



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
United Church of Christ Identity and History
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Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Many young adults are in transitional periods that include significant changes of geography, employment, family relationships, and other aspects of their lives. Those in transition often end up receiving hospitality more than they give it. Some familiar images of hospitality may be rides to and from places, sleeping on couches and floors, or chipping in to buy friends dinner on a special occasion. Some young adults are already established in significant ways, so it may be important to be aware of situational differences between those who spend most of their time working and those who spend most of their time pursuing further education.

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 include 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

Leader Preparation

Prayer: Dear God, help this group to come together in ways that give us a chance not only to think about hospitality, but to experience it. Give us awareness, like Zacchaeus, to perceive the moment to climb trees and empty our pockets and the strength to carry through. Give us imaginative empathy to sense the needs of others before they ask and to bring to mind the suffering of those we do not see. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Moments of Hospitality Survey (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Reflect on your answers to the questions you will pose to the group. What did you learn about yourself from your answers?

Supplies:

- white board or newsprint taped to the wall, markers

Use these questions to lead a group discussion: What are your experiences of being welcome or unwelcome in any setting? What kind of hospitality is most comfortable or natural to you? In what situations are you most likely to extend hospitality? Record on the newsprint or white board the group's key words and phrases.

2 Circle of Affirmation

Leader preparation: Make a list of positive attributes of everyone in the group. If you do not know who will be there, make a list of categories of attributes that you could potentially affirm.

Supplies:

- a ball of yarn or other soft object

The purpose of this exercise is to connect the "sacrifice of praise" with care for one another. Have the group sit in a circle with one person holding the ball. The person holding the ball should toss the ball to another person and verbally affirm something about that person, such as "You have a beautiful smile," or "You make good contributions to our discussions," etc. Repeat this until everyone has been affirmed without repeating anyone (if you are using yarn, the person tossing can hold on to one end so that everyone knows who has not yet been affirmed). Remind the group that God is present with them, and invite them to repeat the ball toss this time affirming something about God. After that, begin a third round where each person affirms something about him or herself.

3 Images of Hospitality

Leader preparation: Look through old magazines to find illustrations of hospitality. Select some magazines that are familiar to the participants and some with which they are unfamiliar. Think about what directions people could go in thinking about hospitality. Will they think about family and friends? Will they think about immigrants? Will they think about their work setting? Will they think about their church?

Supplies:

- colorful magazines
- large poster paper
- scissors
- glue
- markers

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one

Place the magazines in the center of the group. Invite the participants to leaf through the magazines and select images that communicate something about hospitality. Cut or tear out these pictures and paste them onto the poster paper.

from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

Invite the group to title the poster. The pictures may illustrate positive (what hospitality should be) or negative (someone not being welcomed or cared for) incidents. Encourage discussion as the group works.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Who is the Guest? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with Luke 19:1–10.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite the group to read Luke 19:1–10. Then pose this question: In this story, who is the guest and who is the host? There are at least three possible answers for each (if the group suggests others, go with it): Jesus, Zacchaeus, and those to whom Zacchaeus gave money. At what moments of the story do the roles change? Who is responsible for those changes?

5 What Kind of Guest Are You?

Leader preparation: Reflect on each character in the story and ways that each could be considered guest or host.

Supplies:

- pictures of Jesus, Zacchaeus and a crowd (or sheets of paper with large headings)

Identify the characters in the story (Jesus, Zacchaeus, those to whom Zacchaeus gives money). All are guests or hosts in different ways. Designate one corner of the room for each person/group and post a picture or sheet of paper with a heading identifying the character. Instruct the participants to move to the corner that best represents the kind of guest they are. Ask people to explain why they chose that particular corner. Repeat the exercise this time thinking about the kind of host they are. After everyone has moved, ask each person to explain this choice.

6 Remembering Those in Prison

Leader preparation: Identify the prison or jail nearest to your community and obtain some basic statistics about the facility, such as the number of inmates, the number of staff, programs available to the inmates, rules for visitation. Contact group members beforehand to bring laptops if they have them, or arrange a meeting location with several computer terminals.

Supplies:

- computers and an Internet connection
- whiteboard or newsprint and markers

Invite the group to research prisons and torture. What is the prison nearest to your community? Who is most likely to be incarcerated there? What groups are involved in visitation or other prison programs? What has been in the news about prisons or torture in the last month? As they discover interesting statistics or

other information, record their findings on the board. Invite one or several group members to conclude the session by praying for those in prison or those being tortured.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Prepare for Spontaneous Hospitality (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the life situation of the participants in your group. What might they encounter on a daily basis (co-workers, study-buddies, diapers waiting to be changed?). Identify several examples of situations where an act of spontaneous hospitality would be appropriate to prompt your group's thinking.

Supplies:

- paper and pens

It is hard to offer hospitality without practice, and oftentimes opportunities pass before you have time to react. Brainstorm about situations members of your group might encounter where someone may need care in the next week. Develop a plan for what you might need to be ready to offer hospitality when such a moment arises (e.g., carrying nutritious food to give away, making sure there are clean towels in your closet, making a list of affirming things to say about co-workers) and commit to doing something hospitable. Have the participants plan to report back in the next session.

8 Emotionally Intelligent Signage

Leader preparation: Preview the video. Before the group arrives, turn on your computer and play the video once so that you do not have to wait for it to load or have problems if you lose your Internet connection.

Supplies:

- computer
- Internet connection
- projector or large screen
- video: "Emotionally Intelligent Signage" at <http://www.tinyurl.com/ytdord>

Play the YouTube clip on emotionally intelligent signage. Invite the participants to think about the signage in your church, or the information in the service of worship bulletin. You might even take a tour of the building to look for signs. What does a visitor see? What is the purpose of the signs: to help people find their way, or to communicate rules of behavior (such as when to stand during a service)? How would a visitor know where to find the restrooms or child care? How would a visitor know what to do during a fellowship dinner? How do these signs demonstrate empathy or encourage empathy? How could your church's signage be improved to communicate hospitality?

