



## Keeping Sabbath

### About this Faith Practice

Sabbath is intentional time taken by individuals and faith communities to integrate the Divine with humanity and creation. Jesus models how to keep Sabbath both inwardly (through prayer, solitude, silence, and meditation) and outwardly (through communal ritual and acts of justice). Our inward movement toward a life centered in the Spirit indicates the reign of God within us. Jesus embodies the depth of sabbath-keeping experiences through outward action to followers and to those he encounters who have specific needs. Our practice of Sabbath is informed by God resting on the seventh day after laboring for six days to create the world, establishing a day of Sabbath. Building on this biblical tradition, some faith communities dedicate a specific day of the week to rest, worship, and work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

### 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:

"Out of Work" by Käthe Kollwitz (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

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

"Guatemala: Procession" by Betty LaDuke (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

#### From AllPosters.com:

"The Dance of Youth" by Pablo Picasso (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>)

"Going to Church" by William H. Johnson (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters8>)

"Midday Rest" (after Millet), c.1890 by Vincent van Gogh (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters9>)

### 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.

Let Me Enter God's Own Dwelling, Tune: Unser Herrscher (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong7>)

I Woke Up This Morning, Tune: Woke Up This Morning (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong8>)

I've Got Peace Like a River, Tune: Peace Like A River (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9>)

### Scripture

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

Discovery	Genesis 2:2–4	Luke 12:22–31
Scripture	Mark 2:23–3:6	Exodus 20:1–17
Discipleship	Luke 6:1–11	Deuteronomy 6:1–9
Christian Tradition	Mark 6:30–34, 53–56	Isaiah 58:9b–14
Context and Mission	Jeremiah 17:19–27	1 Corinthians 11:17–26
Future and Vision	Psalms 119:105–112, 129–136	Matthew 27:51–66 (Matthew 26:14–27:66)

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# Keeping Sabbath



## Exploration: Discovery

### About this Setting

This setting focuses upon discovering new ways to practice Sabbath and affirming current practices. While Sabbath is part of the pattern of Creation, we somehow fill all our days and hours to the point where we have to be intentional about setting aside quiet time to be with and listen to God. The practice of journaling or working with a mandala or praying five times a day or following a ritual for a Sabbath meal may expand our understanding of and commitment to keeping the Sabbath holy. A visit to a synagogue or mosque may enrich one's understanding of the cultural differences among the three Abrahamic faiths and will help build bridges of communication with others in the community.

### About this Exploration

Sabbath is intentional time taken by individuals and faith communities to integrate the Divine with humanity and creation. Jesus models how to keep Sabbath both inwardly (through prayer, solitude, silence, and meditation) and outwardly (through communal ritual and acts of justice). Our inward movement toward a life centered in the Spirit indicates the reign of God within us. Jesus embodies the depth of his Sabbath-keeping experiences through outward action to his followers and to those he encounters who have specific needs. Our practice of Sabbath is informed by God's resting on the seventh day after laboring for six days to create the world, establishing a day of Sabbath. Building on this biblical tradition, some faith communities dedicate a specific day of the week to rest, worship, and work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.



## BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

**Genesis 2:2–4**  
**Luke 12:22–31**

## Leader Preparation

Place information about these practices in your church newsletter, e-mail, and website postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: “A personal exploration of keeping the Sabbath is available through our Faith Practices resources. These activities will enable you to keep the Sabbath more deeply in your personal life, in family and home life, and in your community and work life.”

### Resources:

Richard Moss, *The Mandala of Being: Discovering the Power of Awareness* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2007)  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/2wt57f8>

Judith Cornell, *Mandala: Luminous Symbols for Healing* (2nd edition; Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 2006)  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/38xftbw>

Yahiya John Emerick, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* (2nd edition, Columbia, MD: Alpha, 2004)  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/263yqxs>

### Websites:

<http://www.mandalaproject.org>

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

## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### 1 Journaling

##### Supplies:

- blank book, with or without lines
- pen or pencil
- Bible

Choose a blank book that really appeals to you or feels meaningful so that you will want to write in it. Make certain it is made of quality materials so that it will last. Get a book that is large enough to write in, yet small enough to carry in your briefcase or backpack. Having your journal with you will facilitate making entries during the day, even if it's just a brief note or several words.

Part of keeping the Sabbath holy is to have time alone with God. This time can be greatly enriched through a spiritual journal. The journal can be a place for recording prayers, meaningful quotes, and insights.

Set aside a specific time each day and a specific quiet place for writing in your journal, such as right after the evening meal or right before you go to bed. Even if you think you don't have anything to write, pull out your journal at those times. Start each journal entry with the day of the week and date so that you can more easily find the entries you've written. Write or draw what is important to you at that moment, such as an event, a relationship, a situation, or an idea. Add your thoughts, feelings, descriptions, images, and prayers about it. You can also include what happened during a time of meditation. The journal is one way to note how things shift for you. If something is troubling you, write a dialog in your journal and see if you receive any clarity.

On the first day of this practice, read Genesis 2:2–4. What words or phrases stand out for you? Perhaps in your first journal entry you will want to list some questions, thoughts, ideas about Sabbath that you want to explore in the next several days or weeks.

##### Resources:

Christina Baldwin, *One to One: Self-Understanding through Journal Writing* (New York: M. Evans & Co., 1977), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2bsgzrs>.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 2 Even God Rests

##### Supplies:

- Bible
- a range of sample mandalas (see <http://www.tinyurl.com/2bkcgcp>)
- a round picture of earth taken from space (see <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dfmzue>)



Prayerfully read Genesis 2:2–4. Reflect on the idea that even God needed a "day" of rest. Reflect on the roundness of the earth. Next, look in books and on the Internet for circular images that speak directly to your heart about what it means to keep the Sabbath, following the example of God as Creator. The circular image can be anything. Hildegard of Bingen, a twelfth-century Christian nun, created circular images called mandalas to express her visions. Native Americans use a circular shape with four colors indicating the four directions. Buddhists create sand mandalas that, when completed, are swept away. People in India make Rangoli paintings. NASA has online images of our round earth, such as "The Blue Marble." Select anything circular that speaks to you about centering your life in a way that deepens your experience of keeping Sabbath by resting.

Choose some prayerful, reflective time to gaze upon your chosen circular image and see if something about it speaks to you on a deeper level. Sit with your back straight, and softly gaze at your chosen mandalas. Remain open to what God might communicate to you through this experience.

### 3 Gazing

#### Supplies:

- a mandala

## Sending & Serving Activities

Hildegard of Bingen, a twelfth-century nun, created mandalas from her spiritual visions. Find a round image that speaks to you about your spiritual life or the Sabbath. Set aside quiet time alone. Place your selected image before you at eye level. Sit or kneel with your back straight. Ask God to guide you during this practice. Silently gaze upon the image and attempt to look through, or beyond, the image. Focus your mind on being receptive to God's promptings. Go as deeply as you can into this practice, keeping your attention on the mandala and allowing whatever speaks to you to emerge into consciousness.

Spend as much or as little time as you feel is comfortable with this practice. Practice as often as you can or feel is beneficial. Such prayer can enable us to feel more centered within ourselves. This feeling will carry over into the outward expression of our lives, endowing us with a greater sense of peace that permeates our thoughts and interactions with others.

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

### 4 Jewish Practice of Sabbath

Read about the Jewish practice of Sabbath at <http://www.jewfaq.org/shabbat.htm>. Keeping the Sabbath is a Jewish practice rooted in the Ten Commandments. If you have Jewish friends, coworkers or acquaintances, find out what keeping the Sabbath holy means to them. If you are not in contact with any Jewish people, search the Internet with your family members while keeping the following questions in mind: What form of Judaism do they practice? What day of the week do



they practice Sabbath, and why? Why is their Sabbath day different than the Sabbath day for Christians? How does the family practice keeping the Sabbath? How does this relate to their idea of rest versus work? How is extra time in prayer and spiritual reading included in this practice of Sabbath-keeping? What do they do for rest or re-creation when not working? How do they center their lives, entering into Sabbath rest?

Place their responses in the context of their form of Judaism: orthodox, conservative, reformed, reconstructionist, Jewish Renewal, or humanistic. How does their religious orientation inform and influence their Sabbath practices? Discuss what you learned with your family.

**Resources:**

<http://www.tinyurl.com/3524398>

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 5 Discern a Sabbath Practice

One of the Ten Commandments is “to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8–11). Find out how your Jewish friends, coworkers, or acquaintances, or Jews who post their Sabbath-keeping practices on the Internet, keep the Sabbath holy. Which practices are more of an outward approach to the Sabbath, and which have a more inward-directed focus? Which practices do you and your family find to be the most, and least, appealing? Which practices would be hardest for you and your family to adopt, and which would be the easiest?

