



Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Discovery

About this Setting

How do we discover gifts of ministry in our church worship? We tell the story, hear the story, and even sing the story. In this setting we will look for ways to help folk of all ages, backgrounds, and stories to discover the many gifts of ministry present in the worship experience. Each worship activity provides opportunities to discover new ways to discover gifts of ministry through music, arts, and story.

About this Exploration

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

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

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

Leader Preparation

Read Ezekiel 2:1-5 and 1 Corinthians 1:1-9. As you read, focus on the gifts of ministry you know about and think of the ones you think you may also have. Additionally, think about gifts of ministry you are sure you don't have. Why do you think you don't have those gifts? What keeps you from considering the possibility that you do? How do the Bible readings reflect an invitation to discover your gifts of ministry?

Prayer: God of great gifts. Please help me to be open to the gifts you give. Please help me to help all to find ways to discover the gifts you give to them. Help us all to be willing to participate in the gifts you share. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

 **1 Calls to Worship (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Use these Calls to Worship printed in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting to gather people together to worship God.

Supplies: None

The Call to Worship is a reminder that God has spoken and invites us to respond with worship. It invites the congregation to enter into a time to come near to God, to hear God's word, to respond with thanksgiving, and finally to be dismissed to serve. The following two Calls to Worship are based on each of the Bible readings for this Exploration.

Ezekiel 2:1-5

- One:** Congregation, stand in body or in spirit.
- Many:** We are here, waiting for God to speak to us.
- One:** God calls us to speak love to all who will listen.
- Many:** And to all who won't listen, too!
- One:** God calls us!
- All:** We will follow!

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

- One:** You are God's holy people!
- Many:** Grace and peace to you and to all.
- One:** God has given you many gifts.
- Many:** We are thankful for all God gives.
- One:** God will give you strength.
- All:** We are ready to live each day for God!

2 Prayers of Invocation

Leader preparation: Use these prayers of invocation without visible script, or if desired, printed in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The Prayer of Invocation invites, or invokes (which means to request or petition for), God's presence in the time of congregational worship. The following two Prayers of Invocation are based on each of the Bible readings for this Exploration.

Ezekiel 2:1-5

We stand in your presence today, O God. We ask you to speak to us, and we promise to listen carefully to you. Help us to discover the gifts you bless us with. Help us to share the gifts you offer with all your people. Help us to live out your call in this rebellious world you love. Amen.

1 Corinthians 1:1–9

We're not sure where to begin, God, but we trust that you do. Thank you for the gifts of ministry you give. Thank you for the discoveries we will make today and each day. Please continue to guide us in eloquence and in every kind of knowledge. Amen.



3 Music Resources

Leader preparation: The Bible readings in the Worship, Music, Arts, and Story setting contain images and stories that help in understanding discovering gifts of music. The community celebration of music is a natural way to express it. Choosing songs that invite those gathered to discover their gifts of ministry important part of worship planning.

Supplies:

- various hymnals or songbooks containing the songs you wish to use
- “Hymns and Songs,” Attachment: Activity 3

The songs listed on the attachment not only work with this Exploration, Discovery, but through all Explorations in the Faith Practice of Discovering Gifts of Ministry. Find and use these songs in worship or other settings to highlight gifts of ministry.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Engaging Bible Readings (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The Bible reading portion of the worship service helps those gathered to hear and prepare to listen to the sermon. Unfortunately, it also may be a time when folks' minds wander and daydream. Use these ideas to help engage folks as they discover gifts of ministry.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Each of the following Bible reading suggestions may help the congregation be more engaged with the reading and may lift up different gifts for ministry the presenters have.

- Have a young reader present the Bible reading. Any time a young person participates in worship it engages the congregation. It will have an even greater impact if the Bible reading is about the call of a well-known Bible personality.
- Have a sign-language interpreter interpret the Bible reading as another person reads aloud. The congregation will experience the reading in two different ways, visual and aural.
- Turn down, or off, the lights in the worship area. Have the reader present the Bible passage in near or complete darkness. It's important for the reader to use great expression, pauses, and vocal variation.

5 I Always Give Thanks: Sermon Idea

Leader preparation: As part of a sermon experience relating to 1 Corinthians 1:1–9, offer the congregation thanks for their many gifts of ministry.

Supplies: None

Write a series of uplifting sentences that describe the many good things about the congregation. Some of them might include:

- The kitchen is always so clean!
- Every person who comes here receives a hearty welcome.
- The lawn is maintained so well.
- The voices I hear when we sing are angelic!
- The snacks when we gather for socialization are the best!
- You really reach out to everyone in our community.
- You are so generous in giving to the many ministries we support.

Each section can begin with the phrase “I always give thanks,” and after a brief description of the good things you can say, “Thank you for using your gifts of ministry.”

6 Invitation to the Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Leader preparation: A worship leader may use the invitation to the offering. Print the prayer of dedication in a worship bulletin or project it on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The invitation to the offering and the prayer of dedication encourage all in the congregation to consider the God’s blessings, to respond with thanksgiving, and to dedicate the offerings into God’s service. These invitations and dedications are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

Ezekiel 2:1–5

Invitation to the Offering

God calls us to give. We’re not called to be rebellious or stubborn against God’s call, but rather to listen to God’s call to be generous, kind, and loving. May God’s spirit be upon us as we bring tithes and offerings today.

Prayer of dedication

Thank you, God, for your word and for your call. As we have opened our hearts to respond to your call to be generous, kind, and loving, may these gifts be used to help all to know of your blessings and to discover the many gifts of ministry you offer. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Your Gifts

Leader preparation: Use this idea to present a children’s sermon about discovering gifts of ministry. Place a mirror inside a box and wrap the box as a present.

Supplies:

- prepared box wrapped as a present

Show the children the wrapped present and ask the following questions, allowing time for response after each question.

- What do you think is?
- What do you think is inside?
- I think this present is from God. What do you think God wants to give you?
- What do you think you need to show God's love for everyone?
- Would you like to open the present and see what's inside?

Let the children help open the present. When you pull out the mirror, show it to all the children individually. Tell them that God's has given them everything they need to show God's love for everyone. Tell them that they will learn many things in their lives, but that God has already given them the gift to love God and to love everyone. Close with a prayer.



8 After Worship, Now What?

Leader preparation: Arrange to display the artwork "Vision after the Sermon" by Paul Gauguin for the congregation.

