



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 Age Group

Young children have a natural ability to enjoy special days and times. In the Genesis passage, God models resting on the seventh day as time set apart. Sabbath provides an opportunity for young children to explore the activities, patterns, and rhythms of their lives. Young children are growing in their experience with numbers, counting, and understanding of time. Sabbath provides the opportunity to explore the seventh day as special. As the children explore the text from Luke, they may connect to times when they have been anxious about friendships, fitting in at school, or participating in a new experience. Jesus' message to let go of worry may provide comfort for young children.

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

Think about each child in your group. This may be your first opportunity to lead this or any group; maybe you've worked with this group before and know them well. Remember that each child is unique, special, and loved by God. Say a simple thank-you to God for the gift of each child.

As you prepare to lead a group of children ages three to seven, keep in mind that this may be the first group learning experience for some of the younger children. A predictable routine of activities will help them feel more comfortable in the group. Because a consistent pattern provides structure for young children, a simple welcome time and closing are provided as an option for leaders. It may be helpful to develop some simple covenant or agreement about how the children will behave toward one another when they are together as a group.

Welcome Time: Invite the group to gather in a circle. In the center of the circle, place an item from Creation such as a flower, stone or bowl of water. Mention to the children that the item in the center of the circle is a gift from God's world and reminds us that God is close. Welcome the children and invite them to say their names.

Have the group walk toward the center of the circle, take a deep breath, exhale, and lift both arms high. Invite the

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 What Time Is It? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read and review the game instructions in the activity description. The younger children in this age group may need help with ideas to complete the phrase.

Supplies:

- an open area

Sabbath time provides an opportunity to rest from usual activities. Invite the children to form a line in an open area. Have the children take turns being the leader. The leader moves to the end of the space to respond to the question "What time is it?" The group asks the leader, "What time is it?" The leader replies by completing the phrase "It's time to . . .," and the group demonstrates that action. Examples include "clap," "sing," "move"; intersperse the actions with "rest." When the leader has named five actions, change leaders. Continue playing the game until all the children have a turn as leader.

Following the game, invite the children to tell about some of the daily activities of their week and some of the times and places they rest. Once the children have shared their ideas, invite the children to sit quietly, take a deep breath, and then exhale. Invite the children to say together, "Thank you, God, for rest. Amen."

2 Unwrapping the Gift

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Glue pictures listed in "Supplies" to individual 3" x 5" cards. Create a multilayered gift to be unwrapped by the group. In a box, place one card with the word "rest." Wrap the box with wrapping paper. On top of the wrapping paper, place the next card with the picture of people. Add a layer of wrapping paper. Place the next card with the picture of animals. Add a layer of wrapping paper. Place the card with the picture of fish and birds. Add a layer of wrapping paper. Place the card with the picture of plants. Add a layer of wrapping paper. Place the card with the picture of water and earth. Add a layer of wrapping paper. Place the card with the picture of light. Complete the gift with wrapping paper to cover the top card. Young children will enjoy the element of surprise in discovering each new gift.

Supplies:

- box
- wrapping paper
- 3" x 5" cards
- glue
- tape
- magazine pictures or clip art of light, water and earth, plants, fish and birds, animals, people, and the word "rest"

God has given people the gift of Sabbath, and young children enjoy unwrapping gifts. As the gift is unwrapped layer by layer, the group will discover God's gifts in creation and rest. Practice the words, "This is good." Invite a child to unwrap the first layer of the gift. As each layer of the gift is unwrapped, invite the group to identify the picture, and then respond to the gift with the words, "This is good." When "rest" is unwrapped, read the word to the group and encourage them to respond, "This is good."

group to echo the phrase “This is a day made by God.”

Have the group move back into place, take a deep breath, exhale, and lower both arms. Invite the group to echo the phrase, “Thank you God for this day.”

Closing: Mention to the children that for many years people in faith families have shared both words and signs to remind one another of the gift of God’s peace. Invite the children to practice the words “Peace be with you” and the reply “And with you.” Next, encourage the children to make a peace sign with their fingers. Invite the children to turn to a partner and share the words and sign of peace.

Read Genesis 1:1-2:4 as a reminder of the pattern of God’s work of creation and the blessing of rest given on the seventh day.

As you prepare to lead these activities focused on Keeping Sabbath, take time to think about the usual activities of your week and the ways you experience Sabbath rest.

Prayer: Loving God, I am grateful for the blessing of time with young children. As we explore together and grow in our understanding of rest through the Sabbath, may we also be reminded of your amazing love for all creation. 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

Once the gift has been unwrapped, invite the children to share in a short echo prayer thanking God for the gift of rest. Loving God (echo), thank you (echo) for the gift of rest (echo). Amen (echo).



3 “Midday Rest”

Leader preparation: Gather art supplies and the poster “Midday Rest.” Spend time looking at the poster and imagining the pattern of work and rest portrayed in the picture. For some children the setting of the picture may be familiar; for others it may be new. Children have wonderful imaginations and enjoy the creative process as much as the result of their work.

Supplies:

- poster “Midday Rest,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters9>, (after Millet), c.1890 by Vincent van Gogh
- a variety of art supplies including paper, pencils, crayons, markers, water colors, tissue paper, glue

In the creation story, God rests on the seventh day. Invite the children to look at the poster “Midday Rest” and tell you what they see. Encourage the children to imagine what the people were doing before they rested. What might the people do after they rest? How might the people feel after their rest? What colors in the picture are restful? The poster shows people and animals resting in God’s creation. Encourage the children to talk about where and when they have rested in God’s creation.

Invite the children to use the art supplies provided to create an art image of people and animals resting in God’s creation. Once the children have completed their artwork, encourage them to share their creation with the whole group.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 God Works and God Rests (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Gather art supplies and review the “Creation Story.” The artistic abilities in your group may vary. As the simple creation story is told, the children will have the opportunity to share in God’s creation as they create according to their ability. Consider that young children are growing in their abilities to share. When inviting the children to share drawing space on the large paper, it may be helpful to designate an area for each child with his or her name.

Supplies:

- Bible
- “Creation Story,” Attachment: Activity 4
- two large pieces of paper approximately 3’ x 5’
- crayons or markers

Sabbath time and rest from work are modeled by God through the story of Creation. Show the children where the story of Creation is found in the Bible. As you tell the simple “Creation Story,” invite the children to draw the Creation story on the large piece of paper. Pause after each part of the story to give the children time to draw. When you reach the conclusion of the story, ask the children to set down their markers or crayons. Invite the children to find a comfortable place

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.

on the floor and use the creation drawing as a “blanket” for a brief time of rest of 30–45 seconds. Take turns with the “blanket” until all have had a time of rest. Using the second piece of mural paper, invite the children to draw pictures or write words on the mural that show their work and the times, places, and ways they rest.

5 Finger Labyrinths

Leader preparation: Download and make copies of a finger labyrinth pattern available at <http://www.tinyurl.com/dd4yuv>. Some faith communities may have an on-site, canvas, or sand-tray labyrinth as an alternative. For additional information on labyrinths, see books from Pilgrim Press,

<http://www.ucc.org/ucc-resources>,

Christian Prayer and Labyrinths, *Praying the Labyrinth*, and *Living the Labyrinth*, or see Wikipedia. Consider that tracing the pattern of the labyrinth will support the development of fine motor skills in young children.

Supplies:

- copies of a finger labyrinth

Young children are often busy with school, homework, sports, music, and other activities during the week. Time to “just be” and talk to God is a gift to all ages. Pass out the copies of the finger labyrinths, and share basic information about labyrinths as a way to be quiet, to talk to God, and to listen to God. Give the following suggestions: As they trace the path to the center, think about the different kinds of activities of the week. In the center of the labyrinth, thank God for those activities. Ask God to continue to be with you as you discover new ways to rest on the Sabbath. Follow the path out into new ways of keeping Sabbath. Remind the children to take their time and to move their finger slowly through the labyrinth. Invite the children to find a quiet place to trace their finger labyrinth. Invite the children back to the group, and provide an opportunity to share. Encourage the children to take home the finger labyrinth to share with their family.

6 Decorated Pillowcases

Leader preparation: Shop at a local thrift store for pillowcases. Reflect on the types of activities you choose as part of your Sabbath experience. The word and even the experience of Sabbath may be new to young children. Sabbath might be described to young children as a special time to rest, be close to God, be with family, and care for others. You may find it helpful to have a few ideas of Sabbath activities in which children might engage to suggest to the group. In current culture, children are often busy with a variety of activities. Celebrate the everyday activities named by the group and encourage the children to honor opportunities for rest.

Supplies:

- fabric pillowcases
- fabric markers

Rest and naps are familiar to some young children, although others may have grown beyond the need for rest during the day. Sabbath time offers the opportunity to rest from the usual patterns of school, sports, and homework. Encourage the group to name the types of activities in which they engage on weekdays. Next, invite the children to name the types of activities in which they engage on Saturdays and on Sundays. Finally, invite the children to name the types of activities in which they engage as “Sabbath time.”

Encourage the children to decorate their pillowcase in ways that will help them remember God's gift of Sabbath rest. They might include pictures of activities or words that remind them how to practice Sabbath rest.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Sabbath Gift Cards (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Gather supplies and think of some examples of the kinds of Sabbath gifts children might offer to others. Younger children in your group will likely draw a picture of the gift, while older children in this age group may be able to write simple words or sentences describing the gift.

Supplies:

- construction paper or 3" x 5" cards
- markers or crayons

In current culture, Sabbath time is a gift. Gift cards have become a popular item to give to others. Invite the children to share the types of gifts they have received for birthday or holiday celebrations. Ask the children if they have received a gift card. Sabbath time is a gift from God to all people and a gift we share with one another. God rested on the seventh day and invites all creation to join that rest. Invite the children to name the kinds of Sabbath activities they enjoy doing with their families. Once the group has created a list, encourage the children to create one or more gift cards to take home to their family as a Sabbath gift. The gift cards may be a picture, words, or sentences indicating the Sabbath activity.

8 Peace Like a River

Leader preparation: Gather supplies and practice the song if it is unfamiliar. Some children are natural singers; others are musically challenged. God loves all kinds of noise!

