



Giving and Receiving Hospitality

About this Faith Practice

Hospitality begins when we perceive ourselves and others as strangers in a community of welcome. Seeing Christ's presence in the other enables us to welcome Christ into the midst of the community, with all of the costs and joys of discipleship. Gentle, attentive, patient, and consistent care is required to create a community where members are intentional about seeking and welcoming all, especially those whose abilities, experiences, and cultural traditions are different from the mainstream of the current community. A community of hospitality is aware, sensitive, and open to divergent cultural practices. It reaches far beyond the limits of the familiar in a highly mobile world, transforming both the newcomer and the established community.

Let's Begin...

Now that you've downloaded the files for your faith practice and age group or setting, you can get started planning one or multiple sessions:

- ① Open the .pdf file for your age group or setting. Choose an Exploration, the approach you think will help your group to best experience the faith practice. Choose any one of the following Explorations to use for one session:



Discovery



Scripture



Discipleship



Christian Tradition



Context and Mission



Future and Vision

Note: If you're planning multiple sessions, you can follow the order suggested above or feel free to use any order that fits the needs of your group. Some groups may choose to start with Scripture and then see where that leads them. Others may be more ready to act in their community and might want to start with Context and Mission.

- ② Locate the Exploration you've chosen

③ Look through all 9 activities and select the ones you would like to do with your group.

- If you're planning a 30–45 minute session, choose 3 activities.
- It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving.
- For 45 minutes to 1 hour, choose 4 or 5 activities.
- For a 1½ to 2-hour session, you can use all 9 activities.

Tip: Look for this symbol  to find activities designed for Easy Preparation (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church).

④ Make copies of any handouts () related to your activities. Order posters (, if using art (see "Ordering Posters," below).

Use of Art, Music, and Scripture in Faith Practices

Faith Practices activities include many opportunities to grow in faith through the use of scripture, music, and art.

Ordering Posters

If you choose activities that use an art image, you or your church will need to purchase posters of the art by clicking on the link provided in the activity. If you wish to use art, you will need to plan ahead, since it takes 1 to 2 weeks for the posters to arrive after you place your order.

Art

Six posters are used with the faith practice Giving and Receiving Hospitality and may be ordered by clicking on the links provided.

From Imaging the Word Poster Sets:

"The Peaceable Kingdom" by John August Swanson (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"The Public Fountain" by Manuel Alvarez Bravo (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"Embrace of Peace" by George Tooker (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

From AllPosters.com:

"Barber Shop" by Jacob Lawrence (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters1>)

"The Luncheon of the Boating Party" by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters2>)

"Vendedora De Pinas" by Diego Rivera (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters3>)

Music

Three music selections are used with Giving and Receiving Hospitality. We have selected music which is easily found in many hymnals. A web link is provided to give more information about each music selection.

Come All You People, Tune: Uyai Mose (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong1>)

Wade in the Water, Tune: African-American Traditional (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong2>)

Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant, Tune: Servant Song (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong3>)

Scripture

Twelve Bible passages are used with Giving and Receiving Hospitality, two with each Exploration.

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

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*Worship, Music, Arts, and Story
Adults*
Seekers and New Church Participants
Young Adults
Older Youth
Youth
Older Children
Young Children
Multiage and Intergenerational
Living Practices in Daily Life
Workshop Rotation
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Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Discovery

About this Setting

The activities in “Worship, Music, Arts, and Story” are designed to bring the faith practice of hospitality alive in worship by providing creative ways to involve people in the worship experience. In Exploring and Engaging, look for ideas to break open and introduce the subject; Discerning and Deciding presents experiences to deepen our understandings; and Sending and Serving gives ideas to send us into daily life to show hospitality. Some ideas are offered to add a significant moment to a particular worship service. Others, however, are thoughts about how we might do something to change a pattern, habit, or practice in our regular services of worship. Suggestions like these might take planning, dialogue, and collaboration among the leaders in the church, staff members, or a worship planning group.

About this Exploration

Hospitality is the intentional and respectful care of both the potential and the gathered community with its diverse and ever-changing hopes, dreams, fears and needs. Extending God’s extravagant welcome requires expansion and adjustment of the physical space and the interior space of individuals. To be truly hospitable, individuals must be personally centered in God’s grace for themselves and others. While respecting boundaries, hospitality requires suspending territories, prejudices and judgment to establish welcome space for all. Hospitality is a radical broadening of individual worldview to welcome people outside of current experience. Receiving hospitality can be more challenging than offering it. Hospitality must be experienced, modeled and practiced as a continuing expression of faith.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Luke 19:1-10

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Exploring & Engaging Activities

① Hospitality Songs

Prepare to enter this experience:

The scriptures used in the “Worship, Music, Arts, and Story” component are all about hospitality, both giving it and receiving it. Music is one way in which people are united in community. Singing together is an activity where all are invited. Selecting songs that express interrelatedness, our common purpose in encountering the Holy Spirit, one-ness in Christ, and the importance of finding community together is important to worship planning.

How to use this idea in worship:

Here is a list of songs for worship planners. They are for this Discovery Exploration, but can also be used throughout the entire faith practice “Giving and Receiving Hospitality” as the worship contexts change. Through repetition, people will come to know and love these songs.

Song	What is especially important	Possible uses
<i>All Are Welcome</i> by Marty Haugen	Ecumenically popular Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/2epuwar	All gathering occasions
<i>Come All You People</i> (lona)	From Zimbabwe; an opportunity for cross-cultural engagement Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong1	Gathering song, enlivener
<i>Come Gather in This Special Place</i>	Especially about communion Purchase The New Century Hymnal (TNCH) at: http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv	Communion
<i>Come On In!</i>	Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/24v8ec5	General, welcome to worship
<i>Come to the Banquet</i>	Speaks about the diversity of the worshiping community Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/2b3thjr	General use or communion
<i>Come, My People</i>	Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/2a6lz3g	
<i>Enter, Rejoice, and Come In</i>	Find in TNCH: http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv	Gathering
<i>I Need You to Survive</i>	Gospel style song underscores interconnectedness Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/254aj4x	Any occasion
<i>Little Children Welcome</i>	Especially invites children Find in TNCH: http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv	

Song	What is especially important	Possible uses
<i>Lord, You Are Welcome</i>	Gathers all by welcoming God into the midst Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/23n9lvj	
<i>Open Our Hears</i>	Calling upon God to enter in Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/2bz87bj	
<i>Santo Espíritu (Holy Spirit)</i>	Calls upon the Holy Spirit (Spanish and English) Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/25xjf3w	Uniting in prayer or gathering
<i>The Spirit In Me Greets the Spirit in You</i> (Jim Strathdee)	Simple words, catchy melody Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/2drwmLn	Any gathering time
<i>Wade in the Water</i> (also see Spanish translation)	African-American spiritual Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong2	A song for gathering around water for affirmation of baptism
<i>Welcome into This Place</i>	Gospel style Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/2ekgand	Gathering
<i>Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant</i>	Expresses humility and hospitality toward others; ecumenically popular Find at: http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong3	For a time of sharing, sending, or commissioning

② The Lost Are Claimed

Prepare to enter this experience:

One way to introduce the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10) is by having people do motions such as dance or pantomime as the text is read. Dramatization and visualization are powerful ways to grab and hold the attention of the congregation and to help children engage in the moment.

How to use this idea in worship:

In the front of the sanctuary place a ladder or another structure that can be climbed. You may decorate it to make it look like a tree. Several people can be part of the scene. Two should act out the parts of Jesus and Zacchaeus. Reading options could include one person reading as the others act out the story, or someone reading the narrative parts while Jesus and Zacchaeus speak their own lines.

Sing a hymn:

"What a Friend we Have in Jesus" (tune: ERIE), <http://www.tinyurl.com/6hu5hw>

③ Called to Serve

Prepare to enter this experience:

Words set to music are often more powerful than words alone. Most people find it easier to remember words when they are connected to music. One way to reinforce a concept is to use repetition in the form of a litany with a musical response.

This worship experience combines spoken words and stanzas of a hymn.

How to use this idea in worship:

Instruct the congregation at the beginning of the service that the hymn “Won’t You Let Me Be Your Servant?” will be used as part of a liturgy. Tell them to look for ways the spoken and sung words emphasize the idea of serving and giving hospitality — a special focus for the day.

Leader: O Christ, who called disciples to your side and taught them to serve and love others, come into our lives today.

Congregation: sing stanza 1 of the hymn “Won’t You Let Me Be Your Servant?”

Leader: O Christ, you call us to bear one another’s burdens and lighten one another’s suffering. Let us faithfully follow where you lead us.

Congregation: sing stanza 2.

Leader: O Christ, let us reflect your light in a world that longs for your peace and justice. Let us be your reflection.

Congregation: sing stanza 3.

Leader: O Christ, you call us to enter into the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your pilgrims on life’s journey serving others along the way.

Congregation: sing stanza 4.

Leader: O Christ, knit our lives together in your love. Let our song ring out in choruses of joy; let our words and music fill the sky with sweet refrains.

Congregation: sing stanza 5.

Leader: O Christ, we are your faithful servants. You call us to create a better world and to love one another, You call us to a grace-filled life.

Congregation: sing stanza 6.

Leader: Amen.

④ To Share What We Have

Prepare to enter this experience:

Paul writes in his letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 13:15–16) that as Christians we should continue to offer sacrifices of praise to God, to not neglect good, and to share what we have. Our gifts of time, talent, and money in our congregations reflect the fulfillment of that directive. This worship experience strives to move us beyond our church boundaries into the community, through a simple exercise in gift giving.

How to use this idea in worship:

Here are two ways to “share what you have.”

1. Prior to the service write down on pieces of paper suggestions for simple gifts such as:
 - Take a meal to a person who is home-bound or in a nursing home.
 - Take canned goods to a local food shelter.
 - Offer one or two hours of service to a local charitable organization this week.
 - Do a household chore or yard work for an elderly or disabled person.
 - Take a plant or flowers to a nursing home resident

Place all the papers in a basket. Ask those who are willing to take a task to draw one of the papers from the basket.

2. A second option is to have paper and pencils available in the pews and ask those who are willing to jot down a gift (time, service, or a tangible gift) they will give a stranger this week.

Whichever option is chosen, say a dedication prayer over the gifts and ask mem-

bers of the congregation to report back on their experiences. Reports could be notes on a bulletin board or website, gathered and posed during the next week.

This experience can be considered a stepping stone to greater giving. An ongoing practice of gifts to others might be started. Perhaps there is a local charitable organization or institution that would work with the congregation to channel such efforts. Often participation in outreach like this can include whole families and a mix of generations and can be a great opportunity for spiritual growth.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

⑤ The Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever

Prepare to enter this experience:

Concepts such as “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8) can be difficult to convey, especially to children. Yet we want to find ways for all who hear powerful scriptures like these to understand them. One way to get the point across in worship is the use of something tangible to represent the idea. A possible image for this scripture is a bowl of water, with some explanation around how water is an image for Jesus Christ (the fountain, living water, etc.).

How to use this idea in worship:

A large, clear bowl of water set in a prominent place will work best. Also have on hand several clear glass drinking glasses and several opaque (not transparent) glasses or cups. Draw the congregation’s attention to the bowl of water. Invite one or two people to the bowl. Ask them to dip a clear glass in and fill it, then hold the glass up for all to see. Then say something like this: We can see the water in the bowl and the water in the glass. Are both waters the same? The answer is yes. The water has not changed even though it is now in separate containers. Have others draw out the water in the opaque glasses and hold those up. Then ask, “Is the water still the same even if we can’t see it?” Of course it is. Ask the people to pour the water back in the bowl. Summarize by saying something like this: “In Paul’s letters to the Hebrews (Hebrews 13:8) he says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Whatever way we believe or others believe in Jesus, Jesus is still the same. We may change, but Jesus does not. We may see Jesus in one way, but other Christians may see Jesus in a different way. Believers can see Jesus differently, but Jesus does not change.”



Prayer:

Creator God, we give you thanks for the life and teachings of your Child, Jesus Christ. May we grow in faith knowing that the boundless love of Christ is always the same for us, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

“In Christ There Is No East or West” (tune: McKEE or ST. PETER)

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2bb2td8>

⑥ Let Mutual Love Continue

Prepare to enter this experience:

Visual images often help us discover inner feelings. Artwork used in worship can stand alongside scripture and evoke broader understandings. This worship experience uses the poster “Embrace of Peace”

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

by George Tooker in relation to Hebrews 13:1, "Let mutual love continue." Obtain a copy of the poster for this activity.

How to use this idea in worship:

Place the poster on an easel in a prominent place in the worship space or project an image of the poster. Try to have everyone have a good look at it. Consider asking the following questions. People could be asked to either answer them aloud, or just ponder their thoughts.

- If you were in this painting, which person would you be?
- If you have ever been embraced in this way, or others embraced you, how did you feel?
- What would it take for us to metaphorically love and care for others as this painting depicts? How might attitudes need to change? How would we need to interact with others to achieve this embrace of mutual love?

Sing a hymn:

"Blest Be the Tie that Binds" (tune: DENNIS)

<http://www.tinyurl.com/24q8evn>

Prayer:

Gracious God, Spirit of wholeness and love, bind our hearts and our will to your holy mission. May we serve you as we serve others, and may we embrace peace and justice and bind ourselves together in Christian love. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Angels in Our Midst

Prepare to enter this experience:

The story in Genesis 18 is about Abraham and Sarah welcoming three strangers often referred to as angels. The apostle Paul speaks of entertaining angels in his letter (Hebrews 13:2) and says to show hospitality to angels, "for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." We begin by assuming that it is unlikely that most folks have ever seen an angel. We read descriptions and see depictions of angels in paintings and Christmas crèches, but the real thing is mostly in our imagination rather than our experience. During this worship experience we will focus on the "unseen" angels and what they represent.

How to use this idea in worship:

Collect three to five different chairs and stools and place them in the worship space where they can be seen by everyone. Use a variety of styles from elegant to simple — perhaps a folding chair, an upholstered chair, a kitchen stool. Be sure to include a child's chair. The greater the variety the more impact the image will have.

Introduce the theme of "angels in our midst" somewhere in the service. Perhaps something like this: "Hebrews 13:2 says, 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.' Today I would like us to think about possible angels in our midst." Point to the chairs and ask, "If we had an angel here today, which chair do you think the angel might choose?"

Encourage a discussion. Continue by asking people to explain their choice of chairs. Does a plush chair seem appropriate? Why? Why not? Would a high stool be best? A child's chair?

Next ask the congregation to give their impression of the meaning of the scripture verse. Talk about the importance of being open to all who wish to join our circle of friends and worshipers, about hospitality that welcomes strangers without conditions or expectations. Expand on the thought that we are asked by God to be welcoming and perhaps to see the “angel” in all people.

Sing a hymn:

“Imago Dei...” - <http://www.tinyurl.com/2f5zgqq>

Litany of Angels (could be used as a sending/benediction)

Leader: May we see God in all creation.

Congregation: May we see the face of angels in our neighbors and strangers.

Leader: May our hearts be open to all God’s people.

Congregation: May we see the face of angels in our mirrors.

All: Image of God surround us, angels of God go with us. Amen.

⑧ Welcome, Children

Prepare to enter this experience:

Using a hymn intertwined with liturgy reinforces both the message of the scripture and the hymn itself. As we think about welcoming all people into our worshiping community, we acknowledge the particular importance of children. The song “Little Children Welcome” -- in The New Century Hymnal

<http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjj> --

is the perfect song for the occasion.

How to use this idea in worship:

There are several ways to use this litany and the hymn.

- Prepare a PowerPoint slide show to run during the liturgy. It could be photos of children and adults from your church and community; it could be photos of children and other people from all around the world; or, it could be a combination.
- Invite the children of the church to come forward and have the congregation sing to them.