9 Visual Hospitality

Leader preparation: Determine whether you want to focus on the building, the neighborhood, or a wider area. If it is not feasible to cover the entire area, take some digital pictures of key locations (e.g. the view from the parking lot, the building entrance, the town square, etc.).

Supplies:

- photos you have taken

If you have ever driven somewhere and not been able to see street signs because they are rusted or covered by a tree branch, you know how a place can communicate, “If you don’t know your way around already, you probably should go back where you came from.” Conduct an assessment of what a visitor might experience visually when they enter your community’s space (this could be the building you meet in or an entire city). What might make a person/group not feel welcome? What is clearly missing? What could be improved by providing more information or by demonstrating more empathy? Develop a strategy to implement your suggestions.

Reflect

As you reflect on this session, think about what you learned about the people in the group. Were they hospitable to one another during your time together? Did they think about hospitality primarily as something for inside your community, outside your community, or in relation to God? What were the highlights? What would you like to do better when you meet again? Pray for each person by name.

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Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

A leader may expect to find divergent exposure to and experience of scripture among young adults. Those who have studied historical criticism or other methods of scholarly inquiry may find they approach interpretation of the text differently than new Christians and those whose faith formation has been primarily through participation in the worship life of a congregation. One significant challenge in exploring scripture is the cultural distance between ancient Semitic and contemporary understandings of appropriate behavior toward strangers. For the tech-savvy who experience a sense of isolation without access to the Internet or a phone, it may be helpful to think about biblical examples of hospitality in terms of connectivity: strangers getting “plugged-in” to a network.

About this Exploration

As hospitality and scripture intersect, we acknowledge the many ways people enter and encounter sacred story. Multiple intelligences, cultural experiences, social locations, and life experiences impact the reading and interpretation of scripture. This invites dialogue, mutual learning, and broadened understanding. Hospitality requires a commitment to multiple expressions of the story. We honor one another and one another’s viewpoints. We are called to embody scripture in the context of a diverse world with many sacred texts. At the intersection of hospitality and scripture, the sacred story challenges and changes all.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 18:1-15
(21:1-17)
Isaiah 25:1-9

Leader Preparation

Read the passages several times. For each reading of Genesis, imagine yourself as a different character and try to see the events described through their eyes. What are you thinking? What are you feeling? For the Isaiah passage, think of a recent experience you have had or a story about refugees, and imagine what it would be like to come from a place of exposure and suffering to be welcomed into God's feast.

Prayer: Dear God, give us ears to hear your words and faith enough to believe when promises seem to go unfulfilled. In the struggles of life from families to global politics, we know that you are the refuge, the shade, and the provider of good things. Help us to rely on you. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for "easy preparation" (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90-120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30-45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Viewpoint (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about stories from your life when a person's viewpoint drastically affected the interpretation of an event. For instance, Sue was really sad on her birthday because none of her friends seemed to remember her. They all said they had other plans that night. When she came home from work, they all jumped out and shouted "Surprise!" and her whole perception changed.

Supplies:

- poster: "Embrace of Peace," <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by George Tooker

Display the poster where everyone can see it, and lead a discussion about how viewpoint can change the meaning of a story. Begin by asking people to share stories of their life where point of view really mattered in a story. If they are stuck, suggest that household chores or an argument might be one of those times. What things depend on viewpoint? What things are independent of viewpoint? How can we develop our capacity for empathy?

2 Milk and Cookies, Bread and Water

Leader preparation: Gather the supplies and prepare the space so that all can sit and eat comfortably.

Supplies:

- milk, cookies (or cake, donuts, etc.), water, bread, cups, plates

Announce that you will be showing hospitality to the group by providing food for them. Distribute milk and cookies to half the group and water with a slice of bread to the other half. If you have an assistant, he or she can offer shoulder massages to those given cookies. As the group eats, lead a discussion about to whom Abraham shows extravagant hospitality (the strangers) and to whom he gives the bare minimum (the mother of his first child). How does God respond to these acts? Invite participants to reflect on the experience by sharing their feelings about the hospitality they were offered.

3 Singing a New Song

Leader preparation: Create a basic melody or chord sequence that you think would work for the ideas expressed in the Isaiah passage. If you do not want to invent something, choose a favorite chorus or hymn and study its meter so that you will be able to help the group select words that fit. Gather instruments as described below. Contact the group beforehand and invite them to bring their own instruments.

Supplies:

- a keyboard or guitar, drums or anything that can be banged or shaken (e.g. buckets, pots and pans, maracas, bean bags, spoons)
- other instruments
- whiteboard or newsprint and markers
- Bibles

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

Have the group sit in a circle and give an instrument to everyone who does not have one. Read Isaiah 25:1–9 together and invite the participants to say what ideas are most important to them. After people have had a chance to share, ask for suggestions for a first line or two and a melody to go with it (if no one has any ideas, use the one you prepared). If someone has an idea, try it out a few times and see if people can play their instruments along with it. When you find something that works, ask for suggestions for another line and see if a song develops. Remind the group that it does not have to win any awards, just be authentic praise to God.

Variation: If the group finds it difficult to create a melody, leave the melodic instruments aside and do this as a drum circle. Have one person start drumming a slow basic beat. Invite others to join in playing whatever variation they want and have one person read the passage as spoken word poetry.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Role Playing (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: No special preparation is required. If you are familiar with your group, identify persons who enjoy drama and who might serve as leaders to small groups preparing brief skits. If you have easy access to a few costumes or props, place them where your group can easily access them. Props are not required, however.

Supplies:

- costumes (optional)
- Bibles

Read together the two texts from Genesis. The strangers and Hagar get two different receptions from Abraham. Form groups of three and have each group create a humorous scenario where two people are treated differently by a host. Perform them for each other and then talk about why they chose the scenario that they did.

5 Descriptive vs. Prescriptive

Leader preparation: Practice making a paper airplane and describing the process. You can do an Internet search for “paper airplane designs” to find several easy examples.