Supplies:

- Bible
- words and music for "I've Got Peace Like a River"
(tune: PEACE LIKE A RIVER), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9>
- whiteboard or newsprint and marker
- a small stone for each child

Jesus shares comforting words with his followers about setting aside worries and focusing on what really matters. Show the children Luke 12 in the Bible. Invite the children to listen to the words of the first stanza (peace like a river) of "I've Got Peace Like a River." Then sing that stanza together. Invite the children to call out popcorn fashion how peace feels to them. Use the marker to record their ideas on the newsprint or whiteboard. Share with the children the words of the fourth stanza (faith like an anchor), and then sing that stanza together. Encourage the children to name something that worries or concerns them. Give each child a small stone. The stone is a visual reminder of things that are of concern. Invite the children to form a circle, bring their stone to the center of the circle one at a time, and leave the worry with God as the group sings the song. If you wish to use movements with "I've Got Peace Like a River," consider these:

Peace: Make a peace sign with your hand

River: Wave motion with hands

Joy: Trace a smile on your face

Fountain: Two hands together in front of body, push upward and outward
(tracing water in the fountain)

Love: Cross hands across chest

Ocean: Gesture broadly, indicating something large

9 Sabbath Seeds

Leader preparation: Gather supplies and prepare an area in which you can be a bit messy! Consider that providing care for part of God's creation is also growing good stewards!

Supplies:

- Bible
- small planting pots
- potting soil with a scoop or spoon
- flower seeds
- water
- 3" x 5" cards with the words "Consider the lilies"
- table cover or outdoor space

Flowers grow without worry or care. Sabbath time opens us to new ways of living. Read Luke 12:22, 27 to the children. Mention to the children that seeds are filled with possibility and surprise. Distribute a small pot to each child and invite the children to fill their pot with soil and then add seeds and moisten the soil with water. Invite each child to decorate the 3" x 5" card with a way of practicing or living Sabbath rest. Encourage the children to take home the Sabbath seeds, carefully tend the seeds with sunshine and water, and watch the seeds grow.

Reflect

As you think about your time with the children, picture those unique, special, or significant moments that touched your heart. How has your understanding of keeping Sabbath been informed by the gifts of these children? How are you and the children growing in your practicing of Sabbath?

Attachment: Activity 4

Creation Story

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. On the first day of God's work, God created Day and Night.

(Pause and invite the children to draw)

On the second day of God's work, God created the sky.

(Pause and invite the children to draw)

Next, God created dry land and called it the Earth. God gathered the water together and called it the Seas.

(Pause and invite the children to draw)

Then God created plants of all kinds. There were plants with fruit, plants with seeds and plants with leaves. This was the third day of God's work.

(Pause and invite the children to draw)

On the fourth day of God's work, God created the sun, moon and stars.

(Pause and invite the children to draw)

Then, God created birds to fly in the sky and creatures to swim in the seas. That was the fifth day of God's work.

(Pause and invite the children to draw)

Next, God created animals that hopped, animals that slithered and animals that walked on hooves and paws.

(Pause and invite the children to draw)

Then God said "Let's make people." So God created people and blessed them. That was the sixth day of God's work.

(Pause and invite the children to draw)

On the seventh day, God looked around at all the work of creation. It was good! God blessed the seventh day and called it holy. And so, God rested.

(Use the finished creation mural as a "blanket," and invite the children to take turns resting)

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

While many adults understand that there are times when “rules are made to be broken,” young children are still developing an understanding of how to follow basic rules. They are growing in their ability to abide by family rules, learning appropriate behaviors for social groups, and as they participate in formal education, they become acquainted with boundaries for that setting also. In the passage from Mark, Jesus and the Pharisees disagree about rules regarding the Sabbath. Young children have a natural ability to perceive a need and act instinctively to help. They may easily connect with Jesus’ concern for those who are hungry and in need of healing.

The question “How much longer?” is often heard from young children. As they grow in their understanding of time and the patterns of their lives, they will be able better to distinguish between time set aside for various activities such as school, play, homework, sports practice, meals, and time for rest. Exodus 20 is a reminder both about rules for living and the importance of time for rest.

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

Take time to consider the rules that order your life choices. What rules do you follow completely? What rules do you follow sometimes? What rules need to be adapted? Now, think about how you find time for Sabbath rest. What kinds of activities do you value for Sabbath time? What kinds of activities do you avoid in order to keep Sabbath? How does helping others connect with your experience of Sabbath?

Read and review Mark 2:23–3:6 and Exodus 20:1–17. Consider how the two texts inform your understanding of Sabbath-keeping.

As you prepare to lead young children, keep in mind that their abilities to work in group settings are still developing. As you explore rules, choices, and decision-making with these children, help them with choices that will not hurt others and will promote their growing social skills.

Welcome Time: Invite the group to gather in a circle. In the center of the circle, place an item from Creation such as a flower, stone or bowl of water. Mention to the children that the item in the center of the circle is a gift from God’s world and reminds us that God is close. Welcome the children and invite them to say their names.

Have the group walk toward the center of the circle, take a deep breath, exhale, and lift both arms high. Invite the group to echo the phrase “This is a day made by God.”

Have the group move back into place, take a deep breath, exhale, and lower

Exploring & Engaging Activities

 **1 Changing Rules (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Review the usual rules of the game of tag. Locate cooperative versions of tag on a site such as <http://www.tinyurl.com/y5rn5yh>. Young children are active and energetic. Choose versions of tag that will allow all children in the group to participate.

Supplies:

- open area
- Bible

Exodus 20:8 gives a basic commandment about Sabbath keeping. Jesus and the Pharisees disagree about how to live that rule. Sit in a circle and invite the children to name some of their family rules or rules at school. Invite the children to play a game of traditional tag, using rules that include one child as “it” who tags another child who becomes the “new it.” After some time, explain that the game is going to change. Play a game of cooperative tag, using rules such as beginning with one child as “it”; as additional children are tagged, they become a part of a “group it.”

Invite the children to return to the circle and share briefly about playing tag with different rules. What did they like about each game? How did the game change? Open the Bible to Exodus 20 and read verse 8.

2 “This Is the Day”

Leader preparation: Find a copy of the echo song “This Is the Day” (tune: This Is the Day) and review the words and music if they are unfamiliar. Hear the tune at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2ugz3tq>. Note that the first half of each phrase may be sung and then echoed by the group. Consider that children ages three through five learn music effectively when songs include repetition and echoing. Children ages six and seven will be challenged by adding actions, instruments, and rhythm patterns. Consider extending the activity by creating simple rhythm instruments such as those found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/29prpme>.

Supplies:

- words and music to “This Is the Day”
- rhythm instruments

Each day is a day that God has made; each day offers the opportunity to celebrate Sabbath! Invite the children to listen to the words and music of the song. Encourage the children to echo each phrase. Once the group is comfortable with the words and tune, invite the children to add clapping and/or musical instruments. Recall with the children that God blesses the seventh day and wants us to rest from daily work. Invite the children to sing the song using the words, “This is the day that we rest from work.” Encourage the children to complete the phrase, “This is the day . . .” with ways to celebrate Sabbath. Sing the song with those words as well. Invite the children to sing “This Is the Day” another time with instruments and/or clapping.

both arms. Invite the group to echo the phrase, “Thank you God for this day.”

Closing: Mention to the children that for many years people in faith families have shared both words and signs to remind one another of the gift of God’s peace. Invite the children to practice the words “Peace be with you” and the reply “And with you.” Next, encourage the children to make a peace sign with their fingers. Invite the children to turn to a partner and share the words and sign of peace.

Prayer: *God of many blessings, you call me to live faithfully. May the time I spend with these children reflect my love of God and care and concern for all of God’s children. 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 Jesus and the Pharisees

Leader preparation: Read and review Mark 2:23–3:6 and create a basic outline of the story for the children to dramatize. Young children have active imaginations and enjoy acting out stories.

Supplies:

- Bible
- scarves or pieces of fabric
- potted plants
- glove to create a hand in need of healing
- towel or sheet

Jesus’ understanding of Sabbath law was different from that of the Pharisees. Show the children where this story is found in the Bible. Using the simple story outline you created, tell the children about the two scenes from Mark. Invite the children to act out these scenes. Roles include Jesus, followers of Jesus, Pharisees, and a person with a hand in need of healing. Invite the children to use the fabric or scarves to create a costume. Encourage the children to “set the stage” by using potted plants as a field and using the towel or sheet for the scene with the person needing healing. Narrate the story, and encourage the children to demonstrate the actions of the person or group. It may be that the children will be interested in acting out the story several times, offering the opportunity to act out a variety of roles in the story. When the group grows tired of retelling the story, invite the children to gather in a circle. Some questions to consider: Why might the Pharisees have questioned Jesus? What did Jesus think was important on the Sabbath?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Rest Is a Blessing (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Write the words of Exodus 20:8 on construction paper for each child. Young children are growing in their understanding of God through relationships with others. Respect for each child builds self-esteem.

Supplies:

- one piece of construction paper for each child
- markers or crayons, pencils

Sabbath time is both a commandment given by God and a blessing. Invite the children to name some activities that have been part of their daily routines, including preschool, school, play groups, sports or music or dance, and time with family. Recall that God shows all people a pattern for their week that includes work activities and rest activities. Encourage the children to close their eyes and imagine turning off the television, telephone, and computer. Picture your family and an activity you would do together to honor God’s gift of rest time. Pass out the prepared construction paper and read the words of Exodus 20:8 to the group. Encourage the children to draw the activity they would choose to keep Sabbath rest.



5 Caring for Others

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Review information about Church World Service. Your congregation may already be familiar with or have participated in a CROP Walk. Church World Service kits provide another way of supporting those in need. Young children are growing in their self-understanding and awareness of the needs of others.

Supplies:

- download information from Church World Service at <http://www.churchworldservice.org>
- “Heart to Heart” DVD
- copies of “Caring for others” to send home, Attachment: Activity 5

Jesus showed concern for the needs of others as part of his Sabbath experience. Before showing the DVD, ask the group if they have heard of Church World Service. Encourage children to share what they know. Add to the information shared by the group information from the website. Show the group the “Heart to Heart” DVD, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2bmv7lu>. Invite the children to tell you how they saw people caring for others on the DVD. Note that Church World Service provides a way for people to care for others. Review and choose a project for the group. Send home copies of “Caring for others.”



6 “Going to Church”

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Consider that young children learn by imitation and learn what is valued from the significant adults in their lives.

Supplies:

- poster “Going to Church,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters8>, by William H. Johnson
- large piece of paper with a picture of your church
- markers, crayons

Sabbath includes opportunities to experience the Holy. Invite the children to look at the poster and share their ideas about what they see. Encourage the children to look closely at the people, at the way they are traveling, at the buildings in the background. Where are the people coming from? Where are the people going?

Tell the children that the name of the poster is “Going to Church.” Invite them to tell you how they travel to church. Recall with the children that church is one of the places people feel close to God and celebrate Sabbath. Invite the children to name the places they feel close to God.

Make the art supplies available to the entire group, and encourage them to create a picture showing them “going to church.” Display the completed picture where the church community will be able to view it.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Hands (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the many ways hands are used on a daily basis. Review the text from Mark 2:23–3:6. For young children, hands can be a window to the world as they pick up and explore.

Supplies:

- hands — that’s it!

