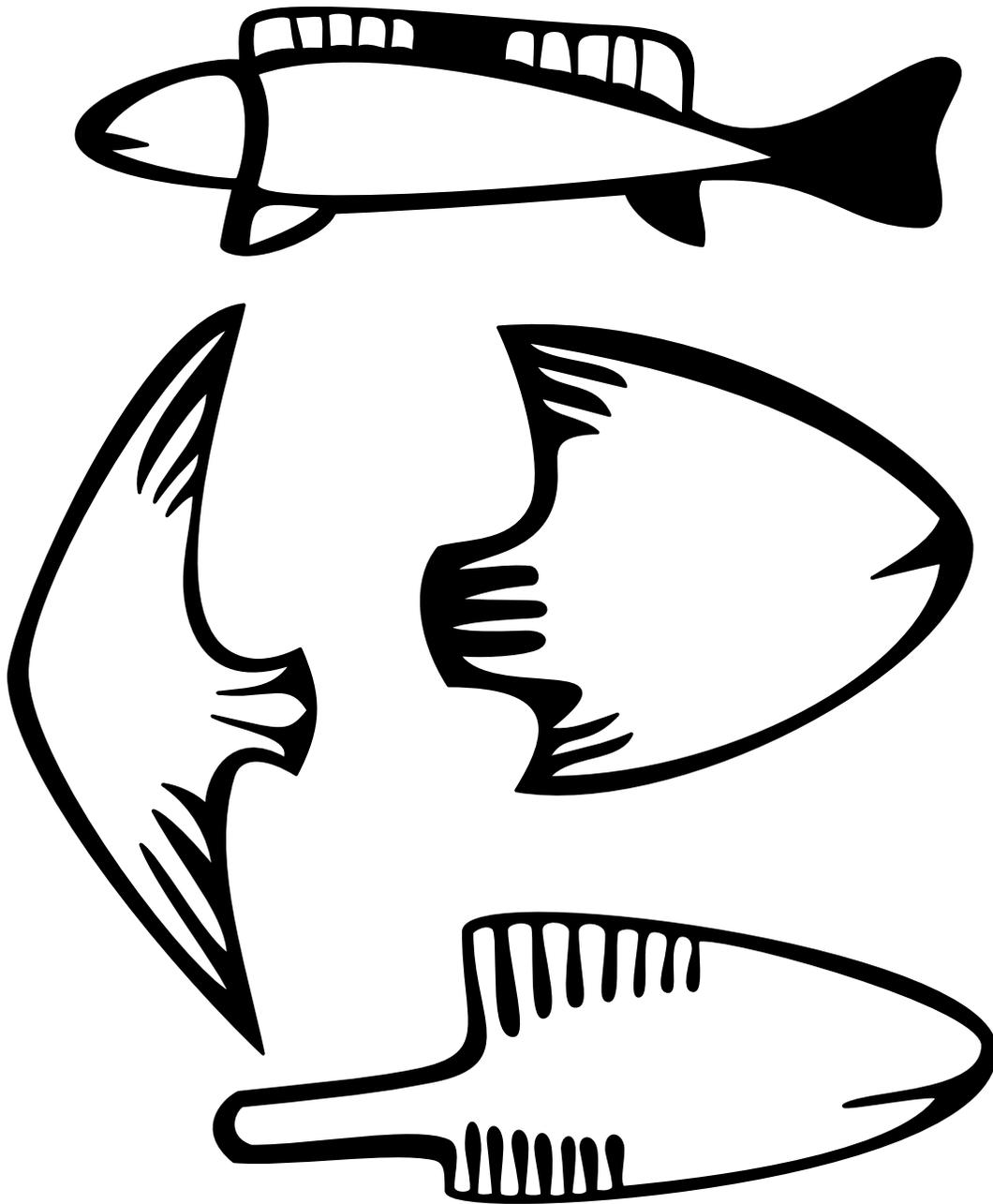
Reflect

Scripture is a fundamental piece of how we learn how God’s people have experienced God. How has scripture experienced your life? Has there been a particular scripture text that has been challenging for you during the time as you lent your leadership to this exercise? Where were particular scriptures that were challenging for the participants? What did you learn about your gifts of ministry through the use of scripture? What did your participants learn about their gifts of ministry through the use of scripture in these exercises?



Attachment: Activity 8

Fish Cutouts



Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

If asked “What is a disciple?” the responses will vary widely in this age group. Some will respond with answers that reflect a person “doing something” that indicates her or his faith. Some will reply with answers that indicate a willingness to “follow Jesus.” And still others might come back with “That’s me!” Using gifts of ministry through discipleship is a continuous learning process that lasts throughout our life, and this age group is putting that process into practice.

About this Exploration

Jesus extends the invitation to “come, follow me.” We are asked to trust that our gifts, talents, and interests may be used by God for the ministry that is before us. We are not asked first to learn more or begin afresh in order to be noticed by Jesus, but rather to hear the Spirit’s call and come just as we are. Through this invitation we are encouraged to place our confidence in God, who is able to work through our open hands and hearts that are offered to the church, community, and world. If we have doubts about our abilities or qualifications, we can be encouraged by the countless Biblical stories that remind us that God always chooses and uses the “least of these.” Come, let’s follow!



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Jeremiah 15:15–21
Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26

Leader Preparation

As the leader, you find yourself in the position of being both teacher and student. You have offered your own gifts and talents of ministry to lead this session. Yet you will most likely also learn and discover new aspects about disciples and about yourself as you move through this opportunity. Trust that your gifts are enough for this task and that God will continue to equip and guide you as you equip and guide others through this study.

As part of your preparation, read Jeremiah 15:15–21 and Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26. How do the characters in these stories come to see themselves as disciples? What are some characteristics that can be identified as being a disciple? Which of these characteristic do you claim?

If you are able, review and/or read Parker J. Palmer’s book *Let Your Life Speak* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000). This book explores what it means to listen for what God is inviting us to do and to be. Another book, *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), describes how the author, a monk, discovered that God was present in everyday tasks, even peeling potatoes.

One of the exercises encourages the use of the movie *Happy Feet* (2006). You might find it helpful to watch this entire film to see how you can use a portion of this movie to help show how

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Becoming Who We Already Are (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Thomas Merton said, “We are always becoming who we already are.” Discipleship is an unfolding process of who we already are as followers of Jesus. Reflect on this quotation from Merton. How are you becoming a disciple that you already are? How can your leadership in this group help others to become who they already are? What gifts of ministry do you bring to this process of discipleship?

Write the Merton quotation on a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard.

Supplies:

- prepared newsprint with Merton quotation

Have the Thomas Merton quotation displayed so that everyone can see it as they gather. Share with the group that discipleship is a process that is always unfolding and is never ending. Invite the participants to read silently the quotation from Merton and then to reflect on it for a few moments. Call the group back together by asking them to share their thoughts about what the quote means for them. Use the following questions to guide the discussion.

- When you read “we” in this quotation, what does that mean for you?
- The word “always” seems to indicate that it is never ending. How is that hope filled? How is that discouraging?
- How do you “already” feel like a disciple?
- How do you hope to become more like a disciple?

Ask each participant to offer a blessing for one another by turning to one another and saying the person’s name and then using the Merton quotation, such as: “[Person’s name], you are always becoming who you already are. Serve God and serve others.”

2 Discipleship for All

Leader preparation: Acquire a copy of “Pentecost from the Rabbula Gospel.” Reflect on this piece of art.

- On what do your eyes focus in the picture?
- What feelings surface as you look at the picture?
- Which person in the picture most replicates how you see yourself?

Now read the story of Pentecost in Acts 2. Reflect on the piece of art again. How do your answers to any of the questions above change after reading the story?

Supplies:

- Bibles
- artwork: “Pentecost from the Rabbula Gospel” (Anonymous), https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401

Invite the group to share what they know about the story of Pentecost. If necessary, have the participants take turns reading Acts 2:1–21 to hear the Pentecost story. Bring out the artwork and place it where all can see it. Invite the group to



using the gifts one has, no matter what they are, is important to the community to which one belongs.