Supplies:

- artwork: "Vision after the Sermon" by Paul Gauguin, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401

Invite the congregation to look at the artwork and consider each of the following questions. Give significant time for thought for each question.

- What is happening in the picture?
- What happened just prior to this scene?
- What do you think the onlookers are talking about?
- What did the ones being watched discover that led them to do what they are doing?
- What gifts for ministry do you see in action?
- What does this picture make you think of?
- What does it make you want to do?
- What are you going to do?

Either close with an additional benediction or simply close with "Amen."

9 Charges and Benedictions

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None

The benediction is a blessing, literally "good words" to send the congregation forth into the world to serve God. Oftentimes a benediction will be preceded with a charge to the worshipers, a challenge to live out one's faith. These charges and benedictions are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

From Ezekiel 2:1–5

Pay attention as God speaks this week. We are leaving this place to live truth and love. We are leaving this place to see what gifts of ministry God will reveal to us. We are leaving this place to be God's people in all we say and do. Amen.

From 1 Corinthians 1:1–9

God enriches you. God strengthens you. God gives you everything you need to live faithfully and to act justly. Go in peace, ready to discover more gifts of ministry in you and in all you meet. Amen.

Following the Church Year

Ezekiel 2:1–5 appears as a reading for Proper 9/Ordinary 14b.

1 Corinthians 1:1–9 appears as a reading for Epiphany 2a and Advent 1b.

A Discovering Advent–ture

During the Advent season, invite all gathered to participate in this litany.

One: God's gifts are right in front of you

Many: But we're focused on preparing for Christmas. We're not focusing on ourselves.

One: Of course not. God's gifts of ministry are about what God is doing.

Many: The gifts aren't about us?

One: They're about what God is doing. Are you preparing to participate in that?

Many: We are participating in that. And God's gifts are right in front of us.

One: Didn't I just say that?

Many: Yes. And we're ready to discover more on this Advent–ture.

One: Clever. God will keep you on track. Because, after all, it's not about you,

Many: It's about what God is doing.

One: And God will never give up on you, either.

All: Thanks be to God!

Attachment: Activity 3

Hymns and Songs

For use with Discovering Gifts of Ministry Faith Practice

Title	Composer	Tune
"Awake, Awake to Love and Work"	Studdert-Kennedy, Geoffrey A	MORNING SONG
"Soplo de Dios viviente" "Breath of the Living God"	Caterna, Osvaldo	FLORINDEZ
"Called as Partners in Christ's Service"	Huber, Jane Parker	BEECHER
"The Calling"	Carpenter, Mary Chapin	
"Come and Fill (All My Life)"	Cooligan, Richard Bruxvoort	
"Come, Labor On"	Borthwick, Jane Laurie	ORA LABORA
"Every Time I Feel the Spirit"	African American Spiritual	PENTECOST
"The Gifts that You Gave Me"	Manley, Jim	
"God, When I Came Into This Life"	Kaan, Fred	LAND OF REST
"Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost"	Wordsworth, Christopher	ANDERSON
"Great Work has God Begun in You"	Birkland, Carol	VERBUM DEI
"Here I Am, Lord"	Schutte, Dan	HERE I AM, LORD
"How Like a Gentle Spirit"	Lincoln, C. Eric	SURSUM CORDA
"I Don't Know Why"		
"I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me"	African American Spiritual	I'M GONNA LIVE
"I'm Pressing on the Upward Way (Higher Ground)"	Oatman, Jr., Johnson	HIGHER GROUND
"I Sing a Song of the Saints of God"	Scott, Lesbia	GRAND ISLE
"It's In Every One of Us"	Pomeranz, David	
"Jesus Calls Us, O'er the Tumult"	Alexander, Cecil F	GALILEE

Attachment: Activity 3 (Continued)

Hymns and Songs

For use with Discovering Gifts of Ministry Faith Practice

Title	Composer	Tune
"Lord, I Want to be a Christian"	African American Spiritual	I WANT TO BE A CHRISTIAN
"Many Gifts, One Spirit"	Pote, Allen	
"Now in the Days of "Youth"	Mathama, Walter J	DIADEMATA
"O God, who teaches us to Live"	Hunter, Tom	ST. ANNE
"One Spirit of Love"	Svenson, Paul B.	
"Prayer of the Children"	Bestor, Kurt	PRAYER OF THE CHILDREN
"Simple Gifts"	Brackett, Joseph	SIMPLE GIFTS
"The Summons (Will You Come and Follow Me)"	Bell, John	KELVINGROVE
"Take My Gifts"	Murray, Shirley Erena	TALAVERA TERRACE
"Take, O Take Me As I Am"	Bell, John	TAKE, OH, TAKE ME AS I AM
"Today We are Called to be Disciples"	Williams, Ralph Vaughan	KINGSFOLD
"We Are Often Tossed and Driven (We'll Understand it Better By and By)"	Tindley, Charles Albert	BY AND BY
"We Have Gathered, Jesus Dear"	Clausnitzer, Tobias	LIEBSTER JESU
"Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant?"	Gillard, Richard	SERVANT SONG
"You Have Called (Me From My Hiding Place)"	Edwards, David L.	
"Tú has venido a la orilla"		
"You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore"	Gabarain, Cesareo	PESCADOR DE HOMBRES

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Scripture

About this Setting

Through scripture the congregation can see real people with real questions. Scripture also shows that gifts of ministry are different for each person. Sometimes scripture stories show people doing good things with their gifts. Other times scripture shows them just learning about them. Still other times it shows them not even realizing the gifts of ministry they have. In this setting we'll engage many different people and provide encouragement and hope through the scripture.

About this Exploration

Scripture provides many examples of people discovering God-given talents that help them not only in their own lives, but also in ministering to or caring for others. As Solomon discovered, gifts such as knowledge and a discerning mind are to be valued more highly than riches, long life, or power. Scripture, along with the community, inspires and affirms people in recognizing the different gifts they possess. Gifts of ministry allow people to play important roles in this world, in faith-related settings as well as in homes, workplaces, schools, and places of recreation.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

1 Kings 3:3–15

Mark 1:14–20

Leader Preparation

Read 1 Kings 3:3–15 and Mark 1:14–20. As you read, consider the gifts of ministry present in the passages. What wisdom and discernment will be helpful to you as you lead? What have you been waiting for in order for you to use the gifts of ministry you have? What holds you back from using them? How will you help others to discover their gifts for ministry?