Jesus heals one person with a withered hand and shows the Pharisees a different understanding of Sabbath. Invite the children to show you a variety of ways of using hands, including: hands reaching high, praying hands, high-five hands, hands over eyes, clapping hands, hands patting another’s back, hands reaching out to help another, hands over the heart, hands combing hair or buttoning buttons or tying shoes. Invite the children to make additional suggestions. Next, ask the children to place one hand behind their back. Repeat the list of actions with just one hand available. After each action, invite the children to identify if the action changed when only one hand was available. Some activities are easily done with one hand, while other activities are more easily done with two hands. Recall with the children that Jesus cared for a person with an injured hand on the Sabbath. How might the person feel when they were able to use both hands again?

Invite the children to look at both hands and echo: “My hands are a blessing.” Invite the children to reach out with both hands and echo: “My hands reach out to help.” Finally, invite the children to cross their hands over their chest and echo: “My hands show love.”



8 Bread to Share

Leader preparation: Gather supplies and review Mark 2:23–3:6. Prior to the group’s arrival, set out the dry ingredients with measuring implements. If you are meeting in an area without access to water, provide a way to wash hands and model appropriate hygiene before handling food. Other precautionary measures, such as hand sanitizers and/or gloves, may be used. Remind the children to use the utensils provided for each ingredient. Make copies of the Quick Bread Recipe, Attachment: Activity 8.

Action story “Hungry on the Sabbath”

On the holy day, Sabbath, Jesus and his friends were walking through a field filled with grain. (Invite the children to show you “walking.”)

Jesus and his friends were hungry. (Invite the children to show you “hungry.”)

Jesus’ friends were so hungry they picked the grain from the plants. (Invite the children to show you “picking.”)

The Pharisees asked “Why?” (Invite the children to show you “Why?”)

Jesus reminded the Pharisees that the Sabbath is for people. (Invite the children to give themselves a “hug.”)

Supplies:

- whole grain
- wax paper
- rolling pin(s)
- plastic bags with a zip lock
- a bowl for each ingredient: all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, baking powder, salt
- measuring cups and spoons
- basin with water, soap, and towel
- table or counter space
- action story “Hungry on the Sabbath”
- copies of the bread recipe

Jesus responds to the needs of hungry people on the Sabbath. Tell the action story “Hungry on the Sabbath.” Invite the children to prepare for the activity by washing their hands. Show the group the whole grain; explain that grain must be crushed to make flour for bread. Place some grain between two pieces of wax paper and invite the children to take turns “grinding” the grain with the rolling pin.

Explain to the group that the supplies provided are the dry ingredients to make bread. Each ingredient will go into the plastic bag. The recipe includes other ingredients that they may add at home with their families. Invite the children to take a plastic bag, measure each ingredient, and place it in the bag. Give each child a copy of the recipe. Suggest that the bread might be shared with friends or neighbors.

9 Hand Collage

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Look carefully at your unique hands! Hands come in lots of shapes and sizes and abilities. Celebrate the gift of hands! Younger children may be challenged by tracing or cutting, and may need help.

Supplies:

- paper in a variety of colors
- scissors
- pencils
- poster board

Hands are a blessing on the Sabbath as they reach out to pluck grain and reach out to heal a withered hand. Invite the children to look first at the top of their hands and tell you what they see. Next, invite the children to look at the palms of their hands and tell you what they see. As the children are comfortable, encourage them to look at another child’s hand. How is it similar to or different from their hand? Invite the children to choose a color of paper and with the help of a friend to trace both hands. As children are able, cut out the hand outline and glue on the poster board. Children may want to identify their set of hands by adding their name. Display the completed collage, and thank God for hands!

Reflect

In what ways did the scripture and the activities you chose lead you and your group to new discoveries of Sabbath? Are there different choices you and the children may make in your daily activities and your Sabbath-keeping because of your time together?

Attachment: Activity 5

Caring for others

Our group will be supporting the work of Church World Service by:

Please help your child “care for others” by bringing the following item:

Thank you!

Caring for others

Our group will be supporting the work of Church World Service by:

Please help your child “care for others” by bringing the following item:

Thank you!

Attachment: Activity 8

Quick Bread Recipe

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar

2 tbsps soft shortening

1 egg

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk

1 cup whole-wheat flour

2 cups all-purpose flour

3 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease or spray with non-stick spray a 9" x5" x3" loaf pan. Mix sugar, shortening and egg thoroughly. Stir in milk. Blend dry ingredients; stir into the liquid ingredients. Pour into pan. Bake 60 to 70 minutes.

Quick Bread Recipe

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Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Modeling Sabbath-keeping is a significant role for the adult caregivers of young children. For children ages three to seven, the understanding of God as loving is closely connected to love experienced with the adults in their circle of care. As the text from Deuteronomy suggests, it is critical for a love of God to be practiced in the home setting and shared between generations. Luke's telling of Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees on the Sabbath is a reminder that rules can be changed and adapted to meet the needs of humanity. Young children recognize that rules such as "time for bed" may be adapted on occasion.

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

Reflect on the settings in which you participated as a young child and how the values of the significant adults in your life were shared. Perhaps you remember reading bedtime stories with a grandparent. It may be that Sunday dinner was a significant time. Sometimes a particular teacher cultivates a previously hidden talent. As you prepare to lead this group of young children, consider ways you will hold God's love in your heart and the ways God's love will be shown through you.

Review Deuteronomy 6:5 and imagine God's love embracing each and every child in your group.

Remember that young children are loving and learn best what it means to show God's love by imitating others. Consider the variety of home settings represented in your group. There may be children in your group who are brought to church by a friend or grandparent and for whom the faith community will be completely new. Do your best to model a welcoming, safe, and caring environment for all children.

Welcome Time: Invite the group to gather in a circle. In the center of the circle, place an item from Creation such as a flower, stone or bowl of water. Mention to the children that the item in the center of the circle is a gift from God's world and reminds us that God is close. Welcome the children and invite them to say their names.

Have the group walk toward the center of the circle, take a deep breath, exhale, and lift both arms high. Invite the group to echo the phrase, "This is a day made by God."

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Love, Love, Love . . . God (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review the children's game Duck, Duck, Goose on a site such as <http://www.gameskidsplay.net> and note that "love" and "God" will be substituted for "duck" and "goose." Young children have immense amounts of energy and will likely want to play the game over and over and over! If the children become over-excited, take a break and encourage the children to slowly take a deep breath, and then exhale, until the group becomes calmer.

Supplies:

- open space

God's people are called to love God and to pass on that love of God to each generation. Invite the children to sit in a circle. Explain that the game is played using the words "love" and "God." Demonstrate by taking the role of "It" in the first round of play. Encourage the children to make sure that everyone has a turn being "It" and being "chosen." You may need to caution about a loving tap rather than a harder hit as "It" moves around the circle. Once all have had an opportunity to participate, show the children a nonverbal sign for love such as arms crossed over the chest and invite the children to echo the words "Thank you, God, for love."

2. "We Want to Learn"

Leader preparation: Practice the song "We Want to Learn to Live in Love" until you are comfortable. Consider how love is learned and practiced! Preparation is key to successful "music making" with children. Practice the song phrase by phrase, so that children will be able to echo words and music.

Supplies:

- words and music to "We Want to Learn to Live in Love" by Dosia Carlson, Attachment: Activity 2
- white board or newsprint and markers

The words of Deuteronomy 6:5 call all people to love God completely and Jesus' actions on the Sabbath remind us to extend that love to others. Invite the children to listen to the words and tune of the first stanza of "We Want to Learn to Live in Love." Sing the song to the children phrase by phrase and encourage them to echo each phrase. Invite the children to think about the words of the first phrase of the song, "We want to learn to live in love," and call out in popcorn fashion ways of showing love to family, friends, schoolmates, and playmates. List the ideas on the white board or newsprint. Sing the song, and after the words "what God would have us do," call out one of the loving actions suggested and encourage the children to show with their bodies that action. Close by singing the song.

Have the group to move back into place, take a deep breath, exhale, and lower both arms. Invite the group to echo the phrase “Thank you God for this day.”

Closing: Mention to the children that for many years people in faith families have shared both words and signs to remind one another of the gift of God’s peace. Invite the children to practice the words, “Peace be with you” and the reply, “And with you.” Next, encourage the children to make a peace sign with their fingers. Invite the children to turn to a partner and share the words and sign of peace

Prayer: *O God, you call your people to love you completely. Open my heart, mind, and soul to your love. May your love surround this group of children. 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 Love God

Leader preparation: Cut out a large red heart for each child. For ease of copying and a larger type font, you may wish to download and print Deuteronomy 6:5 from <http://bible.oremus.org> or <http://www.biblegateway.com> and practice the phrase so that you can repeat it easily with the group. If you choose a version other than NRSV, you may need to adapt the words listed below. Young children are good at learning and memorizing information of all sorts. Memorization offers the opportunity to carry important words and ideas throughout their lives.

Supplies:

- Bible
- red construction paper hearts
- scissors
- markers or crayons
- large piece of paper with the words “Love God” at the top
- glue

The words from Deuteronomy 6:5 are a reminder to love God with all of our being. Invite the children to sit in a circle. Have the group listen carefully for three ways of loving God, and then recite Deuteronomy 6:5. Show the children where this verse is found in the Bible. As you speak the words “heart,” “soul,” and “might” (NRSV), hold up a single finger, two fingers, and three fingers as a visual cue. Invite the children to tell you the three ways of loving God. Once the three ways of loving God have been identified, read Deuteronomy 6:5 again and encourage the children to speak the words “heart,” “soul,” and “might” along with a single finger, two fingers, and three fingers. Give everyone a large red heart and invite them to draw a picture of themselves on the heart. As individual hearts are completed, assist the children in gluing their heart to the large paper. Recite Deuteronomy 6:5 to celebrate the group’s love of God.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Act It Out! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Create a list of activities in which young children and caregivers might participate as part of their Sabbath, including “taking a walk,” “playing a game,” “visiting someone who is sick,” and “going to church.” As you prepare for this activity, which includes the opportunity to pantomime, remember that for some children this may be their first experience acting with a group. It’s more important to enjoy the process than to expect perfection. Help the children to respond respectfully to the efforts of others in the group.

Supplies:

- list of activities

Keeping Sabbath is a practice that is modeled from generation to generation. Invite the children to count to five. Then ask them to name who helped them learn to count. Next encourage the children to clap their hands. Invite the children to tell you how they learned to clap their hands. Finally, ask the children to raise their hands if they know how to brush their teeth. Ask the children to name how they learned that skill. Mention to the children that we learn many things by watching, listening, and following the actions of others, including what we do on the Sabbath.

Invite the children silently to act out the Sabbath activities you created. Encourage the children who are the “audience” to guess the activity. Invite the children to give everyone a round of applause!