Consider selecting a new Sabbath practice, or modify an existing practice in your family life, that might enhance everyone's experience of keeping the Sabbath. Ritual is a very important part of the Jewish Sabbath. What meal ritual might your family be willing to establish? Select and perhaps modify one outward approach (such as not shopping on Sunday) and one inward approach (such as more prayer time) that feels comfortable to each person. Plan a way to incorporate these practices into family life. How do they feel? How do they affect your perception of the command to keep the Sabbath holy? Discuss the plan with members of your household.

Implement your plan for one month. At the end of the month ask your family members these or similar questions: In what ways have your perceptions changed? Have the practices changed how the family experiences the Holy? Have we experienced more rest during this time? How has this plan helped us be more re-creative? If the new practices do not appeal to you or your household anymore, select others to experiment with for a month. Then ask the questions again. Perhaps you and other family members will find new practices that resonate with your need for Sabbath-keeping.

**Resources:**

<http://www.tinyurl.com/3524398>



### Sending & Serving Activities

#### 6 Visit Synagogue

Keeping the Sabbath holy is one of the Ten Commandments. Learn how Jews practice keeping the Sabbath (Shabbat) at <http://www.jewfaq.org/shabbat.htm>. Locate a Jewish synagogue in your area. Visitors' courtesies vary among congregations, so find out when the synagogue conducts its Shabbat (Sabbath) service and inquire what they expect from visitors. A decorum card on Shabbat etiquette may be available. Expectations might include wearing head coverings and conservative clothing. Prohibitions might include smoking, electronic devices on the property, and applause. Once you are prepared, plan a visit. Watch for any practices that resonate with you and family members, and consider applying them in your home life.

**Resources:**

<http://www.tinyurl.com/3524398>

### Work Place and Communal Life

#### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### 7 Muslim Practice of Sabbath

While Christians and Jews find their authority for keeping Sabbath in the Ten Commandments, Allah, Islam's God, didn't rest after the six days of creation and Muslims see no need to rest on their "Sabbath" which is Friday, the sixth day of the week. No rest or ceasing is commanded, expected or practiced. If you have Muslim friends, coworkers, or acquaintances, find out what keeping Sabbath means to them. If you don't know any Muslims, do an Internet search for Muslim Sabbath practices. Then consider the following: What day of the week do they practice, and why? How do they practice keeping Sabbath? How do they center their lives before entering into their Sabbath experiences? What new ideas does their practice of Sabbath raise for you on how to practice keeping your Sabbath?

For more information, view <http://www.tinyurl.com/299tyo8>. Additional resources on Islam can be found on the religious leaders page of Intersections International's [changethestory.net](http://www.changethestory.net) website: <http://tinyurl.com/2elqxpq>.

**Resources:**

History Channel DVD: "Inside Islam," <http://www.tinyurl.com/29xppmf>  
Yahiya John Emerick, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* (2nd edition, Columbia, MD: Alpha, 2004), <http://www.tinyurl.com/263yqxs>  
John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2c2feky>  
Coleman Barks, *The Illuminated Prayer: The Five-Times Prayer of the Sufis* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2000), <http://www.tinyurl.com/26lff43>



### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 8 Muslim Practice of Prayer

Talk with a Muslim friend, acquaintance, or coworker, or read how Muslims practice the Sabbath at <http://www.tinyurl.com/299tyo8>. Consider selecting a new Sabbath practice, based on what you have learned, or modifying an existing practice in your life. While in Muslim countries the call to prayer comes from mosques five times each day, this practice does not occur in most parts of the Americas. One way to adopt this practice is to select five times during the day to stop and say a prayer. For Muslims, formal prayers are said before sunrise, shortly after noon, during late afternoon, right after the sun goes down, and before going to bed. The goal is to keep their minds returning to God.

Try this practice for a day, and see how easily you can remember to stop and focus on God in prayer these five times. Set the alarm on your cell phone as a reminder. Practice for several days, and see if remembering becomes easier. Perhaps this practice can become a positive Sabbath routine for your life.

If keeping track of the times is too difficult, you can download free reminders from <http://www.tinyurl.com/2epgeah>. Salaat Time calculates the correct times for the five daily Muslim prayers. At the prescribed times, visual and auditory alerts let you know when to pray.

#### **Resources:**

- History Channel DVD: Inside Islam, <http://www.tinyurl.com/29xppmf>
- Yahiya John Emerick, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* (2nd edition; Columbia, MD: Alpha, 2004), <http://www.tinyurl.com/263yqxs>
- John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2c2feky>
- Coleman Banks, *The Illuminated Prayer: The Five-Times Prayer of the Sufis* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2000), <http://www.tinyurl.com/26lff43>

### Sending & Serving Activities

#### 9 Visit a Mosque

Learn how Muslims practice Sabbath by talking with Muslim friends, acquaintances, or coworkers, and then select a mosque to visit. Call the mosque to ensure you are even allowed to visit; some mosques do not allow non-Muslims to enter at any time, and others do not allow visitors during the month of Ramadan (the ninth month of the Islamic calendar). Check service times and information on visitors' courtesies, as they vary. Expectations may include (a) cleanliness, such as removing shoes and washing; (b) modest dress (women are required to dress modestly, covering their wrists and ankles, and wear head scarves); (c) not walking in front of or otherwise disturbing Muslims in prayer; (d) separation of women and men during prayer.

#### **Resources:**

- History Channel DVD: Inside Islam, <http://www.tinyurl.com/29xppmf>
- Yahiya John Emerick, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* (2nd edition; Columbia, MD: Alpha, 2004), <http://www.tinyurl.com/263yqxs>



- John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2c2feyk>
- Coleman Banks, *The Illuminated Prayer: The Five-Times Prayer of the Sufis* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2000), <http://www.tinyurl.com/26lff43>

### Reflect

Consider the practices in this Discovery Exploration as they relate to yourself, your family, your community, and your workplace. What aspects of the mandala and your experiences with Judaism and Islam have had the most effect on your experience of the Sabbath? What did you find to be provocative, challenging, fascinating, or just plain fun? How have you shared with others what you have learned?

# Keeping Sabbath



## Exploration: Scripture

### About this Setting

Our biblical stories inform how we are to live out our faith. Mark 2:23–3:6 and Exodus 20:1–17 provide the guiding stories out of which our practice of the Sabbath grows. In Mark 2:23–3:6 Jesus defines the Sabbath as a practice made for people. Exodus 20:1–17 tells us to keep the Sabbath holy because it is to be a day of rest. As you work through these practices, ponder these scriptures.

### About this Exploration

Scripture defines Sabbath in several ways. Our journey will help us explore how Sabbath was given as commandment and blessing, and how Jesus expanded Sabbath to be more inclusive. Jesus reinforced the concept that the Sabbath was about God, but for people (Mark 2:23–3:6). Sabbath is a time of blessing, a time to rest from daily work and to restore energy and “godness.” Sabbath is not a time to worry about rules, but to work for God’s reign, letting God take care of the rest. What helps us focus on Sabbath? Consider how we can recharge, refresh, and renew our spirits, minds, and bodies.



### BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

**Mark 2:23–3:6**  
**Exodus 20:1–17**

### Leader Preparation

Place information about these practices in your church newsletter, e-mail, and website postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: “A personal exploration of keeping the Sabbath is available through our Faith Practices resources. These activities may enable you to keep the Sabbath more deeply in your personal life, in family and home life, and in your community and work life.”

## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### 1 Journaling

##### Supplies:

- Bible
- personal journal and pen

Slowly read Exodus 20:1–17 and Mark 2:23–3:6. Reflect on what you have read. In your journal, write a summary title for each passage. Below the title, write any fresh thoughts or insights. What words or phrases seem to jump off the page for you? Which words seem to fit your life at the moment, or life as you want it to be? Next, write how you felt as you read the passage. What words might express what you felt as you read the scripture: joy, relief, sadness, guilt, peace, challenge. Be creative—don’t worry about writing something that sounds stupid. Just write whatever comes to mind, without censorship. Maybe even doodle in the margins, such as drawing a hand, or Mount Sinai, or the grain plucked from the stalks. Write a poem, either haiku, cinquain, or acrostic. When you think you are finished, pause for three minutes. Then reread the scriptures and what you’ve written. What might you add? Leave space for future thoughts and ideas. Make this practice into a weekly event. At the end of the week, write comments about how your thoughts on these passages influenced your week. The following week, add to the previous week, then select other Bible passages to ponder in writing.