Litany for Children:

Leader: The children of God are gathered in this place. All God’s children are welcome here.

Congregation: sing stanza 1 of “Little Children Welcome”

Leader: May we always protect all children, keep them safe, nurture their bodies and minds, encourage their imaginations, and hold them in our thoughts and prayers.

Congregation: sing stanza 2.

Leader: May we always show compassion and love to all children—to those who brighten our days and lives and those we’ve never met.

Congregation: sing stanza 3.

Leader: Let us pray. O God, be with these children and all children. Bless their lives and their homes. Be with their parents and families encouraging harmony and peace.

All: O God, be with the children on this day and all the days to come.

Congregation: sing stanza 4.

Leader: God bless the little children, in the name of Jesus.

All: Amen

⑨ Jesus Speaks to Zacchaeus, a Choral Reading

Prepare to enter this experience:

It is important to help those who attend worship to engage in speaking and singing words related to the scripture of the day. One way to reinforce the scripture is through choral reading.

How to use this idea in worship:

For this worship service present Luke 19:1-10 as a choral reading divided into three parts: part one narrates the story, part two contains the words of Jesus, and part three the words of Zacchaeus. Divide the worshipers into three groups (divide by where people are seated or by some other designations such as youth, adults, children or men, women, all, or whatever works in your setting) and read the scripture.

A Choral Reading of the Story of Zacchaeus

(from *The New Testament and Psalms, an Inclusive Version*, Oxford University Press 1995.)

Part 1: He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man named Zacchaeus was there, a chief tax collector who was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him,

Part 2: Zacchaeus hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.

Part 1: So Zacchaeus hurried down and was happy to welcome Jesus. All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'Jesus has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' Zacchaeus stood there and said to Jesus,

Part 3: Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to those who are poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.

Part 1: Then Jesus said to him,

Part 2: Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Sarah and Abraham. For the Human One came to seek out and to save the lost.'

Sing a hymn:

"O Savior Let Me Walk with You" (tune: MARYTON), in *The New Century Hymnal*, which can be purchased at <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

Benediction:

As Jesus called Zacchaeus down from the tree, let us be ready for the call to serve God and humanity—to do justice and work for peace. Go forth with the love of God in your hearts. Amen.

Following the Church Year

⑩ Safe Journey to Bethlehem

Prepare to enter this experience:

The church practices hospitality all year long, every day. Each season of the church year presents a unique way of looking at God's hospitality and our own. We might not think of the season of Advent as a time of hospitality, but if we begin to think of hospitality as a time to both give and receive, as a time of creating safe spaces, suspending prejudices and judgments, then Advent can be seen as a perfect time to explore how we can create images of hospitality. Let's pursue one way of seeing hospitality during this season through the eyes of children.

How to use this idea in worship:

Most churches will have a crèche and figures of the nativity, kings, shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and a manger for the baby Jesus. This suggestion lets them be part of worship with the help of the children.

On the First Sunday of Advent, gather everyone in the entrance or narthex of the church and unpack the empty stable. Unwrap the figures and talk about one. Explain that we're going to carry the empty stable into the worship space and set it up there through Advent. Talk about ways to make it a safe place for Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. Then have the children carry the stable and manger into the sanctuary. Assign some children to keep Mary and Joseph safe on this first Sunday of their journey to Bethlehem (somewhere not too close to the stable, because we will move them closer and closer each week). Keep the other characters like shepherds, kings, and Baby Jesus in the box for later Sundays. Maybe some of the animals could be in the stable this first Sunday. Be sure everyone understands that we are making a safe and welcome place for Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and everybody. Talk about what it takes to make people safe, welcome, and cared for.

Use this little litany to have the children participate:

One: Who is traveling to Bethlehem?

Children: (Mary and Joseph)

One: Where are they?

Children: (Right here! They're here!—etc.)

One: Are you keeping them safe on their journey?

Children: (Yes. We are, etc.)

One: Thank you children.

Sing:

"Away in a Manger" Can be found in The New Century Hymnal:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

On the Second Sunday of Advent, conspire with the children to find a special place in the worship space for Mary and Joseph to be, somewhere a little closer to the stable, somewhere they decide will be safe, somewhere where the children can look out for them. Prepare the children to be part of the following when it happens in the service:

One: Has anyone seen Mary and Joseph?

Children: We have! They're over here!

One: Are they safe on their journey to Bethlehem?

Children: Yes, we're taking care of them. We even have a blanket to keep them warm.

One: Thank you children, for helping them on their way to Bethlehem by keeping them safe and warm.

Sing:

"Gentle Joseph, Joseph Dear" (in The New Century Hymnal, which can be purchased at <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>). Have the women and girls sing stanza 1, the men and boys sing stanza 2, and everyone sing stanza 3.

On the Third Sunday of Advent, conspire with the children to find a place in the worship space for Mary and Joseph a little closer to the stable, and also have them unpack the shepherds and bring them in and be ready for the following:

One: Has anyone seen Mary and Joseph?

Children: We have! They're over here!

One: Are they safe on their journey to Bethlehem?

Children: Yes, we're taking care of them.

One: Is anybody else going to Bethlehem?

Children: Shepherds!!

One: Shepherds? How many? Where are they?

Children: There are _____. They're over here!

One: Are they safe?

Children: We're keeping them safe, and we brought a blanket for the sheep.

One: Thank you children for making them safe and helping them on their way.

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds are moving closer. The children are ready:

One: Only a few days to go. Are Mary and Joseph on their way, and are they safe?

Children: They're almost there, and they're safe.

One: Where are the shepherds? Etc.

One: Thank-you children for helping Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds on the way to Bethlehem where Jesus is going to be born. Will you be there when that happens on Christmas Eve?

Children: (respond as they will)

(Ask the children if they have any ideas about how we can make Jesus and everybody else welcome on Christmas Eve. You might say that we'll have to get the baby Jesus and the stable ready, too.)

For Christmas Eve at the chosen time in the service, have the children bring the shepherds, Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus and place them in the manger space. Thank the children for keeping everybody safe on their journey to this manger, and thank them for all they have done to make this a safe place for everybody. Lead the children and everybody in a simple prayer.

O God of Love. You sent the baby Jesus into the world to be a great joy for everyone. Thank you for the gift of this baby. Thank you for children everywhere. Keep all the children in the world safe. Help us to find ways to make the world safe for everybody. Amen.

Sing:

"Silent Night" or "O Little Town of Bethlehem," available in The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>.

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Scripture

About this Setting

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About this Exploration

As hospitality and scripture intersect, we acknowledge the many ways people enter and encounter sacred story. We are aware of how multiple intelligences, cultural experiences, social locations, and life experiences impact our reading and interpretation of scripture. This raises possibilities for dialogue, mutual learning, and broadened understanding. Hospitality requires our commitment to multiple expressions of the story. We learn to honor one another and one another’s viewpoints. We learn to experience scripture in the context of a diverse world with its many sacred texts. And through all of this we are more fully open to being challenged and changed.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 18:1-15

(21:1-17)

Isaiah 25:1-9

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1. Gather with a Song from Zimbabwe

Prepare to enter this experience:

One way we express hospitality in worship is by uniting everyone in song. When we sing songs of a culture different from the main culture of our worshiping community, we signal a willingness to include others. The song "Uyai Mose," <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong1>, can be used as a gathering song at the beginning of the worship service. This is a lively song from Zimbabwe in the Shona language and can be sung with motions to indicate welcoming. The words — *Uyai mose, tinamate mwari, uyai mose zvino* — are by Alexander Gondo; the English paraphrase — Come all you people, come and praise your maker — is by I-to Loh. The musical arrangement is by John Bell of the Iona community.

How to use this idea in worship:

Explain that African worship often includes dancing as a way of involving the whole being in worship. A simple way to introduce motion for the congregation is to invite the group to learn the song by rote with a song leader "lining out" each of the harmony parts. It can be taught in English and in Shona. It will work well to sing it several times in Shona followed by several times in English. Listen to a recording to hear the pronunciation: <http://www.tinyurl.com/2a8kbcd>. After the group or congregation is comfortable singing it, invite those who wish and are able to face each other (one side of the room facing the other works well) and make beckoning motions to each other — arms outstretched, palms up — in rhythm to the singing. Explain that these simple gestures express the spirit of invitation and hospitality evidenced by Africans when they sing. Next, invite all to participate, as they are comfortable: just singing, just moving, or doing both at the same time. Once the congregation has learned the song, use it frequently as a gathering song. The addition of an African drum (djembe) adds great vitality.

How to find the song:

The song can also be found at this website: <http://www.tinyurl.com/22uupyzy>. On the site, the song can be downloaded and you can hear an audio sample. Other songs: "Uyai Mose," <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong1>; "Come All You People," <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong1>; or "Two Gathering Chants," <http://www.tinyurl.com/22uupyzy>. The song is under copyright, so you can use a license to print or project it.

2. To Be Cast Out

Prepare: to enter this experience:

When we read the story of Sarah, Abraham, and Isaac we often forget about Abraham's other son, Ishmael, the son he had with Sarah's Egyptian servant Hagar. But if we read Genesis 18:15-17 we find a redemptive moment when Hagar and her son learn from an angel that they are not forgotten.

How to use this idea in worship:

The scripture for this worship experience is powerful. It speaks of rejection and protection. Here are ways to make the story come alive.

1. Precede the story time with a paraphrase of Psalm 40.
2. Invite a liturgical mover/dancer or actor to act out the motions as the Genesis passage is read.
3. Read the scripture. Then have a woman and a child enter the worship space. The woman will have the following lines (or a paraphrase) memorized and say



them. (Someone else will be ready to be the angel's voice.)

Hagar: "Oh, what will I do now? The water Abraham gave us for our journey is gone. We will surely die in this desert alone."

(Hagar directs the boy to go sit a ways away from her, perhaps under something like an altar table or tall plants. The boy sits with his head down, looking dejected.)

Hagar: "Please, God, don't make me watch my child die."

A voice: "Hagar, do not be afraid for God has heard the voice of the boy and knows where he is."

(Hagar slowly walks toward the boy and takes his hand. They embrace before slowly leaving the worship area.)

End with a prayer:

Gracious God, even when we are cast away from our families you know where we are. You know our fears and misgivings, our longing for companionship and love. Help us to remember that even in our saddest moments you know where we are and watch over us. Help us to rise from our moments of desolation with renewed hope and strength and extend those feelings to others. May we always recognize the gift of your love and share it willingly with all those we meet. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

"If You but Trust in God to Guide You" (tune: NEUMARK), in The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

3. To Exalt God

Prepare to enter this experience:

A central focus of worship is to exalt the name of God. We do it in our songs, our prayers, our liturgy, and in the reading of scriptures. We also use many names to describe God such as Father, Mother, and Creator. The names we give God help us to see the many attributes of God, and this helps us to expand our words of praise.

How to use this idea in worship:

This litany encourages members of the congregation to contribute names of God and choose words of praise. Announce that in this worship service there is a special litany to praise God, and that the congregation will create it as they go along. Go through the litany to prepare the people for where they will be asked to "fill in blanks." The litany below has blanks to be filled in by worshipers and leader as it is recited. Consider reading the litany and asking people to call out words to fill each blank. They can do it in turns or all together.

Litany of Exaltation and Praise:

Leader: Dear ____ (Name for God) _____. We give you ____ (praise word) ____ for all your gifts. We give you thanks and ...

Congregation: ____ (praise words).

Leader: Dear _ (Name for God) _____. You have given us life, friends, family, and homes, and for this we say ...

Congregation: ____ (praise words).

Leader: Dear ____ (Name for God) _____. You created earth and all its creatures, days and nights and their sun and moon, people and their many colors and for this we say:

Congregation: ____ (praise words).

Leader: Dear ____ (Name for God) _____. You have given us your greatest gift, love, and have given us the capacity and courage to share that love, and for this we say:

Congregation: ____ (praise words).

All (unison): God is good. God is great. God is our hope. God is our salvation. Praise God. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

"We Praise You, O God" (tune: KREMSER), in The New Century Hymnal,
<http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjav>

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4. Christ Is the Fountain

Prepare to enter this experience:

Water is often important in stories of hospitality. In the story of the strangers visiting Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18:3–4), water is the first thing offered. It is also a symbol of survival. In the story of Abraham sending away Hagar and their son Ishmael, Abraham sends water, but it runs out, and God comes to the rescue (Genesis 21:14–21). Water is the sign of our baptism, and Christ is known as the fountain of life. We encounter water throughout scripture as a sign of sustenance, refreshment, survival, and salvation. The photograph "The Public Fountain," <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, is evocative of some of these characteristics of water and can become a focal point for a worship experience.

How to use this idea in worship:

Have people view the image "The Public Fountain" by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. It might be projected or displayed as a poster on an easel. Use the following questions for people to answer out loud, or as a way of guiding their meditation:

- a. Where is this fountain?
- b. Who do you think built it? Why is it there?
- c. What is it used for?
- d. Where is the boy from?
- e. What can you imagine about his life?
- f. In what way does water represent hospitality to you?
- g. In what ways do we provide water for others?

Conclude by reminding people that Jesus said whatever you do for the least of these you do in my name. Talk about how it is important for individuals and communities to provide basic means of survival for all people—not just for those we know, but also for anyone in need. Talk about Christ as an example of sharing living water with all people.

Sing a hymn:

"Come to the Water" (<http://www.tinyurl.com/287wj62>), "Like a Healing Stream," (<http://www.tinyurl.com/2abb82x>), "Cuando desciendo a las aguas (As I Descend in the Waters)," (<http://www.tinyurl.com/2dle3bc>)

5. The One Called "He Laughs!"

Prepare to enter this experience:

Read Genesis 18:9–15 and 21:1–3. Sarah in her advanced age laughed when she heard God say she would have a child — a son, the heir she and Abraham had longed for. We don't often find references to laughter in the Bible, if at all. And we certainly don't find any other mention of someone laughing at the words God speaks. But laughter is key to this scripture for it not only describes how absurd Sarah thinks the statement is, but it also lets us in on the name of the baby, Isaac, which literally means "He Laughs!" What absolute joy this event gave Isaac's parents.



How to use this idea in worship:

While most people would agree that worship should and could be joyous, few congregations make a point of finding time to laugh together. To emphasize the joy that Abraham and Sarah felt when Isaac was born, build a few moments of laughter into worship before reading Genesis 18:9–15 and 21:1–3. Tell a few jokes, and when the laughter subsides, introduce the scripture reading by explaining that today's text is all about a child named "He Laughs!" Be sure to emphasize the joy that those aging parents felt at the birth of a child—so joyous that his very name was laughter. But also mention that the laughter began with Sarah's reaction of disbelief and culminated with the laughter of God's miracle fulfilled. Then read the scripture. (You might even prepare people to be ready to laugh at the place where the reader says "So Sarah laughed to herself," and the reader will pause while everyone has a good chuckle, then continue with the reading.)

Litany for Laughter:

Leader: We laugh with Sarah who thought the idea of a child at her advanced age was a joke.

All: We laugh with Sarah for her relief that God had answered her years of prayer by giving her a child.

Leader: We laugh with Sarah who looked into the face of her baby and felt a joy she could express in no other way than laughter.

All: We laugh with Sarah who came to know the love of God.

Leader: We laugh with Sarah who named her baby "He Laughs," so she would always remember the moment God spoke about her child.

All: We laugh with Sarah because God is good. God fills our lives with good things to make us happy.

Leader: Let us laugh with Sarah.

All: Amen! Ha!