5 Rules, Rules, Rules

Leader preparation: Review Luke 6:1-11 so that you can tell the story in your own words. Brainstorm and write down a list of rules that are likely to be familiar to young children in a variety of settings, such as home: brush your teeth before bed, wash hands before eating, make your bed; school: raise your hand before talking, walk indoors, turn in homework; playground: take turns; no fighting. As you consider the role of rules and young children, be aware that many rules keep children safe and provide appropriate boundaries within groups.

Supplies:

- Bible
- list of rules

Jesus demonstrated an inclusive understanding of the rules of Sabbath. Read your list of rules. For each rule, invite the children to stand up if they follow it. Once the list of rules you created has been read, have the children share additional rules. Encourage the children to think about and share rules that might change, depending on the situation; for example: bedtime might change for holidays or weekends.

Show the children Luke 6:1-11 in the Bible. Tell the story. Mention that Jesus had a different understanding of Sabbath rules than the religious leaders, which included helping those who were hungry or in need of healing. Encourage the children to name a rule they would suggest for Sabbath.

6 The Dance of Youth

Leader preparation: Gather supplies and spend time reflecting on the poster “The Dance of Youth” Young children use their bodies to express feelings of all types. Movement allows children to expend energy and channel feelings.

Supplies:

- poster “The Dance of Youth,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>, by Pablo Picasso,
- music such as “This Is the Day,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/2ugz3tq>, “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/ytnale>, or “Morning Has Broken,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/25dXPw>

The Sabbath experience encourages us to love God with the whole of our being. Invite the children to look at the poster “The Dance of Youth.” Ask them to respond to the following questions: What might the figures be doing? If the figures could talk, what might they say? How do you feel when you look at the figures? Invite the children to choose a figure and mimic the figure’s position. Ask the children to notice how the figures are touching one another. Invite the children to create a circle and hold hands high.

Play the music you have chosen and encourage the children to move to the music as if they were the figures in the poster. After a brief interval, invite the children to move separately to the music and show God their love. After another brief interval, encourage the children to move to the music as you repeat the words “Love God with your heart, soul, and might” (NRSV). Stop the music and encourage the children to echo the words: “Love God with your heart, soul, and might.”

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Praying Hands (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Reflect on the times you seek God through prayer. In what ways is prayer modeled in your home setting? As children grow in their abilities to participate more fully in worship, they also grow in the sense of belonging to God's family of faith.

Supplies:

- whiteboard or newsprint and marker

Celebrating Sabbath includes time for God, family, and prayer. Invite the children to sit in a circle. Encourage the children to look at both sides of their hands. Next, invite the children to hold up both of their hands and count out loud each finger. Finally, encourage the children to fold their hands prayerfully. Ask the children to name in popcorn fashion the times they pray, either on their own or with family, friends, or others in their church community. Record their responses on the whiteboard or newsprint. Mention to the children that the group is going to create a "thank you" prayer together. Invite the children to name things for which they are thankful, including activities, objects, and people. Record their responses on the whiteboard or newsprint. Invite the children to practice a simple verbal response, "Thank you, God," along with a simple hand gesture such as both hands moving from lips out as if blowing a kiss. As you read each item on the list, give a simple hand gesture to signal the children's response. Invite the children to conclude the prayer with a group "Amen."

8 Sweet as Honey

Leader preparation: Choose a honey-based snack recipe from

<http://www.tinyurl.com/234tmez>

and gather the ingredients and supplies for that snack. In choosing the snack option, be aware of any food allergies, and avoid foods that might choke young children. If you are meeting in an area without access to water, provide supplies for hand washing and model good hygiene. Other precautionary items such as hand sanitizer and/or gloves may be used. Remind the children to handle only the food items needed for their snack.

Supplies:

- ingredients to make honey-based snack
- paper plates
- freezer-size plastic bags
- printed copies of Psalm 119:103 "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (NRSV)
- stickers
- basin with water, soap, and towel
- table or counter space
- clear tape

Sabbath time is a sweet blessing from God. Encourage the children to make a sweet snack to be shared with their family as a gift of Sabbath. Invite the children to prepare for the activity by washing their hands. Assist the group in making the snack from the chosen recipe. Encourage each child to place a portion of the snack on a paper plate and put the plate in the freezer bag. Distribute a copy of

Psalm 119:103 to each child, and provide access to a variety of stickers. Invite the children to write their names on the copy as they are able, decorate the verse with stickers, and attach the copy to the plastic bag with tape. Send the snack home with the children to enjoy with their families!



9 Share the Love Door Hangers

Leader preparation: Make copies of the blank door hangers, Attachment: Activity 9

Learn more about the mezuzah at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2cc8qg> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/22uc6ua>.

You may want to share a simple explanation of the Jewish faith with the young children, such as the belief in Yahweh and following the teachings of the Torah, including the Ten Commandments. Depending on the ages and abilities of the children in your group, you may want to precut the door hangers.

Supplies:

- a copy of the door hanger template for each child
- scissors
- two construction paper hearts, one with the word “love” and one with the word “God”
- markers, crayons, pencils

Loving God and showing love to others are central to the Sabbath experience. Explain to the children the Jewish practice of placing a mezuzah on the doorpost of the house. The mezuzah is a way of being reminded that God is close. Door hangers provide another way to remind us that God is close and God’s love is to be shared with others. Pass out the supplies for making the door hangers. Invite the children to cut out the door hanger, glue on the hearts, and decorate the hanger as a reminder of God’s love that can be placed on a door in their home. Provide an opportunity for the children to tell one another about the purpose of the door hanger and the ways they might use it to remember God and share God’s love.

Reflect

The opportunity to teach and learn from another generation is a precious gift. As you think about your time with this group of young children, remember especially the ways God’s blessing of love has been present in your midst.

Attachment: Activity 2

Dosia Carlson, 1965

CANONBURY L.M.
Arr. from Robert Schumann, 1810–1846

Simply (♩ = 100)



1. We want to learn to live in love: To follow what is
 2. When we are sad or feeling mean And fall to love or
 3. When others are unkind to us And make us want to



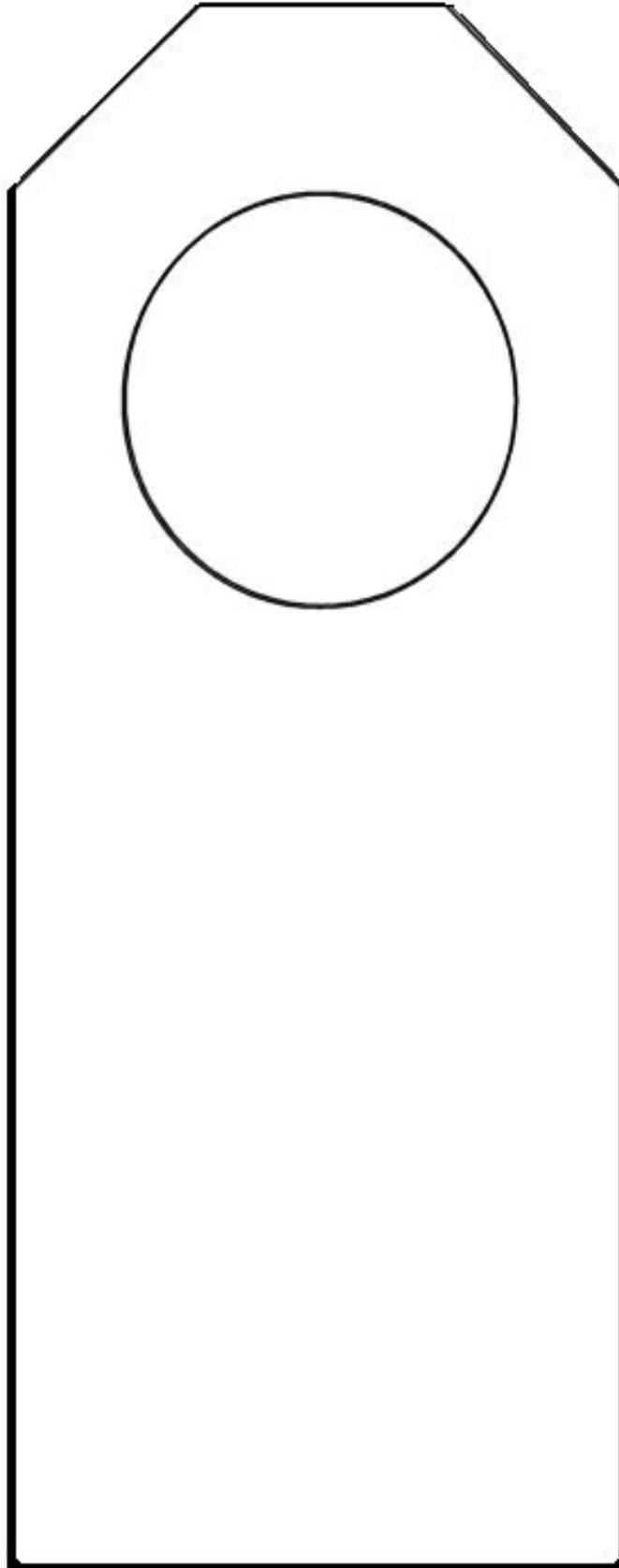
good and true. Through friends at church, at home, at play,
 to be fair. Our friends at church, at home, at play,
 cry or fight. We can reach out to be good friends,



We find what God would have us do.
 Can help us know that God does care.
 And help them know that love is right.

Words from *Sing of Life and Faith*, copyright © 1969 by the United Church Press.

Attachment: Activity 9



Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

“It’s time to take a break” are familiar words to people of many ages. Busy lives, multiple tasks, complicated schedules, and the demands of everyday life can become overwhelming. Persons of any age may experience times when it is important to rest, take a time out, or change focus. Just as Jesus and his followers retreat from the routine of their lives, opportunities to seek out rest and refreshment are important for young children. The second part of the message from the Gospel of Mark indicates that Jesus and his followers continued their work of healing and caring for others. While young children tend to be self-centered, they are growing in their recognition of and ability to respond to the needs of others in caring ways.

Jesus and his followers travel by boat to a deserted place seeking rest. The passage from Isaiah also includes the image of water in unending supply provided by God to quench human thirst. Many young children find pleasure and delight in exploring and enjoying God’s gift of water. Sabbath-keeping is a way of quenching the basic human need for rest and refreshment.

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 lives. 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

As you prepare to lead the group, take time to “go away” to a quiet place. In that quiet place, spend a few moments becoming centered. You might spend time reflecting on the poster “The Public Fountain.” Imagine the faces of the children in your group gathered around the fountain. Celebrate the opportunity to share God’s gift of rest and refreshment with these children. Use this time to refresh, recharge, and reconnect with God. As you are ready, return to the task of planning and preparation for your time with the group.