Prayer: God who grants great gifts of ministry. Please give me wisdom and discernment to understand the gifts you give. Please help me to help all to follow you with the gifts you give to them. Help us all to stop holding back and to live out these gifts of ministry. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Welcome (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Use these ideas to welcome the congregation at the beginning of the worship service.

Supplies: None

From 1 Kings 3:3–15:

Welcome to our worship service! What did you dream last night? Have you ever had one of those dreams like Solomon—the kind where God offers you whatever you want and you ask for wisdom? What would you ask for? Money? Power? Wealth? World peace? What would you ask for? What do you think the best gift of ministry God could give you? Let's explore those thoughts today as we worship.

From Mark 1:14–20:

Welcome! Whenever you meet someone, you usually ask, at some point, "What do you do?" as a way to find out what their job is. Think about what you do. Now think about what you have always wanted to do. If you got the opportunity to do that, how would you respond? If you discovered and knew that God was calling you in a new direction, would you go that way? Let's listen for God's leading as we discover gifts of ministry today in our worship service.

2 Calls to Worship

Leader preparation: Use these Calls to Worship printed in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting

Supplies: None

From 1 Kings 3:3–15

One: We come here to worship you today, O God

Many: We offer ourselves and ask you to show us how to live your way.

One: What do we ask of our God as we seek to follow?

Many: Grant us your wisdom, God!

One: Are we ready for God to grant that wisdom?

All: Please grant us wisdom, God, and the courage to use it.

From Mark 1:14–20

One: We are here today because of your Good News, God

Many: And we'd love to share that good news with others

One: God calls us exactly where we are, with the gifts we have

Many: But are we willing to follow?

One: The time to live out God's call is now!

All: God, please give us your courage and strength!

3 I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

Leader preparation: Use hymnals with the song "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God" (tune: Grand Isle), or prepare lyrics for projection to a screen for use with the congregation.

Supplies:

- hymn: “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” by Lesbia Scott (tune: Grand Isle), <http://www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh712.sht>

Before singing the song, offer this brief introduction: *Who are the folks who have been the most inspirational to you in life? What was it about them that gave inspiration to you? What gifts do you remember them having? And how did those gifts minister to you? As we sing this hymn, “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God,” remember those who have inspired you.*

Sing the song. After the song, invite the congregation to consider the gifts of ministry they have and how they can use them to inspire others.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Held Back (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Use these ideas to develop a sermon from Mark 1:14–20.

Supplies:

- Bible

Think of the different ways the phrase “held back” is used:

- Describes a student who isn’t ready for the next grade level—needing more time to prepare.
- Describes a competitor keeping some energy in reserve for a late burst of speed.
- Describes a person who seems to be restrained from achieving a goal.
- Goth kids

Who is held back in Mark 1:14–20? Jesus. He waited until John was arrested before starting his public ministry. Why?

The first disciples—Simon, Andrew, James, and John—had taken up the family business. What held them back from following a rabbi before Jesus? They weren’t invited. When Jesus invited them they followed immediately. They had finally been invited.

In our lives, what is keeping us held back from really following Jesus? Is it something we’re still just not ready for, but will be soon? Are we just waiting for the right opportunity to come along? Do we feel restrained from following Jesus because of fear or because of something else? What’s keeping us held back?

5 Dream Drama

Leader preparation: Arrange for two actors to portray the two characters in this short drama, based on Solomon’s dream in 1 Kings 3:3–15.

Supplies:

- (optional) couch or chair for actor to ‘sleep’ in

Actor 1 sleeps.

Actor 2 (either a nonvisible voice or a character speaking in the ear of a sleeping actor 1) gets Actor 1’s attention.

Actor 2: Wake up!

Actor 1: Do I have to? Can't I just dream here with my eyes closed?

Actor 2: OK—but pay attention. This is important.

Actor 1: Sure. What's up?

Actor 2: What do you want?

Actor 1: What do you mean? I want to be sleeping. But that's not working out so well.

Actor 2: I mean, what do you want from me to help you?

Actor 1: Well, you've been great to me all along. I have everything someone could ask for. But I think I'd really like a discerning mind. I'd like to be able to make good decisions that will help people,

Actor 2: Good answer! You could have asked for money or power, but you asked for wisdom. I'll do that. And I think I'll throw in all the other stuff you could have asked for, too.

Actor 1: Really? Cool! This is the best dream ever! Will it be real when I wake up?

Actor 2: Just don't let it go to your head. Be wise. Things will work out fine.

After the drama, say: *In 1 Kings 3:1–15, God offered Solomon whatever he wanted and Solomon asked for wisdom. What gift of ministry do you hope for?*

6 Invitation to the Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Leader preparation: Use the invitation to the offerings for the worship leader and, if desired, print the prayer of dedication in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Use these 1 Kings 3:3–15 and Mark 1:14–20 themed invitations and prayers of dedication.

Supplies: None

The invitation to the offering and the prayer of dedication encourage all in the congregation to consider the God's blessings, respond with thanksgiving, and to dedicate the offerings into God's service. These invitations and dedications are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

1 Kings 3:3–15

Invitation to the Offering

What gifts will we share today? With wise and discerning minds, how will we respond to God's call to work for what is good and right and true? This morning I encourage you to be generous in sharing all the gifts of ministry God has blessed you with. We will now receive tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God who blesses, thank you for this opportunity to give. Help us to use wise and discerning minds so that these gifts will be used to share justice, love, and hope in our community and throughout the world. Amen.

Mark 1:14–20

Invitation to the Offering

What holds you back? What inspires you? What makes you nervous? What gives you the courage to take a step forward right away? We are all at different places on our life journey, but we all have a place in God's family. I encourage you, as children of God, to reach out to all of God's children lovingly and generously. As the plate comes by, please give courageously and joyfully. We will now receive this morning's tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Dedication

Help us to no longer hold back, God, in loving you and in loving all your children. May these gifts be used to welcome the outcast, the rejected, the fearful, and the lost with your unconditional love. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Communion Invitation (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Although practices vary, some congregations hold the sacrament of Holy Communion as one that can be received only by those who understand it, by those who have reached a certain age, or by those who have been through particular education about what is being celebrated and remembered. This communion invitation acknowledges the many gifts of ministry we have and welcomes any and all to the table.