Sing a hymn:

"Someone Asked the Question" (tune: WHY WE SING), from The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

6. A Feast for All People

Prepare to enter this experience:

Nothing brings people together like a meal. Banquets and feasts provide frequent stories for both Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament. As Christians we are drawn into the remembrance of our faith through the bread and wine of communion, a most special feast. Isaiah 25:6 says that God will make a feast for all people with rich foods and wines — words evoking bounty and generous hospitality. To reinforce this concept in worship calls for a sharing of food and contemplation of the meaning of being welcomed to a feast.

How to use this idea in worship:

Most worshiping communities do their best fellowship around meals, but these meals are generally casual affairs held at times other than worship. For a special worship service related to the Isaiah passage, consider bringing in some wonderful food. There are many ways to do this, but here are two suggestions.

1. In the center of the worship space, set up a table and fill it with foods that can be eaten by hand: small slices of breads, pieces of cheese, fruit, crackers and whatever you can imagine. Make it look beautiful and inviting. After reading Isaiah 25:1-9 invite people to approach the table and gather some food to eat (provide small paper plates or napkins). If space allows, encourage them to linger and talk with one another to savor the feast, or they could do that when they return to their places with food.



2. Prior to worship fill several baskets with the same kinds of food mentioned above and napkins. After reading Isaiah 25:1-9 distribute the baskets among the members of the congregation. Encourage them to fill their napkins with a variety of foods. Invite everyone to eat and talk with one another.

After they have eaten, ask them to join in this litany.

Leader: God makes feasts for all people.

Congregation: We give thanks for the good food and hospitality God provides.

Leader: As God invites us to enjoy the feast we should plan feasts for others and invite them to know God's hospitality.

Congregation: We need to look for more opportunities to share the feast.

Leader: We are blessed by God's abundance.

All: Blessed be the God of good feasts. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

"As We Gather at Your Table" (tune: BEACH SPRING), from The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

Blessing:

Gracious God help us gather other guests to share in the feasts you provide. May we seek ways to share the bounty you give us with all humankind. Go in peace, serve God. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activities

7. Let Children and Youth Give Hospitality (for worship planners)

Prepare to enter this experience:

The story of Abraham and Sarah entertaining three strangers (Genesis 18:13) reminds us of the gifts that are brought to us if we open ourselves to receive. Theologian and teacher Henri Nouwen said, "The hospitable teacher has to reveal to the students that they have something to offer." If we consider worship as formative and pastors as teachers, the implication is clear. One of the most hospitable offerings to children and youth is to lift up their gifts. All too often youth are called upon only for youth Sunday, serving banquets, and ushering. Children are often engaged in Christmas pageants and choir singing. These are certainly worthy tasks, but what if a congregation would consider how children and youth could assume more leadership and sacramental roles in worship? Hospitality in the church is not just for the visitor. It is for one another as we offer opportunities to contribute our gifts.

How to use this idea in worship:

Pose these questions for discussion to your congregational leadership , and invite youth and children to participate in the dialogue:

- a. What times do we see youth and children playing roles in worship? What are those roles?
- b. Why do we invite youth and children to participate mostly for special times like youth Sunday, Rally Day, and Christmas or Easter dramas?
- c. What worship roles could be performed by youth and children that are now filled only by adults?

Brainstorm ways children and youth can serve in leadership and assisting roles



in worship. Here are some suggestions:

- a. Children and youth who like to speak or sing can read scripture, lead parts of liturgy, preach, lead songs, and cantor psalms.
- b. Those who prefer other ways of participating can be communion servers, bring elements to the table, pour water for baptismal affirmation, and carry things in processional.

8. Wipe Away All Tears

Prepare to enter this experience:

The powerful image “God will wipe away the tears from all faces” (Isaiah 25:8) makes us believe that God knows our sorrow and can heal our broken hearts and spirits. It is a promise that helps us understand the empathy of a loving God. This scripture from Isaiah praises God for deliverance from oppression.

How to use this idea in worship:

Read Isaiah 25:1-9, and then restate verse 8. Pose the following questions (you could ask for people to verbally answer them or give a show of hands, or write their responses on pieces of paper, or simply meditate on their answers):

1. Recall a moment when someone wiped away your tears. What did that moment feel like?
2. Recall a moment when you have wiped away the tears of another.
3. What does the wiping away of tears suggest?

Pause between the questions so that people can consider each thoughtfully. (Maybe some music could be played). When the questions have been answered, follow with this or a similar prayer: Loving God, we know the great and wonderful things you have done, and we praise your name for them. You hold us in the embrace of your love. You empower us to seek out the poor and the oppressed to wipe away their tears, just as you have sent others to us to wipe away our tears. May we never forget the importance and power of this gift of empathy and empowerment. Thank you for the signs of your love. Give us the courage and grace to spread that love to others. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

“How Deep the Silence of the Soul” (tune: TALLIS’ THIRD TUNE), found in The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>



9. The Peaceable Kingdom: A Blessing

Prepare to enter this experience:

Scripture contains all that we need for our spirits to live: nourishment, consolation, spiritual food, comfort, direction, guidance, and very importantly, and image of life made perfect. We are not so foolish to believe that life is going to be without threats, dangers, and times of trouble. Still, it is important to embrace the image of God’s perfected realm—of the world that God wants us to have, and to know that God is at work to bring this about, with us and for us. John August Swanson’s painting “The Peaceable Kingdom,” is a powerful portrait that imagines such a scene. What if we would leave a worship service ready to enter an ordinary world, but carrying an image of a world that could be? This could be a compelling way to end a worship service.

How to use this idea in worship:

Obtain a copy of the poster: “The Peaceable Kingdom”
<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>

by John August Swanson. Gather a group of people who will plan the worship service, including children. Explore Isaiah 25:1-9 and Isaiah 11:1-10. Perhaps



someone could paraphrase these passages for the children. Talk about what the world would be like if there were peace. Study the Swanson poster together, and invite people to tell what they discover, what feelings it evokes. Listen to the song “Imagine” by John Lennon, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2e7m8h>. Talk about how to develop an experience for worship time that would use the image as a way of sending. Here are some worship suggestions:

- a. Project the image while reading Isaiah 25:1–9. (See “God’s Peaceful World” below.)
- b. Consider playing John Lennon’s song “Imagine” while inviting people to meditate on the picture. (If you use this suggestion during the Christmas season, play John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s “Happy Christmas — War is Over”: <http://www.tinyurl.com/2qrjzh>.)
- c. Involve children by gathering them below the picture holding stuffed animals. They could be asked to bring their favorite stuffed animals (have some available for guests and those who forgot). The children could have the animals be “peaceful” together.
Have a child or youth read the following. Invite them to develop additional “Imagines.” Use as many readers as you want. You don’t have to limit the readers to just two.

God’s Peaceful World

Reader 1: Imagine our world like God imagined our world: a world where people share, a world where people don’t hurt each other.

Reader 2: Imagine a world where God comes and wipes away your tears whenever you’re sad.

Reader 1: Imagine a world where there is plenty of food for everybody, and where everybody shares what they have.

Reader 2: Imagine a world where all the animals and children play, and there is no fighting.

Reader 1: No playground bullies, no hitting each other.

Reader 2: No wars, no bombs, no need for people to hide from fighting.

Reader 1: Imagine a world where everybody is singing because the wars are over, nobody’s hungry, and everybody is safe.

Reader 2: Imagine...

All Readers: Just imagine.

Benediction:

Reader: Imagine

All: Just imagine.

Leader: Go in peace.

Following the Church Year

⑩ More and More Christmas Presents

Prepare to enter this experience:

The season of Christmas extends through Epiphany Day, January 6th. The following Sunday is Baptism of Jesus, and then Sundays in Ordinary time follow until Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. During this time we can find ways to explore hospitality in worship. Christmas is a festive time of gift-giving and activity, but sometimes it feels like there is a vacuum in the days and weeks following. What if we would keep the giving and receiving of gifts going during



the time following Christmas Day? Here is a simple idea for three Sundays of Christmas and after Epiphany. (You can decide how many Sundays to do this. The Sundays may vary with each year and with traditions.)

How to use this idea in worship:

Begin with three Sundays following Christmas, and prepare a box for each Sunday. You can add more Sundays and boxes to extend the idea. The boxes can be any size you choose. Place the boxes in plain view of the congregation. Explain that the gift of Christmas is not just about Christmas, but that we enjoy the gift of Christmas all year long, for our whole lives. The presents are to remind us that we keep on receiving God's hospitality, and keep on giving it and sharing it with others. Have the children open the boxes, one each Sunday, and be part of the special time.

First Sunday of Christmas

Place in the box a rainbow made of colored silk scarves or ribbons and a card with the word HOPE written on it. Select one of the lectionary readings that brings a message of hope, or use the reading for the Second Sunday of Christmas, Jeremiah 31:7-14. Ask the children to open the box. Talk about how Jesus represents hope for the world. Talk about what hope can mean, and how we receive hope. Talk about what hopelessness is, and how we can carry boxes of hope to those who need it. Who might some of these people be? What hope can we bring? Sing a song of Christmas hope: "Jesus, Jesus, Oh What a Wonderful Child" (tune: WONDERFUL CHILD), in The New Century Hymnal

<http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>.

Second Sunday of Christmas or Epiphany

Place in the box an amazing battery operated light, perhaps a lighted star. Select one of the lectionary readings that brings a message of light, or use the reading for Epiphany Day. Ask the children to open the box. Talk about how wonderful light is, and how it makes us happy. Talk about how Jesus brings light and happiness into our lives. Talk about how we can carry the light of Jesus in us and to others. Talk about people who don't seem to have much light in their lives. How might we share the light of Jesus with them? Sing a song of light: "Hark the herald angels sing, Jesus, the Light of the World" (tune: ELDERKIN), from The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>.

Baptism of Jesus

Place in the box a large, beautiful decanter of water. Have a clear basin nearby to pour water into. Select one of the lectionary readings about water, ask the children to open the box. Ask the children to identify the water, and talk about how important, nourishing, and beautiful water is. Talk about water and baptism. Ask the children to pour the water in the basin and listen to the sound of pouring. Talk about how Jesus was called the Living Water. Whenever we give others some water, it is like doing it for Jesus. Think about those who are thirsty, and how we might help. Sing a song of water: "Wade in the Water"

<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong2>.

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Setting

The activities in “Worship, Music, Arts, and Story” are designed to bring the faith practice of hospitality alive in worship by providing creative ways to involve people in the worship experience. In Exploring and Engaging, look for ideas to break open and introduce the subject; Discerning and Deciding presents experiences to deepen our understandings; and Sending and Serving gives ideas to send us into daily life to show hospitality. Some ideas are offered to add a significant moment to a particular worship service. Others, however, are thoughts about how we might do something to change a pattern, habit, or practice in our regular services of worship. Suggestions like these might take planning, dialogue, and collaboration among the leaders in the church, staff members, or a worship planning group.

About this Exploration

Hospitable disciples see God in each encounter with the people in our daily lives and those who lie beyond our usual circles of experience. The distinctions between other and self decrease when other living creatures and the earth are encountered as a sacred system of interrelationships.

We practice hospitality in cultures with habits of expected interaction. However, Jesus calls us to habits of attentiveness that go beyond our own cultures, needs and experiences. As disciples, all can be encouraged to see the face of Jesus in every experience of hospitality.

Hospitality encompasses giving and receiving. Receiving the gift of hospitality from another, even when uncomfortable, embodies receiving God's many gifts to our world.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

John 13:1-17, 31b-35
Acts 2:42-47

Exploring & Engaging Activities

① An Act of Hospitality with *Oshibori*: Warm or Cold Towels

Prepare to enter this experience:

You may have experienced the Japanese custom of *oshibori*

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2felqp5>

where wet and wrung out washcloths are rolled up and brought to the table before a meal, or when sitting down after a journey. In winter they are warm, in summer they are cool. As an alternative, sanitary wipes can be used. These can be dispensed from one bowl and discarded into another to assure that each participant receives a fresh moist towelette. This is an act of hospitality that you can provide for one particular worship gathering. It could be done as people enter, or at a point in the worship service, perhaps as a preparation for communion, or as part of the welcoming time after all have gathered. It could also be done in connection with telling the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17, 31b-35).

Supplies:

- 1 washcloth for each person attending, or sanitary wipes sufficient for one for each person attending
- a vessel to keep the wet washcloths warm or cold
- a basket for receiving the used towels. (If people will be seated, one that can be passed around.)

How to use this idea in worship:

As you prepare, read John 13:1-17, 31b-35 to yourself. You might want a helper or several to help you to prepare. They should read the story too.

People receive the warm (or cool) towels, use them to wash their faces (and hands), and then put them back in the little basket they were served in. This is intended as a simple act of hospitality. Use cool towels if it is a warm day, or warm towels for a cold day. Either as people enter or after they are settled in, offer the towels and say something like, "You've come a distance to this place. Here is a towel that is nice and warm for you to wipe your face and hands, and refresh yourself." And then offer a basket for the used towel.

You will need to get an adequate number of washcloths (usually white). Before the gathering, run water on them and wring them out, and roll them nicely (the shape of a hot dog roll). (Run warm water on them for a cool day, cold water for a hot day.) Then put them either in a warmer with a lid to keep them warm, or in a cooler, depending, on the weather, until it is time to offer them. You will need a basket to receive the towels after people have used them. Disposable wipes can be used as a substitute for wash cloths.

② Singing One Another's Songs

Prepare to enter this experience:

Singing songs from a culture other than one's own is a way of bringing others into our midst. It is also a way to imagine what the realm of God is like — a diverse gathering of people from every age, every place, every culture and race, all singing the songs that represent them.

How to use this idea in worship:

Select songs from your resources and explore ways to introduce them. Choose several songs and introduce one each week. On the first Sunday begin by reading the story of the banquet in Luke 14:15–24. Then talk about how worship is like the banquet. You could say something such as: Today we are beginning an exploration of hospitality. The story of the banquet in the scriptures is like the realm of God. It includes lots of people, and many who are not like us. We are enriched when we invite people who are different from us, not just the usual and expected people. The same is true about our music. When we bring new songs into worship we are honoring and inviting the people who love those songs.

When you bring in new songs, be sure to do the following:

- Tell something about the origins of the song, something about the people, the circumstances, or how the song is used. Hymnal companions and the internet are good places to find this information.
- Talk about language. Find ways to try new languages, even if it is just one verse. You may find someone who would sing a stanza (verse) in the original language. Some youth study languages in school. Maybe they could help. Are there people in the neighborhood who would sing a song?
- It is valuable to note the language of origin, if it is other than English. Direct the singing for each stanza in one language, e.g., “We will sing the first stanza in Spanish and then continue in English.” Recognizing the language gives honor to its origin and affirms that worship is celebrated in many other cultures.
- Find someone to lead the song — someone who can introduce it with enthusiasm and make people comfortable with exploring something new, something from another culture.

As you compile your list of songs, look in the back of the hymnal for places of origin of hymns. For example, *The New Century Hymnal* <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>.

The index, page 90, lists Traditional hymns and songs giving the culture of origin. There are also collections like *Global Songs* (Augsburg Fortress) that contain songs from around the world (<http://www.tinyurl.com/2ceefjw>).

③ The Jesus in Me Loves the Jesus in You

Prepare to enter this experience:

Being a hospitable disciple means seeing God as we encounter others. As people created in the image of God, we need to see beyond our families and cultures to recognize that God is in every human being. To acknowledge our interrelationship with one another and God is to embrace the sanctity of life. To honor this understanding in our worship is foundational to worshiping rightly with one another, and at the same time acknowledges that hospitality in the worshiping community is first of all God’s hospitality.

How to use this idea in worship:

Use the praise song “The Jesus in Me” to embody the concept of God-in-us, or *Imago Dei* (a Latin phrase used to express the idea that we are created in God’s image). Here are some suggestions for using the song.