Note: The activities related to the Isaiah passage will focus on Isaiah 58:11.

Welcome Time: Invite the group to gather in a circle. In the center of the circle, place an item from Creation such as a flower, stone or bowl of water. Mention to the children that the item in the center of the circle is a gift from God’s world and reminds us that God is close. Welcome the children and invite them to say their names.

Have the group walk toward the center of the circle, take a deep breath, exhale, and lift both arms high. Invite the group to echo the phrase, “This is a day made by God.”

Have the group move back into place, take a deep breath, exhale, and lower both arms. Invite the group to echo the phrase, “Thank you God for this day”.

Closing: Mention to the children that for many years people in faith families have shared both words and signs to remind one another of the gift of God’s peace. Invite the children to practice the words, “Peace be with you” and the

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Traveling Story (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Mark 6:30-34 and 53-56. Identify a “place of rest” the group can travel to in safety. As you plan for the traveling story, you may want to invite another adult or teen to assist with group supervision. Another option is to travel within the group’s usual meeting space. When working with young children, you may choose to substitute “child-friendly” language, such as “show with your body” for “pantomime.”

“Work and Rest”

Practice a simple signal, such as a hand wave, that will indicate the children are to pantomime the spoken activity.

Jesus and his friends had been very busy. They had been teaching (signal). They had been traveling from town to town. (signal). They had been healing those who were ill (signal).

Jesus thanked his friends for their work and told his friends that Sabbath rest was important too. He asked them to go to a place away from other people so they could rest. Jesus and his friends traveled by boat.

(Invite the children to find a partner. Practice pantomiming “rowing.” Encourage the children to “row” as they travel with the partner to the “place of rest.” Lead the children to the place of rest.)

When Jesus and his friends arrived they rested. (signal)

(Invite the children to close their eyes, take a deep breath and exhale. Repeat the breath pattern several times.)

Before long, crowds of people found Jesus and his friends. Jesus cared about people and knew it was time to get back to work. It was time to “teach” (signal). It was time to travel (signal). It was time to heal those who were ill (signal).

(Invite the children to return with their partner to the group’s meeting area.)

Supplies:

- Bible
- story, “Work and Rest”

Jesus and his friends model a pattern of work, rest, and a return to the care of others in keeping Sabbath tradition. Invite the children to name some of the activities of their week. Encourage the children to think about activities they consider “work” as well as activities they consider “rest.” Recall with the children that Jesus and his friends also experienced work and rest. Show them where the story is found in the Bible. Invite the children to help tell the story, “Work and Rest.”

2 “Public Fountain”

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Review Isaiah 58:9b-14, focusing particularly on Isaiah 58:11, and recall times you have been thirsty and then refreshed by life-giving water. Think about biblical images such as the “waters of creation” and Christian liturgical use of water in baptism. Consider that for some young children water can be a source of enjoyment, while for others it may cause anxiety.

reply “And with you.” Next, encourage the children to make a peace sign with their fingers. Invite the children to turn to a partner and share the words and sign of peace

Prayer: God of good gifts, you offer rest and refreshment to body and soul. May the time we share together provide breathing space between the challenges of daily life. 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.

Supplies:

- Bible
- poster “Public Fountain,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Manuel Alvarez Bravo
- water in a bowl
- towel
- individual cup of water for each child

Isaiah reminds us that time with God satisfies a deep thirst. Invite the children to sit in a circle and place a bowl of water in the center of the circle. Show them Isaiah 58:11 in the Bible. Encourage the children to take turns dipping a hand into the bowl of water. Provide a towel as needed. Invite the children to name, in popcorn fashion, uses for water.

Show the group the poster, “The Public Fountain,” and encourage the children to tell you what they notice about the child and the fountain. Wonder with the children about why this child might be drinking from the fountain and how the child feels. What words might the child use to tell you about the water?

After the children have responded, distribute the individual cups of water to the children. Invite the children to echo the phrase, “Thank you, God, for the gift of water,” and encourage them to drink.

③ “Peace Like a River”

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the song “I’ve Got Peace Like a River” (Tune: PEACE LIKE A RIVER). See <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9> to hear the tune. Make arrangements with another group to sing the song. Sharing the song with another group provides the opportunity for young children to be leaders as well as learners. Young children will be supported in their musical endeavors when songs include actions both for physical movement and language development.

Supplies:

- words and music for “I’ve Got Peace Like a River”

Water is life-giving, life-sustaining, and a gift from God, as is the gift of song. The Sabbath tradition provides an opportunity to praise God as individuals and in community. Introduce the song to the children one stanza at a time by inviting them to echo both words and the actions listed below. Invite the children to join you in singing the entire song with the actions.

Peace: Make a peace sign with your hand

River: Wave motion with hands

Joy: Trace a smile on your face

Fountain: Two hands together in front of body, push upward and outward (tracing water in the fountain)

Love: Cross hands across chest

Ocean: Gesture broadly, indicating something large

Once the group is comfortable with the song and actions, sing and teach the song to another group.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Helping Others (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Create a list of ways young children might provide help, such as share a toy, be a friend, heal a hurt, give a hug. You'll notice that three-word phrases work well in the song! Become familiar with the children's song, "This Is the Way We Wash Our Clothes," See <http://www.tinyurl.com/345vw5c> to hear the tune. If you are not confident singing, remember that children sing naturally and are appreciative of any efforts. Your example provides confidence to others who are feeling anxious about singing.

Supplies:

- list of helping activities

Jesus and his followers were aware of and responsive to the needs of others. Christian tradition has been inclusive of acts of kindness to others as part of the Sabbath experience. Sing through the usual words and action for "This Is the Way We Wash Our Clothes." Indicate to the children you have some new words and actions for the song. Use the list of ideas you've created as the new words for the song. Invite the children to sing and show you an action for the new words. Encourage the children to suggest additional stanzas as time permits. For additional challenge, you might encourage the children to do all the actions as the final stanza!

5 We Care About Water

Leader preparation: To be informed as a leader, go online and research water facts at <http://www.water.org>.

The UCC documentary, *Troubled Waters*, <http://www.ucc.org/troubled-waters>,

gives a good overview of the issues. Consider that for many young children, a basic understanding of simple ways to conserve water will begin with turning off a faucet for washing hands or brushing teeth.

Supplies:

- magazines
- scissors
- glue
- markers
- large piece of paper with the title "We Care about Water"

Water as a reminder of God's gift of refreshment is central to Christian tradition. God's gift of water is to be conserved. Invite the children to respond by making a sound such as a hand clap or foot stomp if they have used water for the following during the last week: wash hands, brush teeth, take a bath or shower, swim, water a plant, wash dishes, wash clothes. Invite the children to share other ways they have used water during the week. Recall with the children that water is a gift from God and one that we celebrate and need to use carefully. Invite the children to suggest ways to care for water in the following situations: a dripping faucet, water left in a glass, a leaky garden hose. Remind them to turn off the water when they brush their teeth.

Encourage the children to cut or tear out pictures of water from magazines and create a collage showing their care and concern for water. The children might also add drawings to the collage. Display the collage in a place where others will be able to view it.

6 A Quiet Place

Leader preparation: Locate a copy of the book, *A Quiet Place*, by Douglas Wood (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002) through your public library or online (used copies may be available for less than \$10.) Read the book and become familiar with it so that you can read it easily to the group. Think about available areas that provide a safe environment to be used by the children as a quiet place. Consider that quiet time for young children may be just as infrequent as for many adults. The spiritual formation of young children will be supported by time to “be.” Remember to use “child-friendly” language when talking about “quiet places.” Prepare individual booklets by folding paper and adding a piece of colored construction paper as a cover. The cover may be secured with staples.

Supplies:

- the book, *A Quiet Place*, <http://www.tinyurl.com/39dh954>
- restful music and player
- three sheets of white 8½” x 11” paper folded in half to create a booklet for each child
- colored construction paper for booklet covers
- stapler
- markers
- crayons

Jesus and his followers went to a deserted place seeking Sabbath rest, and Christian tradition models time for quiet reflection. Share the book, *A Quiet Place* with the group. Invite the children to respond with questions or comments. Invite the children to name some places they use as a quiet place.

Distribute the booklets, markers, and crayons to the children. Mention to the children that they may now find their own quiet place within the area you’ve chosen. Play the restful music and encourage the children to draw pictures in their booklets of places they want to remember and use as their quiet places.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Quiet Time (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Plan to take the group to a different area that is quiet for this meditation time. Spend some time this week meditating, using the pattern below. Reflect on how you feel during and after the meditation time. The phrase “think quietly” has been used in the activity description, rather than “meditation,” as a way of helping young children become acquainted with this practice. Consider that young children have a limited capacity to sit still quietly and may become restless or giggly during the meditation. Gently remind the children to respect the quiet time of the group as needed.

“Quiet time meditation”

Breathe out. Feel your worries leaving.
 Breathe in. Feel God’s peace entering. Hold it.
 Breathe out. Let go of bad feelings.
 Breathe in God’s kindness. Hold it.
 Let your breath out slowly, letting go of busy thoughts in your mind.
 Breathe in Christ’s love. Hold it.
 Breathe out and let your love flow to others.

Supplies:

- a quiet place to sit
- copies of “Quiet time meditation,” Attachment: Activity 7
- stickers or crayons or markers

Jesus and his friends went away seeking Sabbath rest. One way we rest is to think quietly. Walk with the children to an area that is quiet and away from other groups. Invite the children to sit comfortably in a chair or on a pew or on the floor. Say to the group: We’re going to take some Sabbath time, stop our regular activities, go to a quiet place, and think quietly about God being close. Invite the children to close their eyes. Read the “Quiet time meditation.”

Close with prayer, inviting the children to echo: God, you are in this place (echo). Thank you for Sabbath time (echo), when we can stop (echo) in the middle of our busy activities (echo) and quietly think of you (echo). Amen (echo).

Return to your original space and distribute copies of the meditation. Invite the children to decorate the page with stickers or, if you have no stickers, with crayons or markers. Encourage the children to take them home to their families as a Sabbath gift.

8 Caring Kits

Leader preparation: Go online to <http://www.tinyurl.com/bdmhg5> and choose a project: school kits, baby kits, hygiene kits, or emergency clean-up bucket. Visit a local dollar or discount store and purchase supplies for the project of your choice. Review the text from Mark 6:30–34, 53–56 and create a simple outline of the story to tell the children. Reflect on the ways your church community shows care for people. Modeling care and concern for others as you work with young children will help the children understand how the members of God’s family show love to one another.

Supplies:

- Bible
- supplies for the project of your choice
- paper
- markers and crayons

Jesus and his followers show that both rest and concern for other people are part of Sabbath tradition. Show the children where the story is in the Bible. Share your story of Jesus and his followers and the kindness shown to people. Mention that caring for people in need has been a part of the work of the Christian community and church groups throughout history. Invite the children to name ways that your church shows care for people. Encourage the children to name ways they show care for others.