Supplies:

- communion elements

Invitation:

Jesus gathered with his disciples for a meal. These disciples were the same ones who had been either passed over by other rabbis as disciples, or had been held back from their dreams for other reasons. Jesus saw in them something much more than their accomplishments or their education. Jesus saw precious children of God who had gifts of ministry. Today we are together as people of different ages, backgrounds, talents, and beliefs. But as Jesus celebrated with a group of untrained, unsure disciples, so we celebrate today. All are welcome at Christ's table—no matter what your gift, whether you have the right training, how old you are, or why you're here in the first place.

8 Charges and Benedictions

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None

The benediction is a blessing, literally “good words” to send the congregation forth into the world to serve God. Oftentimes a benediction will be preceded with a charge to the congregation, a challenge to live out one's faith. These charges and benedictions are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

From 1 Kings 3:3–15

May your lives be long and may blessings abound. May you be filled with God's unconditional love and walk in faithfulness. May your friends be many and your enemies few. And most of all, may God grant you wise and discerning minds, so that you may know and do always what is right and true and just. Amen.

From Mark 1:14–20

Walk forward in your journey of faith. Know that you are blessed with gifts of ministry. Be ready to bravely step out and follow where Jesus leads. And may the good news of Jesus and God's unconditional love be with you always. Amen.

9 Reverse Handshake Time

Leader preparation: End the worship service about 10 minutes short on a day where you plan to do this activity. If possible, brush up on some encouraging words about gifts of ministry for each person in the congregation.

Supplies: None

At the end of worship change the time often reserved for “Shake hands with the pastor at the door” to have the pastor shake hands with each person as he or she exits the pew. The pastor should offer to each person a word of encouragement and kindness.

Some things to say might include:

- I love to hear you sing.
- Your presence here encourages me.
- Your smile is infectious!
- Ready for coffee?
- How will you use your gifts this week?

Following the Church Year

Mark 1:14–20 appears as a reading for Epiphany 3b.

1 Kings 3:3–15 appears as a reading for Proper 15b/Ordinary 20b and Proper 12A/Ordinary 17A.

Good Answer

Leader preparation: Use these ideas for a sermon, children’s sermon, or coffee-hour discussion about Solomon’s dream and his request for wisdom. Before the sermon or discussion, read 1 Kings 3:3–15 together.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Suppose you were on a game show called “Good Answer,” where the questions posed weren’t the kind with obvious trivia-book answers but, rather, where the questions were what the most important things to do, to be, or to have are. Some possible questions in this game show might be:

- If you could be strong, kind, or rich, which one would want to be?
- Is it better to be kind or to be helpful?
- Which would you rather be for the rest of your life? Comfortable, healthy, or happy?
- What does it mean for you to be content?

Close the discussion with a prayer that each person wouldn’t necessarily know all the answers, but rather use the gifts God gives to follow where God leads.

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Setting

Who is a disciple? The person seated in the pew next to you may be. The person who walked in late may be. God blesses all of God's children with gifts of ministry. Recognizing the gifts you have and seeing gifts of ministry in others is a great indicator of one who seeks to follow God's call. It is a great indicator of being a disciple.

About this Exploration

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

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Leader Preparation

Read Jeremiah 15:15–21 and Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26, focusing on the times you’ve felt hopeless, angry, and worn out. What do you do when you feel as if there is no way to use your gifts of ministry? Where do you find encouragement? Are there events or places on your faith journey that you see as turning points? How did they affect you and how you share your gifts of ministry? How will you provide encouragement to others as they live in doubt, fear, hopelessness, and call?

Prayer: God of peace and encouragement, please help me when I live with anger and hopelessness. Please help me to help all to find ways to trust in you as we discover our gifts of ministry. Help us all to follow your call through all of our faith journeys. Amen.

1 Calls to Worship (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Use these Calls to Worship printed in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting

Supplies: None

The Call to Worship is a reminder that God has spoken and invites us to respond with worship. It invites the congregation to enter into a time to come near to God, to hear God’s word, to respond with thanksgiving, and finally to be dismissed to serve. These two Calls to Worship are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

Jeremiah 15:15–21

One: We’ve been trying, God, but sometimes it all seems hopeless

Many: It often seems like everyone is against us. What can we do?

One: If we keep telling your story, will anyone listen?

Many: Or will they keep fighting?

One: God promises strength, deliverance, and a reason for unending hope!

All: We will persist, O God. Help us!

Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26

One: Jesus says, “Follow me!”

Many: Why would Jesus call people who act like “they” do?

One: Jesus calls those who listen. Are you listening?

Many: We are! Can Jesus call us with all we’ve done?

One: God gives healing and strength. Are you ready to follow?

All: We are ready to follow the giver of great gifts and healing!

2 Prayers of invocation

Leader preparation: Use these Prayers of Invocation without visible script or, if desired, printed in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The Prayer of Invocation invites God’s presence in the time of congregational worship. These prayers are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

From Jeremiah 15:15–21

In our times of anger and hopelessness, O God, we thank you for your presence and unconditional love. We continue to try to follow you, but so often life’s circumstances make it seem impossible. Please give us strength today. Please give us hope today. Please deliver us from all that keeps us from living out your love. Amen.

From Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26

In the times we feel unworthy, O God, thank you for calling on us to follow you. When the world scoffs and questions your call, thank you for giving us strength and healing. Please help us to discover the gifts of ministry you give. Please help us to see gifts of ministry in others. Please fill us with your Spirit in our worship service today. Amen.

3 I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

Leader preparation: If this hymn is unfamiliar to your congregation, ask the choir or a strong voice in the congregation to learn the hymn first. You might have the church musician introduce the hymn as a prelude or postlude the Sunday before you want the congregation to sing it. Use hymnals with the song “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” or prepare lyrics for projection to a screen for use with the congregation. View the suggested YouTube videos listed below for different ways you may wish to use this song.