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 2 Healing on the Sabbath

##### Supplies:

- Bible
- personal journal and pen

Slowly read Mark 3:1–6 until you have it firmly planted in your mind. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Breathe slowly and deeply for a few minutes. Put yourself at the synagogue with Jesus and the man with the withered hand. How does the synagogue smell? How does the bench feel? What do you see? Listen to Jesus tell the man, “Come forward.” Watch the reaction of the man and the crowd. Put yourself in the crowd. How do you react? Listen to Jesus. How does the man react when he hears Jesus ask, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?” Look at the expressions on the faces of the men in the synagogue. Listen to their breathing, notice their body language and their verbal responses. Then look at the expression on Jesus’ face as he heals the man.

Slowly come back into an awareness of your body and your surroundings. Open your eyes. How does this meditation experience shape your understanding of the Sabbath?



### Sending & Serving Activities

#### 3 Sabbath Dance

**Supplies:**

- Bible
- poster “The Dance of Youth” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>) by Pablo Picasso
- song “I’ve Got Peace Like a River,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9>
- personal journal and pen

Read Mark 2:23–3:6. Then study the poster “The Dance of Youth” by Pablo Picasso. How do you think Jesus would have felt about this joyous dancing on the Sabbath? Read the words of the song, “I’ve Got Peace Like a River.” What kind of movements does this song suggest? Do you feel joy like a fountain on the Sabbath? Would dancing enhance your ability to feel peace, joy, and love? Sing “I’ve Got Peace Like a River” while dancing. Dancing can be any joyful body movement that expresses how you feel. How did you feel before you sang and danced? How did you feel afterward? Write your experiences in your journal.

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### 4 Family Journal

**Supplies:**

- Bible
- a journal in which all family members can write

Choose a day and time in each week to gather together as a family with the journal and a pen. Open with a short prayer. Read Exodus 20:8–11. Recall the story of Creation in Genesis 1:1–2:4. Ask each person what keeping the Sabbath holy means personally. Invite that person to write this thought in the journal, including his or her name. Adults or older siblings will need to write for young children. Pass the journal around until everyone has made an entry.

Talk about how your family might keep the Sabbath holy this week. Agree to do one thing as a family. Write that commitment in the journal.

When ideas about the Sabbath run short, ask each person to name something for which he or she is grateful; what he or she appreciates about another family member; or what he or she looks forward to in the coming week.

Gather again in one week and read what each person wrote in the journal. Then ask each person to come up with a new understanding of what it means to keep the Sabbath, and write these entries in the journal. Continue this journaling practice for a month. Then the following week, sit down together while someone reads the entries. Enjoy the closeness the practice engenders.



### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 5 Ten Commandments

**Supplies:**

- Bible
- large sheet of paper, such as butcher paper or a large poster board
- pens, pencils
- crayons, glitter glue, and other craft supplies

Gather the supplies and place them on a table. Read Exodus 20:1-17. Ask a family member to write out each of the Ten Commandments on the butcher paper so they all fit. Read each commandment out loud and discuss its meaning. Then invite everyone to decorate the Ten Commandments. Have fun! Celebrate by making the poster bright and cheerful. Keep in mind that when we follow the Ten Commandments, we are better able to get along with God and with one another. When the poster is finished, display it in a prominent place in the house.

### Sending & Serving Activities



#### 6 Grains of the Field

**Supplies:**

- Bible
- poster “Midday Rest” (after Millet), (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters9>) c.1890 by Vincent van Gogh.

Invite your family to read Mark 2:23–3:6 together. Compare and contrast the scripture reference—eating grain in the fields on the Sabbath—with the picture “Midday Rest.” Why did Jesus allow his disciples to eat grain from a field that probably wasn’t theirs? What were the Pharisees doing, out following Jesus on the Sabbath? Is it okay to “work” to prepare food on the Sabbath, or does food need to be prepared ahead of time? Think about the people in the picture. What is their story? Why are they resting? Invite each person to tell something about the people in the picture. How do you think they would react to Jesus and his disciples coming into their fields to eat on the Sabbath? How does this affect your view of the Sabbath?

### Work Place and Communal Life

#### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### 7 Out of Slavery

**Supplies:**

- Bible

Read Exodus 20:1–17. In verse 2, God reminds the Israelites that they no longer are slaves, but free. Part of this new freedom is the freedom to keep the Sabbath holy. There are an estimated 27 million slaves in the world today—people forced to work without pay, under threat of violence. These people do not have the privi-



lege of keeping the Sabbath holy. Read about modern-day slavery at <http://www.tinyurl.com/6mydtw>.

Encourage members of your family to read about modern slavery. Discuss with them opportunities for getting involved to do something to help end slavery. Design a family project, such as raising funds to donate to groups that work to free the slaves. Help everyone keep gratitude in their hearts for the gift of celebrating the Sabbath as they choose, with options and without coercion.

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 8 Baking Bread

##### Supplies:

- Bible
- Ingredients for baking bread

Read Mark 2:23–3:6. Jesus allowed his disciples to eat grain in a field by which they were passing on a Sabbath. In the current economic climate, many people are out of work and in need of food. As a Sabbath practice, consider a ministry with your church, family, and/or friends of baking bread on specific Sunday afternoons and taking the loaves to a food pantry that would accept such an offering. Gather those who will help you. Perhaps a church youth group might take on the project. Find a kitchen where you can cook and a pantry willing to accept the bread. (Many places are hesitant to accept home-baked goods.) You might seek sponsors willing to donate supplies. Baking pumpkin bread on a weekend before Thanksgiving, to go out with Thanksgiving baskets, will add joy to many recipients' holidays. Baking cranberry bread would complement both Thanksgiving and Christmas meals.

### Sending & Serving Activities

#### 9 Healing on the Sabbath

In Mark 3:1–6 Jesus healed a man's withered hand on the Sabbath. Today, our hospitals offer healing care around the clock, every day of the year. Hospitals generally rely on volunteers to work at information desks or in the gift shops, serve as liaisons in the surgical waiting area, perform office work, transport patients, and deliver flowers and mail. Contact the volunteer coordinator at your local hospital and see if your gifts might match any of their needs. Pray about the opportunities, and if you feel so called, fill out their application form and offer your services. Perhaps even consider volunteering on Sunday afternoons as a way of making the Sabbath holy for others.

### Reflect

As you moved through this Exploration on how scripture informs the practice of keeping Sabbath, how did Mark 2:23–3:6 and Exodus 20:1–17 shape your thoughts and feelings about each activity? How has your life changed as a result: personally, in your family life, professionally, and in the community? Record your thoughts and experiences in your journal.

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# Keeping Sabbath



## Exploration: Discipleship

### About this Setting

As disciples of Christ, we are followers of biblical teachings. Just as sailors used stars to find their way at night, so we navigate with Christ as the leader of our faith. In this component we will probe how better to follow Christ as we practice the Sabbath in our personal lives, and in our family, work, and community lives.

### About this Exploration

Practicing Sabbath leads us to a fuller understanding of who we are as children of God. God calls the people of Israel to keep God's words on their hearts, to teach them to their children, to fix them as an emblem on their foreheads. Jesus reminds the Pharisees that the law is given to free people from oppression, not further to oppress an already downtrodden people. As we explore what it means to keep Sabbath, we will experience that Sabbath becomes a way of being, as well as a way of doing.



### BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

**Luke 6:1-11**  
**Deuteronomy 6:1-9**

## Leader Preparation

Place information about these practices in your church newsletter, e-mail, and website postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: "A personal exploration of keeping the Sabbath is available through our Faith Practices resources. These activities may enable you to keep the Sabbath more deeply in your personal life, in family and home life, and in your community and work life."

## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### 1 Just Imagine

##### Supplies:

- Bible
- journal and pen

Read Exodus 19:16–25. Moses, who delivered the Ten Commandments from God to the Israelites, later reminded them that God spoke to them face to face from the midst of the smoke on Mount Sinai. That morning there was thunder and lightning and a blast of a trumpet. The people naturally were afraid. Sit or lie down in a quiet space, close your eyes, and get comfortable. Breathe slowly and deeply for a couple of minutes, and then breathe naturally. Imagine that you are standing with the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai. Remember that there were thousands of people with Moses. What does the ground feel like underneath your feet? What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you see? What are the people around you doing? What do you see on Mount Sinai? How are you feeling? What are you thinking? What is said, and how do you respond?

Record your experiences in a journal. Include any ways that your perception of God and the Sabbath has changed.

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 2 Freedom

##### Supplies:

- journal and pen

In Deuteronomy 6:6 Moses reminded the Israelites that God brought them out of slavery. As Christians, through Christ we are redeemed from a slavery to sin. We no longer need to let sin enslave us; we can rely upon God to guide us into better ways of living. The 12-step approach to addictions uses spiritual concepts to assist individuals in overcoming their weaknesses and finding strength in God. Through personal discipline, mutual accountability, and social support, a person following the 12 steps can find a way back to a more healthy and whole existence.