Prayer: God, who is our guide and teacher, help me to model your example of offering opportunities for others to hear your voice inviting them to come and follow you into a life of discipleship. Amen.

spend two or three minutes looking at the artwork. Welcome them to share their thoughts using the following questions.

- What do you notice about the picture?
- Which image stands out and why did it catch your attention?
- Where might you imagine yourself in the scene?

Encourage them to share how the Spirit has gifted them for ministry just as the disciples had been on that day of Pentecost. What gift(s) would they ask for now from the Spirit? End with a time of prayer asking the Spirit to honor the requests made.

3 Fear Factor!

Leader preparation: Sometimes the most difficult part of any task is getting started. Whether getting started on cleaning out a closet or beginning an exercise routine or sharing one's gifts of ministry, having the courage to begin is sometimes the hardest part of all. Think about a time when this might have been true for you. What fears did you have and why? Did you follow through with the task?

On the TV show "Fear Factor," contestants had to move past their fear of all sorts of challenges in order to win the money. When God invites us to discover our gifts of ministry, this can be a fear-factor event as well. We may have to move past our fears in order to discover the true gifts that lie within us. Preview the video "Fear Factor: Twins Episode, Part 1."

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and projection capability
- video: "Fear Factor: Twins Episode, Part 1," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftl-SsJVfN4s>

Ask how many participants remember the show "Fear Factor." Welcome them to share some of the memories they have about the show. Show the video "Fear Factor: Twins Episode, Part 1." Introduce the notion that we all have fears that can prevent us from discovering our gifts of ministry that lie within us. Encourage the group to talk about their "fear factors" using the following questions.

- If there was nothing keeping you from doing _____ for God, what would that be? [Participants fill the blank in.]
- What changes might be required for you to follow God's invitation?
- How could the church help you overcome your fear?

As you close your time together, have the participants gather together in groups of two or three. Invite them to pray for one another and with one another, asking for God's help in overcoming their fear factors.

Session Development

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

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

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Whose Hands? Whose Feet? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Jeremiah 15:15–21. Discipleship is an invitation that extends through good times and through difficult times. Discipleship is being called by name in the midst of those moments; it is the invitation to be God's hands, God's feet, and God's heart for others. Ponder how you have been God's hands and feet and heart for others.



Supplies:

- Bible
- “Christ Has No Body,” Attachment: Activity 4
- markers and newsprint
- construction paper
- scissors
- glue sticks

Invite a participant to read Jeremiah 15:15–21 for the group. Talk about the frustration and anger that the prophet Jeremiah expresses while still acknowledging that he is commissioned by God to be of help to God’s people.

Hand out the copies of Teresa of Avila’s prayer “Christ Has No Body.” Either read it aloud yourself or invite a group member to do so. Invite conversation regarding the gifts of ministry that each brings to the community, the church, and the world as the hands, feet, eyes, and heart of Christ. Have the group members choose one of the following: hands, feet, heart, or eyes. Invite each to cut out his or her choice from a sheet of construction paper. Have participants write a gift of ministry that they can offer using their hands, heart, feet, or eyes. Have them glue their items on a sheet of newsprint. End your time together with a prayer offering the work of the hands, feet, eyes, and hearts of the group for all of God’s people.

5 Discipleship of Uniqueness

Leader Preparation: Discipleship is about learning and discovery. It is about being taught and about being the teacher. It is about gifts that are unique and gifts that are shared. It is about discovering our own uniqueness that adds to the greater good of the community. All these aspects come together in the movie *Happy Feet* (Warner Brothers, 2006). If you have not already viewed this movie, rent it and do so. Think about the characters, the story, and the discovery that takes place around the giftedness.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and projection capability
- trailers for *Happy Feet*, <http://www.traileraddict.com/trailer/happy-feet/trailer#bsyOigF6qwicV4FZ.99>

God has given each of us unique gifts of ministry. Sometimes we must overcome challenges, both within ourselves and outside of our selves. Self-doubt, insecurity, embarrassment, and fear can prohibit us from putting our gift(s) to good use. The characters in the movie *Happy Feet* face all the joys and challenges we do as they try to discover the gifts within themselves. In the cold land of Antarctica, the Emperor Penguins each express their true love with a special heartsong of their own that expresses their very being. However, the misfit Mumble cannot sing, but instead has an extraordinary talent to tap dance with almost magical energy and expression. He must go on his own adventure and show that what makes you different can make all the difference in the world. Show the movie trailer to the group.

Engage the group in conversation using the following questions.

- Do you think that it was difficult for Mumble to believe in his unique gift? Why or why not?
- Mumble tried to “fit in” and be like the others. Have you ever tried to fit in, discounting your own unique gift? What was that like?
- Have you ever felt like the character Gloria, trying to be supportive of another’s unique gift but struggling to understand his or her uniqueness? What was that like?



- What role does the community play in supporting unique gifts?
- Have you ever wondered if God gave you unique gifts of ministry?
- Who has been the person who has believed in your gift(s) even when you questioned yourself?
- How have you experienced God's affirmation of your gifts?

6 I'm Gonna Live!

Leader preparation: Music reaches our spirits in a way that simply talking about something cannot. Take time to listen to the song "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" (tune: I'm Gonna Live). What happened when you listened to this song? How is God using you by being a leader for this group?

Write each of the following words on sheets of newsprint: Work, Play, Sing. Display the sheets of newsprint around the room.

Supplies:

- song: "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me," African American spiritual (tune: I'm Gonna Live), http://www.hymnary.org/text/im_gonna_live_so_god_can_use_me?tab=about
- music player
- prepared sheets of newsprint
- newsprint and markers
- self-adhesive note paper
- pencils or pens

Play "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" for the participants. Hand out copies of the lyrics so that participants can then read them silently and reflect for two or three minutes. Distribute self-adhesive note paper, along with the pencils and pens, to each participant. Ask them to write activities, skills, gifts, talents they have and use that fit the under the categories of work, pray, and sing. Have participants place the pieces of note paper on the sheets of newsprint around the room (with the words "Work," "Play," and "Sing") as they feel appropriate. Ask if there are other categories they would add to the three that are mentioned in the song. Write a sheet for each of those, and tape them up in the room. Invite the group to write any additional activities, skills, gifts to add to these new sheets or move any words they previously placed.

Close your time by singing the song together, either with the recording or without accompaniment.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Incarnation (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Through his own life and ministry, Jesus was the incarnation, the embodiment, of God's love for all people. He did not just talk about that love, but through his actions he displayed that love for others to know and see. He used his unique gifts of ministry to witness to the work of God. Think on the things you have done about putting your faith into practice, of using your gifts of ministry in applying your beliefs.



Write the following quotation from St. Francis of Assisi on a sheet of newsprint:

Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.
—St. Francis of Assisi

Supplies:

- prepared newsprint
- “Preach the Gospel,” Attachment: Activity 7

Invite the group to read the St. Francis of Assisi quotation, and then engage the group in conversation using the following questions.

- What does preach the gospel mean?
- How do gifts of ministry allow us to preach the gospel?
- How do our actions speak louder than our words?

Hand out copies of “Preach the Gospel,” and read the litany together.



8 A Game of GIFTS!

Leader preparation: Celebrating our gifts of ministry used for discipleship can be fun just like a game of Bingo. To be ready for this activity, you will need to make enough Gifts game cards to make sure there is one for each participant. You will also need to secure some items to use as markers for the cards, such as: buttons, M&Ms, dried beans, or beads. You will need to have small strips of paper cut and ready to use, along with a container to place them in once the names of the gifts have been written on the strips. You may want to have candies to give away to the “winners” of the games you play as they shout out *Gifts!* when they have completed a row.

Supplies:

- “Gifts Card,” Attachment: Activity 8
- pencils and/or pens
- markers for the cards, such as buttons, M&Ms, dried beans, or beads
- small strips of paper
- container for the strips of paper
- newsprint
- marker
- (optional) candies or game prizes

Invite everyone to begin naming the gifts of ministry that he or she possesses or sees in others, such as good listener, school volunteer, hard worker, caring, teacher, hospitality, sense of humor, and so forth. Write these on a sheet of newsprint. The list needs to be at least 30 items or more. Do not let them be shy in naming their gifts or the gifts of others.