Supplies:

- hymn: “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me,” African American spiritual (tune: I’m Gonna Live), http://www.hymnary.org/text/im_gonna_live_so_god_can_use_me?tab=about
- (optional) computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- YouTube videos:
 - Congregational sample—“FSPC—Hymn #369: “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me”—25 Oct 2009,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9T8lks0JfKo>
 - Children’s Choir sample—“Emma Sings “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me,”” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxDiW7cG0Y4>
 - Adult choir sample—“I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me,”” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABUTPedTr_A
 - Praise band sample—“FHCC: I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me,”” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwxmCROAkXc>

Invite people to add verses to this hymn that reflect their gifts for ministry, such as “I’m gonna study . . .,” “I’m gonna build . . .,” “I’m gonna cook . . .,” and so forth.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Sermon Idea

Leader preparation: Use these ideas to develop a sermon from Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26.

Supplies:

- Bible

Jesus showed extravagant love for those who were outcast from society. In Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26, Jesus interacted with reaction to three who were outcast:

- A tax collector
- A woman who had been bleeding for 12 years
- A dead girl

In one way or another, each of these people was ostracized. A tax collector was considered a “bottom feeder.” A woman bleeding for years was “unclean” by the standards of the day, and she not only should not have been touching a rabbi, but also should have been separated from everyone. Dead bodies should never have been touched at all.

Matthew, the tax collector, chose what he did for a living. The woman had done nothing to deserve separation. And all the little girl had done was gotten sick—and now her family was going to be separated because they were in contact with her dead body.

In each case Jesus obliterated the boundary in favor of love. In each case Jesus saw value where others saw reason to stay away.

How have we ignored the gifts of ministry in others because they weren't the 'right kind of people? How does recognizing the gifts of ministry God gives in ourselves and others help in expressions of love?

5 Children's Message

Leader Preparation: Used this idea for a children's message related to Jeremiah 15:15–21.

Supplies: None

Gather children at the front of the worship area.

What do you do when you're angry? What do you do when you don't get what you want? Do any of you ever lay on the ground and kick and scream? Do you ever wish bad things would happen to people with whom you're angry? Sometimes in the Bible people got very angry. They complained loudly and they also sometimes wished bad things would happen to people with whom they were angry. God understands that we sometimes feel like everything is going wrong and we think it won't get better. But guess what? God also promises to help us when things are going badly. God promises to be with us through the really good times and the really bad times. And God forgives us when we've been so mad at someone we wished bad things would happen to them. Maybe knowing that will help you hope for good things to happen for you and for people you're happy with and people you're angry with. Do you think God can help you with that?

Close with a prayer.

6 Invitation to the Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Leader preparation: Use the invitation to the offerings for the worship leader and, if desired, print the prayer of dedication in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The invitation to the offering and the prayer of dedication encourage all in the congregation to consider the God's blessings, to respond with thanksgiving, and to dedicate the offerings into God's service. These invitations and dedications are based on the Bible readings for this exploration.

Jeremiah 15:15–21

Invitation to the Offering

Sometimes we wonder if it is all worth it. What if the work we do and the gifts we share don't do any good? What if things get worse even though we're trying to make it better? God promises strength for the journey. God promises that when we use our gifts for

ministry that it is not in vain. God promises to be with us through the good and through the bad. Please be generous today, knowing that God is present and active every day of our lives. We'll now receive this morning's tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Dedication

Please bless these gifts, God, and help us to use them in hope. When we fail and when our efforts are stopped, please help us to persevere, God. May your goodness come to all as we share these tithes and offerings and as we continue to trust you as we share all our gifts of ministry. Amen.

Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26

Invitation to the Offering

God blesses each of us with gifts of ministry. Sometimes the gifts and the people surprise us, even astonish us. Yet God's love, God's strength, and God's gifts have no boundary. Today let us give generously, knowing that the work God calls us to and the gifts God gives will be helped through our giving. This morning's tithes and offerings will now be received.

Prayer of Dedication

Thank you for calling, healing, including, and loving all, O God. We pray that these gifts will help to include the outcast, heal the sick, and bring life where it seems only death is present. Help us to share these gifts and all our gifts of ministry wisely and generously. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Out in the Open (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Trying to keep the world from seeing our gifts of ministry can keep others from experiencing the good we have to give through those gifts. Pray for strength to use the gifts of ministry you've been given to share God's love.

Supplies: None

Share these words from Frederick Buechner: "The place God calls you to is where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." (*Wishful Thinking*, p. 95, 1973) Ask those gathered to come together in small groups of 2–4 people for a short discussion. Some questions for them to discuss include:

- Where is your deep hunger?
- Where is your deep gladness?
- How do your deep hunger and gladness come together?
- Where are your deep hunger and your deep gladness at odds?
- How do you think you'd like to share your deep gladness and your deep hunger with others?



8 Taking a Risk?

Leader preparation: Arrange to display "Diamond Peak, Nevada, USA" for the congregation.

Supplies:

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

Invite the congregation to look closely at “Diamond Peak, Nevada, USA” and think. Give significant time for thought for each question:

- What is happening in the picture?
- What preparation did the snowboarder do?
- What do you think happened just after this picture was taken?
- What about this picture energizes you?
- What about this picture scares you?
- What gifts for ministry do you see in action?
- What does this picture make you think of?
- What does it make you want to do?
- What are you going to do?

Either close with an additional benediction or simply close with “Amen.”

Following the Church Year

9 Benedictions

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None.

Jeremiah 15:15–21

And now, let us go from this place, ready for what lies ahead. When we experience failure, frustration, and hopelessness, may we be strengthened by our loving God. When we are persecuted and ridiculed, may God’s love uphold us. And in all that we do, may we use our gifts of ministry to sow not evil, but rather all that is good, and true, and loving. Amen.

Matthew 9: 9–13, 18–26

We may be an unlikely bunch, but we are called by God. We may be an unusual bunch, but we have been blessed by God. We may even be an unhealthy bunch, but we trust in God’s true healing. Go from this place to use the gifts of ministry God gives to share inclusion, healing, and love with all. Amen.

Matthew 9: 9–13, 18–26 appears as a reading for Proper 5A/Ordinary 10A.

Jeremiah 15:15–21 appears as a reading for Proper 17A/Ordinary 22A.

Places of Healing

Leader preparation: Gather research on several local ministries that are about healing. Be prepared to present them to the congregation.