Darren Littlejohn, a recovering addict and current student of Tibetan and Zen Buddhism, assigned his own themes to the 12 steps: 1. acceptance; 2. confidence/faith, 3. surrender; 4. self-examination; 5. self-honesty; 6. willingness; 7. humility; 8. forgiveness; 9. restitution; 10. admission; 11. seeking; and 12. selfless service/unconditional love.

Consider where in your life there is something that separates you from God. If it's not obvious, consider the not so obvious: a particular type of food, gossip, negative thinking, a judgmental attitude, even a restless mind. Select someone who can support you and partner with you, and write a simple, achievable goal. Then follow the 12-step process to work your way back to health. When you achieve



your goal, celebrate with family and friends. You have grounded yourself more and honored the God of the Sabbath.

**Website:**

The 12 steps listed: <http://www.12step.org>.

### Sending & Serving Activities

#### ③ Keeping Sabbath in Your Heart

Moses, who delivered the Ten Commandments in the Hebrew Bible, also delivered God's commandment that the Israelites were to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:1–9). This scripture, known as the Shema, is the central prayer in the Jewish faith. It is written on a small scroll that is rolled up and placed into a mezuzah that is posted on the doorway to the home. People touch the mezuzah upon leaving and entering the home to remind them of this commandment.

One way to follow the path of heart devotion to God and to keep the Sabbath, a day set aside as holy, is to select a meaningful phrase and constantly repeat it throughout the day, or recite it at specific times in the day. This will help keep your heart in tune with the Divine. Easily repeated devotional phrases can be practiced any time to keep you focused on God in every moment. Sample phrases include "God is love," "I love you, God," "Your peace is with me," "God, help me to be holy," "Love God with heart, soul, mind." This practice will help you keep your heart and mind on God throughout each day—whether at home, in the community, or in the workplace. Consider putting a copy on your desk or on the refrigerator or on the mirror you use most often.

Keep up this practice for at least one month. Watch how your life changes. Pay attention to the dreams you have at night to see if they begin to change.

### Household and Family Life

#### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### ④ Rose Windows

**Supplies:**

- pictures of rose windows from cathedrals

Architects from the medieval period created rose windows in cathedrals to express the radiance of the balance in the spirit—harmony, wholeness, and completeness. The windows symbolize unity in diversity, bringing together the science of geometry with the beauty of the sacred. Many French cathedral rose windows depict Mary, who symbolizes the congruence of human obedience with divine love.

Rose windows, as symbols of wholeness, can be used for a meditation practice on keeping the Sabbath as a way for us to become more whole, or holy. These circular mandalas offer a gate through which meditation upon God can open up more areas for growing in holiness. Select an image of a rose window that appeals to



each member of the family. Gather at a time set aside for Sabbath and spend a few minutes gazing not only upon the image, but through it, to allow the image to speak to each person in new ways. Discuss your experiences with one another.

If possible, plan a visit to a church or cathedral in your area to see a rose window.

**Resources:**

**Websites:**

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

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2f9a92j>

**Book:**

Painton Cowen, *The Rose Window* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.),

<http://tinyurl.com/28oxdw3>

## Discerning & Deciding Activities

### 5 No Other Gods

**Supplies:**

- journal and pen

In Deuteronomy 6:7 the Israelites are commanded to have no gods but Yahweh. At one point in their early history, when they feared the absence of their leader Moses and God, the Israelites molded a golden calf to worship. We create other objects to worship, such as cherished ideas, another person, an activity (such as the Internet or gaming), our pride, money, food, work, or sex. When these objects become our primary focus and interest instead of God, then, like the Israelites, we are worshipping at another shrine.

In a family conversation talk about what is primary in each person's life. To what do you give your first priority? How did this object ascend to priority in each person's life? How is it affecting family life? How can each person begin to relinquish the object's control over his or her life, so that God can be at the center of each person's heart? If you choose, write a plan of action for dethroning the objects and enthroning God.

**Resources:**

Patrick Carnes, *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* (New York: Bantam, 1992), <http://www.tinyurl.com/23bq5e5>

Kay Sheppard, *From the First Bite: A Complete Guide to Recovery from Food Addiction* (Deerfield Beach, FL: HCI, 2000), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2w9jv5x>

Kimberly S. Young, *Caught in the Net: How to Recognize the Signs of Internet Addiction — and a Winning Strategy for Recovery* (New York: Wiley, 1998)

<http://www.tinyurl.com/39duxvc>

David N. Greenfield, *Virtual Addiction: Help for Netheads, Cyberfreaks, and Those Who Love Them* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 1999)

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2c2xgt5>



### Sending & Serving Activities

#### ⑥ Review Your Sabbath Practices

**Supplies:**

- paper and pen

Practices used for keeping the Sabbath can take many forms. On a sheet of paper, write a list of your family's Sabbath practices. Keep the list in front of the family, and ask each person to pray about each practice, one at a time, paying attention to any promptings they may receive from God. This may involve listening prayer. Listening prayer can include asking God questions, then quietly and attentively waiting for a sense of what the answer may be. While you wait, pay attention to your body to see if it responds positively to the prompting. Follow your intuition, and also check in with others about the perception of guidance you may have received. Where do your family practices preserve life and do good? Where do they interfere with family members' spiritual growth by creating resentment? Ask for guidance about what can be modified to enhance your family's spiritual connection with God. Write what comes up for each person, checking with one another and your pastor to see if an idea is good, and then follow through.

### Work Place and Communal Life

#### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### ⑦ Love God with All Your Might

**Supplies:**

- a list of community volunteer opportunities

In Deuteronomy 6:1-9, we are instructed to love God with all our might. This would include our physical might or bodily strength. One way to love God with our physical strength is to volunteer for a project that requires physical energy, such as helping build homes, stocking shelves in a food pantry, doing yard work, making phone calls, entering data, or caring for animals in a shelter. The opportunities are vast, and the needs are great. Talk with your pastor about possible local volunteer opportunities. An Internet search for opportunities in your community probably will turn up something. Consider your personal gifts as you comb through the various needs. Find something that uses your gifts, appeals to you, and fits within a time frame you have to offer. As you volunteer, remember to follow the instructions in Colossians 3:23 that suggest we do our work heartily, as for God rather than for people. This will assist you with making your volunteer efforts a Sabbath-keeping practice.



### Discerning & Deciding Activities



#### 8 Sabbath Refreshment

**Supplies:**

- poster “The Public Fountain” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>) by Manuel Alvarez Bravo
- journal and pen

Jesus said the Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath. Sabbath is a time for rest and re-creation, a time to find refreshment for our souls. We come to Christ in prayer and meditation to find this refreshment. In what ways do members of your community refresh themselves and find Sabbath rest? Consider the poster “The Public Fountain.” Gather with friends or coworkers and ask each to spend some time in silence, pondering what it is like to receive cool, moist refreshment from God, the source of living water. In what ways can you and your group increase the amount of refreshment you receive from God? How can that refreshment be extended into your community? Brainstorm ideas, select one, and bring it into reality in your community.

### Reflect

How has your experience of the Sabbath as a disciple of Christ shifted as you work with this Exploration? Have you discovered a guide to navigate you through the sometimes difficult questions? Have you experienced a deepening of the Sabbath in your inner life as you practiced the personal spiritual exercises? Record any thoughts in your journal.

### Sending & Serving Activities

#### 9 Serving Soup

**Supplies:**

- journal and pen

Jesus ensured that his disciples were fed on the Sabbath. When people’s bellies are empty, it’s hard for them to behave well or even think clearly. Find a local soup kitchen where you can volunteer. Pray before you go. Then let your experience be an act of worship, with your mind focused on God, allowing your hands to be the hands of Christ, ready to help wherever necessary. Talk to some of those being served. What is it like for them to be here? What brought them to this situation? How does hunger affect how they think and feel about life and about God? Are they resentful of needing to come get a free meal, humble with thanksgiving for the gift of food and service, or are they demanding and self-righteous? Write your answers in your journal when you return home.

# Keeping Sabbath



## Exploration: Christian Tradition

### About this Setting

Christian history reveals a wide variety of ways Christians have practiced the Sabbath, providing some landmarks that can be called upon for ideas as well as for warnings. This component presents several different, but recent, ways of practicing — and not practicing — the Sabbath.

### About this Exploration

Throughout the history of the church the practice of Sabbath has run from narrow to broad. Certain faith traditions establish restrictions concerning a Sabbath day, limiting everything from household tasks to social activities. Other traditions focus on the intent of the practice: worship, study, and rest. All these traditions highlight rest and re-creation. Current understandings have broadened Sabbath to embrace the practices of justice and of devotion in and around the moments of our daily life. These various interpretations provide the foundation for our practices of Sabbath today.



**BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:**  
**Mark 6:30–34, 53–56**  
**Isaiah 58:9b–14**

### Leader Preparation

Place information about these practices in your church newsletter, e-mail, and website postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: “A personal exploration of keeping the Sabbath is available through our Faith Practices resources. These activities will enable you to keep the Sabbath more deeply in your personal life, in family and home life, and in your community and work life.”

## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### 1 Gazing upon Icons

##### Supplies:

- a journal and pen or pencil
- an icon that speaks to you about how to keep the Sabbath

Icons are religious images often painted on wood representing Jesus; Mary, the Mother of Jesus; saints; angels; and spiritual scenes. They were developed as a visual aid for communicating biblical events and ideas among preliterate people. Eastern Orthodox Christians have used icons extensively in their religious practices as a doorway to the Divine. The believer can meditate on the icon to enhance his or her spiritual life or to seek to imitate the life of the person depicted in the image. This inflow of spiritual energy is one way to keep the Sabbath.

Select an icon from the online resources, and spend quiet time deeply contemplating the rest of the Sabbath while gazing upon the image. Record your experiences and decisions in your journal.

##### Resources:

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

<http://www.tinyurl.com/33braqz>

Alfredo Tradigo, *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Guide to Imagery Series* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006), <http://www.tinyurl.com/3575zj9>  
Solrunn Nes, *The Mystical Language of Icons* (2nd edition, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2ucg42w>

### Discerning & Deciding Activities



#### 2 In and Out of a Labyrinth

##### Supplies:

- a journal and pen or pencil
- a labyrinth, Attachment: Activity 2

Labyrinths are designs that symbolize wholeness, using a circular or spiral pathway that takes one to its center and back out. In a walking labyrinth, one starts outside, meanders along the path to the center, and moves back out in the opposite direction. Labyrinths are different from mazes, which are playfully designed to confuse.

Find a labyrinth in your local area, or use a picture of a labyrinth. If you have a picture, place a piece of clear plastic over it so that you can use the labyrinth over again. If you do not have clear plastic, use your finger, the eraser end of a pencil, or the dry end of a ballpoint pen. Center yourself with a few long, slow, deep breaths. Then follow the path presented by the labyrinth. As you circle inward, contemplate the inward journey of the Sabbath through prayer and rest. As you spiral back out, meditate on how to bring the inward journey out into the world. Record your experiences and decisions in your journal.



### Resources:

<http://www.labyrinthlocator.com/>

<http://www.labyrinth-enterprises.com/chartres.jpg>

<http://www.lessons4living.com/labyrinth.htm>

Gailand MacQueen, *The Spirituality of Mazes and Labyrinths*  
(Kelowna, British Columbia: Northstone Publishing, 2005)

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 3 Exploring Mandorlas

#### Supplies:

- a journal and pen or pencil
- a mandorla, a spiritual image depicting two overlapping circles with a symbol in the almond-shaped center, Attachment: Activity 3

Medieval Christian artists sometimes brought two circles together so they overlapped, creating the shape of an almond in the center. This mandorla symbolized the halo around a holy person, an embryo, or the overlay of heaven upon earth. Often, an image of Christ or Mary the mother of Jesus appeared in this central shape. In a similar way, keeping the Sabbath involves bringing a bit of heaven into the earth plane through prayer that works itself out by reshaping our everyday lives.

Locate a mandorla and gaze upon it. Breathe slowly and deeply, looking through the almond shape in the center. Allow the image to speak to you of deeper realities, Sabbath truths that you can bring back into the world to share with others. Record your experiences and decisions in your journal.

#### Resource:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/23mlc33>

<http://www.tinyurl.com/246cuko>

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

### 4 Early American Sabbaths

#### Supplies:

- a journal and pen or pencil

In the book *Little House in the Big Woods* (75th anniversary edition, New York: HarperCollins, 2007), Laura Ingalls Wilder's father tells how his grandfather endured the Sabbath. It started Saturday evening. From sundown until sundown, no meals were cooked or heated; horses couldn't be hitched; no one could even smile. In church, they had to sit perfectly still on hard benches for two hours. During the afternoon, they sat on a bench and studied their catechism. Finally, the Sabbath ended at sunset.

Why do you think the adults designed such Sabbath practices? What might have been the benefits and drawbacks of this practice? What brought about so many



changes during the past few generations? Consider how the Sabbath is different now for you and your family. In what ways is your practice of Sabbath a discipline that keeps you in tune with God? How might you amend your practice of Sabbath? Record your reflections in your journal.

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 5 Tom Sawyer's Sabbath

##### Supplies:

- a journal and pen or pencil

Mark Twain (1835-1910) wrote, "Often, the less there is to justify a traditional custom, the harder it is to get rid of it." His fictional nineteenth-century character Tom Sawyer hated Sunday school "with his whole heart." It lasted ninety minutes, and then came the worship service, during which children who memorized 2,000 scripture verses could receive a copy of the Bible. Tom managed to wheedle the necessary quantity of tickets from other kids who had memorized their verses, and he was called up in front of the congregation and given a Bible. When asked whom Jesus called as the first two disciples, he blurted, "David and Goliath!"

Tom well represents creative, energetic children who need other ways of learning about God besides memorizing verses. Many children today will not respond to traditional Sunday school formats. Howard Gardner, a developmental psychologist and professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, formulated a list of multiple intelligences, different ways in which people learn:

- verbal-linguistic
- kinesthetic-bodily
- intrapersonal
- interpersonal
- logical-mathematical
- visual-spatial
- musical
- naturalistic

If you participated in church as a child, reflect on your experiences and memories. Which of Gardner's multiple intelligences were addressed in your experiences? Which of those is your primary way of learning? In what ways is your current congregational experience different? Consider how children's activities at church and in your home might be modified to accommodate the variety of children's educational needs. Work with the education or spiritual nurture committee of your church to bring about changes that will enhance the Sunday experience for children.

##### Resources:

Howard Gardner and multiple intelligences:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/88b38>

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Unabridged edition, New York:

Sterling, 2004), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2btpqlg>

Howard Gardner, *The Unschooled Mind, Intelligence Reframed, and The Disciplined Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2fqzum>



### Sending & Serving Activities



#### 6 Early African American Sabbath Practices

##### Supplies:

- poster “Going to Church” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters8>) by William H. Johnson

African American slaves who wished to worship God in their own way and time sometimes had to do so in strict secrecy. They hung wet quilts around their worship space to deaden the noise. When they talked, they spoke into a large iron wash pot to quiet their voices. They developed methods of keeping the Sabbath that directly addressed their circumstances and met their needs.

In your community, where are there congregations that maintain their native cultural expression of Sabbath? In what ways have they adapted their services of worship to their current cultural context?

Study the art print “Going to Church.” In what ways have some African Americans preserved past cultural practices, and in what ways have they established new traditions?

Find a congregation of a culture different from your own. Visit on a Sunday with your family or a friend. Experience the differences and see how they feel. How does worship feel different from your church’s services?

##### Resources:

Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Revised edition, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), <http://www.tinyurl.com/248tm9o>

## Work Place and Communal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### 7 Blue Laws

Blue laws are legal restrictions on businesses during Sundays that have been part of the American landscape since the country was colonized by Europeans. These laws have covered a wide range of practices, from preventing the sale of liquor to closing businesses employing more than six people. Only during recent decades have many blue laws been repealed. Find out if there are any blue laws in your area. Are they different from other parts of the state where you live? Do the laws serve humans, or do humans seem to be serving the laws? Do blue laws support the idea of rest, or do they create more angst? Do we pity those who are forced to work on Sundays to keep their jobs, or those who would gladly give up a day of rest to obtain much-needed income? How do blue laws discriminate against religions that honor a day of rest other than Sunday?

Consider the following: When New Mexico repealed its ban on Sunday alcohol sales, residents experienced a 42 percent increase in alcohol-related traffic deaths and a 29 percent increase in alcohol-related car crashes on Sundays. Research indicates blue laws preventing alcohol sales on Sunday protect public health. How does this affect your view of working on Sundays?



Next time you shop on Sunday, start up a conversation with a store clerk. Keep the above questions in mind while keeping the tone friendly and caring. How does he or she feel about working on Sundays? See if the clerk adds some wisdom to your understanding of keeping the Sabbath.

**Resource:**

David N. Laband and Deborah Hendry Heinbuch, *The History, Economics, and Politics of Sunday-Closing Laws* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1987)

<http://www.tinyurl.com/38ojr3e>

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 8. Chariots of Fire

**Supplies:**

- movie “Chariots of Fire” (info at <http://www.tinyurl.com/m9mkwp>)

Eric Liddell was on the British running team for the 1924 Olympic games. While he was slated to run the 100-meter dash, he refused to compete when he learned that he had to run a preliminary heat on a Sunday. Instead, he was switched to the 400-meter dash, and won an Olympic gold medal anyway. He believed it was better to honor God and keep the Sabbath free of work than to compete on a Sunday for an Olympic gold medal. His choice distressed his teammates and nation, but he stayed his course. At the height of his running career, he made another choice for God instead of for his running career: he went to China as a missionary. His life represents one type of conviction concerning the Sabbath.