After the list is ready, distribute the Gifts cards to each participant. Since everyone is probably familiar with the game of Bingo, they will recognize the card format. Ask the participants to write one of the gifts listed on the newsprint in a box on their Gifts card, wherever they choose. They will then continue to write gifts in the squares until the card is completely filled. Explain that the heart in the center of the card is the “free space”!

While the participants are completing their cards, write the gifts listed on the newsprint onto the small slips of paper you have ready. List one gift per slip and then place them in the container you have. Once everyone has their card filled in, tell them that you will pull out a slip of paper with a gift listed on it. They are



to place a marker on the square on the card where they wrote that gift. Continue to call out gifts until a participant has covered all the gifts in a row, horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, and called out *Gifts!* Play several games, mixing up how participants can win; such as: postage stamp, four corners, straight line, diagonal, or cover all.

Close the time by recognizing that all gifts of ministry are worth celebrating.

9 Practicing Presents

Leader preparation: Read Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26. Jesus offers gifts of ministry in this text, not with programs or plans, but rather through his presence of being there for individuals in their time of need or want. Jesus did not have any gimmicks to offer, but rather offered his gift of simply being present. In his book *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence shares insight about presence: “We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed.”

Take time to reflect on how you have practiced this gift of presence and how you are practicing that gift by being a leader for this session. How might your gift of presence make a difference for those who will gather in this group?

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork board or newsprint
- markers
- different sizes of gift boxes
- wrapping paper
- tape
- bows, ribbons, and gift tags

Reflect

St. Francis of Assisi is credited with this declaration: “Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.” Discipleship is the use of our gifts of ministry in preaching the gospel at all times through our actions. How has your acts of discipleship, during this time of leadership, helped others to see the gospel? How have you seen the gospel through the actions of those in the group?

Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26 to the group. Explain that Jesus’ presence seemed to be a real gift to those individuals he encountered. Ask for participants to share any experiences when they have had someone help them by just being present when they needed them. What was it like to receive such a gift? Encourage them to share how they can be such a gift to another. Invite the participants to choose a box and place a “gift of ministry” or a “present of presence” in the box that they would give another person. Invite them to wrap the gift in that box. Encourage them to give it to someone explaining what the gift is. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the gifts that were received and those that were offered.



Attachment: Activity 4

Christ Has No Body

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

—*Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)*



Attachment: Activity 7

Preach the Gospel

One: Go and share the Good News.

All: We will through our gifts of ministry.

One: Go and preach the gospel.

All: We will through our actions.

One: Go, share, preach.

All: We will, with the help of God.

“Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.”

—St Francis of Assisi



Attachment: Activity 8

Gift Cards

| G | I | F | T | S |
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Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

The word “tradition” may evoke strong feelings from those in this age group. Some will respond with delight as they think of the traditions that have sustained them throughout their life. Some will respond with indifference as they have not established a sense of tradition yet. Others will crinkle their noses at the thought of holding to tradition. But whatever the reaction to the word, through our gifts of ministry we are able to honor the past, be engaged in the present, and look toward the future through the customs, rituals, and practices we find meaningful to our faith.

About this Exploration

Faithful Christian practices encourage a communal awareness that God calls, nurtures, and blesses the use of our gifts to strengthen God’s work in the world. Our understanding of this partnership with God is always emerging. Traditional gifts, such as preaching, hospitality, music, and caring may be demonstrated in ways recognizable since ancient days. Christian tradition may also be informed and evolve to include modern forms of expression such as social media, video, legislative advocacy, and more. No matter the era or tradition, gifts of ministry are grounded in a desire to minister with and on behalf of Christ.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 49:1–7
Luke 10:38–42

Leader Preparation

Find a quiet place and set time aside to reflect on what tradition means for you. What customs, rituals, or practices have been a part of your history? Think of how the traditions of your family or of your church have influenced your life. Read Isaiah 49:1–7 and Luke 10:38–42. What connections to tradition do these texts offer? What connections to discovering gifts of ministry do these texts suggest? How can you help others explore what tradition means for them as they uncover their gifts of ministry?

Prayer: God of all time and places, guide me in this time of learning and discovery. Help me to nurture a safe place for others to listen for your call to use their gifts of ministry. Strengthen us as we partner with one another as the church to support the customs, rituals, and practices that allow your people to continue the work of the community and the tradition of care on behalf of Christ. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Light Your Way (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Matthew 5:14–16. Ponder how you have chosen to let your light shine. Consider how you have hidden it under a bushel at other times. The image of light is an important aspect to our Christian tradition. From the creation story to the birth story and beyond, there is the concept of a light shining forth into the world. Your gifts of ministry are a light shining into the world. Pause and consider those gifts and the light that you bring to the world around you. Obtain a variety of candles; these can be new or used in a variety of sizes and shapes—just whatever you can find, enough for each participant to have one.

Write the following words to the song “This Little Light of Mine” on a sheet of newsprint:

This Little Light of Mine

Refrain:

This little light of mine,
I’m gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine,
I’m gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Hide it under a bushel—NO!
I’m gonna let it shine.
Hide it under a bushel —NO!
I’m gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Supplies:

- Bible
- candles
- lighter
- prepared newsprint with “This Little Light of Mine” lyrics

Have the lights off in the room and a single candle lit as participants gather. Invite one group member to read Matthew 5:14–16. If you need to turn the room lights on, do so at this time. If the group would be comfortable with the single candle burning, allow it to be the only light in the room. Invite the group to reflect about some of the words in this text that they would like to focus on and consider. Engage the group in conversation using the following questions.

- How does it make you feel when you hear that “You are the light of the world”?
- Have you “hidden” your light?
- When you think of your light, what gifts of ministry come to mind?
- What do you think about when you hear that you ought to let your light shine before others?
- How have the customs, rituals, practices of the church helped you to shine your light?
- It might be easy to let our gifts be the focus, but we are encouraged to let our gifts give glory to God. How can we keep the focus on God?



Session Development

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

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

As the time draws to a close, pass out a candle to each participant. Allow each person to light his or her candle from the one candle that was lit from the beginning. Share with the group as they do so that our Christian tradition can serve as a light from which we each can find our own light, which is then shared with others. Once all the candles are lit, join in singing “This Little Light of Mine.”

2 M & M

Leader preparation: Stop. Sit. Relax. Read Luke 10:38–42. Reflect on the characters of this story. What attributes of these two women are a part of who you are? What attributes of Jesus are a part of you? How have the traditions, within and outside of the church, help to contribute to your “Martha side” and to your “Mary side”? As you provide leadership to this session, be attentive to the balance of setting aside time with God (like Mary) and the doing for God by using our gifts of ministry (like Martha).

Supplies:

- Bible

Ask one of the participants read Luke 10:38–42 to the group. Invite three people to role play the characters Jesus, Mary, and Martha, using their own words.

Engage the group in conversation about this story and the gifts of the two women using the following questions.

- How were they both using their gifts in this situation?
- How do we place different values on gifts?
- How have the traditions of the church or society affected those values?
- How do the actions and/or words of Jesus affect the women?
- In what way does Jesus value both women’s gifts?
- How have traditions of the church set boundaries around what roles men or women can have?
- Have those boundaries changed? How so?

As you close this activity, offer a prayer acknowledging that is not our outside exterior, but what is on the inside—our spirit, our heart, our intention—that can make all the difference in how our gifts of ministry can be used by God.



3 Potato Heads

Leader Preparation: Community is an important part of Christian tradition. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. Think about your community and the many parts of the body that comprise that community. Where do you fit into that community? Who helped you discover where your gifts would fit? Who have you helped to discover their gifts in the body? Obtain a Mr. and/or Mrs. Potato Head toy, with the extra pieces that come with them, if possible.