- a. First, have a song leader teach everyone the song, “The Jesus in me loves the Jesus in you ...” <http://www.tinyurl.com/2c4hjbb>
- b. Suggest some other words to express the Holy. Short, two syllable words are best, but others could work too, such as “The Spirit in me loves the Spirit in you” or “The Holy in me loves the Holy in you” or “The God in me loves the God in you.”

c. When you repeat the song, call out a new word for all to sing.
d. Finally, invite those who are comfortably able to stand, face a neighbor, and sing to the neighbor, "The Jesus in me loves the Jesus in you." Then turn to the neighbor on the opposite side and sing, "The Jesus in me loves the Jesus in you." Then face the song leader to sing "So easy, so easy, so easy to love." Keep the song going with different "facings" and new words. Some might find it uncomfortable combining singing and moving. It is helpful to give people permission to "just sing, just move, or do both."

Discerning & Deciding Activities

④ Breaking Bread Together

Prepare to enter this experience:

Bread is often used as a symbol of basic life. For Christians, the term "breaking bread" reminds us of the last meal Jesus shared with the disciples and it connects us to the sacrament of Holy Communion. When the term "breaking bread" is used it generally means "sharing" and eating the bread together. This worship experience revolves around the breaking and sharing of bread. The scripture reference is Acts 2:41.

How to use this in worship:

If possible, consider baking bread prior to worship so that the worship space can be filled with the scent of fresh, baked bread. Strategically place a couple of bread machines near the entrance of the worship space, or perhaps bake bread in the church kitchen. Frozen bread dough can be prepared according to package directions in place of baking bread from scratch. Bread may also be purchased and used. There should be enough bread so that everyone has a sizable piece. Be sure to have napkins available.

If your worship space allows, consider having the congregation gather around one or more tables to sample the bread. You may wish to have butter or oil and jams or jellies to help expand the pleasure of the experience.

Once everyone has shared the bread, have them return to their seats and say this or a similar prayer: *Dear God, we give you thanks for bread to share with one another and for all the good food that nourishes us every day. We remember how Jesus shared bread with his friends during the Passover meal in Jerusalem the night before he died. We remember the many times we have been at a table with our friends and family to share bread and food and conversation with those we love. For these gifts, we offer thanks and praise.*

All: Thank you God. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

"Let Us Break Bread Together" from The New Century Hymnal
<http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

⑤ Beautiful Are the Skins

Prepare to enter this experience:

The writing of prayers and litanies by members of the congregation or members of a worship planning team can bring freshness to a worship focus on hospitality. When we think about opening ourselves up to be a hospitable community, we will look at issues that divide or distance, for example issues of race or social class.

Writing a litany of praise can be a way of expressing openness or perhaps of envisioning a world that we want to become. Beautiful are the works of God in which the vision of an all-embracing God who sees God's people as one is lifted up.

Leader: Beautiful are the works of God!

People: Beautiful also are the skins of God's people!

Leader: Beautiful is the mind of God!

People: Beautiful also are the hopes of God's people!

Leader: Beautiful is the heart of God!

People: Beautiful also are the souls of God's people!

Leader: God made the heavens and the earth!

People: To God be the glory for the things God has done!

(*Jeremiah Wright Jr., copyright 1995 The Pilgrim Press, The New Century Hymnal, p. 824*)

How to use this idea in worship:

Gather a group of people and read the story of the banquet in Luke 14:15–24. Talk about where the edges of your congregation might be. Who are the people on the margins, the people who need to be invited? What kind of prayer or litany could you write that would embrace all, invite all, and make all feel welcome—none excluded? Read the litany above. With that in mind, begin to envision God's new realm as a banquet to which all are invited.

Try a model such as this:

Beautiful is the house of God:

Beautiful is the house of God: its doors are always open.

Beautiful are the people of God: ready to share with one another.

Beautiful are the people of this church: ready to sing one another's songs.

Find the model that works best. This is not an exercise in crafting perfect prayers, but rather an exploration in expressing hospitality.

⑥ A Flower Communion

Prepare to enter this experience:

The story of the heavenly banquet in Luke 14:15–24 is an image of extravagant hospitality where those on the margins are welcomed. It also carries a strong message of diversity. When the banquet-goers finally assemble, we can only imagine the variety of guests. We are told the dominion of heaven will be like this. We get a glimpse of this every time we gather as communities of inclusion. It is like a lovely bouquet of flowers.

Holy Communion, Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper or Lord's Table are names given to the celebration of the sacrament that grounds Christian worship. But communion is a word that can be used to describe people of any faith gathered in worship to acknowledge both their communion with God and one another. The idea of a flower communion began in the Unitarian movement in Czechoslovakia.

How to use this idea in worship:

In the original service, each person was asked to bring a flower to worship. As they arrived, they put their flowers in a vase. In the service the vase was brought into the congregation and prayers were said. At the end people were asked to select someone else's flower to take home. As a worship planning team, explore the following questions.

- a. How could we adapt this idea for our worship service?
- b. What would be an appropriate Sunday for this?
- c. What would we say the Sunday before to prepare people for this?

d. What scriptures might we use, and what words might be said to bring meaning to this ceremony?

Have a bouquet of diverse flowers prepared and laid out or in a vase so that every person can choose one as they enter the church building. At the appointed time in the worship service, explain the idea that a congregation is like a bouquet of flowers, everyone different, everyone beautiful, and each one contributing to the beauty of the bouquet. Then invite people to come forward and place their flowers in an empty vase while music is played. Reflect on the beauty of the flower bouquet and invite individuals to say their thoughts. (Below are some additional words that might be said to reflect on the bouquet.) Tell people that at the end of the service they will each be able to choose a flower, different from the one they placed in the vase, to take home as a reminder of how we are all part of a diverse family.

Sing "Dazzling Bouquet (Mine Is the Church)"* <http://www.tinyurl.com/23faw77>. This fun song includes phrases like, "We are a dazzling bouquet of every kind of flower. Jump in the vase, 'cause we've got space for more." It might work well to have the stanzas sung by soloist(s) and congregation with choir joining on the refrain.

Some additional words that might be said to reflect on the bouquet: "We use flowers in our ceremony this morning to help us symbolize the love that is hidden deep inside us. Flowers are beautiful, and so are the feelings of love among people. Their beauty cannot be measured, and neither can the feelings of people be measured. Their life is short, but new flowers will replace the flowers that die, and new love can come into our hearts. This bud is for the new babies who have joined us this year. Last year these babies did not exist. This year they are here among us. Before they could lift a hand, they learned to smile. Before they could speak, they learned to love. If we help them keep this love in their hearts, they will pass it on to others, many years in the future. This flower represents the people living all over the world. Maybe we will never see them face to face, or touch their hands. But we can still warm our hands on their hearts, because we know that their hopes are like our hopes, their pain is like our pain, their love like our love. These flowers were each brought here by a different person and put together on these trays. They stand for all the people here today. These flowers, so lovely today, will fade tomorrow. But the love among brothers and sisters, families and friends, will go on and on. We know one another, we know what is in each other's hearts. We have brought our flowers and our love to brighten our church and gladden our hearts."(Author Unknown)

*"Dazzling Bouquet" by Bret Hesla is printed in *Bring the Feast; Songs from the Re-Imagining Community*. The Pilgrim Press, 1998. It is also available from Augsburg Fortress in *Global Songs 2: Bread for the Journey* <http://www.tinyurl.com/23faw77>

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Looking at the Banquet (for worship planners)

Prepare to enter this experience:

In the parable of the great banquet, Jesus creates an image of a community formed by inviting ones separated by social and cultural distance. The heavenly banquet that Jesus wants us to imagine is made of all God's people with people of all classes, races, abilities, and cultures. If we think of worship as a rehearsal for the realm of God where all join in the heavenly banquet, then we need to consider

what our worship looks like. All too often the community focuses on its sameness and on its own cultural patterns of doing worship. A look at cultural differences can be the beginning point for a look at inclusiveness. If we consider our worship as a rehearsal for the heavenly banquet where all are included, then we become an image of hospitality to people of differing classes, races and cultures.

How to use this idea in worship:

Identify a group willing to evaluate worship from a cultural viewpoint. Use the Nairobi Statement as a guide for discussion. Developed in 1996 by the Lutheran World Federation, it is widely used by people who want to explore the ways culture and worship intersect. Find the Nairobi Statement online, and make copies for the group. <http://www.tinyurl.com/294hhtu> (Permission to reprint is included at the web page.) After all have read it, discuss it to make sure all understand the four categories. The following categories may give clarity:

- a. Trans-cultural: These are the actions and signs we share with all Christian worship, such as baptism, scripture reading, communion.
- b. Cross-cultural: These are actions and signs that come from cultures other than the congregation's main culture. For example, use a communion cloth brought from another country. Sing a communion song in a different language.
- c. Countercultural: These are actions and signs that stand in contrast to the prevailing culture. For example, an invitation to communion might be: Jesus welcomed everyone, so do we. No matter who you are or where you are in your faith journey, you are welcome at our table.
- d. Contextual: These are actions and signs that lift up and honor the customs and arts of our own community. For example, use pottery communion vessels made by members of the youth group, or display on the walls of the worship space pictures of the realm of God created by the children.

Take a "tour" of your worship services and the physical surroundings. Use the four cultural lenses to examine where your strengths and voids are. In what areas might you put some attention in order to bring your worship into cultural balance? Make a list of specific things that are already present and things to add.

Talk about what some additions might mean to visitors of another culture. What do these additions say to children? Consider ways to introduce the additions that would honor the people or culture they represent and enrich your worship. End with a prayer for openness to people of all cultures.

❸ Wonders and signs

Prepare to enter this experience:

In Acts 2:43 the writer states, "Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles." The next two verses tell how believers sold their possessions and distributed the proceeds to those in need. What a commitment to faith! For those preaching the Gospel today, this message of self-sacrifice may be difficult to convey. But we are called as a community of faith to make sacrifices and to use our resources to help those in need.

How to use this idea in worship:

Consider distributing to the congregation paper or index cards and pencils or makers and crayons. Ask everyone to write or draw one personal item they might be willing to sell and then give the proceeds to a charity or special church fund for the needy, or something they would give to help someone in need. Then invite the congregation to write or draw an item that would be difficult for them to part with for the benefit of those less fortunate. Collect the papers or index cards. Place them on a table at the front of the worship space, and say a litany of blessing:

Leader: Gracious God, giver of life and things that sustain life, help us think about and remember all that you provide for our families and us.

Congregation: God, we give you thanks for all we have.

Leader: When we think about the ways we spend our money, about the things we buy to make our lives comfortable, remind us that there are others in our community, country and world who have so little. Help us focus on ways to limit our own gathering of possessions and to use our resources to help others live more comfortably.

Congregation: God, may we remember to live simply and give with generous hearts to those who are less fortunate.

Leader: Loving and sustaining God, we have brought before you and this congregation lists of our possessions. We ask you to help us find ways to sacrifice our belongings so that we have resources to help others who have less than we do.

All: God, thank you for your abundance. We ask your blessing on us as we move to be more giving and loving toward others that they may know that your community of faith cares for them. Help us to remember that we are blessed by the sacrifices we make for others in your name. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

"Take My Gifts" (tune: TALAVERA TERRACE), in The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

❾ Love One Another

Prepare to enter this experience:

John 13: 31b–35 relates Jesus' new commandment to love one another. Jesus asks the disciples to love each other as he loved them because, he says, in this way everyone will know they are Jesus' disciples. As Christians we are called to live out our faith in ways that demonstrate the love of Jesus through our actions. This is more than a request. It is a command, and it can be difficult to obey not because we don't want to, but because it may be hard to know how to get started and how to interpret "love."

How to use this idea in worship:

To reinforce the idea of loving others as Jesus loved us, encourage the congregation to brainstorm ways to interpret the love Jesus is asking for and how to get started loving others as Jesus loves us. In the worship space set up a large white board or newsprint. Ask a volunteer to jot down ideas as members of the congregation call them out. If children are present, make sure to encourage their participation.

Read John 13: 31b–35. Draw a large heart on the whiteboard or newsprint. Invite the congregation to call out answers to these questions. Ask a volunteer to record their ideas on the newsprint or white board.

1. Who does Jesus ask us to love?
2. How do we show love to others, especially those people we don't even know? To reinforce the idea that these responses are an act of love, hand a heart-shaped sticker to each person who responds to the questions. Have enough stickers on hand so that everyone who would like one can receive it after the service as a reminder of today's message on love.

Prayer:

Jesus, teach us to love as you have loved us. Help us to know no bounds with generosity and caring. May we smile at those we don't know, extend kindness to strangers, risk embarrassment by offering help to someone who is struggling, and show love with no interest in a reward. Help us be your loving arms on earth. Keep our words and actions filled with love toward one another. Give us courage to love. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

"Jesus Loves Me"

Consider singing one or two verses in another language as a reminder that we are called to love all people. Don't worry about the words; the effort is the important thing here. See <http://www.tinyurl.com/26p2akb>.

Following the Church Year

⑩ Bringing Stories and Food to Share

Prepare to enter this experience:

The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and extends until Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday. It is a time to focus on the life of Jesus and on our lives as disciples, exploring the ways we give and receive hospitality. When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he showed them that they needed to be able to receive hospitality. Good disciples need to keep giving and sharing hospitality.

Lent is also a time of telling the stories of salvation. From the times of the earliest church Lent focused on mentoring those who would become Christians through baptism at the Easter Vigil. How do we relate these two themes? Quite simply. At the same time we as Christians go about our lives as disciples living out lives rooted in hospitality, we take this time of Lent as an opportunity to review our theology, beliefs, and the covenants we have made with God: affirm them, and at the same time focus on our role as teachers and mentors for those who are eager to learn the faith. A tall order? Perhaps, but not a dual role. Some of our best teaching is done by example. So what better way to spend Lent than extending real hospitality and telling stories?

How to use this idea in worship:

Food in church? From the earliest Christian worship, people brought their food and shared it. They took turns telling the stories of their faith, singing songs, and reciting scripture. Here is something in which everyone can participate, even visitors and newcomers who can enjoy the food and listen to the stories with no pressure, but certainly be given an opportunity to share their own stories. Make Lent a time for some genuine hospitality.

Allow plenty of advance time to prepare for this activity. Perhaps a small planning group could work out details of the following and do adequate publicity. Choose a time during worship for the story and snack time. Plan to have this happen every Sunday at the same point in the service. Recruit families, representatives of a group, or individuals to commit to a Sunday. Make sure they know what is being asked of them before they commit.

The task is as follows:

- a. Prepare to present a story of faith. This can be a Bible story, a story of Christian faith and belief, or a life experience of theirs that was important to their faith journey. It could be a story about baptism. Set a time limit, perhaps no longer than 5 or 10 minutes. They could bring pictures or props, maybe even a PowerPoint.
- b. Recommend a hymn that fits with their story. Be sure to let the musicians know in advance so they can provide accompaniment.
- c. Prepare a short prayer. The prayer could be printed in the order of service for all to pray, or they could just pray.
- d. Bring some food to share, something that is easy to handle. Perhaps the

planners could also assist in preparing it. Or perhaps someone else could provide it.

At the appointed time in the service, a worship leader can say something like this: During the Sundays of Lent, we will include in our service a custom from the early Christian church. It is a time of hospitality and sharing of food. Just like in the early church where the members brought their stories, their life experiences, their stories of salvation and baptism, and songs, we have recruited members of our congregation who are willing to do that for our worship. During a time of some instrumental music (a brief song) we will have something to eat, and then we will hear their story.