Supplies:

- sheets of paper
- tape

Recruit two volunteers who know how to make a paper airplane. As the first volunteer folds, describe what he or she is doing without making any evaluative or instructive comments. (“[Volunteer’s name] folded the paper down the middle.”) When the second volunteer folds, describe what he or she is doing as instructions. (“First, fold the paper down the middle.”) For humor, you can embellish negative feedback. (“Do not be like [volunteer’s name] who only makes one diagonal fold since that is an abomination, but always make two diagonal folds.”) Note that another way of being prescriptive is to affirm one airplane-maker and

disaffirm the other. (“[Volunteer’s name] really knows how to make a good airplane.”) Use the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive as the basis for a discussion. In the Abraham text, what parts are descriptive and what parts are prescriptive? Just because a story is in the Bible doesn’t mean that every character is a good role model.

6 God Our Shade

Leader preparation: Read Psalms 23, 46, 62, and 121; John 2:1–11; and Luke 14:1–24. You may want to do word studies related to rest, shade, and feasting. Alter your meeting space in some way to make it uncomfortable, e.g. turn up the thermostat or move all the chairs so that no one can sit down. Be aware that you may need to make arrangements for those who cannot stand.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- concordance (optional)

What difference does the room arrangement make if providing rest or comfort? If available, use a concordance to find Bible passages that include rest, shade, and feasting. Where else in the Bible do such images occur? Why might this be important? The psalms and Jesus’ parables will be important sources, but your group may come up with others. What aspects of society prevent rest, shade, and feasting?

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Wipe Away Tears (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think of those who you know who are grieving. Write a prayer for the wiping away of their tears. You may want to search prayer books for appropriate prayers to use as well.

Supplies:

- strips of black cloth

Give every person a strip of black cloth. Ask participants to name someone for whom they would like to pray who has experienced or is experiencing great sorrow. Write down the names so you can make sure none get overlooked. Instruct the group that after each person finishes praying, they should use their black cloth to wipe their eyes, symbolically removing the tears and disgrace. You might begin by saying something like, “God promises that one day all tears will be wiped away and disgrace will be removed. Let’s pray together for God’s healing, that each and every person experiences that healing sooner rather than later.” Encourage the participants to take the cloth with them and place it somewhere that will remind them to pray for those who are heavy with sorrow — perhaps hanging it near where they usually pray or using it as a bookmark in their Bible.

8 Banquet Meditation

Leader preparation: Read over and adapt the meditation narration so that you can speak it easily and naturally

Supplies: None

Invite the participants to assume a comfortable posture for meditation. They may want to put their head down, lay on the floor, or sit in the lotus position. Tell them how long the meditation will take and how you will signal that it is over. Invite them to take a few deep breaths and then slowly begin to narrate a reflection on Isaiah 25:1–9.

Imagine yourself as a citizen of a great city that sits atop a breathtaking mountain. ... You have been traveling for a long time and the clothes that stick to your body are covered with the mud of sorrow and unmet expectations. ... You are ushered into a private bath and given new clothes. ... You bathe slowly, feeling the aches of your journey seep out into the warm, sudsy water. ... Your breath makes puffs of steam in the damp air. ... Relaxed and restored, you turn a knob and watch as your worries seem to descend with the water, disappearing down the drain. ... You dry with a fluffy towel and smell the crisp scent of newness as you pull on clothes that fit just right. ... As you walk down the hall, wonderful aromas of food draw you forward as your guide opens the door to a room that is both expansive and intimate. ... Warm faces of those reclining on both sides of a low table smile as you enter. ... Someone beckons you closer and old friends make space for you on the thick velvet pillows. ... A drink is pressed into your hand as someone else offers you a plate and calls for food to be passed. ... You sample a few of your favorite foods and a few dishes you don't recognize. ... Talk rises and falls, alternately serious and playful, boisterous but not overwhelming as you are welcomed into the embrace of conversation. ... As gentle music wafts over the scene, you lean back and think, "It's good to be home." [Leave plenty of time for this to sink in.]

Close the meditation with a prayer:

"O God, refuge, shelter, and shade, as we go out from this place, may we live as people of your city, giving all those we meet a glimpse into the welcome you have prepared for the weary and brokenhearted."

Children of Abraham?

Leader preparation: Using a search engine or concordance, make a list of all the places Abraham occurs in scripture. List who makes use of the story (the writer) and what they use it for. How does he show up in the Qur'an or in Jewish commentaries?

Reflect

Take time to process how the group responded to the conflict in the passages. Was the discussion more concerned with the past, the present, or the future? What can you do to help the group think about the context they are most prone to overlook? Pray for the tears of everyone in the group and for all those whose tears have not yet been wiped away.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- a printout of relevant passages from the Qur'an and Talmud

Lead a discussion about who Abraham is and what he meant for the early church. Ask the group to identify where Abraham shows up in scripture (they can flip through their Bibles). Why does he become such a significant figure? What connection is there between the hospitality he offers and God's action to expand the "family"? How should we relate to others who trace their faith heritage back to Abraham, such as people who are Jewish or Muslim?

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Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Young adults often find themselves between idealism and pessimism. Some will not yet have experienced a sense of failed dreams and others may conclude that after seeing lots of dreams decay in a short span of time, they should give up and get used to the status quo. It is in this intersection that discipleship becomes extremely important since discipleship is not a solitary act of choosing to follow but rather a continuous pattern of choosing to follow again and again and again. It is important in this session to help them connect the idea of following or imitating Jesus with the associated idea of repetition expressed in the word “discipline.”

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 which 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 13:1-7, 31b-35
Acts 2:42-47

Leader Preparation

Spend some time thinking about things for which you have developed a discipline. How long did it take? Who helped you along the way? Read through the passages and reflect on what it would mean for washing others and eating together to become a discipline and a means for you to express love for God.

Prayer: O God, help us to live as a community in which there are not washers and washed, or servers and eaters, but one in which there is the continuing activity of mutual care. Let gladness and generosity grow in our hearts so that we are ready to both give and receive. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Finding Jesus (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the passages and think about incidents in your own life to share.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Have the group read the scripture passages together. Lead a discussion about where participants saw Jesus this week. You might begin with something like this: “Jesus is an unpredictable figure. He frequently did things differently than people expected, including his closest disciples, who at times seemed to think they were generals or princes. How strange it must have been to be told that foot washing was to be their model of ministry. Jesus also indicates in a famous parable about sheep and goats that caring for those in need is central to being a disciple. With that in mind, where have you seen Jesus this week? And did you share ‘bread’? If so, what was the result?”