Supplies:

- Mr. and/or Mrs. Potato Head toys, with extra pieces if possible
- hymn: “One Spirit of Love” (by Paul B. Svenson ©1987/2011 Dad’s Songbook Music LLC. All rights reserved. Used by permission www.dadsongbook.com); video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBg80JaNI1M>
- “One Spirit of Love,” Attachment: Activity 3

As the participants gather, have Mr. and/or Mrs. Potato Head toys sitting where all can see them. Remind the participants that part of the Christian tradition focuses on being in community. The New Testament writer Paul speaks specifically about community and gifts of ministry in a letter to the church of Corinth.



Invite several participants to take turns reading 1 Corinthians 12:12–31 to the group. Suggest that the community can be envisioned like the Mr. and/or Mrs. Potato Head. If you have the extra pieces, take some of the extra arms, eyes, and/or noses and replace the “regular” pieces. Point out that this toy would look funny with just arms, legs, eyes, noses, and so forth. Note that our community of faith would not be the same if all of our gifts were in music, art, teaching, leading worship, and so forth. Mr./Mrs. Potato head looks best with a diverse set of parts. So, too, does a community of faith need a diverse set of gifts of ministry. Invite the members to share what gifts they offer to the community.

Hand out copies of the song “One Spirit of Love.” Either sing this song together or do it as a responsive reading with either you or a participant to read the verses and everyone joining together on the refrain.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Signs and Symbols (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Signs and symbols are important parts of our Christian tradition. What symbols have been important for you? Have those signs and symbols changed over your span of your faith journey? How do symbols represent the gifts of ministry of a community? What would your sign or symbol be to represent your own gift of ministry?

Supplies:

- paper and/or construction paper
- markers

Invite the group to take a walk around the church, including the worship, education, and fellowship spaces. As the group walks, invite them to look for signs and symbols of the Christian tradition. Allow for times of quiet as you move from place to place, but also encourage them to look for:

- symbols of ministry to the community
- markers that represent the Christian tradition
- signs of gifts of ministry that they participate in with others
- images that bring special feelings or emotions

Upon your return, invite discussion about the signs and symbols that they noticed on the walk. *Were there symbols that seemed to be missing or less visible? What new symbols or signs would you add to the space?* With the plain paper, construction paper, and markers, ask the participants to create a symbol for their own gift of ministry. If you are able to place the papers to be displayed, place them there for others to see and enjoy.



5 Elephant in the Room

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the story on the handout, “The Elephant and the Blind Men.” This story originated in India, but it has spread across the world in many different variations. Ponder what it means to you. How have you experienced individuals, groups, committees, or congregations that resemble this story? Have you found yourself being one of the participants thinking you had the complete answer or the only answer to a situation? How might this story help us contemplate about our Christian tradition and the exploration of our gifts of ministry? How can group discernment about something provide a positive experience?



Supplies:

- “The Elephant and the Blind Men,” Attachment: Activity 5
- (optional) stuffed elephant toy or elephant figurine

Hand out the copies of “The Elephant and the Blind Men.” Invite a volunteer to read it to the group. Then have the group to talk about experiences that have been like this story, where a variety of positions were taken or a variety of views were held around one topic, program, ministry. Use the following questions as necessary.

- How can group process offer an opportunity to learn from and grow with one another?
- How might gifts of ministry be like the elephant, needing a variety of points of view before being fully discovered?
- What might you bring to the group process that no one else can offer?
- How might our tradition, rituals, and practices been seen as the “elephant” and viewed from many different points of examination?
- What does this story offer as a model for our present practices?



6 We Are Family

Leader preparation: Read Luke 10:38–42. Family relationships can be complex. Think about the interaction, or lack thereof, between the two sisters in the story from Luke. If you have siblings, reflect on how you and your siblings might have interacted in the context of this story. Spend time looking at “Sisters in the Wind” by Ethan Hubbard. Imagine these two as the sisters, Martha and Mary. What comes from this imagining?

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: “Sisters in the Wind” by Ethan Hubbard, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401

Display “Sisters in the Wind” by Ethan Hubbard where everyone can see it. Read Luke 10:38–42 for all to hear. Allow the group to sit silently and reflect on the artwork for several minutes. Divide the group into pairs and invite each pair to pose as the sisters in the artwork. Encourage conversation about this text and about this piece of art through the following questions. After a few moments, have the partners switch places.

- If you were one of the sisters in the picture, which one would you be? Why?
- In what ways did it feel different to be each sister?
- How does this image embody the story told in Luke?
- Who do you imagine Martha to be in the picture? Mary? Why?
- In what ways might this image remind you of another story involving Martha and Mary from John 11, when Martha and Mary are looking for Jesus to come help their brother, Lazarus, who is ill?
- How does this image of the sisters symbolize the use of tradition within the church?
- What gifts of ministry might the older sister bring? The younger sister?
- How do the young and old of the congregation share in their gifts within the family of the church?



Sending & Serving Activities

7 Ordinary Routine, Extraordinary Gifts (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Luke 10:38–42. Consider that Martha and Mary may have been doing actions that were “routine” within the story that is told. Pause and consider the ordinary routine you have in your life. Write down some of the things that you do on a regular basis each day. Consider how these routines/rituals/practices are gifts of ministry to another person or to a group of people. Had you considered these routines to be extraordinary opportunities for sharing in ministry? Offer a prayer for the opportunities you have been given to share your gifts in the most routine ways.

Supplies:

- clock
- paper
- pens or pencils

Hold up the clock or point to it (if a clock is somewhere in the room). Remind the group that each day is twenty-four hours long, filled with routines, responsibilities, and activities. Sometimes we take for granted the gifts of ministry that become a part of the routine (or tradition, if you will) of our lives. Ask the group to list the routines they have in an ordinary day on a sheet of paper. After a few minutes, invite everyone to form groups of two or three people. Within these small groups, ask each to share their lists and then encourage them to offer one another examples of how their “routine” is or might be an extraordinary gift to someone, family, friends, the community, the church, the school, and so forth. After a period of sharing, bring the large group back together and solicit responses about the discoveries that were made within the small groups. Close the time together with a prayer giving thanks for the ordinary routines that give us extraordinary opportunity to share our gifts with others.

8 Light to the Nations

Leader preparation: Look at a globe or world atlas. Read Isaiah 49:5–6. How are you a light to the nations from where you are? Consider how you will invite the participants to consider the same question. Consider how the Isaiah text and the text from Matthew 28:19–20 interweave.

Cut out a candle shape and make several candle shapes each person. Obtain a world map or draw a rough outline of the world on a sheet of artwork board.

Supplies:

- Bible
- cutouts of a candle, several for each person
- markers
- world map or rough drawing of the world on poster board
- tape
- pillar candle
- matches/lighter

Light the pillar candle and place where it can be seen as participants gather. Display the world map or artwork board with the picture of the world on it. Invite a volunteer to read Isaiah 49:5–6 aloud to the group. Ask another member of the group to read Matthew 28:19–20 aloud. Encourage the participants to engage in conversation using the following questions.



- What comes to your mind when you think of being a light to the nations?
- How can being a light just in your own family, church, community be challenging enough, much less being a light to the nations as the text suggests?
- What might your light look like as you share it with the world?
- How has the traditions of our faith been a light for others to see?
- What, if anything, does the two texts hold in common with one another?

Share that we all have gifts that can be offered to the world, even if that means just around the corner. Give the participants several candle cutouts and invite them to write on the candle a gift of ministry that they and/or the church offers to the world. Invite them to tape the candles to the world map or artwork. Note that their lights can make a difference in the world. Place the artwork where the congregation can see it.

9 Sabbath

Leader preparation: Find time to relax and sit quietly; be attentive to your breathing. Try not to rush this time of solitude. Practice a time of Sabbath for yourself. After a time of quiet, read Luke 10:38–42. Reflect on how Mary is participating in the practice of Sabbath. What can sitting at the feet of Jesus do for you as you prepare to lead this activity? What might you hope that he would say to you? Barbara Brown Taylor’s book *An Altar in the World* contains a chapter on the practice of saying no, which might offer some insights into this practice of Sabbath.