Adapt this to what works in your setting. Open up the storytelling to others to add their faith stories. As a great example of genuine hospitality, invite visitors to tell their story. In addition, a time of fellowship following the service of worship would be a great time for more stories. This is a way for Lent to be a time of deepening faith and hospitality to all.

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Setting

The activities in “Worship, Music, Arts, and Story” are designed to bring the faith practice of hospitality alive in worship by providing creative ways to involve people in the worship experience. In Exploring and Engaging, look for ideas to break open and introduce the subject; Discerning and Deciding presents experiences to deepen our understandings; and Sending and Serving gives ideas to send us into daily life to show hospitality. Some ideas are offered to add a significant moment to a particular worship service. Others, however, are thoughts about how we might do something to change a pattern, habit, or practice in our regular services of worship. Suggestions like these might take planning, dialogue, and collaboration among the leaders in the church, staff members, or a worship planning group.

About this Exploration

God continually invites us to participate in extravagantly welcoming others into abundant life. Our Christian tradition gives us ancestors in faith who have told and preserved stories of their experiences, questions, failures, accomplishments, joys and sorrows. We learn from their experiences as well as from our own. In sharing meals with friends, we repeat Jesus' breaking the bread and sharing the cup with others. God invites us to welcome those whom we encounter in daily life, and those we might not otherwise encounter, to see them as God's beloved people, to respect the variations on the theme of human who present themselves to us. We are called by God to create a safe, welcoming environment for all. We are continually influenced and taught by our Christian traditions.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Mark 14:22-25

1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

1 Peter 4:1-11

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1. Speak the Very Words of God and Serve

Prepare to enter this experience:

The message of 1 Peter 4:11 reminds us to speak the words of God and to serve God in all that we do. It's a message that reminds us that our words and actions need to reflect our faith. Those baptized into the Christian church are marked with the sign of God as they enter God's family. We are God's own, and God wishes us to speak to and serve others as God does. We are "in the family," and extending the love and hospitality of that family to others is one of the greatest Christian traditions.

How to use this in worship:

What better way to reinforce God's word than to speak it. This worship experience includes a choral reading, a responsive reading between two groups. Divide the congregation by section to read the following:

Group 1: Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God.

Group 2: What does that mean?

Group 1: Ah, a good question. Well, it means that God would not call someone stupid, God would not say words to us that would hurt our feelings, God would not yell at us.

Group 2: But what kind of words would God use?

Group 1: God would use words that show kindness and love.

Group 2: Oh, we get it. God might say, "That was a job well done," or "You are a wonderful person," and "please" and "thank you."

Group 1: That's right. God's words are words of kindness and love, and God wants us to use those kinds of words with one another.

Group 2: What else would God like us to do?

Group 1: I'm glad you asked. God would like us to serve others and to do it with the strength that God supplies so that God may be glorified in all things.

Group 2: So, God would help us serve others, give us ideas and the resources to help those in need, to find ways to feed the hungry and shelter those with no homes?

Group 1: That's exactly right. We can call on God, pray to God for help, so that we may be God's workers.

Group 2: God is good.

All: God is great; God is loving. God gives us good words to speak and good ideas and the strength to provide for others. God is great, indeed. And we must never forget to keep giving God our thanks. THANK YOU, GOD!

Sing a hymn:

"If You But Trust in God to Guide You" (tune: NEUMARK) from The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>



2. Bulletin Words Can Speak Hospitality

Prepare to enter this experience:

Our service of worship is a combination of traditions we know about from the Bible and those that have been handed down from the early Christian church (which was derived from Jewish worship) and from innovations and revisions that have taken place throughout church history. Not all of these traditions are ancient. For example, the use of individual glass cups for communion began a little over a century ago. Ancient practices in our worship are important to carrying our faith traditions. They can take on added significance, especially for newcomers and strangers, when they are explained or translated. Words used to identify parts of worship beg for modern interpretation. As an act of hospitality, examine these words from the point of view of a neophyte or visitor.

How to use this idea in worship:

Your printed order of service may include these words:

Prelude
Invocation
Introit
Scripture
Sermon
Offertory
Doxology
Lord's Supper (or Holy Communion)
Benediction
Postlude

Consider two things:

1. Name the major movements of the service. For example, Gathering, Discovering the Word, Meal, Sending.
2. Give each piece of the service a more contemporary interpretation. See the example from the Attachment: Activity 2.

If you project hymns on the screen, consider projecting these "guideposts" to reinforce where we are and what we are doing during the service.

3. Be Hospitable

Prepare to enter this experience:

Showing hospitality, especially to those we do not know, is at the center of Christ's commandment to love one another. In 1 Peter: 4:9 the statement on hospitality includes the caveat to do it without complaining. The last statement reminds us that it is easier to be pleasant and welcoming to those we know or count as friends. It is not uncommon for church members to greet visitors at the door without really extending hospitality. Some visitors may need to know where childcare is provided, if there is a Sunday school that morning, where to find the restrooms or pastor's office, or how to use the printed order of service or maybe help finding a place to sit. Church hospitality needs to make visitors feel welcome. That may include educating the congregation to watch for people they don't recognize and to approach them to help them feel comfortable in your worship space.

How to use this idea in worship:

Begin the service with a welcome greeting, such as: Greetings to you from God our Creator, Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our Sustainer on this most happy morning. We want you to feel welcome and blessed to be a part of this community of faith whether this is your first time here or you've been here for generations.

Introduce the focus of the day, which is hospitality. Read 1 Peter: 4:9. Suggest that this is a day that we would like to make visitors feel welcome. Instead of putting the visitors on display by asking them to stand or even to wear visitor name tags, invite members of the congregation to stand or raise a hand as you call out the function or functions they serve in your congregation. You might include: church school leaders, choir members (all choirs: children, youth, adult, bells, instrumentalists), members of the governing Board and committees; moderator or Board chair; youth leader(s); members for more than 20 years, 10 years, 5 years, one year or less.

In this way you take the focus off the visitors and place it on the community of faith and allow the visitors to identify a person or two they might wish to seek out after the service to ask about a specific program. End by saying a word of welcome to visitors to let them know you are all happy they have taken the time to worship with you today.

Sing a hymn:

"We Are Not Our Own" (tune: YARNTON) in The New Century Hymnal,
<http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>



4. Affirming Our Baptism

Prepare to enter this experience:

Our Christian tradition gives us a context to live out our faith and belief in Jesus Christ. Baptism is a Christian sacrament. Every drop of water reminds us of Christ's baptism. When we gather around water in worship, we can recall our own baptism and faith stories, and renew the vows that were said by us or by the community on our behalf. Through this Affirmation of Baptism we remind ourselves of how we are all welcomed into the Body of Christ through baptism.

Supplies:

- a bowl (clear glass is good) on a stand so all can reach it and see it
- pitchers or vases to pour water
- seashell
- plastic eggshell
- small piece of wood to represent a boat

How to use this idea in worship:

Recruit helpers to pour the water and to put things in the water. As the Affirmation of Baptism begins, come to the font or bowl, which already has some water in it.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Blessing of the Water, Attachment: Activity 4.

5. I Am Welcome, I Am Loved Just as I Am

Prepare to enter this experience:

Hospitality in worship needs to be about more than our tradition of greeting people who come. It needs to be felt by everyone present. And we need to recognize that it is not just about being friendly to one another, it is about the grace of God who welcomes all of us, no matter who we are, who we have been, what we have done, or what we've been guilty of. In the presence of that love and grace we can all truly affirm that we are welcome.

How to use this idea in worship:

Composer and teacher Bryan Sirchio has written a song that has many uses in

worship, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2faqvg8>. The music is available at the composer's website, <http://www.BryanSirchio.com>, as a song sheet and mp3. It is also available in Bryan Sirchio's collection, *Something Beautiful for God*. Here are the lyrics:

I am welcome,
I am welcome,
I am loved just as I am;
I am welcome,
You are welcome,
We are loved just as we are —
O Spirit, breathe that truth into our hearts.

Use this beautiful song as a meditative song that is sung over and over again as people come forward for the communion meal. The song could be learned by the congregation and sung as an assurance of God's love following a prayer of confession. It could be sung at the beginning of worship as part of a litany such as this:

Leader: Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are troubled and weighted down with care, and I will give you rest."

Everyone (singing): I am welcome ...

Leader: God spreads a banquet even in the shadows of the darkest valleys and says, "Come, fear not, sit down, eat, drink, and be refreshed."

Everyone (singing): I am welcome ...

Leader: God makes waters spring forth from dry places, and rocks, and quenches our thirst. God says come to the waters and be refreshed.

Everyone (singing): I am welcome ...

Leader: The Holy Spirit folds her wings around each of us, no matter who we are, who we have been, what we have done, or what we've been guilty of.

Everyone (singing): I am welcome ...

Leader: So let us now be assured of the grace we have through Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost and know that we are welcome always, forever, just as we are.

Everyone (singing): I am welcome ...

6. One More Thing

Prepare to enter this experience:

The acts of hospitality we offer may determine whether a first-time visitor to worship will decide to return. Getting visitors to return was not the motive of the fifth-century monk, Benedict, who said, "Let all guests who arrive be received as Christ." Rather, he was simply following the teachings of Jesus, who said, "When you do it to the least of these who are members of my family, you do it to me."

Congregations find many ways to receive visitors: greeting them, helping them find seats, handing them bulletins, acknowledging their presence during worship, sending follow-up letters, and inviting them to fellowship time. Monasteries like those founded in the tradition of St. Benedict often welcome visitors to stay for several days. If you've ever stayed at a monastery as a guest, you might have been told that while you are there and even as you travel on, the community will pray for you. What if churches in their worship would do one more thing and pray for their visitors? What if that would happen every Sunday? And what if the visitors would be invited to participate in the church community by asking

for their prayers? And even if there are no visitors, the community would pray for those who have visited recently or those yet to come.

How to use this idea in worship:

At a point in the service — perhaps at the time you acknowledge your guests, or during the regular prayer time, or at the time of sending, have the person leading prayers say something like this:

Jesus said, "I came as a guest and you received me." St. Benedict of the early church believed that all visitors were to be treated as Christ. We extend our hospitality to you. We want to surround you with our prayers, and we hope that we can make you feel welcome. We also ask that you pray for us that we may find new ways and new energy to serve the world in love. Let us pray. O God, we thank you for the presence of these guests among us. We pray for them and their loved ones and ask your blessing on them, and on each of us. Help us to be givers and receivers of your love.

(Other prayers can continue.)

7. Live by the Will of God

Prepare to enter this experience:

In 1 Peter 4:1–3 we hear that it is time to move away from a life focused on worldly things and time to live by God's will. In verse 8 the writer points to love as the means by which we are able to live out God's will: "Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins."

How to use this idea in worship:

Before the service of worship make sure there are Bibles, hymnals and/or songbooks available and accessible to all participants. At a point in worship, read 1 Peter 4:1–11. Then address the two themes of "Live by the will of God" and "Maintain constant love for one another." Point out that this is an overriding theme for Christians and forms the basis of our faith. The will of God can be compared to the Ten Commandments; and the love statement can be compared to that given by Jesus to his disciples, "Love one another as I have loved you." Invite the people to look through their Bibles, hymnal and/or songbooks to find references to "love." Perhaps two or three people could read some of the Bible verses they found. Then sing some of the songs they identify. After the singing, pray: O gracious, loving God, help us to understand your all-surrounding love, and to experience what it means to live within the power of your loving grace. Show us how we can make your love known to others. Prompt us, push us, and maneuver us to follow your example of boundless love toward each other. The more we know your grace, the more we must respond in love toward each other, toward all we know, and those we have yet to meet. We ask your help in this and all we do in the name of Jesus. Amen.

8. New Covenant

Prepare to enter this experience:

When is a meal not a meal? Answer: when it is a covenant! Most Christians will have heard the words of covenant spoken during the communion meal as Jesus talks about the cup as a reminder of the new covenant he is making. This is a specific reference to the events that will follow that Passover meal in which he will be a sacrifice to seal a new covenant. The concept of God's covenant is accompanied by a rich tradition of Christian and Judaic symbols. Here is a great opportunity to lift them up and teach about them.

How to use this idea in worship:

Prior to worship, place reminders of scriptural covenants in the midst of the worship space: a communion cup and bread, baptismal water (perhaps a bowl of water or move the font central), a dove (or a picture of one), a rainbow (ribbons or a rainbow flag), a picture of Jesus, a cross. During the service read Mark 14:22–25. Then ask the congregation to see if they can name the signs of covenant that are before them. Ask them to call out their answers. Say something more about each as they are called out, like the following. If they are not all mentioned, be sure to point them out.

- Baptismal font/bowl/water: God's covenant of baptism and our Christian sacrament through which we join the Body of Christ, the church
- Communion cup and bread: (Mark 14:22–25) God's covenant of salvation and our sacrament of Holy Communion
- Dove: a covenant sign used twice in scripture — first, a dove sent by Noah from the ark to find land after the flood (Genesis 8:10) and second, a dove descended on Jesus when he was baptized (Mark 2:10)
- Rainbow: the covenant with Noah after the flood (Genesis 8:12–13)
- Cross and/or picture of Jesus: God's new covenant (Mark 14:22–25)

Continue with this litany:

Leader: God, Creator of all, you made a covenant with Noah and Noah's descendants to never flood the earth again. You set a rainbow in the sky as a visible reminder of your promise.

People: We give you thanks, Creating God, for rainbows that remind us of your covenant.

Leader: God, Fountain of Life, the waters of baptism and the dove of the Holy Spirit remind us of Jesus' baptism and our own and how we have been joined in the Body of Christ.

People: We give thanks, Faithful God, for the water that sealed us with the mark of our faith at our baptism and for the Holy Spirit, the dove of peace.

Leader: Loving Parent God, we give you thanks for your Child, Jesus, whose death on the cross reminds us of salvation and eternal life.

People: We give you thanks, God, our Mother and Father, for the bread and cup of the Holy Meal that are signs of the Body of Christ that we share.

All: God of Covenant, God of Promise, help us to see and to remember your grace and your love though these signs and gifts. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

"Wonder of wonders, here revealed" (tune: PENTECOST), in The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjav>

9. As We Leave the Table, Say Thanks

Prepare to enter this experience:

Imagine you are a guest for dinner in someone's home. When the meal is ended and you are ready to leave, you would express your thanks. In Christian worship, the same thing happens when we leave communion: we give thanks to God. The ancient Christian tradition is to have a prayer of thanksgiving. It can be said by one person or by everyone. One of the big ideas of the prayer is to share our meal with others. That means sharing the Word, which can be food, compassion, love, and justice.

How to use this idea in worship:

Dr. Fritz West, a United Church of Christ minister, wrote the following prayer. Use it as it is, or write your own.

Here are some ideas for you to consider.

- a. Choose a name for God, for example: God of Creation who feeds all of life ...
- b. Thank God for the communion meal: You have fed us at your table and we thank you.
- c. Ask for God's blessing and help as we commit to our mission: to feed others, to care for the world, to carry justice.

Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion

(*The Communion Prayer of Thanksgiving* by Fritz West © 2007 Worship and Education Ministry Team, UCC; Permission is granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship. All publishing rights reserved.)

Celebrant: Holy One,
you gave us this day our daily bread
and nourished us with Christ's presence:

People: We thank you.

Celebrant: Send us from this meal with the Bread of Life,

People: to feed all who hunger for your Word.

Leader: Send us from this meal,

People: to care for your gift, this fragile and beautiful planet.

Leader: Send us from this meal with the Cup of Life,

People: to work for justice with joy, a world sharing the abundance of God.

Leader: Make of us your salt and light and leaven.

People: In Christ's name we pray.