2 Foot Washing/Hand Washing

Leader preparation: Decide whether washing hands or feet would be more appropriate for your group. If you choose feet, make sure to give people an option to indicate that they would prefer just to have their hands washed or to opt out of this activity. Fill the dishpan with warm water and soap beforehand.

Supplies:

- soap
- dishpan
- towels
- iPod/CD player for background music
- disposable disinfectant hand wipes (optional)

Invite the participants to sit in a circle in an area where it will be OK if a little water gets spilled. Begin with a prayer, something like, “Help us to remember that we are called to serve the world—service that begins with direct care for those near us and extends to all people and the complex systems of which they are a part.” Have one person take the basin to another person in the group and ask if it would be OK to wash that person’s feet. After a person’s feet have been washed and dried, he or she takes a turn to choose someone else in the group, ask permission, and wash.

Another way of doing a foot washing is by using disposable disinfectant hand wipes. These will feel cold on a person’s bare feet. You might invite participants to bring their own towels and use the towel to warm the feet after such a washing.

You may want to sing “Won’t You Let Me Be Your Servant?” (tune Servant Song): <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong3>. When everyone has been washed, ask someone to close in prayer.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

3 Human Machine Imitation

Leader preparation:

Supplies:

- props such as boxes, paper, plastic cups, a thick rope
- separate room for each group

Form two or more groups and instruct each group to create a "human machine" — bodies moving in simple motions to do something collectively such as open a package, tie a knot, or make a pyramid of cups (think "Rube Goldberg"). Give them several minutes in separate rooms, and then bring the groups back together. Tell each group the goal is to recreate the other human machine as exactly as possible after seeing it demonstrated briefly. Have each group demonstrate (but not explain) their machine through two or three cycles. Then, separate the groups again and have each group attempt to recreate the "machine" on their own. After a few minutes, ask each group to select one member who will go and "inspect" the other group and correct them if needed (this will mean the inspectors have to fill in a spot in the machine). Then come back together and reflect on how the skills required to complete the exercise might relate to discipleship.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Communal Inventory (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read all of Acts 2, with particular attention to verses 44–45.

Supplies:

- space for people to spread out their possessions
- white board or large paper such as newsprint
- markers

Begin by saying something like, "In the book of Acts, Jesus' followers in Jerusalem met the needs of those around them by sharing their possessions. Most of us have significant possessions that we did not bring with us today. We're not going to ask anyone to surrender their possessions, but to give you some sense of the strength of community that the first century followers of Jesus had, we're doing to do a little experiment." Instruct the group to empty their pockets, purses, and wallets. Note that participants can leave anything they consider "too personal" where it is. Make a list of the group's possessions. Then ask the group to brainstorm about what they could do together with those resources. Encourage both serious and silly answers. The purpose is to understand that pooling a community's resources has power both to get things done and to bring people together.

5 Water -- Not Just for Washing, Anymore!

Leader preparation: Read about the significance of water worldwide. The UN's "World Water Development Report" (March 16, 2009) may be a good place to start. You can find that at <http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr>. Another source for helpful information is Church World Service at <http://www.tinyurl.com/687abh> or the UCC documentary "Troubled Waters," <http://www.ucc.org/troubled-waters>.

Supplies:

- poster: “The Public Fountain,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Manuel Alvarez Bravo

Jesus exhibited care for his disciples by taking on the role of a servant to wash their feet — an act that was not strictly necessary, but was highly practical if you were eating together at a low table. Give the group a few minutes to study the poster and reflect on the significance of water worldwide. Ask them to share their reflections and to share information from your own research. Lead a discussion about how to connect personal acts (such as getting a visitor a beverage) with global problems.

6 Common Meal

Leader preparation: Contact participants in advance to bring food from different categories depending on your meeting time (e.g. soup/salad/casserole, coffee/bagels/fruit). Review John 2:1–11, Luke 9:12–17, Luke 14:1–24, Matthew 26:26–29, and Luke 24:13–27.

Supplies:

- plates and cups
- utensils
- napkins
- serving table

Arrange seats in a circle, preferably with the food in the center. You might introduce this practice by saying something like, “The meals the disciples shared in Acts were a direct extension of the many feasts they shared with Jesus and served as a sign of God’s care for all people.” Offer a blessing on those who prepared the food and the supply chains that made it possible for the food to be on the table. The, as you eat, invite each person to share about ways they have seen God recently. If conversation lags, ask questions about needs that participants have and when someone articulates a need, ask for a volunteer to immediately pray that God would meet that need as people continue to eat.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Exercising Our Perception (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review and adapt the meditation text. Practice reading it slowly.

Supplies: None

Lead a meditation on perceiving the strangers in our midst. Invite the participants to get in a comfortable position (perhaps a posture they use regularly for prayer). Read the meditation slowly with long pauses between sentences.

Take a few deep breaths and listen to the sound of the air moving in and out ... Allow your breathing to continue in its normal rhythm, just pay attention to it. ... You may find it helpful to pray something like ‘Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.’ ... We’re going to spend a few minutes paying attention to our memories, particularly of people we tend not to notice—strangers. Think back to how you came into this room. Who was here when you arrived? What were they doing? Think

further back to coming in from the street or parking lot. Did you see anyone on the way? What did they look like? Think back to your journey here. Who did you pass by? Did you greet anyone? Would you have noticed if someone greeted you? Now think back to earlier in the day or even yesterday. Did you encounter someone you had not known before? Did they need something from you? Did you need something from them? If no one comes to mind, just let your mind wander over the events of your past week. Are there opportunities you might have responded to differently if you had been paying more attention? If anything comes to mind, hold it before God and ask for help. Now, trusting that God will give us glad and generous hearts when we ask, begin to move slowly back through the events of your week and allow each moment to become a little prayer. Come back through your journey here. Step in off the street. Walk into this room. Take a few deep breaths.