Tell the children about Church World Service and the chance to help others by putting together kits. Invite the children to help assemble the kits. When the kits have been assembled, encourage the children to create a simple card or drawing to be included with the kit. Invite the children to touch the kit with a hand and echo a simple blessing: “We send this kit with our love and care.” Use the information provided to send the kit, cards, and drawings to those in need.

9 Hand Washing

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Consider that celebrating Sabbath has included a gathering around meals for Jews and Christians. The ritual of hand-washing has been included in the celebrations of both of these faith communities. Consider that participating in the rituals and observances of the faith community helps young children develop a sense of belonging to that faith family.

Supplies:

- bowl
- pitcher or jug of water
- towel
- simple snack of your choosing (be aware of food allergies)
- plates and napkins

Water cools, refreshes, cleanses, and satisfies the needs of God's people. Invite the children to sit in a circle around the bowl, pitcher of water, and towel. Mention to the children that for many years people of faith have celebrated Sabbath by sharing a meal. It has been important to wash hands before sharing a meal for health and safety, and as a sign of respect for God. Invite the children to take turns placing their hands above the bowl. Using the water in the pitcher, pour water over the child's hands and into the bowl. Use the towel to dry hands and pray with the child, "Thank you, God, for these hands." Once the children have participated in the hand-washing, invite them to say a simple blessing for the food and share the simple snack you've prepared.

Reflect

In what ways did you and the children experience rest and refreshment through the chosen activities? What "thirsts" were satisfied during your time together? What new connections to Sabbath traditions did you discover?

Quiet time meditation

Breathe out. Feel your worries leaving.

Breathe in. Feel God's peace entering. Hold it.

Breathe out. Let go of bad feelings.

Breathe in God's kindness. Hold it.

Let your breath out slowly,
letting go of busy thoughts in your mind.

Breathe in Christ's love. Hold it.

Breathe out and let your love flow to others.

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

What activities and patterns of living do we choose to help keep Sabbath? That question is central to the Jeremiah passage. For many young children, decisions around the activities associated with Sabbath may be made by the caregivers in their lives and influenced by cultural pressure. Still it is important to help young children identify and make appropriate choices as they celebrate Sabbath. Living faithfully and keeping the Sabbath was also a challenge for the Corinthian community. Young children may have experienced conflict with siblings or peers, but may be unfamiliar with conflict in the church setting. The passage reminds God's people of all ages to gather around the table and participate in the sharing of food and drink as they celebrate Sabbath.

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

Busy, busy, busy. It is often a challenge to set aside the burdens of our lives and celebrate the Sabbath fully. Make a list of the challenges you experience in devoting time to keeping Sabbath. Then physically set aside the list! Open yourself to new opportunities for Sabbath-keeping.

Review the passages from Jeremiah and 1 Corinthians and be aware that faith communities as well as individuals continue to be challenged to honor the Sabbath.

As you eat a meal with family or friends this week, consider the role of shared meals in your pattern of keeping Sabbath.

Welcome Time: Invite the group to gather in a circle. In the center of the circle, place an item from Creation such as a flower, stone or bowl of water. Mention to the children that the item in the center of the circle is a gift from God's world and reminds us that God is close. Welcome the children and invite them to say their names.

Have the group walk toward the center of the circle, take a deep breath, exhale, and lift both arms high. Invite the group to echo the phrase "This is a day made by God."

Have the group move back into place, take a deep breath, exhale, and lower both arms. Invite the group to echo the phrase "Thank you God for this day".

Closing: Mention to the children that for many years people in faith families have shared both words and signs to remind one another of the gift of God's peace. Invite the children to practice

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Bread and Cup Mosaic (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Make copies of the outline of a cup and loaf of bread for each child. Reflect on meals eaten in your home, or with friends and colleagues from your work setting. How does the sharing of a meal impact your relationships? Consider that the faith formation of young children is nurtured through caring, loving relationships. Young children are growing in their enjoyment of a variety of foods.

Supplies:

- 8½" x 11" white paper with outline of bread and cup for each child, Attachment: Activity 1
- small squares (1" x 1") of a variety of colored construction paper or tissue paper
- glue

The Corinthian community is reminded of the importance of sharing bread and drink with one another on the Sabbath. Invite the children to talk about meal-times in their homes. Encourage the children to tell one another about the places where they eat breakfast or dinner. Invite the children to name the people who share meals with them. Ask them about some of their favorite foods. Encourage the children to tell about special meals for holidays or other celebrations.

Recall with the children that faith communities share a special meal together remembering God's love for all people. That simple meal is bread and juice. Show the children a copy of the bread and cup. Invite the children to glue the squares of paper into the outlines of the bread and cup. When the children complete their mosaics, invite them to display their work in an area where others will be able to view them.

2 Eating Together

Leader preparation: Review the passage from Corinthians, focusing on 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Young children are likely to have experienced a variety of meal settings, from home to fast food, parties, and restaurants. Some of the older children in this age group may have specific chores associated with meals.

Supplies:

- paper to cover the top of the table
- crayons, markers

The family of faith is encouraged to eat together and remember God's love as Sabbath is celebrated. Invite the children to gather around the table covered with the paper. Recall with the group that Jesus shared a special meal with his friends. Encourage the children to name the tasks that must take place before a group eats a meal together, such as setting the table, cooking food, pouring drinks, washing hands, saying a prayer. Invite the children to choose a task and act it out for the group. Encourage the children to use crayons or markers to decorate the table covering with pictures of meal time with family. When inviting the children to share drawing space on the large paper, it may be helpful to designate an area with each child's name.

the words “Peace be with you” and the reply “And with you.” Next, encourage the children to make a peace sign with their fingers. Invite the children to turn to a partner and share the words and sign of peace

Prayer: God of wisdom, remind me that even in the busyness of everyday life, you challenge me to lay aside my burdens and remember you. Guide the time this group is gathered together and bring us into closer relationship with 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.

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

After the table cover is decorated, encourage the children to name the tasks that take place after a group finishes a meal, such as washing dishes, taking care of leftover food, brushing teeth. Invite the children to choose a task and act it out for the group. Say a simple prayer of thanks to God for food and family.

3 Burden Bag Game

Leader preparation: Gather supplies and create gift cards. Review the passage from Jeremiah 16:19–27. Read the instructions for the game in the activity description so you can give clear instructions to the group. Note that the child chosen to begin the game will be the last child to give away a gift card. As the children participate in the relay game, watch carefully to ensure that all children have the opportunity both to carry the bag and to receive a gift card. If needed, you might partner with a child who is reluctant or anxious about the task.

Supplies:

- “burden bag” — a bag with a variety of items: sports item (ball, glove, bat), clothing item (cap, sock), cleaning item (sponge, towel), shopping item (can of food), school item (pencil, notepad)
- open space
- “Sabbath gift card” — a 3” x 5” index card for each child with the words “God’s day is special”

God’s community is encouraged to set aside the burdens of work and daily routine and consider the activities that make up Sabbath time. Show the group the “burden bag” and all the items inside the bag. Encourage the children to identify the items and how and when they might be used. Invite the children to form two lines on opposite sides of the game area. Pass out a “gift card” to each child and read the message on the card to the group. Give the following instructions for the relay game. Choose a child (child A) to carry the “burden bag” to child B in the opposite line. Child A delivers the “burden bag” to child B by setting down the bag in front of child B. Child B gives child A her/his “Sabbath gift card.” Child A sits where Child B was, waiting, indicating he/she received a gift card. Child B then picks up the “burden bag” and carries it back to a child in the other line. Continue the relay back and forth until all players have carried the burden bag and received a gift card. The last child to carry the burden bag receives a gift card from the first player who carried the bag. When all have received the gift card, invite the children to applaud one another and give thanks for God’s special day.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Sabbath Choices (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review the list of activities below and add ideas appropriate to this group of children. Review the instructions for the game so that you can clearly explain the game to the group. Prepare for the activity by placing pieces of construction paper in three areas of your meeting space. Consider that the responses of the children to the activities are not right or wrong and that the game may encourage children to think in new ways about the choices they make for Sabbath.

List of Activities

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Shopping for new clothes | Playing a board game with family |
| Taking a walk with a friend | Praying |
| Playing in a soccer tournament | Going to school |
| Walking the dog | Drawing |
| Visiting someone who is ill | Practicing for a school play |
| Singing in church | Hiking |
| Shopping for food | Eating at a fast food restaurant |
| Participating in worship | Picnicking |
| Reading a story with mom or dad | Going to the barber or hair salon |
| Doing homework | Gardening |

Supplies:

- list of activities
- three pieces of colored construction paper—one with the letter S, one with the letter E, and one with the letter B
- open space

Sabbath activities are intended to be joyful and to honor God and other people. Explain to the children that this game is about “choices” and that some children in the group may make different choices than others, and that is okay! Show the children the paper with the S for Sabbath, the E for everyday, and the B for both. Tell the children that you will name different activities. After an activity is named, each child moves close to the letter he or she thinks is appropriate for that activity: S for Sabbath, E for everyday, or B for both. After the list is completed, invite the children to name other activities for Sabbath.

5 Eat and Drink

Leader preparation: Gather supplies and review 1 Corinthians 11:17-26. Depending on the practice of the faith community, young children may or may not have participated in Eucharist or Communion. However, young children have participated in meals in many settings and are familiar with the special feelings associated with food and family. Think about food or meals that your church community provides for others, such as through a community food bank or soup kitchen. If there is not water available in the meeting area, provide a basin with water, soap, and towel for hand-washing. As you plan for the snack, be aware of food allergies and choking hazards for young children.

Supplies:

- simple snack items
- plates, cups, napkins
- table covering
- plant or vase with flowers
- streamers

The act of sharing a meal together echoes the breaking of bread and drinking of cup and guides the faith family. Recall with the children that Jesus and his friends shared a special meal together that is still celebrated and is called the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper, or communion (or use the language preferred in your setting). That meal includes bread and juice. Invite the children to help get ready to share a meal together by first washing their hands and then preparing the table. Encourage some children to cover the table, others to decorate the table with streamers and flowers/plants, and others to set the table with plates, cups, and napkins. Invite the children to the table and encourage children who are willing to say a blessing for the food. God will enjoy multiple prayers! Eat and

drink together and encourage the children to tell stories about mealtime in their homes. Some children may be able to tell stories about meals prepared for persons in need in the church or community. Once the snack time is finished, invite the group to help with cleaning up after the meal.

6 Together in Community

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Download instructions for making a paper-doll chain from <http://www.tinyurl.com/2b54kzx>. Trace and precut a chain of paper dolls for each child. Consider that young children draw and create from their own observations and experiences. Remember to respect their individuality.