Following the Church Year

Easter and Judaism

The time leading up to Easter, particularly Holy Week, and the Easter Vigil — particularly as these events coincide with the Jewish tradition of Passover — is a good time to contemplate the relationship of our Christian communities to the Jewish community. This time in the church year and the weeks following can become an exploration of how others may view the way we tell stories and celebrate liturgies in our worship. For example, to create a Seder meal in a Christian worship context might seem to some as a way of honoring ancient tradition. At the same time, it raises an issue of the idea that Christianity replaced Judaism, and that the only way that the First Testament and Jewish traditions have value is through the eyes of the New Testament and Christian belief. What image of hospitality does this present to our Jewish neighbors? What image does it present to interfaith families in our Christian worshiping community? See <http://www.tinyurl.com/233rmg>.

How to use this idea in worship:

This is a good time to take a look at the use of Hebrew scripture. One idea is to be sure to find ways and times to tell Hebrew scripture stories that stand on their own. Incorporate the psalms in worship. Use songs that honor the stories and figures from Hebrew scripture, such as the praise song "You are!"

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

or "God of Abraham and Sarah" (tune: CONSTANTINE)

<http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv> (in The New Century Hymnal),

and songs that link us to ancient symbols, like rainbows and fiery pillars, for example, "In the Midst of New Dimensions" (tune: NEW DIMENSIONS), in The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>.

Resources:

Has God Only One Blessing? By Mary C. Boys. Paulist Press, New York 2000

<http://www.tinyurl.com/254pt29>

Preaching without Contempt: Overcoming Unintended Anti-Judaism by Marilyn J. Salmon Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2006

<http://www.tinyurl.com/23aut4u>

This website give ideas for families who are interfaith, and is good for communities that want to explore this idea: <http://www.tinyurl.com/23fj28r>.

Attachment: Activity 2

An Order of Service

Ancient

Prelude

Invocation

Choral Introit

Scripture

Sermon

Offertory

Doxology

Lord's Supper (or Holy Communion)

New**We Gather**

*music centers our thoughts for worship
a time to be still and listen for God
we look to God to be present
a sung scripture to begin worship*

We Discover God's Word

*we hear words from the Bible
we reflect on a message in the scriptures*

We Share at the Table

*we offer our gifts for the community to use
we sing a song of praise and joy
we share a meal in the name of Jesus
(all are welcome)*

We Are Sent into the World

*we are given a blessing to go and do God's holy work
we are sent on our way with music*

- If you use the Prayer of Jesus in the service, write out the words so that all may feel comfortable participating in saying the prayer.
- Include page numbers for all music, including the Doxology and the Gloria Patri.
- Include a page number for any creed or affirmation of faith.
- If you have pew Bibles, list the page numbers next to the scripture so that all can find the text.
- Include a brief explanation of the procedure for communion, such as "Take the bread and cup as it is passed," or "Take the bread. Hold the cup until all are served," or "Come to the table. Take a piece of bread and dip it into the cup."
- If you pass the peace, include brief instructions.
- If you use a hymn of invitation, briefly explain what a person is to do, such as "This is an invitation to join this congregation either by confession of faith or transfer of membership from another congregation. Those who desire to respond, please join the minister at the front of the sanctuary during the singing of this hymn."

Attachment: Activity 4

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Blessing of the Water

Reader: O God of grace, you have been living water to your people in every age. You have blessed every generation with life and possibility. You promise to quench the thirst of those who long for you; you promise to bring rain upon the dry land; you send the dew upon each morning of our existence.

Invitation to the Water

Come, come to the water. Come, you who are thirsty. Come to the water.
The mighty acts of God are known to us through water.
Water, that primordial pool of creation over which the Spirit hovered;
Water that cleansed the whole earth for new beginnings, new growth;
Water that divided so slaves could walk to freedom on dry ground;
Water, our bath, our tomb, and our womb;
Water by which we are adopted as daughters and sons of the Most High.
Come to the water and give thanks to God whose mighty acts are known to us through water.

Leader (invite all who are comfortably able to come forward): Please join us around the waters of baptism (or Life).

Sing "Wade in the Water" (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong1>) or "Take Me to the Water" (<http://www.tinyurl.com/2ahvyq1>) as the congregation comes forward.

One: See the streams of living water.

The Helpers hold up pitchers and pour water into the font or bowl that already has some water in it. It is appropriate to have music playing in the background. During the rest of the prayer, the Helpers occasionally dip up water and let it pour back into the bowl. One could use a sea shell, another an eggshell, another some kind of small sprinkling can, so that moving water is heard and seen through the prayer. It is important that there be a continuous flow of words and actions, but keep this from being mechanical.

Leader(s): Holy One, we thank you. Your Spirit moved over the waters of creation bringing life to the world.

(Helper stirs the water.)

Your ark of salvation carried the faithful through the cleansing flood.

(Helper floats a small piece of wood in the water.)

You led Moses and Miriam and your people from slavery across the Red Sea to freedom.

(A Helper hand "divides" the water.)

And in the fullness of time, you sent Jesus nurtured in the water of Mary's womb, baptized by John in the waters of Jordan,

(Helper pours water with the eggshell.)

to be living water to the woman at the well, to wash the feet of the disciples, and to send them to baptize all nations by water and Spirit.

(Helper dips a seashell and pours.)

Leader (hold a hand over the water): As you have through all of life O Holy One, again pour out your Spirit upon this water as we gather around it to proclaim our faith and get wet with your grace.

One: All who wish are invited to renew the vows of your baptism. Let us proclaim our faith. Do you believe in God? If you do, say I believe in God!

People: I believe in God!



Attachment: Activity 4

(*Prayer of Thanksgiving and Blessing of the Water continued*)

One: Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

People: I believe in Jesus Christ!

One: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

People: I believe in the Holy Spirit!

One: Eternal God, you have been the font of Living Water to all generations. We thank you. Sisters and brothers, come and mark yourselves with water to remember your baptism and God's never-ending faithfulness to us.

Congregation returns to their seats.

Notes: This liturgy is written so that the congregation does not need to have any words printed in the bulletins, leaving them free to watch, move, and participate. Feel free to adapt the script, for example, letting the movers say their lines

From *Worshiping into God's Future*, United Church of Christ. Adapted by Arthur Clyde © 2003.

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Setting

The activities in “Worship, Music, Arts, and Story” are designed to bring the faith practice of hospitality alive in worship by providing creative ways to involve people in the worship experience. In Exploring and Engaging, look for ideas to break open and introduce the subject; Discerning and Deciding presents experiences to deepen our understandings; and Sending and Serving gives ideas to send us into daily life to show hospitality. Some ideas are offered to add a significant moment to a particular worship service. Others, however, are thoughts about how we might do something to change a pattern, habit, or practice in our regular services of worship. Suggestions like these might take planning, dialogue, and collaboration among the leaders in the church, staff members, or a worship planning group.

About this Exploration

Hospitality marks the identity and inspires the action of a welcoming community. Discerning needs of the local community and expressing compassion for the global community call individuals and congregations to respond to the real need. Each individual brings unique gifts to the community and extends opportunities to share. Mission partnerships are never one-way streets. Risking outreach to others creates opportunities to receive. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and those in prison are ways of welcoming Christ into the community. Those sent forth in mission are uniquely able to return with lessons of hospitality offered by those who have been served. Looking to God for guidance, the open hearts and serving hands that reach out to the world are the same hearts and hands that welcome.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Romans 12:9-18

John 6:1-21

Exploring & Engaging Activities

① Recognizing Miracles

Prepare to enter this experience:

The New Testament tells of special deeds and miracles performed by Jesus. But these accounts are two thousand years old, and most people today don't expect miracles to happen. So if miracles are scarce, or if we have trouble believing in them, why not bring some examples into worship as a reminder of the power and love of God who is always performing miraculous deeds.

How to use this idea in worship:

Prior to the service of worship gather one or more symbols of common miracles (or create a Power Point of photos) like these:

- a flower bulb and the flower it produces
- a pumpkin seed and a pumpkin
- a pregnant woman and someone with a baby
- a packet of yeast, some flour, and a loaf of bread

During the service show the examples of miracles and talk about how we have come to view these examples as simply everyday experiences, forgetting that God the Creator is at the center of each of one, that God gives us these miracles day by day. Invite the congregation to call out examples of miracles that are recorded in the Bible. Here are some examples you can add if they are not mentioned:

- Jesus feeding the five-thousand
- Jesus turning water into wine
- Jesus healing the leper, the blind man, the woman with a hemorrhage
- Jesus bringing Lazarus back to life
- Jesus walking on water, calming a storm
- God parting the waters of the Red Sea for the Israelites to pass
- God sending plagues into Egypt to free the Israelites

Then ask the congregation to call out events in their own lives that they feel may have been miracles, or God acting on their behalf.

Pray:

God of miracles, you give us the dawn, the glow of sunlight, and the refreshing coolness of rain. You are the creator of rainbows and stars that glow at night. Your creating spirit continues to perform miracles for us every day: give us wisdom to see and faith to believe in the wonders you supply. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

"Sois la semilla (You are the seed") (tune: ID Y ENSEÑAD) The New Century Hymnal, #528 (The Pilgrim Press: 1995), <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

② Outdo One Another in Showing Honor

Prepare to enter this experience:

Romans 12:9-10 outlines what it means to extend Christian love. We are to hate evil and have genuine love and affection for one another and outdo one another in showing honor for one another. What a wonderful expression of love — to honor others, to show respect to those who are elderly, to give special treatment to

those who are lonely; people who are single, divorced, or widowed; people who sometimes sit alone during worship. We can honor the unlovable or argumentative people of the church by seeking them out and being cordial to them. Honor means showing respect — being gracious and kind to even the unlovable ones by acknowledging their personhood and their status as children of God. If we can make our congregation a place to practice honoring one another, think what could happen if we would make that our mission to those outside our doors.

How to use this idea in worship:

Consider having stick-on name tags ready for all who attend worship. Write on each label MOST HONORED PERSON. Or, choose another type of sticker such as a gold star or heart. As people enter the worship space, greet them and give a sticker to wear. During the service read Romans 12:9–10. After the reading, invite people to greet one another, to turn and ask one another's names and then say, "It's an honor to meet you!" You want to consider having people introduce themselves as Mr._ Mrs._, Miss_, Dr._, etc., as an additional way of honoring each person.

When everyone has been introduced, ask them to be seated. Follow up with comments about the importance of honoring one another as a sign of Christian love. Remind the congregation that showing simple respect and kindness is one way to honor people, respecting their status as children of God. Challenge them to seek out people this coming week with whom they don't usually talk. This is a way of honoring these people by greeting them and engaging in a conversation. This is God's challenge to us: to show love by honoring others, and to make it our mission to extend that honoring to those outside our church.

Pray:

Good and gracious God, help us honor all those we meet: those who are elderly, children, youth, and the people with whom we work. Help us to honor all those who work to serve us: clerks and salespeople, teachers and coaches, waiters and waitresses. May our kindness and patience with all people reflect our desire to honor them as you have called us to do. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

"O for a World" (tune: AZMON) <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv> (from The New Century Hymnal)

③ Blessings to You

Prepare to enter this experience:

It is a common practice to say "God bless you" when someone sneezes. But what if we made a practice of giving God's blessing to others even if they don't sneeze? Romans 12:14 says that we should even bless those who persecute us. This experience is based on a Litany of Blessing to reinforce the idea and words of extending God's blessing to others.

How to use this idea in worship:

Prior to the worship service, arrange for someone to pretend to begin sneezing at a pre-determined time in the service. Then when it happens, say "God bless you." Then ask for a show of hands of people who usually say "God bless you" to someone who has sneezed. Ask for a show of hands from people who regularly say "God bless you" to others, just to extend God's love. There will probably be

fewer hands. Talk about that, and say that perhaps we hesitate to say the words because we aren't sure how they will be received. Or, perhaps it feels phony, or we don't feel worthy enough to say God's blessing so we leave those words to clergy people to say. Or, perhaps we don't want to "broadcast" our faith and give people the impression that we are very pious. Suggest that perhaps we should think about our hesitation and consider the benefits of passing along God's blessing to others. As we have been so richly blessed by God, then we can pass that along to others with these simple words.

Litany of Blessing

Leader: May the God of blessing fill your hearts today.

Congregation: God bless us.

Leader: May the joy of God be seen in your smiles and heard in your laughter today.

Congregation: God bless us.

Leader: May the grace of God move us to new places of action and commitment to living out the Gospel.

Congregation: God bless us.

Leader: God bless all creation, all peoples, all races, all leaders, all children, all youth, all ages, and all faiths.

Congregation: God bless us. God bless you.

Leader: Now turn to another person and say "God bless you."

Sing a hymn:

"Sent forth by God's Blessing" (tune: THE ASH GROVE) from the New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

Discerning & Deciding Activities

④ Communion, Loaves, and Fish (for worship planners)

Prepare to enter this experience:

In John 1:5–14 five thousand people are fed with five loaves of bread and some fish. Author Paul Galbreath reminds us of the relationship of our Holy Communion not only to the Last Supper, but to other mealtime stories about Jesus. In this story, Jesus preaches and then feeds the people. Here we find the actions of Holy Communion: Jesus gives thanks, blesses, breaks, and distributes bread. In modern practice, we hear the word and we gather at the table.

What would happen if we would recall in communion not only Maundy Thursday ("on the night in which he was betrayed"), but other stories from the life of Jesus? These suggestions are not intended to be whole communion liturgies, nor to change the communion tradition of a church, but rather to broaden the experience.

How to use this idea in worship:

A worship planning team can discuss ways to enable the story of the feeding of the five thousand to flow throughout a service of word and sacrament. Begin with the Great Thanksgiving (Communion Prayer or Eucharistic Prayer). The prayer, usually said at the communion table, includes thanksgiving for God's creation and the history of God's acts of salvation and recalls Jesus' life, death,

and resurrection. Consider adding phrases such as:

- As we gather we recall how Jesus invited himself to the table of Zacchaeus to be a guest of an unpopular person,
- How Jesus used the meager offerings of a little boy — five loaves of bread and two fish — to feed five thousand people
- And how Jesus after he had risen cooked breakfast on the seashore for the disciples.
- As we recall how Jesus became both host and guest at table with not only friends but strangers, we gather today to celebrate this feast of remembering and anticipation of the joy of the heavenly banquet.

Also think of imagery: In what ways can you bring the image of five loaves of bread and two fish into the communion time? Consider having a child bring the loaves and fish to the table. If the congregation is small, maybe just one slice of bread and one little can of sardines would carry the message. Perhaps there are images that could be projected that would evoke these stories.

⑤ Thanks for the Pineapple Workers

Prepare to enter this experience:

There are many stories in the Bible that display God's abundance. In John 6:1–21 we hear the story of many people fed by five barley loaves and two fish that were brought by a boy. Jesus gave thanks to God and fed 5,000. Did he thank the boy? We can be certain. But the story of the boy is lost. Who was he? So often we enjoy hospitality and abundance. But often the people who fished or baked or farmed to supply the food are forgotten. The pineapple is a symbol of hospitality. At the same time it has been the product of plantation farms where there is a history of oppression. Pineapples in American colonial times were a sign of hospitality for those who could afford them. As we focus on this symbol, we can also lift up the beauty of those people in all lands who labor in agriculture, and be vigilant for instances when these people are exploited. As one person said, one person's symbol of hospitality is another person's symbol of oppression and enslavement. In preparation, look for articles that provide insight into justice issues, such as "Sour Taste of Pineapples" <http://www.tinyurl.com/26xnpqq>.

How to use this idea in worship:

Obtain a copy of the poster "*Vendedora De Piñas*"

<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters3>

the "seller of pineapples," by Diego Rivera. This picture can provide an excellent focal point for a moment of reflection on abundance, hospitality, and gratitude. Bring the picture and some fresh pineapple into the midst of worship. Tell the congregation the name of the painting and anything else you know about it. Remind them that pineapples have been a symbol of hospitality in Western European culture.