Write the following quotation from Meister Eckhart on a sheet of newsprint:

God is not found in the soul by adding anything, but by subtracting.

Supplies:

- Bible
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard with quotation

Reflect

Tradition is an important aspect of who we are. The practices and rituals we have in our family, our community, and our church help us honor our past while living in the present and moving toward the future. What was the highlight of this time of looking at the importance of the Christian tradition for you? What did you learn about the importance of practice and ritual that has special meaning for you? Your time, talent, and energy were gifts of ministry for the group as they discovered their own gifts through the invitations you offered, thus offering them the chance to make them a part of the ongoing tradition of our faith. Celebrate your gifts.

Our Christian tradition has long held the practice of Sabbath as an important aspect of our faith. From the earliest stories of creation, God practiced Sabbath on the seventh day and rested. Yet in our busy lives, we hardly take the time to say “no” and to rest. How does the character of Mary say “no” to the expectations of her sister and “yes” to the practice of Sabbath? Encourage more conversation about Sabbath using the following questions.

- What would it look like for you to say “no” to some of the things in your life?
- What is a way that you practice Sabbath now? What might be a way that you want to practice it in the future?
- Doing too much for the church is also not healthy. How can you say “no” when someone from the church calls?
- If you could spend some time simply listening to Jesus, what would you like to hear?

Close your time together by practicing several moments of quiet listening to the still small voice of God’s Spirit through the silence and peace. Then have each participant turn to another person in the group and say, “May you hear the word you long to hear from Jesus. Go in peace.”



Attachment: Activity 3

One Spirit of Love

♩ = 89
Muted strum
Light Reggae Feel

Paul B. Svenson

G 4 G D Em

1. Ma - ny are the won - ders of God ma - ny
2. Some will be the tea - chers of life some the
3. Li - ving as the bo - dy of Christ and the

Em/D C D G

doors o - pen wide ma - ny roads that are still un -
prea - chers of love some the fa - thers and some the
heart of the earth and the hands that will break new

C D G D

tra - veled Ma - ny are the gifts that we share
mo - thers Some will be the ones who will care
gro - und Cel - e - brate the gifts from with - in

Em Em/D C

ma - ny bur - dens we bear ma - ny
some will li - sten and share serv - ing
now its time to be - gin God's -

D G C D

my - ster - ies still un - ra - veled
God as they serve each - o - ther
peo - ple can turn the world a - rou - nd now!

C D G G7 C D G

CHORUS Ma - ny gifts One spi - rit of love one spi - rit of love

C D G F C D G

Ma - ny gifts One spi - rit of love one spi - rit of love

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Attachment: Activity 5

The Elephant and the Blind Men

Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day the villagers told them, "Hey, there is an elephant in the village today."

They had no idea what an elephant is. They decided, "Even though we would not be able to see it, let us go and feel it anyway." All of them went where the elephant was. Every one of them touched the elephant.

"Hey, the elephant is a pillar," said the first man, who touched the leg of the elephant.

"Oh, no! It is like a rope," said the second man, who touched the tail of the elephant.

"Oh, no! It is like a thick branch of a tree," said the third man, who touched the trunk of the elephant.

"It is like a big hand fan" said the fourth man, who touched the ear of the elephant.

"It is like a huge wall," said the fifth man, who touched the belly of the elephant.

"It is like a solid pipe," said the sixth man, who touched the tusk of the elephant.

They began to argue about the elephant, and every one of them insisted that he was right. It looked like they were getting agitated. A wise man was passing by and he saw this. He stopped and asked them, "What is the matter?" They said, "We cannot agree to what the elephant is like." Each one of them told what he thought the elephant was like. The wise man calmly explained to them, "All of you are right. The reason every one of you is telling it differently is because each one of you touched a different part of the elephant. So, actually the elephant has all those features what you all said."

"Oh!" everyone said. There was no more fighting. They felt happy that they were all right.

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

The context in which this age group participates in mission varies from the workplace to the soccer field, from the group of friends at the children's school to the piano recital, from the neighborhood to the book club. Life is full and busy, both in the church and outside of it. The context for older adults becomes different as they may begin to have more time, without the busyness of children's schedules and work responsibilities. At this point for some, their time becomes more open for the exploration of new ministry opportunities and the chance for discovering new gifts in those ministries. Being living examples of faith, no matter where one is in life's journey, offers the chance to continue to discover gifts of ministry so that God's love and justice can be made real.

About this Exploration

Loving God and loving neighbor come together in the context of our lives and the mission opportunities that we have before us. Through the power of God's Spirit, individuals are equipped to do the work of God for the people of God. Community, defined in a variety of ways—school, work, team sports, neighborhood, church, offers the place where the sharing of gifts can take within the everyday-ness of life. It is within this everyday-ness that our gifts of ministry can be explored, discovered, and offered. Only then to begin this cycle again as we move through our life's journey.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Nehemiah 2:11-20
2 Corinthians 3:1-6

Leader Preparation

Before beginning an exploration about doing, practice the ritual of being. Take time simply to listen to God's Spirit. In the midst of the hustle and bustle of your own life, offering your gifts of ministry to others, set time aside to hear the voice of God speak into your heart.

Discovering gifts for ministry in one's context and in the vocation of one's life is an unfolding process that occurs again and again. The opportunity presented in this Exploration gives you, as the leader, the chance to help others in that process of discovery and discernment. Read Nehemiah 2:11-20 and 2 Corinthians 3:1-6. Within these texts the authors encourage the readers to recognize their importance in the place where they are. To rebuild the wall and to be a letter for others to read seems to say that we ought to allow our lives to speak the Gospel. Reflect on how your life has been a "letter" of witness about God's activity in your life. Think about how you have helped to "repair the walls"—physically or figuratively within your context.

Barbara Brown Taylor's book *Altar in the World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009) reflects on her discovery of how to be aware of sacred in the context of one's life and would be a great read during this Exploration.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Speaking without Words (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-6. How is the word "letter" used in this text? What type of letters have you received throughout your life? Consider how the use of text messaging, email, Facebook, and Twitter changed the communication we do with our words.

St. Francis of Assisi is credited with this saying: "Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." Think about how your life speaks without using words. What kind of "letter" did people get to see today through your actions?

On a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard write the quotation from St. Francis of Assisi.

Supplies:

- Bible
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard with St. Francis Assisi quotation

Paul wrote letters to the early churches to convey the good news of Jesus, to offer encouragement, and to give discipline when necessary. Invite a participant to read 2 Corinthians 3:1-6 to the group. Encourage conversation about the use of letters today. Ask the group when the last time was that they wrote a letter to someone or received a personal letter from someone. Talk about how other forms of communication, such as email, text messaging, Facebook have changed how we use letters.

Read the quotation by St. Francis of Assisi, and display the newsprint or whiteboard. Engage the group in conversation using the following or similar questions.

- What comes to your mind as you as hear this quotation?
- Describe an example of when your actions quote the gospel.
- When have you seen an example of the gospel being "spoken" without words?
- How can this saying be an encouragement for those who do not have the gift of speaking easily in public?
- How are your gifts of ministry shared without words?

Close with several minutes of silence.

2 The Big Questions

Leader preparation: Read the lyrics of the song "The Summons." How do these words intersect with the discovery of gifts for ministry within the context of our daily lives and the mission of the church? How does this song speak to you and to your life?

Supplies:

- song: "The Summons" by John Bell (tune: Kelvingrove); video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0aAkOe87mo&feature=related>; lyrics, [\[missing URL\]](#)
- music player

Ask a volunteer to read the lyrics of the entire song. Foster conversation around the questions posed in each verse.



Prayer: *Holy One, during this time of discovery allow the gifts of ministry that you have given to me to be a blessing to those who will gather together during this Exploration of Context and Mission. May I be willing to trust your Spirit to guide me. Amen.*

- What questions seem easy to answer? Why?
- Which questions encourage more contemplation? Why?
- What questions cause unsettledness? Why?
- What gifts of ministry are needed to answer the questions asked within this song?
- How do you call on God's name to help you in times of discernment about gifts of ministry?
- How can the community of faith be of help in times of discernment?