Discuss with your coworkers or friends what choices they have made about what constitutes work and rest on the Sabbath. In what ways do they seek to honor God, rather than people or the community, in all they do on Sundays? How does this affect your local community?

**Resource:**

David McCasland. Eric Liddell: *Pure Gold* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 2004), <http://www.tinyurl.com/3a2fqxa>

### Sending & Serving Activities

#### 9. Be Reconciled

The Didache: Teachings of the Twelve Apostles, written between 50 and 120 CE, includes instructions for the early Christians. Among them are Sabbath practices. These include not only gathering to break bread and give thanks, but also to confess sins so their sacrifice would be pure. In addition, they were not to let anyone join with them in worship that had a quarrel until they were reconciled. Everyone had to be at peace with everyone else so that their sacrifices would be pure. This commentary in the Didache probably was based on what Jesus said in Matthew 5:23-24.



This Sabbath-keeping practice enabled all those at worship to be at peace with one another, reducing conflict. Take time to examine if there is someone at church or in your workplace or community with whom you are not at peace. If so, take steps to reconcile with that person or group so your worship will honor God.

### Reflect

From the humorous to the sublime, Christians throughout history have found a variety of ways to keep the Sabbath holy. How have these different approaches affected your thinking about the Sabbath? Which have challenged you? Which have been easy to dismiss? Which have brought you comfort for your spiritual growth? Record your thoughts in your journal.

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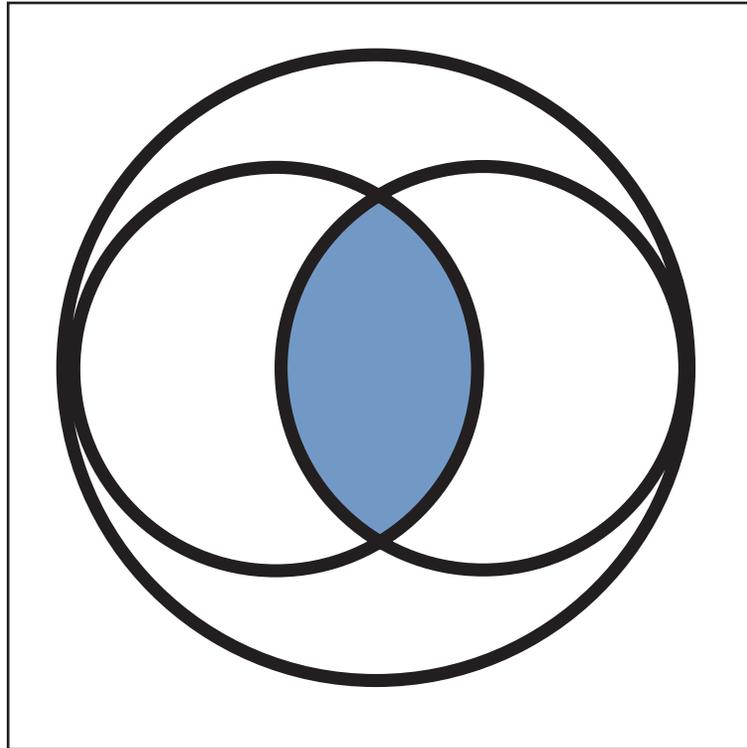


Attachment: Activity 2





## Images of a Mandorla



<http://www.tinyurl.com/24a8bn8>

# Keeping Sabbath



## Exploration: Context and Mission

### About this Setting

Reaching out to others can be part of the Sabbath experience, offering rest to those who find rest difficult to come by due to economic circumstances. This Exploration helps put humanitarian legs on scriptural teachings so individuals can exercise their new knowledge of Sabbath-keeping. Paul, quoting Isaiah in Romans 10:15, calls the feet of those who bring good news “beautiful.” This good news can come in many forms: you can do it from home, from church, from your workplace, from a social group. The opportunities and the needs are endless.

### About this Exploration

The prophet Jeremiah goes to the busiest places in the city to call the people to observe Sabbath as a day intentionally set apart by God. In the same way, we are called to take the gift that is Sabbath to our communities and then to the wider world. As communities of faith, we are encouraged to model Sabbath living that is joyful, inclusive, and not burdensome. The Corinthian church was challenged to rethink the way they lived out the Sabbath together in community. Maybe we will have to do the same! What do you mean — change?



**BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:**  
***Jeremiah 17:19-27***  
***1 Corinthians 11:17-26***

### Leader Preparation

Place information about these practices in your church newsletter, e-mail, and website postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: "A personal exploration of keeping the Sabbath is available through our Faith Practices resources. These activities may enable you to keep the Sabbath more deeply in your personal life, in family and home life, and in your community and work life."

## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### ① Jeremiah Speaks

**Supplies:**

- personal journal and pen

Carefully read Jeremiah 17:19–27. Then close your eyes and breathe deeply and slowly for a few minutes. Imagine you are standing with Jeremiah at the public gate in Jerusalem. What do you feel under your feet? How does the temperature affect you? What do you smell — perhaps domestic animals, perhaps sweaty humans? What do you see? Listen to Jeremiah as he proclaims God's word to those who are moving through the gate on the Sabbath. How is he speaking? How do his words affect those around him? How do his words affect you? What loads are you carrying on the Sabbath that can be put down? Perhaps you are experiencing a load of extra chores that can wait, a load of worries, or a load of emotional pain that can be laid at the feet of Christ. Consider what load you can lay down, and how you can lay it down. Thank God for the opportunity to lay down the load.

Open your eyes. Consider your experience and write it in your journal. Then proceed to lay down the extra load you no longer need to carry.

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### ② Body and Blood

**Supplies:**

- personal journal and pen

In 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, the apostle Paul gives the words of consecration for communion. Close your eyes and take a few slow, deep breaths. Focus your imagination on what it might have been like to be in the upper room in Jerusalem when Jesus consecrated the wine and bread for his disciples. Imagine yourself reclining at the table with the other disciples. Feel the cushion beneath you. Note the smell of the room, the disciples, the food. Hear the sound of others eating. See them reclining at the table. Then focus on Jesus. Listen carefully to his words of consecration. How does his face appear? How do the disciples respond? How do you respond as you are given a piece of consecrated bread? How do you respond when you are handed the wine goblet? How do you feel as you ingest the consecrated elements? If you want to say something to Christ, say it now. Perhaps you want to express gratitude or love, or you have a question.

Slowly come back into your own environment and open your eyes. Write your experiences in your journal.



### Sending & Serving Activities

#### ③ Entering God's Own Dwelling

**Supplies:**

- song "Let Me Enter God's Own Dwelling" (Tune: UNSER HERRSCHER)  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPsongZ>
- personal journal and pen

Slowly read the words to the song "Let Me Enter God's Own Dwelling." Savor each phrase and fling open the door to God's dwelling. Let each phrase soak into your mind and heart. Then go back and slowly read each verse as a prayer. Envision your body as a temple of the Holy Spirit. Seek to see God face to face. Ask God to sanctify your ears so you receive into your mind what is holy, and your lips so you speak what is good. Let your life be like a fruitful field in which God can sow good things. Among the things you can allow God to plant in your life are portions of the Bible. Ask for guidance to do God's will. Offer praise to God for all God does in your life.

Listen to the tune at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cufabz>

When you are done, write in your journal anything that came to mind while you were meditating on the hymn.

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### ④ The Gift of Food

**Supplies:**

- Bible

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17–26 with your family. The apostle Paul clearly is upset with the Christians in the church at Corinth who gather for Holy Communion and either eat more than their share or get drunk, leaving others with nothing. There is nothing holy about being greedy with food when it leaves others with nothing.

According to a United Nations report, 825 million people in the world are still undernourished. If your family has the ability to purchase and eat sufficient food for each day, then consider setting aside one Sunday evening each month as a time to live in solidarity with those who don't have enough to eat. Consider skipping dinner as a family and placing the money saved into a piggy bank. Gather as a family and view the online catalog for Heifer Project International. When your family has saved at least \$20, you can purchase a flock of chicks, ducks, or geese to help a family become more self-reliant. Decide as a family what you would like to purchase, and select someone to honor with the gift. Send the money with joy and gratitude for the abundance you have in your lives.