Then, reflect together on these questions or questions that might arise:

- Who grew the pineapples?
- Who grows the pineapples we put on our tables today?
- Are they present in our worship?
- If we wanted to say a prayer of thanks to the people who grew our pineapples, who would those people be?
- If we wanted to know more about these people where would we go?

Say a prayer like this one, and at the end of the service, share the pineapple with everyone.

Leader: We know your abundance, O God, in the beauty of the food you provide for us.

People: We thank you for our daily bread.

Leader: We know your abundance, O God, comes to us through the hands and labor of others.

People: We thank you for all who work hard to provide food for us and for the world.

Leader: We remember how hard they work, and we pray they are justly paid for their labor.

People: We need to be mindful of the labor of food providers and how they are paid.

Leader: We come with humility to the table you have set for us, O God, and remind ourselves of how fortunate we are.

People: We thank you, O God, for this pineapple and for the many hands that labored to grow it, bring it to us, and serve it.

Leader: Thanks be to God.

People: Thanks be to God.

All: Amen.

⑥ A Surprise Feast

Prepare to enter this experience:

The feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1-14) is a wonderful Gospel story that points to the mystery that surrounded Jesus. Who was this teacher from Nazareth? How could he make so many miraculous things happen? His followers were amazed by his abilities. This story illustrates how the presence of Jesus could ignite hospitality among people who didn't even know one another, yet would share what they received in order to create a feast for all. The idea of sharing what we have with others and making sure all are fed is a model for the mission of the church today.

How to use this in worship:

Prior to the worship service arrange for a few people to secretly bring simple food (bread or crackers, cheese or fruit) into the worship space. Consider planning for them to bring less than they think will be needed. After reading John 6:1-14, introduce the experience by saying something like: "What a miraculous event. How lucky those five thousand folks were that somebody brought some food. And how amazing that, even though there wasn't much to begin with, there was plenty for everyone. I wonder what it would be like if it would happen here? But then, no one ever brings food to worship here!" At this point, plan to have the people who brought food interrupt you and say something like, "Here, we've brought food and we're ready to share it with everybody!" Then they will bring out the food and share it with the whole congregation. Since there will be less food than needed, be sure to remark about this by saying something like, "Well there surely will be enough for everyone if we all just take a small amount. That way we can be sure that everyone is fed!" After the food is passed and eaten, be sure to collect the leftovers. Plan to have the leftovers carried to the front of the worship space. Be sure to comment on this since it is an important part of the story that illustrates how abundance flows out of hospitality. All can be fed if we share with one another.

Prayer:

God of abundance and grace, you remind us of the love of Jesus when we are willing to share with others. Bountiful feasts or simple meals shared with others become means of grace and a reminder of your many blessings on our lives. Help us to find ways to extend your generosity to us with other people. Help us to remember to open our doors, our hearts, spread our tables, and invite others in to share your extravagant welcome with all. Bless us and keep us in your care. Amen.

Sing a hymn:

"Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread" (tune: ST. FLAVIAN) in The New Century Hymnal, <http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Hope and Pray

Prepare to enter this experience:

In a letter to the Romans (12:12) Paul says, "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer." These words are still important today for Christians. So many things have changed in our recent past. Uncertainty can seem very threatening as news accounts that were once a day now stream through our televisions and across our computer screens giving us minute-by-minute accounts of what is happening everywhere in the universe! We are immersed in events even as they are taking place. We can find much of today's news to be disturbing or alarming, and that can make us feel hopeless, helpless, and powerless. Paul encourages Christians to look for and celebrate hope in our lives, to be patient in our suffering, for we are God's own and in God's care, and to continue to pray.

How to use this idea in worship:

Prior to worship, place paper, pencils, and perhaps crayons where everyone can easily access them during the service. Introduce the theme of Hope and Prayer by reading Romans 12:12. Invite everyone to jot down or draw things that remind them of hope. Some suggestions could be:

- a community of friends and family that provide support
- the dawn of every day brings fresh starts
- the birth of a baby brings new life
- a farm field or orchard at harvest time reminds us of bounty
- hospitals are places of healing
- faces of children on a school bus or subway
- churches

Next, ask each person to write a one- or two-line prayer, or draw an image of someone in their community or anywhere in the world for whom they would like to pray. After a few moments collect all the papers and bring them to a table or altar for a time of community prayer.

Sing a hymn:

"In our prayers" (see Attachment: Activity 7)

Pray:

Gracious God, help us to find hope in all situations and to give hope to others by offering



them our love and support. We have placed before you symbols of hope and people for whom we want to pray. We give over to your loving care these thoughts from our hearts.

Sing (repeat):

"In our prayers."

Pray:

Bless us, our families and friends; bless all members of this congregation that we may be a hope to others and that we may faithfully pray for your blessings and to praise your holy name. Amen.

Sing:

"In our prayers."

⑧ Do Not Be Afraid

Prepare to enter this experience:

In John 6:15–21 after Jesus preached to thousands of people and fed them, evening comes and he slips away, while the disciples go off in a boat. Suddenly, a strong wind begins to rock the boat. The disciples are scared and then astonished when Jesus walks out to them on the water and says, "It is I; do not be afraid." These are words to comfort the frightened disciples: they are words to reassure us today as we face our own fears and turmoil.

How to use this idea in worship:

Tell the scripture story and then use this litany.

Be Not Afraid

Leader: At times in our lives we face fears and have been anxious, but Jesus says,

All: Be not afraid.

Leader: Many times we have to do things that are difficult, sometimes even painful, but Jesus says,

All: Be not afraid.

Leader: We have held the hands of crying children; we have steadied the hands of aging parents and grandparents and worried about their fears, but Jesus says,

All: Be not afraid.

Leader: Some of us have counseled troubled children and teenagers, others have worked to heal people who are sick or comfort those who are dying, or we have simply sat with a troubled friend, and in these times, Jesus says,

All: Be not afraid.

Leader: You call us to minister to others, to love and care for one another, and you want us to hear your still voice of calm. And always in these times, Jesus, you say to us,

All: Be not afraid.

Sing a hymn:

"Jesus, Lover of My Soul" (tune: MARTYN)in The New Century Hymnal
<http://www.tinyurl.com/28o4kjv>

⑨ Twelve Baskets Left Over

Prepare to enter this experience:

In John 1:5–14 the story of Jesus feeding five thousand people with a little boy's five loaves of bread and some fish ends with gathering up twelve baskets of leftovers. The message is clear: when we are fed by God's grace we have abundance to share with others. If we connect the telling of this story with communion, we can be left with a compelling opportunity to share not only the good news, but real food, and not only with one another, but with the whole world. This is the mission of the church.

How to use this idea in worship:

The story of loaves and fish ends with twelve baskets of leftovers, a sign of abundance. Think of ways that the communion meal becomes a beginning of hospitality as it extends into our daily lives. What if at the end of the communion service, twelve picnic baskets were carried into the congregation by children and a meal would be shared around the communion table? What if at the end of the communion service twelve baskets would be carried out of the church to feed hungry people? Discuss these and other ideas with a worship planning team to enable the story of the feeding of the five thousand to flow throughout a service of word and sacrament.

Sing:

"Twelve Baskets Left Over" <http://www.tinyurl.com/27eggrg>

1. Twelve baskets left over! The great crowd is fed.
From few loaves and fishes a banquet is spread.
The needs are so great, our resources so small,
but Christ breaks and blesses enough for us all.

2. Twelve baskets left over! Our barns bulge with grain.
Why must tender children know hunger and pain?
God gives us enough if we only will share,
like Christ, making justice and living with care.

3. Twelve baskets left over, much more than we need!
O Christ, name our doubt, our excuses, our greed
Then teach us to trust you each day that we live,
To share with thanksgiving the gifts that you give.

Words: Ruth C. Duck, 1993; copyright © 1996 The Pilgrim Press; Music ANDERSON by Jim Strathdee, 1996; copyright © 1997 The Pilgrim Press.

Following the Church Year

⑩ Pentecost Songs

Prepare to enter this experience:

The story of Pentecost is one in which diverse people become one in the Spirit. They are not necessarily all speaking the same language, nor are they alike in their races and cultures. This is the church today. As a Pentecost people it is clear that one mission of a hospitable church is to explore one another's cultures and



to allow for an exchange of styles, ideas, and theological interpretations. Full hospitality is more than saying, "You're welcome here. Come and be like us." Rather, full hospitality is the community that says, "Come as you are and share your culture, your gifts with us. We're eager to embrace a mission of growing and transforming ourselves." Rather than becoming simply a result of changing culture and demographics, such a church becomes hospitable to the world around it.

How to use this idea in worship:

Pentecost is a great time to embrace the idea of new languages. Unfortunately, many churches see Pentecost and World Wide Communion Sunday as the only times when they engage in the languages of "the others." Pentecost can be the perfect time to explore the songs of a culture other than the mainstream culture. It can be a time to commit to a plan of choosing a new song from a culture other than the main one, and singing it for several Sundays. Consider these suggestions:

- Try to experience the song in its original language. Perhaps there are one or several people who can sing it in its language of origin. There may be many in the congregation who would love to try it. Don't assume that we will always sing the song in English. To announce that we will sing a certain song, and then just begin in English, ignoring the original language, renders the language invisible along with the culture that gave it birth.
- Always bring a story of the people (the culture) with the song.
- Try adding some instruments such as percussion, like shakers, and perhaps a guitar and trumpet accompaniment.
- Honor the song by giving it a real home in the liturgy. Don't just sing it because it is peppy or pretty, but because it is the perfect gathering, or prayer song, or sending song.

Attachment: Activity 7

In Our Prayers

O Lau Tatalo

J = 88
 Cmaj⁷ Am⁷/G Cmaj⁷ Am⁷/G Cmaj⁷ Dm⁷ G

In our prayers,
O lau ta - ta - lo,

Dm⁷ G C Em/G C Cmaj⁷ Dm⁷ G

in our hearts, in our prayers,
Ma - i lo'u lo - to, O lau ta - ta - lo,

Dm⁷ G C Em/G C C⁷ F F/C

in our hearts, God in your grace,
Ma - i lo'u lo - to, Le A - tua Ma - ma -

F F/C Em⁷ Am⁷ Em⁷ Am⁷/G Dm

hear our prayers, God in your grace, O
Ta - li - a ma - i, Le A - tua Ma --ma na A -

G Dm G⁷ Cmaj⁷ Am⁷/G Cmaj⁷ Am⁷/G

God, hear our prayers.
-lo - fa, Ta - li - a ma - i.

Words: Sidney Fowler

Samoan Translation: Lauaki Agaiotupu Pouesi

Music: Lauaki Agaiotupu Pouesi

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WORSHIP. MUSIC. ARTS & STORY

Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Setting

The activities in “Worship, Music, Arts, and Story” are designed to bring the faith practice of hospitality alive in worship by providing creative ways to involve people in the worship experience. In Exploring and Engaging, look for ideas to break open and introduce the subject; Discerning and Deciding presents experiences to deepen our understandings; and Sending and Serving gives ideas to send us into daily life to show hospitality. Some ideas are offered to add a significant moment to a particular worship service. Others, however, are thoughts about how we might do something to change a pattern, habit, or practice in our regular services of worship. Suggestions like these might take planning, dialogue, and collaboration among the leaders in the church, staff members, or a worship planning group.

About this Exploration

Pursuing hospitality invites self-examination and even criticism. Where are we as individuals and where is the community in the complexity of protecting, tending and making space for self, God, others and all creation? Where are the points of giving and receiving hospitality? How do we discover the courage to reach beyond the familiar? What growth is required as individuals and as a community? What practices, events and experiences are worthy of celebration? What sustains a continuing journey? Living into God’s future calls forth a dance of individual and communal points of view, commitments, passions and understandings. God welcomes all into this future.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Luke 14:15–24

Mark 10:13–16

Exploring & Engaging Activities

① Praying for Others

Prepare to enter this experience:

The banquet story in Luke 14:15–24 talks about the realm of God as a meal to which many people are invited, but they are too busy to attend. But many others were never invited. They represent the many who are often ignored by us. They represent those we tend not to think of, or those we don't bother to acknowledge. As individuals we can take time to think about people who are invisible to us. We can begin to move closer to them through prayer. This is an exercise in prayer for a worship service or a time of meditation.

How to use this idea in worship:

Look through magazines or on the Internet to find pictures of a wide variety of people that represent those whom we might ordinarily overlook or ignore. Include people of all ages, all races, all occupations, and all abilities. Paste these pictures on 3" x 5" cards. Read Luke 14:15–24. Then distribute a card to each person. Invite people to think about the person pictured on the card. What might life be like for that person? Where might they be right now? What might they be thinking? Sometimes people have deep needs or carry heavy burdens that don't show. Acknowledge that even though they are unknown, anonymous people, we can still pray for them. Perhaps the picture will remind us of someone else to pray for. Or it may simply be someone to whom we simply don't pay much attention. Pause for reflection (choose a length of time with which you are comfortable). Now hold the card close to your heart and pray for that person. Pause again allowing time for silent prayer. Close with a gathering collect (prayer): God, you call us all to be at the banquet. Help us to remember to invite others. Open the eyes of our hearts to see _____ (name those whom we may neglect.) Help us to imagine ways that we can be your banquet hosts in the world. Let God's people say Amen.

② Yes, Jesus Loves Me

Prepare to enter this experience:

In the story of Jesus welcoming children, Mark 10:13–16, Jesus once again goes against culture by lifting up children. In Jesus' day children were not valued as they are in many of today's societies. As we think about how Jesus loves all the children, we begin to think of children in places and cultures other than our own. Singing "Jesus Loves Me" in a language other than your own can be an image of hospitality as we bring those of other cultures into our midst. This may remind us of our opportunities to welcome all children just as Jesus did.

How to use this idea in worship:

Find a way to tell the Bible story to the children of the congregation in the presence of all. Invite all the children to be together. Talk about how Jesus loves all the children in the world. Remind them that each child speaks his or her own language.

Have the congregation sing "Jesus Loves Me" in several languages.

See <http://www.tinyurl.com/246tcxn>.

Invite the congregation to sing one stanza in English and then a stanza in many languages all at the same time to remind us how Jesus loves all the children and how many children with many languages love Jesus.



③ A Song about Interdependence

Prepare to enter this experience:

When we think about hospitality, we often think about what we can do to extend a welcome to others. Sometimes we have been recipients of hospitality and have been welcomed into someone else's space or home. We might also consider that we need to keep on giving hospitality to one another, not just to newcomers. One way to remind us of that is to sing a song about our interdependence in the Body of Christ.

How to use this idea in worship:

Find the song "I Need You to Survive" by David Frazier.

See <http://www.tinyurl.com/2eqpgyo>.

Teach the song to the congregation. Perhaps it could first be sung by a small group. When everyone is comfortable with the song, ask them to turn to a neighbor when they sing, "I need you, you need me, we're all part of God's body." Then turn to another neighbor to sing "Stand with me, come be with me, we're all a part of God's body."

Discerning & Deciding Activities

④ Keep the Little Children Out

Prepare to enter this experience:

We sometimes make an effort to welcome people who are disenfranchised, but at the same time we might neglect others in our midst who are marginalized, sometimes in more subtle ways. Jesus welcomed children in a time when children were not valued as they are today. Even as we say children are precious to us, we need to make sure that we value their participation in worship. Have a group read Mark 10:13–16 and then discuss ways to foster children's participation in worship.