Session Development

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

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

Sing the song together.

3 Missionaries from Home

Leader preparation: Read Nehemiah 2:11–20. Think about times when your church or community has helped to rebuild the walls. Have you participated in the Habitat for Humanity build or a mission trip? What mission opportunities have you been a part of that are not about physical walls, but about the "rebuilding" of a program or a ministry?

Contact local individuals who have participated in mission opportunities such as Habitat for Humanity, youth or adult mission trips, or through school programs, and invite several to come and share their experiences with the group. Be clear with the guests about how much time they will have to tell their story.

Supplies:

- name tags
- guest speakers

Hand out name tags to the participants and the guests. Arrange the room so that everyone is comfortable and all can see and hear the speakers. Allow the guest speakers to introduce themselves and tell about their experience in mission. Encourage a time of dialogue where questions can be asked and answers shared.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Can We Build It? Yes, We Can! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: If you can, get some Legos® or other building blocks and have them on a table in front of you. Consider borrowing these from the children's area. Read Nehemiah 2:11–20. Reflect on what this text stirs within you as you consider your role building up the Body of Christ. Have your repaired walls within your family, community, church? If so, how were your gifts of ministry helpful to this process? Take time to build with the Lego® blocks in front of you. Allow your imagination to be free.

Supplies:

- building blocks
- Bible
- construction paper
- markers and/or crayons
- scissors
- tape or glue sticks
- large sheet of craft paper



Have pieces of construction paper, markers and/or crayons, and scissors on tables as the participants arrive. Ask a volunteer to read Nehemiah 2:11–20 to the group. Invite conversation about how the church can be a part of building a stronger community. What are the programs, missions, and ministries taking place that help build something for the common good? Ask the participants to cut several brick or block shapes out of construction paper. Invite them to write the name of the programs, ministries, and missions that help build something for the common good that they just named. Have participants use their bricks or blocks to build something on the large sheet of craft paper. Invite them to work together to glue their bricks or blocks. Will they make a church, a pathway, a wall? What is the hope for these missions, ministries, and programs to build? How can the group represent that in their creation? When the creation is completed, write somewhere on it “Can We Build It? Yes, We Can!” Display it somewhere for all to see.

5 All That I Have

Leader Preparation: View the video “The Actual ’73 Giving Tree Spoken by Shel Silverstein.” Take a few moments to reflect about this story of giving. How does the tree use its gifts to help the boy? Does the boy use his gifts in any way? In mission and ministry, do we expect something in return for our gifts being used or given? How might you feel if God asked you to give everything to another?

Cut out leaf shapes. Make enough for each person to have several leaves.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and projection capability
- video: “The Actual ’73 Giving Tree Spoken by Shel Silverstein,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITZCP6OqRIE>
- prepared leaf shapes, several for each person
- brown construction paper
- scissors
- glue sticks
- tape
- markers
- large sheet of craft paper

Show the video “The Actual ’73 Giving Tree Spoken by Shel Silverstein.” Foster conversation about how the tree might serve as an example for discovering gifts of ministry. Ask participants how we, as individuals or as a community of faith, might be asked to re-imagine how we can give other gifts when we have already given of ourselves. Examples of re-imagination might be:

- Use of the church’s kitchen to prepare meals for the homeless or elderly
- Church school classrooms used for daycare or elder care
- Sanctuary space shared with another congregation that does not have a building

Invite the group to make a “giving tree” to represent the mission and ministries and gifts that are shared in the context of church. Hand out leaf shapes and have the participants list missions and ministries on the leaves. Invite a few people to make the trunk of the tree out of the brown construction paper. When ready, assemble the tree on a large sheet of craft paper. Place the tree where others can see it.



6 Bloom Where You Are Planted

Leader preparation: Examine “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” (c.1912) by Gustav Klimt. Allow the different flowers and plants to come into focus. Where



do you see different colors explode? Are there colors that are more subtle? What shapes do you see? Which flower or plant or leaf might represent you in this painting? How does this artwork represent the possibility of “blooming” gifts of ministry in the context of the garden in which one finds themselves planted?

Familiarize yourself with the poem “Bloom Where You Are Planted” by Wm. Claire Greiner. How are the author’s words reflected in the painting by Klimt? How are the words of this poem encouraging to those discovering their gifts of ministry?

Supplies:

- artwork: “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” by Gustav Klimt, <http://www.art.com/products/p15177883-sa-i3715775/gustav-klimt-farm-garden-with-sunflowers-c1912.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=55eedd136d4049bcaab8f63c70afd3e3&searchstring=klimt+farm+garden+with+sunflowers>
- poem: “Bloom Where You Are Planted” by Wm. Claire Greiner, <http://bloomcolumbus.cfsites.org/custom.php?pageid=24789>
- flower seed packet (for each participant)

Display the artwork in a location within the room for all the group members to see it. Allow time to view the painting, inviting the members of the group to see it up close if they would like to do so. Invite the group to share their thoughts about the artwork. Encourage conversation using the following or similar questions.

- Which flower or plant catches your eye first?
- What flower or plant seems tucked away in the midst of this garden?
- Do you think one plant or flower overshadow the others? Why or why not?
- How might these flowers and plants represent our gifts of ministry within the church or community?

Hand out the copies of the poem “Bloom Where You Are Planted” by Wm. Claire Greiner. Invite a volunteer to read the poem for the group. Allow just a minute or two of quiet reflection. Ask participants to share their thoughts or feeling about the poem. Ask the group how they think the poem and artwork interact with one another. What encouragement might be gained from considering the phrase “bloom where you are planted”?

Close with a prayer asking for God to give encouragement to all to use their gifts of ministry to further the mission of God right where we have been planted for this moment in time.

Give a seed packet to each participant as they leave so that they might “plant” these seeds to remember themselves of this time together.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Letters of Love (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read 2 Corinthians 3:1–6. Think about letters that you have received in the past. What made those letters special? In today’s world where communication happens at a rapid pace through email, text messaging, and Facebook correspondence, how might you feel receiving a hand-written letter from someone?



Supplies:

- Bible
- stationery
- envelopes
- pens
- (optional) list of names and addresses for those people of the faith community who are in nursing homes or who are homebound

Invite one of the group members to read 2 Corinthians 3:1–6 for the group. Encourage conversation about the sending and receiving of letters. Ask them how this form of communication may be a lost art in the age of text messages, email, and Facebook correspondence, and if so, what would be lost in not writing letters. Ask the group to consider what is gained in this form of communication.

Ask the members of the group to write a letter to one of the persons from the faith community who is in the nursing home or who is homebound. Gather the letters together and offer a blessing for them as they are sent forth as messages of love.

8 One for All and All for One

Leader preparation: Read Romans 12:4–8. How is this image of the body helpful in thinking about the church as a body of members; each offering different gifts of ministry? Take time to reflect on how you have seen the Body of Christ participate in the ministry and mission of caring for others within the context of your own community, school, church, workplace. Preview the video “If We Are the Body” by Casting Crowns. Secure a computer so that the group can watch one of the videos during the session.

Supplies:

- Bible
- computer with Internet access and projection capability
- video: “If We Are the Body” by Casting Crowns, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SExJ9od-0zQ>

Read Romans 12:4–8 to the group. Show the video “If We Are the Body” by Casting Crowns. Encourage conversation about how we are the Body of Christ in offering gifts of ministry using the following or similar questions.

- How does this church encourage persons to discover and share their gifts?
- How have you felt invited to share your gifts in the mission and programs of your community?
- How has the church been the hands, feet, and body of Christ?

Ask the participants to get together in pairs and offer this blessing to one another: *You have hands for healing, words for teaching, and love for showing all that there is a way. Go with your gifts of ministry to be the Body of Christ.*

9 Bucket Brigade

Leader Preparation: Preview the video “Have You Filled a Bucket Today?” Take time to reflect on this story. How does this simple message also relate to adults? How are adults called to be bucket fillers, sharing their gifts of ministry with others?



Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and projection capability
- video: “Have You Filled a Bucket Today?” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUgid19wEZ0&feature=related>
- bucket
- small pieces of paper
- pencils or pens

Reflect

Were the participants able to recognize the larger context in which their gifts of ministry could be offered? In what ways did the members of the group grow in their understanding of mission in variety of contexts that they are a part of? Think of your most favorite part of this Exploration. What make it special? Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for this opportunity to serve.

This activity features a children’s story that has a message for all ages. Place the bucket in the center of the group. Show the video “Have You Filled a Bucket Today?” Foster conversation about how this story can translate into our adult gifts of ministry, filling the bucket of another. Nurture the discussion using the following or similar questions.

- In what type of bucket filling activities do you participate?
- In what bucket filling activities, programs, missions, or ministries does the church participate?
- How has your bucket been filled recently?
- How might we be more attentive to helping fill another’s bucket?
- If we could actually see someone’s “bucket,” how would that encourage us to offer our gifts?
- How have we been a bucket dipper?
- How has feeling another’s bucket helped to fill yours too?

Distribute the small pieces of paper, giving several to each participant. Invite them to write down the opportunities to share their gifts in filling another’s bucket and then place the pieces of paper in the bucket.

Offer a blessing for the gifts represented in the bucket and ask God to continue to fill our buckets so that we might fill another’s.

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

Talking about the future can be a challenge for this age group. Some will find it an exciting topic as they imagine moving forward into what lies ahead, expecting many more years to practice their gifts of ministry as they continue to discover them. Some will find it difficult to imagine the future as their lives may hold many changes that cause them to be concerned over issues of health, usefulness in their context, and the ever-changing pace of life. Therefore, as this group explores the notions of future and vision, placing trust in God no matter where we are on life's journey will allow each person to respond to God's invitation and to know that God who gives us strength for all things.

About this Exploration

We are not who we once were. We adapt and change along with the shifting circumstances we experience. Gifts of ministry develop throughout the duration of our lives. Our gifts are revealed, acquired, and developed as we encounter the present and are led toward expanding hope for the future. When we engage our gifts of ministry we join with God in making that hope reality, and we become the people God calls us to be.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
1 Samuel 3:1–10, 11–20
Philippians 4:1–13

Leader Preparation

Take time to pause and reflect on what you imagine for the future. How will the next months, years, or decades unfold? What ideas or dreams you hope for that future? Read 1 Samuel 3:1–10, 11–20 and Philippians 4:1–13. Note that in this study we have the opportunity to explore the character of a young Samuel who struggles to understand the voice he hears in the night and needs another to help him discern that voice. We then have the chance to hear the voice of Paul, who through his many travels, sees the future of the church unfolding before his very eyes. In our consideration of the future, we are invited into the adventure of our lives as we continue to discover our gifts of ministry that help us to practice our faith in real and tangible ways.

Prayer: O God, my help in ages past and my hope in years to come, be my guide now as I offer myself in the leadership role of this Exploration saying, “Here I am.” May I be able to focus on whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pleasing, and whatever is commendable during this time. May I know that I am able to do this through the strength given to me by your Spirit. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Me and My Mentor (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read 1 Samuel 3:1–10. Reflect on the idea that Samuel could not discern the voice of God for himself and needed the help of another, Eli, to do so. Who in your life has served as your “Eli”? How did this person help you discern God’s voice? Have you served as an “Eli” for another?

Supplies:

- Bible

Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 3:1–10 for the group. Introduce the concept of having a mentor, like Eli was for Samuel. Encourage members of the group to share stories about who has served as a mentor for them. Continue to engage the group in conversation using the following or similar questions

- How did this person help you discern an important call in your life?
- When have you served as a mentor for another?
- How did having a mentor help you during that uncertain time?
- What skills or gifts did Eli have in serving as a mentor?
- What role might mentors play for the future of others in this community of faith?

2 Picture This!

Leader preparation: Read 1 Samuel 3:1–10. Consider the idea of a puzzle, having many pieces. Unless those pieces are put together in the right order, a picture cannot be formed or seen. When it comes to seeing our gifts of ministry, now or in the future, we might only have “pieces” of that vision and may need the help of others to help us “put it all together” to see the complete “picture.” Reflect on how this may have happened for you in the discovery of your own gift(s) of ministry.

Obtain a puzzle that requires a medium level of difficulty—easy enough that the group can begin to put it together, but not too easy that it will be completely finished in the time you have for this session. You will need a table for putting the puzzle pieces on and to begin assembling the puzzle.

Supplies:

- Bible
- puzzle of medium difficulty level for each group of four to six people
- table for each puzzle

Invite a member of the group to read 1 Samuel 3:1–10 to the group. Introduce the idea of a puzzle representing the discovery of a call that might come in a series of “pieces.” Each piece needs to be put into place before the complete “picture” (discernment) is known.

Have groups of four to six people gather around a table where a puzzle is scattered. Let the fun begin as the groups work to put the puzzles together. Foster conversation in the area of discovering gifts of ministry, where sometimes it is easy to see that gift and while at other times it takes much longer to finally get the “pieces” put together and the “picture” to be made clear. Puzzles may not be able to be completed in the time you have. Ask the group how the incomplete



Session Development

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

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

puzzle might represent the need for additional gifts of ministry to come into “the picture” before it becomes complete

3 Day Dreaming

Leader preparation: Read Philippians 4:8–9. Take time to think about the things that are listed in verse 8: things that are true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable; make a list of what comes to your mind. What are things worthy of your praise? Make a list of those. Consider how these things bring you peace.

Write the words “true,” “honorable,” “just,” “pure,” “pleasing,” and “commendable” on sheets of newsprint (one word per sheet).

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper
- pencils and pens
- prepared sheets of newsprint
- markers

Place the newsprint sheets where they can be seen by all. Invite the group to become as comfortable as possible. Read Philippians 4:8–9 for the group. Explain that they are going to take seriously this call to give time to thinking about those things that are listed in verse 8, that they are going to “day dream” about things that are true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing and commendable. Distribute paper and pencils or pens. Ask the group to spend ten minutes in silence, thinking about things that fall into any of those categories listed in the verse and then writing them on their paper.

Call the group back together. Ask them to share their lists, while you write their responses on the newsprint sheets. Place tally marks behind the things that get repeated. Invite comments from the group about the items that get listed. Ask them to consider how we make take for granted the things on these lists.

End your time with a prayer of thanksgiving for the items listed.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Dream Weaver (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: When it comes to opening ourselves up to possibilities, we often put limits on our dreams or our opportunities to be engaged in ministries just beginning to be imagined. We often have a list of why we cannot do something, rather than a list of why we can. Take time to reflect on how you have stifled your own gifts of ministry, thinking of reasons why you cannot do something. Think of a time when that did not happen and you moved forward with courage and determination. How has your faith community been able to dream about future mission and ministry? What holds the community back from moving ahead in those dreams?

Prepare a sheet of newsprint with a simple outline of a church that fills the paper. At the top of the paper print the word “Future.”



Supplies:

- prepared newsprint
- markers

Open the activity with conversation about believing in possibilities—about having dreams for the future and about setting goals for mission and ministry. Indicate that this activity will be about sharing dreams for discovering gifts of ministry for the greater community of faith and for individuals in that community. Encourage the participants to think of ways they, as individuals or as a collective community of faith, might put gifts of ministry to work in the future. Ask them to dream, without concern over money, time, energy, as they consider programs and plans. Invite them not to censor their ideas, but to simply let them flow freely. This activity is about imagining the possibilities. Write down the ideas and dreams inside the outline of the church on the newsprint. After a while, invite conversation on how those ideas, dreams, programs, and gifts can begin to come out of the church and into the world.