Web sites: World Watch, <http://www.tinyurl.com/3yoh9gs>  
Heifer Project International, <http://www.tinyurl.com/86d82>



### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 5 Out of Work

##### Supplies:

- poster “Out of Work” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>) by Käthe Kollwitz

Gather together as a family and look at the print “Out of Work” by Kollwitz. Invite each to say what he or she sees in the picture. As a family create a story about the people in this picture. What is the situation? What is each person in the picture feeling? How is each person coping? What might each person be thinking? Perhaps your children have friends whose parents are now out of work, or you or a member of your family is out of work. Ask your children how that feels and how it affects their friends. As a family, discuss ways in which each person might be able to assist a family dealing with unemployment or underemployment. Perhaps the family can prepare and take a meal, send a card of encouragement, or offer to assist them with projects they are working on while looking for another job. As a family, pray for those without work, asking for God to bless them with jobs so they can meet their financial obligations, find meaning in their work, and develop positive associations with other people.

### Sending & Serving Activities

#### 6 Sponsoring Children

##### Supplies:

- Bible
- world map

In 1 Corinthians 11:17–26, the apostle Paul is distressed with the Christians in the church at Corinth who gather for a meal and Holy Communion and either eat more than their share or get drunk, leaving others with nothing. Perhaps some of those who were left hungry were children.

Gather together with your family and read the Bible passage. Discuss how children in the world fare compared to your family. An easy resource to access is the annual UNICEF report. Look on the website tabs at the top of the home page for the annual State of the World’s Children reports. These reports detail, by country, the percent of children under age five who are underweight and show wasting or stunting. For younger children, speak only in general terms about children needing more food.

Discuss as a family what you can do to set aside money to help sponsor a child, for example, through the Global Ministries Sponsorship program of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Go to

<http://www.tinyurl.com/374wqt7>

and scroll down to the list of centers. Locate the countries on the world map. Ask your children what country or countries they would like to donate to as a way to assist other children. Suggest they do extra chores around the house to raise the money to send to Global Ministries or another entity serving children.



### **Web sites:**

Global Ministries, <http://www.tinyurl.com/374wqt7>

UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/>

## Work Place and Communal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### ⑦ Open on Sundays

James Cash Penney, <http://www.tinyurl.com/bw2toz>, started the J. C. Penney Company, a national chain of stores founded on the Golden Rule. Among those he hired Penney deeply valued honesty and respect for the customer. When he opened his first retail store in 1902, miners in town worked six days a week and only on Sundays had time to do their shopping. With great angst, and with trepidation over breaking with church teachings and family tradition, Penney decided to keep the store open on Sundays to meet the needs of his customers. When he helped those who could come in only on Sundays, he experienced deep satisfaction and knew there was something of the Divine in his work. He was rewarded that year with sales that enabled him to pay off his entire loan.

In today's culture, keeping stores open sometimes twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, is sometimes a way for owners to meet the true needs of customers. It also honors the Sabbath of traditions other than Christian, such as Jewish and Muslim. As part of your practice of keeping Sabbath, make a commitment not to shop on Sundays. Take care of your shopping needs on other days. If it becomes necessary for you to shop on a Sunday, hold in your mind that even though it is a day of rest for some, for others the day of rest might be another day of the week. As you enter the store, focus not so much on what you need to buy, but on the people who are working in the store so you can buy what you need. Greet those who are working with kindness and respect. Call them by name, and treat them as full human beings. Find a little something to say that might brighten their day. By respecting them, you honor the Divine within them.

### **Resources:**

Beatrice Plumb, *J. C. Penney, Merchant Prince* (Minneapolis, T. S. Denison, 1963)

### **Website:**

<http://www.tinyurl.com/3ynyrwb>

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### ⑧ Sharing the Body and Blood

In 1 Corinthians 11:17–26, the apostle Paul is distressed with the Christians in the church at Corinth who gather for a meal and Holy Communion and either eat more than their share or get drunk, leaving others with nothing. Consider how the early Christians were consuming at others' expense. Their behavior is not unlike the current consumer culture of North America and western Europe. According to <http://www.tinyurl.com/3yoh9gs>, 12 percent of the world's population, living in North America and western Europe, accounts for 60 percent of private consumption spending. Meanwhile, about 33 percent of the world's popu-



lation, living in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, accounts for only 3.2 percent. About 2.8 billion people have less than \$2 a day on which to survive. According to a United Nations report, 825 million people are still undernourished.

If you live in abundance, thank God for the opportunity it provides so you can share your blessings with others. Consider eating a little less during each day and setting aside the money you saved. Over time, it can really add up. Find out when your church celebrates One Great Hour of Sharing, which usually is on the fourth Sunday of Lent. Write a check for the amount you saved and make a powerful contribution to One Great Hour of Sharing. Another possibility is contributing to Bread for the World, a collective Christian group that urges U.S. decision-makers to combat hunger.

### Reflect

Living out the Sabbath in community can be a highly rewarding experience for all concerned. According to Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:7 God loves a cheerful giver. The verse can also be translated “hilarious” giver — one who gives with great joy and delight. As you reflect on the activities above, especially those done in community, record how you felt about giving, and see where there is room for more joy in your life.

#### **Websites:**

World Watch, <http://www.tinyurl.com/3yoh9gs>

One Great Hour of Sharing, <http://www.ucc.org/oghs>

Bread for the World, <http://www.bread.org>

## Sending & Serving Activities

### 9 Coffee Time

In 1 Corinthians 11:17–26, the apostle Paul is distressed with the Christians in the church at Corinth who gather for a meal and Holy Communion and take more than their fair share. The injustice among Christians could easily have been avoided if everyone considered taking only a portion, rather than stuffing themselves and getting drunk.

Fairness in the commercial marketplace is an area for potential growth. Organizations that focus on fair-trade coffee and other products include Equal Exchange, <http://interfaith.equalexchange.com> The Fair Trade Coffee Company, <http://www.fairtradecoffee.org> and Peace Coffee, <http://www.peacecoffee.com>.

At your office, community center, or church, investigate how the coffee is paid for, who supplies it, and who is in charge. Work with that individual or group to encourage them to take advantage of the justice-oriented products provided by fair-trade coffee companies. Even if coffee is already supplied, perhaps the management would be open also to offering other products from the fair-trade companies, such as tea and cocoa. Gather with others to bring these products to the coffee table.

#### **Website:**

Equal Exchange, <http://interfaith.equalexchange.com>

# Keeping Sabbath



## Exploration: Future and Vision

### About this Setting

This Exploration will assist with taking what has been learned about the practice of keeping the Sabbath and moving forward into the future. Sometimes we need to look inward to find clarity and direction for this movement. Sometimes we need to join with family members in projects that will clarify how to keep the Sabbath holy as a family. Sometimes we need to join with friends and neighbors to make the Sabbath a reality in a wider area. And sometimes reaching out to the world at large gives us the opportunity to bring Sabbath rest to those who have none.

### About this Exploration

Sabbath implies renewal based in reflection. Rooted in the past, Sabbath beckons us toward the future. It calls us to encounter God in the present moment. Sabbath is a way for us to remember that we are God's beloved children. Awareness of God's presence can guide us through all of life's experiences. As God's people, we often find ourselves facing challenging times, not unlike those faced by the psalmist and by Jesus' followers after his crucifixion. At such times, a sense of God's presence can guide our choices toward a future filled with the possibilities of Sabbath transformation.



**BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:**  
***Psalm 119:105-112,***  
***129-136***  
***Matthew 27:51-66***  
***(Matthew 26:14-27:66)***

### Leader Preparation

Place information about these practices in your church newsletter, e-mail, and website postings. Include the following, edited to meet the individual needs of your congregation: "A personal exploration of keeping the Sabbath is available through our Faith Practices resource. These activities may enable you to keep the Sabbath more deeply in your personal life, in family and home life, and in your community and work life."

## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### ① Sacred Steps

When Joseph of Arimathea came to collect Jesus' body from the cross, he may have wailed, or he may have been silent. As he, and probably other followers of Jesus or members of Joseph's household, carried Jesus to his rock tomb, every breath must have been labored with emotional pain. Each step would have been part of a sacred walk. He held sacred grief in his body. Later, his every step and every breath would be filled with the sacred joy of Jesus' resurrection.

As you breathe and walk through your Sabbaths, focus on the sacredness of each moment. Each breath in brings the inflowing of Spirit into our temples, laced with joy and sacredness. Each breath out becomes the outpouring of love into creation. Each step made through sacred space brings us a little closer to Christ. By focusing this way, time and space can open up a little and show things that ordinary consciousness will miss.

Spend several minutes in silence and focus on your breathing. Breath in, breath out. Welcome the Spirit in, pour out love. Spend one minute focusing on the Spirit in your personal life; spend another minute focusing on the Spirit in your family and your household; spend another minute focusing on the Spirit in your community. Breath in, breath out. Welcome the Spirit, pour out love.