Supplies:

- healing ministries resources

Share several resources relating to local healing ministries. Invite the congregation, as a whole or in smaller groups, to spend time throughout the week contacting and then visiting these places to share gifts of ministry with them. Some places you may wish to consider include:

- nursing homes
- hospitals
- foster care agencies
- day care operations
- preschools

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Setting

We have much to learn from the past. We have much to honor as we practice our faith. Celebrating our Christian tradition also gives life in our practices of faith today. In this Christian Tradition Exploration, we remember the gifts others have shared and seek to discover through their experience the gifts of ministry with which we are blessed today.

About this Exploration

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

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 49:1–7
Luke 10:38–42

Leader Preparation

Read Isaiah 49:1–7 and Luke 10:38–42, remembering the earliest time you were aware of any gift of ministry God gave you. Additionally, think about the times these gifts have been appreciated or perhaps discouraged. What has given you encouragement when you’ve been discouraged? How has the appreciation of others helped your gifts of ministry to grow? How have you been distracted? How do the Bible readings reflect an invitation to discover your gifts of ministry?

Prayer: God of encouragement, please help me to discern your gifts. Please keep me from discouragement and distraction. Please help me to help all to find ways to discern and use the gifts you give to them. Help us all to honor our past as we benefit from the wisdom it brings. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Welcome (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Use these ideas to welcome the congregation at the beginning of the worship service.

Supplies: None

From Isaiah 49:1–7:

Welcome to our worship service! What brought you here today? Was it a sense of need? Was it an invitation? Was it “just the thing you do on Sunday”? God’s people have been worshipping together for years and years. This great worship tradition is new to some of you, and to others, it has been something you’ve been a part of since before you were born. To all I say, welcome! Today we will learn from our past and be encouraged by the light and life in this place of worship. God has chosen you to be here today. Let’s worship God together!

From Luke 10:38–42:

Welcome! Who is here to sing today? Who is here to pray today? Who is here to listen to a sermon today? Who is here to serve today? Who is here for fellowship today? We’re here for many reasons, and it is a delight that all of those reasons come together in this time of worship. Today we will learn from and celebrate our past as well as look forward to God’s call today. Welcome! Let’s worship God together!

2 Greeting

Leader preparation: Use this idea during the congregation’s time of greeting or passing of the peace during the worship service.

Supplies: None

During your time of greeting or passing the peace, encourage all gathered to make a point to greet at least ten to fifteen people, making sure to greet several people they either do not know or whom they rarely, if ever, talk to in church or in the community. Encourage them to greet people with whom they may have had arguments and people they may try to avoid. Invite people to greet one another with these words: *God has brought you here today. I can learn from you, I hope today we both learn about the gifts of ministry God gives. After a few minutes, invite people back to the place where they were sitting. Say: God brings us all here today to remember and celebrate our past and to discern the gifts God gives today.*

3 Calls to Worship

Leader Preparation: Use these Calls to Worship printed in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The Call to Worship is a reminder that God has spoken and invites us to respond in worship. It invites the congregation to enter into a time to come near to God, to hear God’s word, to respond with thanksgiving, and finally to be dismissed to serve. These Calls to Worship are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

Isaiah 49:1–7

One: From near and far we come to worship today

Many: Some of us are energized. Others are discouraged

One: We carry God’s light with us today.

Many: Through celebrations and through difficulties.

One: God has chosen you and given you great gifts

All: Let us worship God together!

Luke 10:38–42

One: What shall we do today? Shall we sit and listen, or stand and serve?

Many: Why must we choose? Can’t we both learn and serve?

One: Of course! But we are still so easily distracted.

Many: We trust that God will help us to choose the better part.

One: We ask for God’s guidance.

All: And we worship God together!

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Sermon Idea (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Use these ideas to develop a sermon from Isaiah 49:1–7.

Supplies:

- Bible

Sometimes we are positive that God has called us to our vocation. We’re certain of our gifts of ministry. Things work out. People are helped along their life journey. We can’t imagine doing anything else for a vocation, at all.

And other times, we think, “What in the world am I doing? Why did I want this job? How fast can I learn to do something else?”

Could it be that frustration, difficulty, and doubt diminish the commitment we have to our vocation? Could it be that it doesn’t?

In Isaiah 49:1–7, the prophet walks between certainty of God’s call and questions whether his work has been for anything.

We’re not alone in our certainty. We’re not alone in our doubts. We’re not alone in our celebrations. We’re not alone in our sadness. We’re not alone on the continuing journey. At all times and in all circumstances, God has promised to be with us.



5 Sisters in the Wind

Leader preparation: Display “Sisters in the Wind” by Ethan Hubbard.

Supplies:

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

Choose several of the following questions and ask the congregation to think about them as they look closely at the artwork. Give significant time for thought for each question.

- What are these two sisters interested in?
- One is moving about and the other is looking off in the distance. Why?
- What happens just after this picture is taken?
- What gifts of ministry does this picture make you think of?
- How are these two like Mary and Martha? How are they different?
- What questions would you like to ask the sisters in the wind?

6 Invitation to the Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Leader preparation: Use the invitation to the offerings for the worship leader and, if desired, print the prayer of dedication in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The invitation to the offering and the prayer of dedication encourage all in the congregation to consider the God's blessings, respond with thanksgiving, and to dedicate the offerings into God's service. These invitations and dedications are based on the Bible readings for this exploration.

Isaiah 49:1–7

Invitation

We are not in a perfect world. We are not a perfect congregation. How can we make everything work out? How can we know for sure that we won't fail? We can't, but we can trust that God calls us, each with God-given gifts of ministry, to be this imperfect yet trusting church. We can be generous in giving to the ministries we have here in this building and throughout our community, state, country, and world. Please be generous this morning as we receive tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Dedication

God who knows our successes and failures, our certainty and our doubt, thank you for your blessings. We pray that as we bring these gifts today that you would bless and multiply them. Help us, as your imperfect church, to follow your call and the gifts of ministry you give. Amen.

Luke 10:38–42

Invitation

We sing, we pray, we listen, we serve, and we give thanks. Sometimes we do everything right. Other times we miss the mark, but still we come together to worship and to praise God. We also come to give thanks to God. Please be generous today, knowing that God is present and active every day of our lives. We'll now receive this morning's tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Dedication

Thank you, God, for giving the gifts of hospitality and of listening. May the tithes and offerings we present today provide hospitality, education, assistance, healing, and love to all your children. Please bless these gifts. Amen.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Every Time I Feel the Spirit (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review the article “Jewish Singing: A Practical Guide to Fostering Communal Music” by Joey Weisenberg (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joey-weisenberg/jewish-singing-fostering-b_868788.html). Using knowledge gained, lead the congregation in this (or any other) song. Use hymnals with the song “Every Time I Feel the Spirit” (tune: Pentecost), or prepare lyrics for projection to a screen for use with the congregation.