You can elaborate as needed. Give people an opportunity to reflect together about what they experienced.

8 Turning Prayers into Commitments

Leader preparation: Research local organizations working to meet basic human needs.

Supplies:

- white board or newsprint
- markers

The context of sharing bread is a good one in which to think about basic human needs. Make a list of the most pressing local needs of which you are aware. Pray for each one specifically. Think about who you already know is working on them. Then formulate a plan for each person to get involved in something this week that begins to address one of those needs.

9 Throw a Party!

Leader preparation: Arrange for a location and some potential times to throw a party. This may be a community building, but it would be more intimate if the group could gather in someone's home. This is an opportunity to affirm that discipleship is not simply discipline, but also celebration of God's good gifts and for the group to practice making others feel welcome and valued in the context of everyday life.

Supplies:

- whatever the group determines is needed for a party

After determining a location and time for the party, spend your usual meeting time planning for the party. Figure out how you want to do invitations (how many, who will invite, will you use electronic or printed invitations, etc.). Discuss ways that you can exercise the practice of hospitality, not just in throwing the party, but during the party as well.

Reflect

Think back over the sessions that you've facilitated about hospitality. Spend a few minutes to journal key insights that participants expressed. Make a point to contact them during the week to communicate how much you valued their contribution. Review your leadership style. Are you following Jesus' example and "washing the feet" of your group? If not, how can you be more intentional in the future? Pray for each member of your group individually and that the group would grow together in ways that bless the entire community around them.

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Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

For many young adults tradition is a dirty word. That should come as no surprise when tradition is so often invoked as a catch-all justification for maintaining the status quo. This session is an opportunity to provide young adults a broader understanding of tradition as something that sustains and supports the very possibility of community. Just as in order to communicate you need some form of language, to practice faith you need some sort of tradition. This is important because it provides a means for intergenerational connectivity that many young adults lack (since they have been taught to relate primarily to people within 12 months of their age).

About this Exploration

God continually invites us to extravagantly welcome others into abundant life. We are not the first to experience questions, failures, accomplishments, joys and sorrows. Our Christian tradition gives us ancestors in faith whose stories and life experiences inform our own. Every drop of water reminds us of Christ's baptism. Shared meals recall Jesus' breaking bread and sharing the cup. Grounded in Hebrew tradition, Jesus displayed radical commitment to the poor. Love for the poor continues to characterize Christian community. 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, and treasure the diversity of humanity. We are called by God to create a safe, welcoming environment for all. We join the family of all time.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Mark 14:22–25

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

1 Peter 4:1–11

Leader Preparation

Hospitality has been central to the identity of Christian communities since the time of Jesus. New Testament debates about what could or could not be eaten, the practice of meeting in homes, and concern for how widows would be fed all point to the centrality of self-giving welcome in the life of the church. As much as the communion table points to the past, it also enacts the future in which God’s reign is fully present.

Prayer: God, thank you for welcoming us to your table. As we enjoy your presence and the gift of the world you’ve created, help us to use our gifts and abilities to extend your welcome to others. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Communion Discussion (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The main point of this activity is not to teach about communion, but to get the group to articulate their experience of it. For background information, read the description of the Eucharist in your church’s Book of Worship and the ecumenical Lima text (Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry) See <http://www.tinyurl.com/yjduapz>.

Supplies: None

Lead a discussion about communion. Ask: What do you think are the most important parts of communion? How many different ways have you seen communion done? What has communion meant to you in your experience of the church? What are your church’s traditions around the celebration of communion? What terms are used (Lord’s Supper, Eucharist, communion, etc.)?

2 Gestures of Inclusion

Leader preparation: Research different gestures used to include or welcome people in different cultures and parts of the world. Examples might include: shaking hands, hugging, waving, winking, kissing a hand, averting your eyes, handing someone a cup of tea. Be prepared to demonstrate several of these.

Supplies:

- symbols of hospitality from other cultures (optional)

Arrange the group in a circle and have them brainstorm about gestures of inclusion, especially those from different cultural contexts. Prompt them with your research if necessary. Practice each gesture together. Have each person choose a partner and invite these pairs to invent a secret handshake. Then have each pair teach the handshake the group. Discuss: In what ways can a secret handshake be both inclusive and exclusive? How might church language and church traditions function like a secret handshake?

3 Food Stories

Leader preparation: Arrange with participants beforehand who will bring what food (drinks, appetizers, main dish, desert). If you have access to a large kitchen, invite them to bring the raw materials and prepare the food together. Tell them to be prepared to talk about why they chose to bring what they did and the memories they have of it. You may also want to review passages where food is important in Jesus’ ministry, such as John 2:1–11, Luke 9:12–17, Luke 14:1–24, Matthew 26:26–29, and Luke 24:13–27.

Supplies:

- plates, cups, utensils
- food brought by the participants

As you eat, invite the participants to tell a story about the food they have brought. Where did the ingredients come from? What culture or region is the dish most common to? Who taught them how to make it? What memories do they have of preparing or eating it? Allow the discussion to develop naturally, but be con-

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

scious that it may be the first time some people have prepared food or thought about it in this way.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Covenant Study (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read background material on the various “covenants” of Noah (Genesis 9:1–18), Abraham (Genesis 12:1–4; 13:14–17; 15:1–7; 17:1–8), Moses (Exodus 20:1–31:18), David (2Samuel 7:4–16; 1Chronicles 17:3–15).

Supplies:

- Bibles

Form groups of two or three persons. Assign each group a biblical covenant to study. Give them several minutes and then invite them to share their findings with the whole group. Discuss how these covenants inform our understanding of what Jesus means by covenant. In what sense is it new? What does blood have to do with it? What does paradise have to do with it? In what sense is it a proclamation? In what sense do all these covenants display the love of God?

5 Love for the Poor

Leader preparation: Read “Love for the Poor” at <http://www.tinyurl.com/23549q3> and prepare a brief summary. Print out the Millennium Development Goals.