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### ② Mazes

##### Supplies:

- locate a local maze or find a book that includes mazes — many children's books have mazes

Mazes are designed to entertain and frustrate. They require making multiple choices, rely on independence, and offer challenges. Mazes are the opposite of labyrinths, which are designed to be ordered, communal, and singular in purpose. Walk through a maze, or follow one with your finger. Notice how your body responds as you move along the pathways, get stuck, enter dead-end spaces, or find your way to the end. How does this experience symbolize the Sabbath for you? Was the experience fun or unpleasant? Did it offer rest and re-creation, or work and unpleasant experiences?

##### Websites:

Online mazes for kids from a Christian perspective,

<http://www.tinyurl.com/33veu98>

Outdoor cornfield maze locator, <http://www.tinyurl.com/24scsxo>

Adrian Fisher's World Maze Database, <http://www.maze-world.com>

Outdoor Mazes Directory, <http://www.tinyurl.com/268jdg2>

Other mazes and activities locator, <http://www.pumpkinpatchesandmore.org>



### **Books:**

Gailand MacQueen, *The Spirituality of Mazes and Labyrinths* (Kelowna, British Columbia: Northstone Publishing, 2005), <http://www.tinyurl.com/284k6wq>  
Jack Saward. *Magical Paths: Labyrinths and Mazes in the 21st Century* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2006), <http://www.tinyurl.com/22w2fzr>  
Jurgen Hohmuth. *Labyrinths and Mazes* (Bel Air, CA: Prestel Publishing, 2003) <http://www.tinyurl.com/27qx86h>

## Sending & Serving Activities

### ③ My Mind Stayed on Jesus

#### **Supplies:**

- song “I Woke Up This Morning” (Tune: Woke Up This Morning), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong8>

The continual refrain in the hymn “I Woke Up This Morning” is the phrase “with my mind stayed on Jesus.” You can hear the tune at <http://www.tinyurl.com/37m2ztb>.

This expression contains the essence of keeping the Sabbath — keeping one’s mind steadily focused upon Christ. Brother Lawrence, in his book, *Practicing the Presence of God*, explains how he spent all his days focused upon God. Brother Lawrence’s spiritual practice, at every moment of every day, was to realize the true intimacy of God within, and to turn his attention at every moment toward God. It is a simple, yet arduous, discipline, with great rewards. Starting tomorrow, as soon as you awake, make your first thought about Jesus and what Jesus would expect of you in this day. At noon and at dinner time and at bedtime, turn your thoughts to God. Challenge yourself to see how often you are able to bring your mind back to Christ each hour, and see if you can improve during the day. Then try again the next day. See if you experience improvement.

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1981), <http://www.tinyurl.com/3a7jsr4>. Other versions are available.

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

### ④ Create a Home Altar

#### **Supplies:**

- small table-top space
- a tablecloth
- meaningful spiritual objects

Bring Sabbath awareness into your home by creating a home altar, a space set aside to withdraw from the busyness of life and to connect with God. Select a location in your home where you can place a small table. Cover the table with a cloth. If possible, use fabric from another country. Place on the table meaningful objects that speak to you of God, such as a cross, a Bible, a special candle, a meaningful picture, or a figurine, such as a butterfly or fish. Place a chair in front of the altar, or a pillow to kneel upon. For keeping the Sabbath in your home, establish



a particular time each day to spend time at the altar focusing upon God. Every time you glance in the direction of the altar, offer a prayer or remind yourself to think upon God.

**Website:**

<http://www.myhomealtar.com>

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 5 Visual Sabbath Reminder

**Supplies:**

- craft papers with Sabbath-related or spiritual themes
- colored pens
- stickers, ribbons, or other materials that can be attached to the paper
- Bible and/or inspirational phrases or texts relating to the Sabbath
- glue and/or glue gun
- ruler
- scissors or a paper trimmer
- picture frames of various sizes, if desired

By yourself, or with other family members, select Bible and/or inspirational phrases or texts relating to the Sabbath that mean the most to you. Then select papers with Sabbath-related or spiritual themes you find appealing or related to the text you have chosen. Select colored pens and possibly stickers, ribbons, or other materials that can be attached to the paper. Using a ruler or other guide, write the text on the paper. Then decorate with stickers, ribbons, or other materials. Trim to fit into a frame, if you want, or simply use as it is. Larger images can be hung on the walls or placed on tables or drawers, while smaller images can be stuck inside mirror frames in a bathroom or placed on a refrigerator with magnets. Use these images as reminders of how you want to keep the Sabbath holy.

### Sending & Serving Activities



#### 6 Cemetery Procession

**Supplies:**

- poster “Guatemala: Procession” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>) by Betty LaDuke

Look at the art print “Guatemala: Procession.” Think about the images in terms of a procession to the tomb of Jesus. How would you approach Jesus’ tomb on a Sabbath day? Would there be candles and food, along with joy that God’s work is accomplished, or would there be great grief at the cruel, unjust turn of events in Jesus’ life? Would Christians approach the tomb in family or church groups, community groups, and with friends, or alone?

Select a Sunday and gather with your family and make a trip to a local cemetery. Decide together how to conduct the procession. If we are all children of God, then every grave contains a son or daughter of God and is due the respect of such a position. How does everyone feel about the experience? After the procession is ended, share your thoughts and feelings together during a meal.



## Work Place and Communal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

#### 7 Celebrating Passover with Others

**Supplies:**

- lists are available at <http://www.tinyurl.com/24gx624> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cowv5o>

Talk to Jewish friends or acquaintances, or contact a local temple, to find someone willing to work with you to create a Passover celebration in your home. Make an invitation list and prepare for the meal, watched over by your Jewish guide. Be sure to include children. Review the practices of the meal at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cowv5o>.

Select a child to ask, “What do you mean by this service?” Ask various members of the group to provide different answers to the question.

When your Passover celebration begins, be sure to keep the focus on reflection and teaching, instead of ordinary conversation. As part of the reflection, ask each person who is willing to describe the experience in personal terms, and how it might affect his or her relationship to God.

David Arnow, *Creating Lively Passover Seders: A Sourcebook of Engaging Tales, Texts and Activities* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2f3w347>

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### 8 Mazes with Friends

**Supplies:**

- locate a local maze

Gather together family and/or friends for an outing at a maze. In the Midwest, fall is a good time to locate a corn maze at an area farm. See how well you can work together to solve the mystery of getting through the maze. Moving our bodies in a fun way can help us re-create ourselves, because our bodies are created to move through space. Working together toward a common goal builds a sense of community. How does this experience symbolize the Sabbath for you? Was the experience fun or unpleasant? Did it offer rest and re-creation, or work and unpleasant experiences? Share your experience with those who went through the maze with you.

**Books:**

Gailand MacQueen, *The Spirituality of Mazes and Labyrinths* (Kelowna, British Columbia: Northstone Publishing, 2005, <http://www.tinyurl.com/284k6wg>)

Jeff Saward, *Magical Paths: Labyrinths and Mazes in the 21st Century* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2006), <http://www.tinyurl.com/22w2fzr>

Jurgen Hohmuth, *Labyrinths and Mazes* (Bel Air, CA: Prestel Publishing, 2003) <http://www.tinyurl.com/27qx86h>

**Web sites:**

Online mazes for kids from a Christian perspective:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/33veu98>



Outdoor cornfield maze locator, <http://www.tinyurl.com/23rro4b>  
World Maze Database, <http://www.maze-world.com>  
Outdoor Mazes Directory, <http://www.tinyurl.com/268jdg2>  
Other mazes and activities locator, <http://www.pumpkinpatchesandmore.org>

### Sending & Serving Activities



#### 9 Sabbath Refreshment for Others

##### Supplies:

- poster “The Public Fountain” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>) by Manuel Alvarez Bravo
- journal and pen

Jesus said the Sabbath was made for people, for rest and refreshment for our souls. But is this refreshment only for ourselves? Consider “The Public Fountain” poster image. This boy came to drink for refreshment. He appears to rely on an outside source of water to get a drink. Access to fresh, clean water for drinking, cleaning, and growing crops is a growing issue of concern in our world. In what ways does your life offer refreshment to those in need? Consider what you might be able to do to offer more refreshment to others, or use only what you need so that there is more left for others. In what ways do you refresh yourself so that you can become a river of living water to others, in your home, your community, your workplace, the world? In what ways can you conserve water, so that others have more access to clean drinking water? Record your answers in your journal.

Some online water-saving tips:

<http://www.wateruseitwisely.com>

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

<http://www.tinyurl.com/22kpgsl>

The UCC documentary, *Troubled Waters*, <http://www.ucc.org/troubled-waters>, gives a good overview of the issues regarding clean drinking water.

### Reflect

With journal in hand, write down which activity you feel brought you closer to the holiness of the Sabbath. Which activity did you find least useful, and what caused you to have that feeling? Which was most fun, drawing you closer to God and/or to others? Which would you like to do again? Write your thoughts in your journal.