Supplies:

- Bible
- precut paper-doll chains
- markers, crayons
- tape
- a piece of paper with the words “Eat and drink together,” folded like a letter and placed in an envelope

The Corinthian church is reminded that sharing the Sabbath meal of bread and drink linked the community together. Invite the children to gather in a circle holding hands. Encourage the children to look around the circle at each person in this group. Recall with the children that church groups include people of all ages, shapes, and sizes. Say to the children: “Sometimes people in churches argue or bicker. Once a church group was arguing and received a letter.” Show them 1 Corinthians 11 in the Bible. Take the letter from the envelope and show the letter to the children. Then read the letter to the group. That church group was reminded that a special meal brings them together in a special way. Encourage the children to look around the circle at each person in this group again. Distribute a paper-doll chain to each child and encourage the children to decorate their chain showing children in this group. Once the children have completed their chains, tape the chains together to form a larger chain and display with the letter.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Prayer for Busy Places (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Visit the website <http://www.tinyurl.com/232cupz> to become familiar with the information on breath prayers. Use one of the following as a breath prayer: Psalm 118:28a: “You are my God, and I will give thanks to you”; Psalm 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God.” Slowly say the first part of the prayer as you breathe in. Then slowly say the last part of the prayer as you exhale. There is no hurry or rush. Repetition is a common form of learning for young children. Breathing naturally calms the body, and energetic young children benefit from alternating lively and quiet activities.

Supplies: None

Jeremiah went to the busiest part of the city to remind God’s people to keep God’s day holy. Invite the children to gather in a circle. Teach the prayer sentence by inviting the children to echo two or three words at a time and finally put the entire phrase together. Next, use a simple hand/arm gesture to invite the children to

Jeremiah reminds God's people to keep the Sabbath holy and remember God. Begin teaching the song by showing the actions created for particular words. As you sing the song, encourage the children to listen to the words and show the action. Invite the children to echo the phrases of the song with the actions, and finally to sing the phrases together to complete the song. Ask the children: When do you feel close to God? How do you show love for God? Once the group is comfortable with the song, explain to the children the arrangements for sharing the song as a Sabbath gift to others.

Reflect

As you think about this experience with the children, what new insights or ideas for keeping Sabbath emerged? How might you and the group take the Sabbath gift into your community and world as a result of your time together?

take a breath. Reverse the gesture to encourage the children to breathe out. Invite the children to say the first part of the prayer as they breathe in, and the second part of the prayer as they breathe out. Repeat several times. Invite the children to move into another body position and practice the breath prayer. Mention to the children that this is a prayer they may use when they want to remember God is close.



8 Food Collection

Leader preparation: Gather supplies and information about the food bank in your area. If you decide to include other groups or the wider church community in the food collection, make arrangements as needed. Prepare the donation box by covering it with paper so it is ready to be decorated by the group. As you prepare for this activity, consider the children in your group and the family situations represented. There may be children whose families are struggling financially and receive assistance with food and meals.

Supplies:

- large box
- paper to cover box
- markers, crayons
- tape
- magazines
- scissors
- glue
- copies of note “Caring for others - food bank” to send home, Attachment: Activity 8

The act of sharing Sabbath meals is also a reminder to show God’s love to others. Tell the children briefly about the work of the food bank in your area. Show the children the box that will collect donations of food to help the food bank. Invite the children to decorate the box with drawings and/or pictures of food items cut from magazines. Invite the children to place a hand on the box and echo a simple blessing: “*Loving God, we show we care for others by giving gifts of food. Amen.*” Once the donation box is blessed, distribute the notes about the food drive to the children.

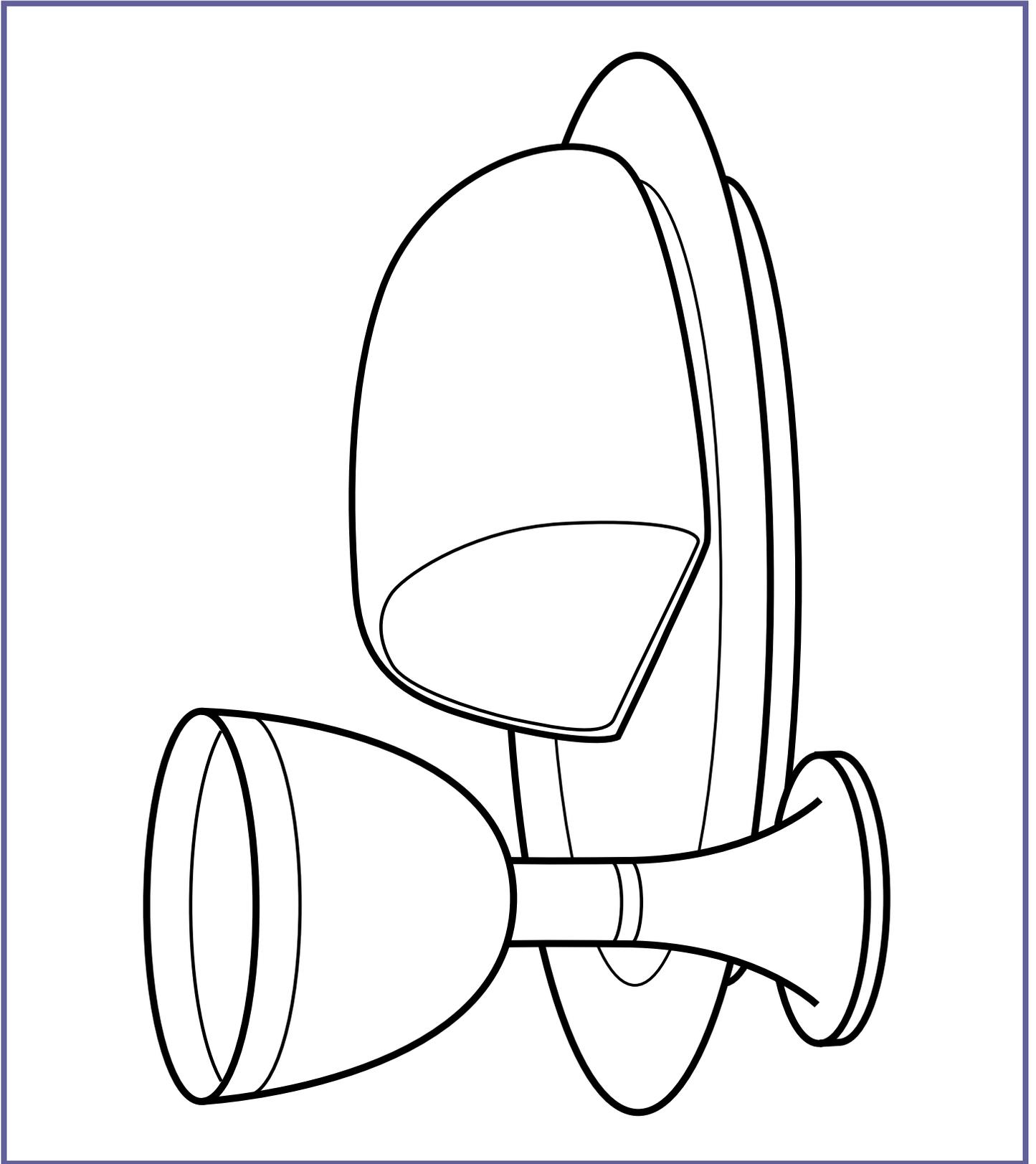
9 Celebrating God

Leader preparation: Review the words and music to “Santo, Santo, Santo” (tune: SANTO) if it is unfamiliar. Hear the melody at <http://www.tinyurl.com/3adargd>. You may decide to teach this song in English, in Spanish, or in both! Create some simple actions for words that are repeated, such as raising the arms high for “holy” and hands crossed over the chest for “heart.” Repetition and action help young children learn music more effectively. Movement is particularly helpful for children with more active learning styles. You may want to arrange to share the song with another group as a Sabbath gift, or arrange to share the song at another time as part of worship.

Supplies:

- song “Santo, Santo, Santo” (tune: SANTO)

Attachment: Activity 1



Caring for others - food bank

Dear Friend,

We are collecting non-perishable food donations for our food bank. Please help us by bringing donations to church by _____(date).

Thank you for helping us care for others!

Caring for others - food bank

Dear Friend,

We are collecting non-perishable food donations for our food bank. Please help us by bringing donations to church by _____(date).

Thank you for helping us care for others!

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

Young children frequently ask, “What’s next?” Children in this age group are developing a sense of the passage of time. As this understanding grows, they are more able to wait and begin anticipating the next event. At the same time, this age group is able to enjoy the “here and now.” The text from Matthew is a reminder of the importance of living in the now as well as living expectantly.

Young children experience challenges in a variety of settings. For children ages three to seven, life is full of firsts, which can make life uncertain and create anxiety. Both biblical texts provide reassurance to persons facing challenges and a reminder of God’s presence and support.

The contrast of dark and light, night and day, marks the passage of time for humanity. For some children in this age group, night and dark are a challenge. A fear of the dark is not uncommon for children ages three to seven, and some children may sleep with a night light to provide comfort. Light reminds humanity of God’s closeness and the opportunities of a new day. As the psalmist reminds us, God’s word lights our way and guides us as we journey into new experiences of Sabbath-keeping.

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

Leader Preparation

The image of light on a path and the promise of a new day are hopeful reminders of God’s constant presence with us. Spend time thinking about the many sources of light you experience daily. How does the presence or absence of a light source determine your activities? How do you begin and end your day? How is your practice of Sabbath renewed through light and fresh beginnings?

Review the passages from Psalm 119 and Matthew 27. Note that for young children the activities suggested for Psalm 119 will focus on verses 105 and 130.

Welcome Time: Invite the group to gather in a circle. In the center of the circle, place an item from Creation such as a flower, stone or bowl of water. Mention to the children that the item in the center of the circle is a gift from God’s world and reminds us that God is close. Welcome the children and invite them to say their names.

Have the group walk toward the center of the circle, take a deep breath, exhale, and lift both arms high. Invite the

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1. God’s Children (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Cut out an oval from construction paper for each child. Reflect on the gifts, talents, and special abilities of the children in your group. Picture in your mind the face of each child in your group; as you do, say, “You are God’s child.”

Supplies:

- precut construction paper ovals
- markers or crayons

Sabbath reminds us that we are God’s beloved children. Invite the children to sit in a circle and look around at the faces of the other children in the group. Begin the game by selecting a child (but not telling the group whom you have selected) and describing the child to the group. Invite the group to guess the name of the child being described. One by one, ask the children to choose a child and describe that child to the group. Continue until all have a turn to describe and be described.