Supplies:

- printout of Millennium Development Goals

Summarize the document “Love for the Poor.” What parts of tradition did it focus on? With what parts of tradition is it not concerned? Read the Millennium Development Goals together and discuss their significance. Is it important that loving those who lack material goods has always been part of Christian tradition? What is the motivation for caring for those who have less?

6 Survival

Leader preparation: Think through the activity so that you can make suggestions if the group is having a hard time.

Supplies:

- paper
- pencils

Tell the participants, “On a sea voyage, your ship capsizes and you manage to swim to a deserted island along with a few other survivors. The climate is tropical with some wooded areas, but with no fruit trees or obvious shelter. How will you organize yourselves to survive and thrive?” Prompt discussion about gifts and abilities by asking: What tasks need to be accomplished? What would enrich the community beyond mere survival? If your group is large, form two or three smaller groups and then compare the different strategies for survival and how they reflect the differing gifts of group members.

Sending & Serving Activities

 **7 Listen to a Voice of Experience (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Identify one or more members of the community who have been around for a long time and would be willing to speak to the significance of tradition for them. Invite them to your group. Come up with a few leading questions for them.

Supplies: None

Introduce your guest(s) and invite them to share something about themselves. You may want to ask something like, “What have our community’s traditions meant in your life?” Give the group a chance to ask questions themselves and guide the discussion toward how your community has historically been welcoming or unwelcoming. Make sure to point out that one area of hospitality that is sometimes neglected is the kind of intergenerational listening they have begun to practice through this activity.

8 Make a Booth

Leader preparation: Research the festival of booths. If you have time, watch the film *Ushpizin*, about a contemporary Jewish man seeking to practice hospitality during this festival.

Supplies:

- bed sheets
- clothespins
- long poles or sticks (like a mop or broom handle)

The Jewish festival of booths (commanded in Leviticus 23) came to be one of the pre-eminent celebrations of hospitality. Each family constructed a temporary living space in which to eat and sleep to remind them of their history. Some mystical traditions say that when people stay in their booth, they are visited by spiritual guests each night who represent the attributes of God: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph, and David; and Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Hulda, and Esther. Build a temporary shelter together using the bed sheets, clothespins, and poles. Spend time in sitting the booth, praying that God would empower you to make shelter for others and to remember that you too are a traveler on the way. If possible, leave the shelter up for future gatherings.

9 Weave a Circle of Tradition

Leader preparation: Study the weaving pattern. Try it at home if you can. Cut the rope or cloth into 6–8-foot lengths.

Supplies:

- thick rope/twine (0.5-1 cm) or long strips of cloth (the more colorful the better)
- scissors

Arrange the group in a circle. Give everyone a piece of rope and ask them to tie one end (loosely!) to their ankle or chair. Have the group count off by 1’s and 2’s

(don't participate if you would make it an odd number). Instruct the 1's to begin one at a time to name a part of Christian tradition that has been meaningful to them and then to pass the open end of their rope to the person on their RIGHT. Then, ask the 2's to name a part of Christian tradition that has been meaningful to them and pass the open end of their rope OVER the one they have just been handed to the person on their LEFT. Now everyone should have a single rope in their hand symbolizing a piece of tradition. Instruct the 1's to say what the rope they have been handed symbolizes (what they have just been handed by a 2) and pass the rope on to the next person, weaving it in an over-under-over-under pattern. When the group is finished, you'll have a complicated mesh made up of what is meaningful to that group. Invite them to talk about what it means to think about what this weaving would look like for your entire community, your entire communion, and the worldwide church--not just in the present but from the earliest days of the church through time and stretching out into the future.

Reflect

Pray that God will speak to each member of the group through the richness and staggering complexity of tradition. Think about the ways you have made space for people in the group. Are there participants who could use an act of hospitality that would help them participate more fully? Thank God for the gifts of each person in the group, and pray that they would be empowered to use them for the benefit of those around them.

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Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

This session on mission is a chance to connect with the desire of many young adults to get out and do. Seek ways to coordinate such energy with the broader mission of the church. Mission takes a lot of effort and planning, but it begins with the willingness to give up your lunch. Some young adults will have grown tired of a “feel-good” approach to mission that is more interested in addressing immediate needs than making strategic long-term impact. Others may find anything that exhibits concern for someone other than themselves a refreshing change from what they are used to.

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

Leader Preparation

Spend time thinking about your own understanding of mission. What is it that the church is here for? What are you here for? If your group is struggling to formulate constructive actions that are appropriate to your community, it will be helpful if you have some concrete suggestions to either get them started or bring them back to reality.

Prayer: Dear God, I remember those strangers who were not welcomed by anyone yesterday. I pray that it will be different today, and I offer myself as host. I bring you my loaves and fish. They are small, but I know you will multiply them for your people. Help me to be attentive to specific ways in which the things I have can be a blessing to others. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Connecting with Purpose (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Try the activity on your own so you are free to pay attention to the group when they are working on their own.

Supplies:

- pencils and pads
- a bell (optional)

Make sure everyone has something to write with and on. At the top of the page write, "What is my true purpose in life?" Invite the participants to take 20 minutes to answer the question. Write down any answer that comes into your head without judging it. People may need to be encouraged more than once not to judge their answers. After 20 minutes, ring the bell or clap your hands to let everyone know to return to the group. Discuss what they discovered.

2 A Hospitable Cyber Presence

Leader preparation: If you don't already use Facebook, SecondLife or another social networking site, create a profile and explore what all the excitement is about.

Supplies:

- newsprint or whiteboard
- markers

Lead a discussion about what hospitality might look like in cyberspace. Invite the participants to share strategies for managing relationships online. How far does hospitality go? What are important boundaries? What are appropriate ways of "blessing" your social network? In what ways do you communicate value and affirmation to your friends? What can we learn from social networking sites about the way the world is connected or disconnected?