Offer this or a similar prayer: *In our dreaming of the future, help us to recognize that your love is stronger than our fear and your hope is greater than our doubts. Amen.*



5 God's Invitation

Leader preparation: The book *The Voice* by R. W. Metlen (Paulist Press, 1999) is an allegory about a man in a rowboat fishing when a Voice says, "Follow Me." The man disregards the Voice. When the boat springs a leak, the man blames the Voice. When he discovers that his boat is stuck and he cannot reach his oars to propel the boat, he fears that if he gets out of the boat to follow the Voice he will surely drown. The Voice again says, "Follow me" and "I love you." Finally the man takes the risk, steps out of his boat, and discovers he can walk upon the water.

If possible, obtain a copy of the book, and read it for yourself. Reflect on how it speaks to your own experience of accepting or rejecting God's invitation. Read 1 Samuel 3:1–10. Reflect on how these two stories share some common themes and ideas.

Supplies:

- Bible
- "The Voice Summary and Questions," Attachment: Activity 5
- (optional) book: *The Voice* by R. W. Metlen (Paulist Press, 1999)

Invite several people to act out the story as you read the book *The Voice*, or tell the story from the handout "The Voice Summary and Questions." Stop at various point to ask the group to reflect on what is happening to the character at that point in the story using the questions provided on the handout.

Invite the participants to share their thoughts and feelings about the book. Guide the conversation using the following or similar questions.

- Have you been satisfied with how your life has been going and then God seems to ask you to go another way?
- How did you feel when that happened?
- In what ways did you relate to the character in the book?
- Recall a time in your life when it seemed as if God would not let you alone. How did you try to ignore God's invitation?



Ask one of the group members to read 1 Samuel 3:1–10. Guide the discussion using the following questions.

- How does the fictional story reflect the biblical story?
- Name some qualities that the characters from the two stories share. Which of these qualities do you share?
- How it is both comforting and disconcerting to hear the Voice?
- In our attempt or desire to discover our gifts of ministry, how might we listen for the Voice that calls us?

As you complete this activity, offer a prayer inviting the voice of God to continue to pursue each of us so that we

6 Flying High

Leader preparation: Acquire “Diamond Peak, Nevada, USA” so that you have the opportunity to reflect on it. What feelings bubble to the surface as you look at this photo? Read Philippians 4:13 aloud. What comes to mind now as you say those words aloud and view this artwork?

Supplies:

- artwork: “Diamond Peak, Nevada, USA,” http://www.art.com/products/p13950276-sa-i2807680/diamond-peak-nevada-usa.htm?sorig=cat&sorig_id=0&dimvals=0&ui=55eedd136d4049bcaab8f63c70afd3e3&searchstring=diamond+peak
- Bible

Display “Diamond Peak, Nevada, USA.” Allow several minutes for the group to reflect on the image. Invite the group into conversation using the following questions.

- What feelings come to mind when you look at this image?
- What feelings might the snowboarder?
- What gifts might the snowboarder need to do this run down the mountain?
- What risks are there be? What joys?
- What risks have you taken to discover your gifts of ministry?
- What joys have come from that discovery? What joys come from putting your gifts into practice?

End your time by reading Philippians 4:13 together.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Raising Your Hand (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read 1 Samuel 3:1–10. Think of a time when you have raised your hand and said, “Here I am” to God. What challenges did you encounter in saying “yes”? What joys came from sharing your gifts and yourself? What might God be inviting you to raise your hand for now? What is keeping you from doing so? Write this on a sheet of newsprint:

Raising Our Hands to Say—Here I Am.



Supplies:

- Bible
- construction paper, any color
- markers
- scissors
- glue sticks
- prepared newsprint

Ask one of the participants to read 1 Samuel 3:1–10 for the entire group. Invite the participants to think of a time when they have “raised your hand” to volunteered for something. Ask them what the experience was like, if it was an easy choice, and if they ever experienced someone else raising their hand for them. Samuel “raised his hand” and said “yes” to God’s call. Suggest that we can make that choice in raising our hand to the voice of God that calls us to discover and share our gifts of ministry.

Invite participants to draw their hand print on a sheet of construction paper, cut it out, and write their name on it. Have them glue it to the newsprint. End the time with a prayer inviting God to help us raise our hands to say “yes” to the call to share our gifts of ministry. Display the artwork for others to see.

8 Letting Go, Letting God

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the prayer “I’m No Longer My Own, But Yours.” Allow yourself some time to reflect on the words of this prayer. Consider the implications of allowing God to use you as God chooses. Where might that lead you? What gifts might yet to be discovered? Are you really ready to freely yield yourself to God?

Supplies:

- prayer: “I’m No Longer My Own, But Yours,” <http://www.wesleymem.org.uk/prayer.shtml>
- single pillar candle
- matches or lighter

Have the candle lit as participants enter the room. Distribute copies of the prayer “I’m No Longer My Own, But Yours.” Ask that the group read the prayer silently first, then give a couple of minutes of quiet reflection time. Indicate that each person is invited to say the prayer aloud, one person at a time, and ask that there be a moment of silence before the next person begins to read. When everyone who wishes to read aloud has done so, ask people to share their thoughts or feelings about the prayer. Complete the experience by saying the prayer aloud together.

9 Come Build a Church

Leader preparation: Obtain a recording of “Come Build a Church” by Ken Medema (Ken Medema Music/Brier Patch Music, 1991). What might it mean for God to build the church today? What does have a church with soul and spirit mean for you? What human frailties might God build upon in your life? How might the hand of God use the gifts of ministry in your setting to build the church?

Draw a large, simple outline of a church on a sheet of newsprint. Print the words “Come Build a Church” on the top of the newsprint.



Reflect

Thomas Merton said, “We are always becoming who we already are.” We are already gifts of ministry to others; yet we are always discovering, always developing, and always discerning our gifts. Reflect on your time as a leader. In what ways has this time been an example of Merton’s observation? Give thanks for your gifts of ministry in leading this Exploration. Give thanks for those who discovered the gifts that were already present in themselves.

Supplies:

- recording: “Come Build a Church” by Ken Medema (Ken Medema Music/Brier Patch Music, 1991); sheet music, <http://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/Come-Build-A-Church/480686#>
- music player
- old magazines
- artwork board
- scissors
- glue sticks
- markers

Have the group listen to the song “Come Build a Church” by Ken Medema. You may consider playing it a couple of times so that everyone can hear the words several times. Invite the group to cut out pictures from the magazines to represent the mission and ministries, program and gifts that they hope God would use to build the church now and in the future. Ask them to glue the pictures on to the newsprint making a collage. Display the artwork where others can view it.

Complete your time by offering a prayer for the church to be built by the hand of God through the use of the gifts of ministry discovered by those within it.



Attachment: Activity 5

The Voice Summary and Questions

The Voice by R. W. Metlen (New York: Paulist Press, 1999)

Summary of the Book

The character in the book was simply going fishing, and then he heard “the Voice.” The invitation was simple—“Follow me.” The character was not looking for anyone or anything to be added to his already satisfactory life. Like most of us, the invitation from “the Voice” was all wrong—inconvenient, coming at the wrong time and in the wrong place. He tried to ignore it, tried to go on as if it were not calling him. But he could not ignore it completely. Suddenly, circumstances changed. His fishing boat sprang a leak. Life seemed to be changing too much, too fast. Everything seemed to be going wrong. He needed help. He suddenly needed “the Voice.” Even though “the Voice” had been rejected and ignored by the character, “the Voice” had remained present and ready when the character was ready and willing to consider the invitation “Follow me.” The excuses rolled out of the character’s mouth so easily. But then having no other choice—because the boat was taking on too much water—the character cried out, “Help! Voice! Help me!” And when the character opened his eyes, he discovered something amazing happened. If he were willing, he could do something extraordinary.

Questions to Consider

- After “the Voice” calls out several times, the character chooses to ignore “the Voice.” When have you ever to ignore “the Voice”?
- The character shouts, “Voice, I do not appreciate you.” When have you said that? What were the circumstances?
- On one page in the book the character thumbs his nose at “the Voice.” When have you thumbed your nose at God?
- Most of us can probably relate to the character’s frustration when he thought everyone was picking on him. How does that feel when it seems like everyone and everything is against you?
- What happens when God asks the seemingly impossible of us—“let the boat sink”?
- What event in your life had you