Supplies:

- hymn: “Every Time I Feel the Spirit,” African American spiritual (tune: Pentecost), <http://lyricsofsongs.net/g/296-gospel-praise-songs-gospel-lyrics/1409-every-time-i-feel-the-spirit.html>

Ask the congregation to gather as close as possible as they sing the song. Suggest that they listen to one another and try to make all the sounds of all the voices blend to one beautiful song. Say that all of our gifts together can make for a marvelous, joyful noise unto God!

The rhythm of this song inspires clapping and movement. Invite the congregation to move about the worship space as they sing.

8 Banjo Lesson

Leader preparation: Display “Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner.

Supplies:

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

Choose several of the following questions and ask the congregation to think about them as they look closely at the artwork. Give significant time for thought for each question.

- What about this painting speaks about tradition?
- What, besides banjo playing, do you think it being taught in this painting?
- What is the banjo teacher learning?
- What is the banjo student teaching?
- What else do you notice in the painting?
- What gifts of ministry does this picture make you think of?

9 Benedictions

Leader preparation: None

Supplies: None

From Isaiah 49:1–7:

God has known you all your life. And God has blessed you with gifts of ministry. As you leave this place, go knowing that through success and failure, through certainty and doubt,

*and through hope and hopelessness, God does and will prove you strength for the journey.
Go now in peace, chosen of God. Amen.*

From Luke 10:38–42:

*Go now to listen for God's still small voice. Go now to share extravagant hospitality.
Go now to sometimes be distracted. God now to choose to follow Jesus' call to love. Amen.*

Following the Church Year

Isaiah 49:1–7 appears as a reading for Epiphany 2A and Holy Week Tuesday.
Luke 10:38–42 appears as a reading for Proper 11C/ Ordinary 16C.

Sermon Idea

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies:

- Bible

Use these ideas to develop a sermon from Luke 10:38–42.

Martha worked while Mary listened. Jesus told an annoyed Martha that Mary had chosen the better part. Paying attention only to work and not attending to spiritual matters isn't the better part. However, paying attention to the better thing isn't the only—or even main—message in Luke 10:38–42.

The main message has to do with challenging the status quo. It has to do with following the gifts of ministry with which God blesses you. Martha was doing the traditional tasks for the women of her time. She was providing hospitality to a guest in her home. Mary was doing the traditional activity of a man of her time. She was sitting at the feet of a teacher—learning as a disciple.

Jesus embraced this out-of-bounds behavior on Mary's part because that's what Jesus does. He invites the least likely into the circle. Jesus welcomes the ones who are not allowed to be not only in the club, but leaders in it!

Jesus invites and welcomes. Jesus recognizes gifts of ministry. And Jesus' followers must challenge the status quo that tells people that they are not good enough to be in the club.

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Setting

We are a people of community. We are also a people who seek to discover the gifts of ministry God gives. In this Context and Mission Exploration we consider ways to practice faith in our community and world. Each sphere—Exploring & Engaging, Discerning & Deciding, Sending & Serving—provides help for us to discern the gifts God gives through music, arts, and story in worship.

About this Exploration

Each of us is like “letters from Christ,” as Paul says, sent to bring hope and healing wherever there is need. In all contexts, there are opportunities for us to share our gifts of ministry in a variety of ways, be it at home, at school, in the workplace, in the neighborhood, and at church. Over our lifetimes, the diversity of our gifts can emerge and grow, and may change, as we move into new places and spaces in our lives. Trusting that God can work through us right where we are is an exciting way to realize that the Holy Spirit is all around us.

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

Leader Preparation

Read Nehemiah 2:11–20 and 2 Corinthians 3:1–6, considering how the gifts of ministry you have contribute to the common good. How do these gifts help to build up yourself and others? How do they bring life? How will you help others to discern their gifts and encourage them to work together for the common good?

Prayer: God of life, please give me wisdom and discernment to understand the gifts you give. Please help me to help all to follow you with the gifts you give to them. Help us all to seek the common good as we use these gifts. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Calls to Worship (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Use these Calls to Worship printed in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The Call to Worship is a reminder that God has spoken and invites us to respond with worship. It invites the congregation to enter into a time to come near to God, to hear God’s word, to respond with thanksgiving, and finally to be dismissed to serve. These calls to worship are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

Nehemiah 2:11–20:

One: We look around and all we see is destruction and desolation.

Many: Help us to build together, God!

One: When we seek a common good, scoffing and ridicule are never far behind.

Many: Help us to build together, God!

One: God gives gifts to help us do something good.

All: Help us to build together, God!

2 Corinthians 3:1–6:

One: Why do we serve God? Is it for recognition and affirmation?

Many: Those are nice, but there is something better!

One: Is it because we are the best God can find?

Many: We hope that we are worthy, but there is something much better!

One: Why do we serve?

All: We serve God because it is at our core. Let us serve God together!

2 Prayers of Invocation

Leader preparation: Use these prayers of invocation without visible script, or if desired, printed in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The prayer of invocation invites God’s presence in the time of congregational worship. These prayers are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

From Nehemiah 2:11–20:

God who is with us through every turn in life, thank you for your presence in our worship service today. Please help us as we seek together to build rather than tear down. Please fill us with your Spirit as we discover the gifts of ministry you give. Please give us your success as we live and work for the common good. Amen.

From 2 Corinthians 3:1–6:

God who calls us today, thank you for your blessings and your presence. Thank you for writing on our hearts your sign of approval. Help us, as we sometimes wander and fail, to discover the gifts you give and to use them to help bring life to all around us. Amen.



③ One Spirit of Love

Leader preparation: You may distribute copies of the attachment as long as you include the permission line. This permission is for congregational use only. If this is a new hymn for your congregation, ask the choir or a strong voice in the congregation to learn it in order to lead the congregation. You might also ask your church musician to use this song as a prelude in a service at least one week before you want the congregation to sing it.