3 Visualizing Mission

Leader preparation: Review "Nature and Mission of the Church," paragraph 17, at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2uq4wj>:

To honour the varied biblical insights into the nature and mission of the church, various approaches are required. Four — "people of God," "Body of Christ," "Temple of the Holy Spirit," and koinonia — have been chosen for particular comment because, taken together, they illuminate the New Testament vision of the Church in relation to the Triune God. A fully rounded approach to the mystery of the Church requires the use and interaction of all biblical images and insights (in addition to those mentioned, "vine," "flock," "bride," "household," and "covenant community"), each of which contributes something vital to our understanding. These images counterbalance one another and compensate each others' limitations. Since every image comes out of a particular cultural context, they suggest both insufficiencies and possibilities. This text seeks to relate to Scripture as a whole, not playing off one passage against another, but trying always to honour the totality of the Biblical witness.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

Supplies:

- plastic covering and newsprint to cover a wall
- drop cloth
- paint
- pencils
- Bibles

Read together the Bible passages for this session. Ask the group to name a few of their favorite images for the church. In light of the passages, how might they reimagine images of the church in mission? Instead of a verbal discussion, open the paints and invite the participants to the wall to paint their images. Encourage them to talk about what they are painting and why.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Where Are We Anyway? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: If you are not already registered with Google, create an account and familiarize yourself with the “My Maps” feature.

Supplies:

- several computers with Internet connection

Enter your zip code to discover what “user created maps” there are for your area. Click on “Browse the Directory” and find the US Census Bureau Demographics map at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2czsjra>. See what you can discover about your community. Use the interface to add locations that are important for your community. Discuss how such locations could be an instrument of mission for your community.

5 Mapping Community

Leader preparation: Gather maps.

Supplies:

- maps of your local area, state, country, and the world

Lay out the maps on a table or hang them on the wall. Lead a discussion about how to be hospitable toward people with whom you do not have contact in your everyday life. Using the maps, ask these questions: In Acts 1:8 Jesus tells the disciples they will be witnesses in Jerusalem (where they were), Judea (the wider region around the city), Samaria (a neighboring region whose inhabitants were not well-liked by ancient Jews), and the ends of the earth. Where is our Jerusalem? Where is our Judea? Where is Samaria? Where are “the ends of the earth”? Keep in mind that though some of these will be geographic, members of your community may be more connected to people who live several states away than they are to people living within a few blocks. What is the significance of nongeographic communities? How do they factor into your community’s approach to mission?

6 Media Consumption Survey

Leader preparation: One week before you want to do this activity instruct the group to spend the week keeping track of the media they watch, read, and hear. Pose these questions: “What messages are you receiving about people who are different from you? What increases your understanding or empathy? What increases your sense of fear? Take brief notes for yourself and come ready to report back to the group.”

Supplies:

- computer with Internet connection
- projector or large screen

Play a clip from Maz Jobrani talking about stereotypes for the group:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/6pdd36> .

Use that as a starting point to discuss the role of stereotypes in media and to reflect critically on their own media habits. In what ways do what they watch, read, and listen to help or hurt their capacity to offer hospitality?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Speaking Blessing to Others (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think of several examples from your life where someone blessed you by listening to something you needed to express or saying something you needed to hear. Use these stories to prompt discussion if the group is having a hard time coming up with ideas.

Supplies: None

Invite group members to describe how a kind word or a listening ear changed their perception of something. Ask for examples of speaking a blessing to others. This may be as simple as saying “Hello” or “Good morning” to a person on the street or subway or in the elevator. We often do this at church, particularly if your service of worship includes passing the peace. Conduct a social experiment of speaking blessings to others as often as possible in the next week. Write down what happens and report back in the next session.

8 Refugee Study

Leader preparation: Do background reading on the issue of refugees. You might find the UN High Commission on Refugees a good place to start:

<http://www.unhcr.org>.

Find out if any refugees are being resettled in a city near you. What is their country of origin? What is causing their displacement?

Supplies:

- copies of article on refugee resettlement: <http://www.tinyurl.com/2f7jdxs>
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

Read together the article on refugee resettlement by Cally Rogers-Witte:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2f7jdxs>.

Ask participants to name biblical characters who were, in some sense, refugees (Abraham, Joseph, Rahab, Nehemiah, Jesus, Paul). List these on newsprint or a white board. What are appropriate hospitable responses to refugees in your area? What specific actions can your community commit to?

Sing “Wade in the Water,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong2>, a spiritual that uses exodus imagery in reference to slaves who fled from the South to the North to gain freedom.

Welcome Video

Leader preparation: Visit some church Web sites and watch any video content they have on the front page. Think about how you would feel as a visitor at that church and take note of things that seemed particularly welcoming.

Supplies:

- video recording device

Create a video to express sentiments of welcome on behalf of your community. What would you offer someone you have never met? What services or opportunities would you want them to know about? If a video recording device is not available, create a storyboard instead. Post the video to a social networking site.

Reflect

Mission means the church on the move, but don't get distracted by the energy to “do something” to the extent that you forget to strategize. Review how the discussion went. Did the group commit to particular actions? If so, decide when and how you will follow up on those decisions. If not, why not? Pray that each participant would be a living, active cell within the body of Christ.

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Giving and Receiving Hospitality



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group or Setting

Many young adults expect that most of their life is still ahead of them and as a consequence possess a sense of investment in the future of the world in general and the communities of which they are a part in particular. Nevertheless, this stage of life can also be a time when disillusionment with previously held ideals makes it difficult to take any hopeful visions of the future seriously. As young adults advance in careers and see increasing levels of income, questions of what they will use their resources to accomplish become all the more critical.

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 Peaceable Kingdom (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Study the poster “The Peaceable Kingdom” by John August Swanson. Display the poster in your meeting space.

Supplies:

- poster: “The Peaceable Kingdom” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources> by John August Swanson

Invite the participants to describe images of the future. These may come from books or movies or someone’s imagination. You may want to draw a distinction between dystopias (like *The Terminator* or *The Matrix*) and utopias (generally viewed as a synonym for an impossible world). You may also want to distinguish between an individual’s image of an ideal perfect place and what paradise for everyone might look like.