How to use this idea in worship:

Dramatize the reading of scripture to provoke thought around the idea of welcoming children. In the worship service, invite the children to come forward for a children's time. It is best to let them know beforehand what's going to happen so they will not be scared. Have two teens play the role of bouncers. As the children come forward to gather around the storyteller, have the two teens block their way. Tell the teens not to treat them roughly, just block their way. While this is happening, the storyteller is reading Mark 10:13–16. At the end of the reading the storyteller goes to the "bouncers" and tells them, "Step aside! Let the children in!" Then the children can gather for a time of conversation. Ask them how it felt to be kept away. When does that sometimes happen to people? Who does Jesus want us to invite and welcome? Thank them and then talk about ways children can play meaningful roles in worship.

⑤ Radical Welcome

Prepare to enter this experience:

The parable of the banquet in Luke 14:15–24 reminds us of those who are often not on the "A list." If we were writing a party list, we might be inclined to think first of those people who are happy and healthy, but ignore those who are depressed or ill or perhaps those who don't speak our language or who differ with our politics. The worshiping community needs to continually remind itself of how it is enriched by a diversity of gifts, abilities, opinions, and also by people with a diversity of needs.

How to use this idea in worship:

Read Luke 14:15–24. Then sing the praise song “Come to the Banquet”

<http://www.tinyurl.com/251ng9x>

by Fay White. Have participants note the many kinds of people mentioned in the song. Use “Prepare to enter this experience” to discuss people who are not on the “A list” at your service of worship. Sing “Welcome into This Place”

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2c4pbe8>

by Orlando Juarez. Explore these questions: What does it mean to call the worshiping community a broken vessel? Does everyone bring brokenness into the community? Does God want broken people to come to worship? Compile a list of all the kinds of people that we’d like to include in worship who don’t presently come. Make this your prayer list, and write a prayer to include these people. Suggest something like this: God, help us to be aware of _____ and find more ways to open our hearts and our church to them.

⑥ Who's Left Out?

Prepare to enter this experience:

The story of the Heavenly Banquet reminds us of our worshiping community. We seek to find ways to include more and more people so that we continue to build a picture of God’s new creation, an image of all people gathered in community. If we were to have such a banquet, we would need to consider not who is usually part of our worship, but who is not. How can we name them and invite them in?

How to use this idea in worship:

Invite people to identify the people who are missing from the gathering, such as people with disabilities, people who are homeless, people from cultures and races different from the dominant culture of the church. Lift up these people in prayer: For this gathering, or as a follow-up, find ways to include symbols to represent the absent ones.

Revise this prayer to meet the needs of your community.

Leader: O God of creation, we come as the family you have created to sit (stand) around your table to be nourished by your grace. Some of us are here, and we see your image in one another’s faces. But others are missing; the ones we need to be part of this heavenly banquet.

One: Where are the people (example) “who have no homes?” I bring this (example) “bag to place on the table as a reminder that this part of your family is not present.”

One: Where are the people (example) “who don’t eat what we usually eat?” I bring this (example) “bowl from China as a reminder that many diverse parts of your family are rarely part of the gathering.”

One: Where are the (example) “children?” I bring this (example) “stuffed animal to remind us that all too often, our children are not present at the table”

Continue with other examples, then the leader concludes with something like this: *O God of creation, we know you best in the faces of our brothers and sisters. Help us to always keep before us the image of the world you created us to be: a world where all are welcome, all are fed; help us to always keep before us the images of those who are absent from our community and find ways to honor them. Amen.*

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Banquets and Tables

Prepare to enter this experience:

The parable of the banquet in Luke 14:15–24a is a perfect springboard for a conversation about the church as a place for nourishment. It can also provide the basis for an exploration about worship as table.

How to use this idea in worship:

Read the banquet story in Luke 14:15–24a. Talk about all the tables where the church feeds people. Perhaps people will name the fellowship coffee table and the communion table. Explore other tables where people are fed, perhaps tables provided through mission outreach programs; think of tables where members of the community sit where others are nourished. Who is invited to these various tables? Talk about those who are never fed there. What are ways that there could be more access given to these tables? Finally, explore ways that the liturgy of communion could become an image of extravagant welcome. Name specific actions that would help.

- Are there any present actions that are hindrances?
- What if the communion would include abundant quantities of bread that was taken to shelters after the service?
- What if communion would be followed by a meal for all the people in the community who need food and shelter?
- What if the church would have a table to collect school supplies for children who cannot afford them? A free store?
- What if the most important part of communion would be the end, where all are encouraged to go and share the meal with others? What would that mean?

The story of the banquet contains much food for thought and ideas for the church to be nourishers of the world.

8 Barbershops and Beauty Salons

Prepare to enter this experience:

Obtain a copy of the poster “Barber Shop” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters1> by Jacob Lawrence. When people gather in church, they become community. Sometimes communities represent longstanding relationships and sometimes they are simply a gathering of people who might not know one another that well, but they gather in a safe place. For generations, barbershops and beauty salons have provided a venue to share stories, news, and opinions on politics, religion, and all of life. Jacob Lawrence’s painting, “Barbershop,” captures such a growing up remembrance filled with energy, activity, and color. Many men and women can reflect on times spent in these small, intimate, transitory gatherings hearing others’ opinions and expressing their own.

The image of a barbershop can be a beginning point for a conversation about people exchanging ideas, about witnessing to their beliefs, and speaking their truths.

How to use this idea in worship:

Be prepared to say something about Jacob Lawrence. View a short clip of Jacob Lawrence painting and speaking on <http://www.tinyurl.com/2733nlh>. Find a way for everyone to see the painting “Barbershop.” Display the poster on an easel.

Use these directions to guide people in a meditation and conversation:



Look at this picture of a barbershop by Jacob Lawrence. It is a painting of barbershops he went to as a child and gives us an image of a place that is filled with activity—a place where a boy growing up would hear stories and news told by men from the neighborhood.

Think of the first time you ever went to a barbershop or beauty salon. How old were you? Who was there? What did the place look like? What did people talk about? Are visits to barbershops or beauty salons part of your everyday life? Is there some place like that where you have a chance to exchange ideas and stories? Have you ever had a time in such a place to be able to get to know someone better?

Take a moment to think about it and share your thoughts with someone next to you. Do “barbershop times” ever call upon you to speak up for something? Have you ever been in such a place when you felt a need to speak up for God’s justice? Maybe to say a word in support of someone being oppressed or unfairly talked about? Take a moment to think about it and share your thoughts with someone next to you.

When the discussion is ended, conclude with a prayer like this:

O God, our lives are filled with many “barbershop times.” Help us treasure these times as we enjoy the company of others and learn from their stories. Help us to become engaged with those we don’t know well so that our lives can intertwine and our communities can be enriched. Let us use these times to be witnesses to your love.

Thank you for barbershops, beauty salons, waiting rooms, and lunch counters, where people can gather in community. Amen.

⑨ Invisible Children

Prepare to enter this experience:

The famous account in Mark 10:13–16 tells of Jesus’ acknowledgment of children. When we follow in Jesus’ footsteps, we need to do the same. It is easy to lift up the happy, smiling children in our midst and celebrate them. However, a closer and more thoughtful look can result in the realization that even though a child might appear happy, he or she might not be well cared for or might be hungry. Time and time again children in the public schools are discovered to be homeless. We need to sensitize ourselves to the children in our communities — and the world — who are at risk.

How to use this idea in worship:

To bring awareness of children who are disadvantaged and at risk, it is important to have dialogue. Perhaps you can invite a community outreach worker or a school counselor into worship, or perhaps someone in the congregation is highly versed in this issue. Here is a prayer to go with the conversation. Divide the first half between two child readers, then have the group respond with the second part, “O God of the Children at Risk, hear their prayer ...”

Prayer for Children at Risk

O God of the Children at Risk, hear their prayer:

Our lives are so fragile.

We want to live.

Many of us have been arrested—at least once.

Many of us have paid dearly for something we did not do,

And even for following what adults do.

We have no regular school attendance.

We barely have food.

Our clothes are torn.

We do not want to be always sick.

We want care, food, and schooling.

We get little affection.



*Our mothers and fathers have no work or are in jail.
Look at us, please listen to our pleas.
We want to live.
We want to live.*

*O God of the Children at Risk, hear their prayer,
And open our hearts to them!
Let us become your transforming agents
To offer them hope, and justice, and life.
In the name of your Child, Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

(Note: This prayer and other worship materials can be found at Worship Ways, <http://www.ucc.org/worship/worship-ways>. "Prayer for Children at Risk" is from the October 19, 2008 issue; Worship Ways, Vol. 7, No.3, copyright 2008 Local Church Ministries, Worship and Education Ministry Team, United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.)

Following the Church Year

Prepare to enter this experience:

The scriptures chosen for the hospitality practice of faith relate more to that theme than to any specific time of the church year. The idea of hospitality threads its way through the themes of many of the seasons of the lectionary year. Often one can find a song that exactly relates to the scriptures for a Sunday of the church year. Finding these is aided by a lectionary index found in some hymnals. Sometimes there is a need for a hymn or song on a given Sunday or season that will help to lift up a particular emphasis on hospitality.

How to use this idea in worship:

The following list suggests songs of hospitality that will be suitable for worship use on many lectionary Sundays:

- "Bring many names"
- "Enter, rejoice, and come in"
- "Jesus, our brother, strong and good"
- "Tú has venido a la orilla" (You have come down to the lakeshore)
- "Little children, welcome!"
- "Jesus loves me!"
- "Wonder of wonders, here revealed"
- "Come, gather in this special place"
- "Una espiga (Sheaves of summer)"
- "I come with joy"
- "I was there to hear your burning cry"
- "God made from one blood"
- "God, bless our homes"
- "Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love"
- "We offer Christ"
- "God, speak to me, that I may speak"
- "Children of God"
- "O God of strength"
- "Christian, rise said act your creed"
- "Won't you let me be your servant?"
- "They asked, 'Who's my neighbor?'"
- "Born of God, Eternal Savior"



Praise songs:

"Welcome to this house"
"Come to the banquet"
"Come on in!"
"Come to Jesus"
"Come, all you people"
"You are welcome here"
"No matter"
"Welcome into this place"
"Draw the circle wide"
"I need you to survive"

Various other sources:

"Let us build a house (All are welcome)" by Marty Haugen, available through GIA, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2eswag6>

"I am welcome" by Bryan Sirchio available at the composer's website <http://www.BryanSirchio.com> as a song sheet and mp3 and in the collection *Something Beautiful for God*.

"Circle Song" by Bernadette Farrell — on Seasons of the Spirit Vol 7
<http://www.tinyurl.com/2g9e2p8>

"All Are Welcome" by Hans Peterson and Larry Olsen
<http://www.dakotaroadmusic.com>

"If you're out there" by John Legend, <http://www.tinyurl.com/6jn6u>

"Part of the family" by Jim Manley, <http://www.manleymusic.com>



Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Intergenerational

Intergenerational Options

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

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

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

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

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

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

Discerning & Deciding Activities

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

Sending & Serving Activities

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

Intergenerational Leader Preparation

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



Exploration: Discovery

① Soldier's Angels (Sending and Serving)

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

Supplies:

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

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

② Filling the Ark (Sending and Serving)

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

Supplies:

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

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



Exploration: Scripture

③ Worship Alive! (Exploring and Engaging)

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

Supplies:

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

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

④ Sing-Along (Exploring and Engaging)

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

Supplies:

- hymnals and accompanists

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



Exploration: Discipleship



⑤ Praying with Art (Deciding and Discerning)

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

Supplies:

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

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



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

⑥ “Water for the World” (Deciding and Discerning)

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

Supplies:

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

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

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



Exploration: Christian Tradition

⑦ Walking the Labyrinth (Exploring and Engaging)

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

Supplies:

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

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

⑧ Blessing of the Animals (Sending and Serving)

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

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

Supplies:

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

Recipe for dog biscuits:

Mix together:
3½ cups unbleached flour
2 cups whole wheat flour
1 cup cornmeal
½ cup skim milk powder
1 tablespoon (or 1 package) dry yeast
3½ cups lukewarm chicken or meat broth

Dissolve the yeast in the lukewarm chicken or meat broth. The richer this broth is, the better your dog will like the biscuits. Let yeast broth mixture set 10 min. Then stir in flour mixture. Roll out resulting dough $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. Cut dog biscuit shapes from dough. Brush biscuits with egg wash. Bake on greased cookie sheets at 300° for 45 min. Turn off oven and leave biscuits overnight to finish hardening. Makes 60 medium-sized biscuits.

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



Exploration: Context and Mission

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

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

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

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5455 S. Centinela Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90066-6970
wwwmplc.com

Supplies:

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

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

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

⑩ Safe Harbor (Sending and Serving)

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

Advertise the event in your community as "Safe Harbor."



Exploration: Future and Mission

① The Story Tellers (Exploring and Engaging)

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

Supplies:

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

Discovery: Luke 19:1–10; Hebrews 13:1–8, 15–16

Scripture: Genesis 18:1–15 (21:1–17); Isaiah 25:1–9

Discipleship: John 13:1–17, 31b–35; Acts 2:42–47

Christian Tradition: Mark 14:22–25; 1 Peter 4:1–11

Context and Mission: Romans 12:9–18; John 6:1–21

Future and Vision: Luke 14:15–24; Mark 10:13–16

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

② Practicing Discernment (Deciding and Discerning)

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



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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reflect

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



Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Intergenerational

Intergenerational Options

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

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

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

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

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

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

Discerning & Deciding Activities

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

Sending & Serving Activities

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

Intergenerational Leader Preparation

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



Exploration: Discovery

① Soldier's Angels (Sending and Serving)

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

Supplies:

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

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

② Filling the Ark (Sending and Serving)

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

Supplies:

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

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



Exploration: Scripture

③ Worship Alive! (Exploring and Engaging)

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

Supplies:

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

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

④ Sing-Along (Exploring and Engaging)

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

Supplies:

- hymnals and accompanists

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



Exploration: Discipleship



⑤ Praying with Art (Deciding and Discerning)

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

Supplies:

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

1. Display "The Public Fountain" by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Treat the print as a work of art and as sacred opportunity by first asking everyone to take a moment of silence to center themselves.
2. Hand each person a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask the participants to write down what they observe, including everything they initially notice about the work. Size, color, or lack of it, texture, subject, etc are all opportunities for noticing.
3. Pair young children with adults or youth so that the older person can write what the child dictates.
4. After you have given time for writing, ask for people to share their response. Allow each person to speak without being interrupted. Ask the participants to save their responses to one another until after everyone has had an opportunity to share.
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6. Now ask the piece of work to speak to you, as if it had a voice. Some imaginations may give voice to inanimate objects or to the flow of the water, for example. Encourage each participant to listen carefully and join in a dialogue with the print (silently) if it seems right. Afterward, encourage people to share their experience.
7. Gently place aside the poster. Remember this piece of art is God's gift through the artist and deserves careful treatment.
8. Now pray with the group. Your prayer may sound like: Thank you creating God for bringing this piece of art to our focus. May our understanding of your work in the world and our understanding of ourselves be increased, by encountering art in a prayer-filled way.

⑥ “Water for the World” (Deciding and Discerning)

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

Supplies:

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

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

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



Exploration: Christian Tradition

⑦ Walking the Labyrinth (Exploring and Engaging)

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

Supplies:

- a tent for outdoor blessing (if needed)
- a banner advertising the event
- bowls with water and feathers for sprinkling
- baked dog biscuits (see recipe)
- human cookies — animal crackers are good!
- scarves for pets
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Exploration: Context and Mission

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Supplies:

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- pencils, paper
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- newsprint or a white board and markers
- a comfortable room with chairs for all participants
- a table where participants can work on art projects
- a low table in the center of a circle allows for some participants to sit back while others work at the table
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- snacks (optional)

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

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

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

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

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

Reflect

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