Distribute construction paper ovals and markers or crayons and invite the children to draw their own face on the oval. Encourage the children to look around the circle at all of the faces created by the group. Invite the children to turn to the child on either side and say, “You are God’s child.” Display the faces in your meeting space.

2. Sabbath Treasure Hunt

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Trace and cut out at least 64 (four sets of 16) footprints from construction paper. Write one word from the following Bible verse on each footprint: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Prepare your area by taping the footprints to the floor, creating a path to the treasure. Young children’s minds are good at learning and memorizing things that they hear repeated, including advertising jingles! The repetition of scripture provides an opportunity to retain words to carry with them in challenging times.

Supplies:

- Bible
- items that help create light, such as a light bulb, flashlight, candle
- construction paper footprints
- “treasure box”
- “treasure” item for each child, such as stickers or pencils

God’s Word guides our way as we make time for God in our lives. Show them Psalm 119 in the Bible. Invite the children to gather in a circle. Show the children the light-related items you brought. Encourage the children to name the various

group to echo the phrase, “This is a day made by God.”

Have the group move back into place, take a deep breath, exhale, and lower both arms. Invite the group to echo the phrase, “Thank you God for this day”.

Closing: Mention to the children that for many years people in faith families have shared both words and signs to remind one another of the gift of God’s peace. Invite the children to practice the words, “Peace be with you” and the reply, “And with you.” Next, encourage the children to make a peace sign with their fingers. Invite the children to turn to a partner and share the words and sign of peace

Prayer: *Creator God, you offer light, hope, and new beginnings to your people and our world. As we face challenges, may we be open to new discoveries. Your presence with us as we take each step of our journey is a blessing. 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.

items. Ask the children to suggest how the items are used. Mention to the children that with light we are able to see more easily where a path leads. Encourage the children to gather by the first footprint on the path to the Sabbath treasure. As the group moves along the path, read the word on the footprint to the group, and invite them to echo the word. Continue along the path, reading the words from the psalm to the group and encouraging them to repeat the word. When the group reaches the last footprint, say the whole phrase from Psalm 119:105 and encourage the children to echo the phrase. Open the treasure box and distribute the Sabbath treasure to the group.

③ “This Little Light”

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Review the words, tune, and actions to “This Little Light of Mine” (tune: This Joy). Hear the tune at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2526gtw>.

Create a sample candle as an example for the group. Some younger children in the group may need help peeling stickers, depending on their fine-motor skills. Observe the group and encourage children to help one another with tasks.

Option: Have the children make paper candles to decorate using empty toilet paper rolls, construction paper, and tissue paper. See instructions at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2ayr42e>.

Supplies:

- words and music to “This Little Light of Mine”
- small pillar candle for each child
- stickers

The light of God’s love is echoed through God’s children. Sabbath is a time to receive God’s love and share God’s love with others. Distribute candles and stickers to the group; encourage each child to decorate a candle. Once the candles are complete, teach the song to the group by saying, singing, and having the group echo phrases of the song. As the group gains confidence, add actions to the words. Sing the song again as the children hold their candles.

Send the candles home with the children. It may be that the song and candles could be shared with another group or used during a worship experience of the congregation to continue the opportunity to share light and love.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ Prayer Chain (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Review Matthew 27:51-66 and reflect on the times of your life when you have particularly needed to feel God’s presence and support. Consider that a part of Sabbath-keeping may be sharing the worries and concerns of your life with God so that you are able to receive the rest, refreshment, and peace offered through the Sabbath. As children share their stories, encourage good listening by the rest of the group.

Supplies:

- construction paper strips approximately 3” x 12”
- crayons or markers
- tape

Sharing the worries, cares, and concerns of the week with God makes open space to receive the rest, refreshment, and peace of Sabbath. Invite the group to tell you popcorn fashion about times during the week when they felt scared or mad or sad. Mention to the children that God is always close to us, even when we are feeling scared, mad, or sad. God wants to know about all our feelings, and we can talk to God through prayer.

Distribute paper strips and crayons or markers. Invite the children to draw a picture prayer to God. The picture might show a friend or family member who needs help, or a time the child felt sad or mad or scared. Children may have more than one prayer and/or prayer strip! As the children complete their prayer strips, assist the children in taping the strips together to form a chain. As the children are comfortable, invite them to share their picture prayers with the group. Invite the children to echo a prayer phrase by phrase: Caring God (echo), we share our worries (echo) with you (echo). We welcome your peace (echo). Amen (echo). Display the prayer chain.

5 Seeking Sabbath

Leader preparation: Gather supplies and locate a space that provides places to hide as well as dim lighting. Review the game instructions in the activity description. Brainstorm Sabbath activities such as a family walk, playing a game, reading a story, in case the children need help with ideas. Be aware that some children may be uncomfortable in a completely darkened space; seeking or hiding with a “buddy” may lessen anxiety.

Supplies:

- flashlight
- area in which lights may be dimmed
- whiteboard or newsprint and marker

God sheds light on our path to keeping Sabbath. There are times when Sabbath appears to be hidden, and we must seek it. Show the children the flashlight and explain the game to the group. Invite the children to name, popcorn fashion, some of the activities they choose for Sabbath time. These activities will become responses during the game and may be repeated. Choose a child to be “It,” and have “It” close her/his eyes while the group hides. Once the children have found hiding places, give “It” a signal to begin seeking the group. As “It” finds each hidden player by shining the flashlight on him or her, “It” asks, “What do you do on the Sabbath?” The “found” child names a Sabbath activity from the list. After “It” discovers all the hidden players, choose another child to be “It.” Repeat until all children have the opportunity to be “It.” Give the group a round of applause to celebrate!

6 Waiting

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Depending on food allergies and/or choking concerns, choose a snack option that will take a short time to be ready, such as popcorn or instant pudding. If your area does not have access to water, provide a basin, soap, and towel for hand washing, or use hand sanitizer as an alternative. As the children respond to the list of activities, model acceptance of all responses for the group. The children may need to be reminded that there are no right or wrong answers and that each person looks forward to different types of activities.

List of activities -- waiting

losing a tooth
 Thanksgiving dinner
 a play date with a friend
 Christmas
 soccer practice
 the first day of school
 story time
 a birthday celebration

Supplies:

- snacks such as popcorn or instant pudding
- supplies for hand washing or hand sanitizer
- plates, cups, bowl, spoons, and napkins as appropriate to the snack choice
- list of activities that may involve waiting
- restful music and player

Sabbath includes waiting and being open to what is next. Mention to the group that you are going to name some activities. If the activity is one that they look forward to or wait for, ask them to respond with a hand clap. Once you have completed the list, invite the children to name additional activities. Mention to the group that sometimes Sabbath time includes time to wait. Invite the group to wash their hands and watch as the snack is prepared. Point out that the snack will take some time to be ready. Invite the group to use the “waiting time” listening to restful music and thanking God for the snack. Say a simple blessing and enjoy the snack together.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Open Shapes (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Arrange your space to provide a large open area. Apply masking tape to the floor to create several simple shapes, such as a square, circle, and triangle. Leave an “opening” in each shape to allow the group to move into the center of the shape. The size of each shape will need to be large enough for the group to be in the center of the shape. For each shape, create a simple sentence that the children may complete with a word or phrase such as “Thank you, God, for . . .” or “God, I need help with . . .” or “God, . . . needs help.” Cut out a variety of construction paper shapes mirroring the floor shapes so that each child may choose a shape. Consider that young children are growing in their understanding of “quiet time” and “talking time.” Give gentle reminders that will help the children act appropriately.

Supplies:

- masking tape
- construction paper shapes mirroring the floor shapes

Sabbath time offers open space for God. Invite the children to identify the shapes on the floor. Mention to the children that each shape has an opening that will allow the group to move inside the shape. Tell the group that once they enter the shape, there will be a brief time of quiet and then time to talk to God. Move to the first shape and encourage the children to move inside quietly. After a short time,

Speak the beginning of the sentence prayer, and invite the children's responses. After the children have had time to respond, invite the group to move out of the shape and continue the process with each additional shape. Invite the children to choose a construction paper shape to take with them as a reminder to look for places and times to talk to God.



8 Sabbath Pockets

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Have you ever reached into a pocket and discovered an unexpected surprise, such as money or a misplaced note? Pockets may also contain reminders of God's gift of Sabbath. Copy and cut out the pocket shapes. You will need two pocket shapes for each child. Glue or staple the edges of two pocket shapes together to form a single pocket for each child. Remember to leave open the top of the pocket. Place a couple of surprises, such as a note with the words, "You are loved" and a stone, in a pocket in your clothing. If time permits and there is a safe outdoor area nearby, you might encourage the children to discover a surprise from God for their Sabbath pocket.

Supplies:

- patch-pocket outline, Attachment: Activity 8
- construction paper
- glue or staples
- scissors
- markers or crayons
- stickers or glitter glue
- simple gift for each child

Sabbath gifts surround us and reminders of God's gifts guide our way. Invite the children to check their pockets for any items they might have and encourage them to show the group what they discover. Then show the children the surprises you placed in your pockets. Mention to the group that God's world is filled with surprising gifts that can remind us to enjoy Sabbath time. Some of God's gifts are things we see, like a flower; something we smell, like cookies baking; time listening to birds sing, and quiet time with God. Other gifts are things that we can pick up and carry with us as reminders. Distribute the pockets and encourage the children to decorate them. Mention to the children that these pockets may be used to hold reminders of Sabbath time. Once the pockets are decorated, give each child a Sabbath reminder to place in the Sabbath pocket.

9 Gifts of Light

Leader preparation: Gather supplies. Cut out the inside circle of a paper plate, leaving a "ring," for each child. Place clear contact paper with the covering removed on the back of the paper plate and over the center hole. Additionally, cut one more circle from contact paper, which will be used to complete the sun catcher, leaving the covering on that circle. Complete a sun catcher as an example. Celebrate the unique creativity of each child!

Supplies:

- paper plates
- scissors
- clear contact paper
- variety of tissue paper cut into 2"- 3" squares

The gift of light shows us the way to keep Sabbath. Each new day offers time to

enjoy the rest, refreshment, and peace of Sabbath. Invite the children to name items that create light. Mention to the group that the sun gives light to the earth each day. Sunshine and daylight are gifts from God.

Show the children the example of the sun catcher you made. Distribute paper plates with contact paper to the group. Invite the children to choose pieces of tissue paper to cover the sticky side of the contact paper, creating a sun catcher. When each child is finished, pull the covering off the circle of contact paper and place over the tissue paper. Encourage the children to take the sun catchers home as a reminder to enjoy each new day and Sabbath time.

Reflect

Take time and think back on all of the experiences shared with this group and give God thanks. Where is the path into more intentional Sabbath-keeping leading you? What new discoveries have come to light for you? How has your life been changed through this time with the children?

Attachment: Activity 8