2 Golden Ratio

Leader preparation: Read some background on the Fibonacci sequence and the golden ratio at <http://www.tinyurl.com/dst6f>. Do some test measurements on yourself.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet connection
- projector
- measuring tapes
- calculators

Introduce this activity by saying something like, “The future that God intends is one of harmonious interconnectedness. Our world is full of hints of that fundamental structure. One of the most well known is the Fibonacci sequence.” Show the video <http://www.tinyurl.com/2fk1mjh>.

Divide the group into pairs. Have one person measure the length of the other’s hand and the length of his or her forearm (wrist to inner elbow). Add the two measurements together and then divide the sum by the longer measurement. That should give you a number close to 1.681. Then divide the longer measurement by the shorter one. That should also give you a number close to 1.681 (the golden ratio). You can also try this with the measurements of a person’s height and the length from top of head to fingertips when arms are relaxed at a person’s side.

There is an ordered complexity within the structure of the world. Though our social and political worlds seem to resist such ordering, the connection between our bodies and nature points us toward a future in which all things work together in proportion to each other.

Leader Preparation

Take a few minutes to reflect on what it means for the kingdom of God to be an invitation to a dinner that you have not yet attended. How is this similar or different from the way you usually think about the church? There may be people in your group who are usually in the group of “the invited” and others who are usually not invited. These groups might look different for social life and religious life.

Prayer: O God, give us a vision of the future that you intend. As we seek to grow together, help us to respond to your invitation in each moment and to equip others to do the same. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

3 Serious Play

Leader preparation: Gather supplies and prepare the space for your group.

Supplies:

- toothpicks
- mini-marshmallows

Set out toothpicks and marshmallows on a table. Invite the participants to see how many different ways they can use these to express “welcome.” Encourage them to think outside the box and to build on one another’s ideas. Ask: What things did you discover? How does an open-ended assignment function as a kind of “play”? What might playing have to do with Jesus’ idea about entering the kingdom “as a child”?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Picturing Jesus (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Do a Web search for “Jesus and children.” Think about who is represented in these images and who is not. Check with your minister to see if he or she has a liturgical stole made from the children of the world tapestry fabric. Someone in the congregation may have a garment or purse made from this fabric.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- crayons
- paper
- children of the world tapestry fabric (optional)

Have the group read Mark 10:13–16. Distribute paper and crayons to everyone. Instruct them to divide the paper into two sections. On one section have them draw a picture of the scene where Jesus welcomes the children. On the other section have them draw a picture of Jesus welcoming children today. If available, display the children of the world tapestry fabric. When the drawings are completed, invite the participants to talk about their pictures. If possible, hang the drawings on the church refrigerator or a bulletin board or cork strip in a prominent area of the church.

5 Responses to Jesus’ Call

Leader preparation: Read Mark 1:16–21, Mark 6:30–32, Matthew 19:16–22, Luke 19:1–10, and identify any other passages in the gospels where Jesus makes an explicit invitation.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- paper
- pencils/pens

Divide the group into small groups of 2–3 people. Assign each small group one of the passages listed in Leader Preparation. Have them read the passage and an-

Answer these questions: What was the social standing of the person Jesus invited? What was the nature of the invitation? What was the response? Report these findings back to the group.

Spend a few moments in silent prayer asking, “What is Jesus calling me to do?” Give an opportunity for people to share if they wish.

Close by singing “Come All You People” (tune: Uyai Mose):
<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong1>.

This song comes 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.

6 Excuses Meditation

Leader preparation: Study the meditation narration and determine if you need to expand it or adapt it in any way to make it appropriate for your group.

Supplies:

- Bible

Read Luke 14:15–24. Then invite the participants to assume a comfortable posture for meditation. They may want to put their heads down, lay on the floor, or sit in the lotus position. Tell them how long the meditation will take and how you will signal when it is over. Invite them to take a few deep breaths and then slowly begin to narrate a reflection on Luke 14.

Imagine yourself going about the tasks of your everyday life. A stranger comes up to you and offers you front row tickets to an event that people like you don’t often have the opportunity to attend. Let that event materialize in your mind: a concert? sports event? exclusive outdoor adventure vacation? It’s the opportunity of a lifetime. Inexplicably, you say, “No.” Even as the words form in your mouth, you can’t believe you’re saying it: “No, I have to ...” Allow whatever comes to mind to rise to the surface of your consciousness and hold it up before God. Is it serious? Is it silly? Does it represent something that might be preventing you from responding to the hospitality God offers? Whatever it is, acknowledge it, and let it go.

Close the meditation with a prayer for openness to hear and respond to God’s invitation.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 World Game (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read a summary of Buckminster Fuller’s “World Game” at <http://www.tinyurl.com/29p3s89>.

Supplies: None

Begin by asking the group to brainstorm answers to the question “What about the world doesn’t work?”

Read Buckminster Fuller’s idea of the world game: “Make the world work, for 100% of humanity, in the shortest possible time, through spontaneous cooperation, without ecological offense or the disadvantage of anyone.” Is this the same as “the future God intends”?

Now brainstorm about what the future God intends is like. Discuss steps for bridging the distance between the first and second brainstorm ideas.

8 Hospitality Assessment Survey

Leader preparation: Adapt questions for your community from <http://www.tinyurl.com/28xv69s>.

Supplies:

- copies of your revised hospitality assessment
- pens/pencils

Distribute the survey to the entire group. Ask each person to complete the survey. When everyone is finished, talk about each answer. In light of your discussion, develop a strategy that the group can implement or recommend to the appropriate body.

9 Play by Their Rules

Leader preparation: Make arrangements with a group of parents or caregivers for your group to join their children for play time.

Supplies: None

Devote this portion of your session to playing with children under appropriate supervision. Instead of setting the agenda, however, let the children set the agenda and play by their rules. Discuss what you learned from that and how those lessons could be applied to making your community more hospitable toward children.

Reflect

The future that God intends is the world we are called into. Take a few deep breaths and rest in the fact that you don’t have to do it on your own. It is God’s work that you are invited into. Ask yourself whether you are ready to put down your “very important tasks” when God calls you to the feast. Are you more like a child or a supervising disciple? Pray that the people in your group will encounter the playfulness of God as they live out the hospitality of the gospel.

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