Supplies:

- hymn: “One Spirit of Love,” by Paul B. Svenson (©1987/2011 Dad’s Songbook Music LLC. All rights reserved, used by permission.), www.dadsongbook.com; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBg80JaNJ1M>
- “One Spirit of Love,” Attachment: Activity 3

Sing the song “One Spirit of Love” as a congregation. Before the song, introduce the following questions for the congregation to ponder while singing:

- How are sharing gifts and sharing burdens similar?
- In what ways can you serve and be served at the same time?
- How can you celebrate the gifts of ministry you have and the gifts of others?
- How does one spirit of love unite God’s people?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ Sermon Idea (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Use these ideas to craft a sermon for 1 Corinthians 3:1–6.

Supplies:

- Bible

It’s nice to be appreciated. It’s nice to gain recognition for your achievements.

It’s not such a great thing to run around and tell everyone how great you are.

It’s also good to look up and to emulate people you respect. It is nice to want to learn from them.

It’s not such a great thing to stand in awe of celebrity and do whatever the object of your awe tells you to do.

Some of the Corinthians wanted to be just like the celebrity missionaries. Some were also critical or suspicious of Paul because he didn’t have the famous resume some of the other super-missionaries had.

Paul, no stranger to self promotion, didn’t like it. But instead of lashing out at the celebrities, he reminded them that it is God who grants gifts. Trophies, accolades, and recommendations may be nice, but they are not a replacement for what only God gives.

You and the gifts of ministry God gives you are enough to serve God. Together we can all use the gifts God gives to give love and life to all.

5 Spontaneous Melodrama

Leader Preparation: Recruit several members of the congregation to act out the reading from Nehemiah 2:11–20.

Supplies: None

Parts you'll need:

- Nehemiah
- 3–4 companions
- animal
- Valley Gate
- Dragon's Spring
- Dung Gate
- Broken wall
- Fountain Gate
- King's Pool
- Sanballat
- Tobiah
- Geshem

Encourage each person to overact as they portray the action described in the readings. Some suggestions are included here. Make this a memorable Bible experience. You may see some comedic and dramatic gifts of ministry in the process.

Nehemiah 2:11–20

So I came to Jerusalem and was there for three days. *(Wait and look at watch.)*
 Then I got up during the night, me and a few men with me. *(Stretch, rub eyes, squint as if darkness is around.)*
 I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. *(Make a "shhhh" noise and motion.)*
 The only animal I took was the animal I rode. *(Pretend to use animal as transportation.)*
 I went out by night by the Valley Gate *(wave to valley gate)*,
 past the Dragon's Spring *(wave to Dragon's Spring and look a bit scared)*,
 and to the Dung Gate *wave at Dung Gate and sniff)*,
 and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire *(look sadly at broken wall)*.
 Then I went on to the Fountain Gate *(wave at Fountain Gate)*
 and to the King's Pool *(wave at King's Pool)*,
 but there was no place for the animal I was riding to continue. *(Notice path is blocked.)*
 So I went up by way of the valley by night and inspected the wall. Then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.
 The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing. I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest that were to do the work. Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace."
 I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us start building!" *(Companions cheer and act out building motions.)*
 So they committed themselves to the common good. *(All smile.)*

But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they mocked and ridiculed us, saying, “What is this that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” *(They sneer and mock.)*

Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven is the one who will give us success, and we his servants are going to start building; but you have no share or claim or historic right in Jerusalem.” *(All look a little confused at this turn of anger at the end of the melodrama.)*

Close by asking:

- How will we build together?
- How can we avoid creating territories in the process?

6 Art

Leader preparation: Arrange to display the artwork “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” by Gustav Klimt for the congregation.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” by Gustav Klimt, <http://www.art.com/products/p15177883-sa-i3715775/gustav-klimt-farm-garden-with-sunflowers-c1912.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=55eedd136d4049bcaab8f63c70afd3e3&searchstring=klimt+farm+garden+with+sunflowers>

Ask the congregation to look closely at “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” and to think. Give significant time for thought for each question.

- How many different flowers can you see in this painting?
- Which one is the most important?
- What do you see besides flowers?
- What is the best single thing in this painting?
- How does this painting reflect gifts of ministry in this congregation?
- What else does this painting make you think of?
- What does it make you want to do?
- What are you going to do?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Invitation to the Offering and Prayer of Dedication (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Use the invitation to the offerings for the worship leader and, if desired, print the prayer of dedication in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The invitation to the offering and the prayer of dedication encourage all in the congregation to consider the God’s blessings, to respond with thanksgiving, and to dedicate the offerings into God’s service. These invitations and dedications are based on the Bible readings for this exploration.

From Nehemiah 2:11–20:

Invitation to the Offering

Thank you for supporting the ministries here. God gives to all of us gifts of ministry. Together we can use these gifts to work for the common good. Some can give much. Others can give more. Others can give much less. Please share the gifts God has given you generously today. We will now receive tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Dedication

Thank you for the opportunity to give, O God. We ask that these tithes and offerings would be used for the common good. We pray that as you bless what we have brought forward today that you would also bless us as we seek to build together. Amen.

From 2 Corinthians 3:1–6

Invitation to the Offering

Thank you for your presence in our worship service today, and thank you for your support of the ministries here. We give today not for recognition or for praise, but rather because God, who has written love and justice on our hearts, calls us to give. Please be generous this morning as we receive tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Dedication

We offer these tithes and offerings today to you, O God. We ask that they be used not for our glory, but rather to show love and justice to all your children. We dedicate these gifts and all the gifts of ministry you give to you and pray your blessing over them. Amen.

8 Wild Goose

Leader preparation: Research and familiarize yourself with the Wild Goose Festival <http://wildgoosefestival.org>, a progressive gathering of Christians dedicated to justice, spirituality, music, and the arts. Share information, videos, songs, and other resources from the Wild Goose Festival with the congregation. Choose and sing songs mentioned on the website. Offer opportunities to attend the festival.

Supplies:

- (optional) computer with Internet access
- (optional) digital projector
- “Wild Goose Festival,” <http://wildgoosefestival.org>
- (optional) copies of Wild Goose materials to distribute to congregation

Rooted in Christian tradition, the Wild Goose Festival gathers people from different traditions, congregations, and walks of life to celebrate the gifts God gives. Wild Goose is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit, and the festivals celebrate justice, spirituality, music and the arts.

9 Benedictions

Leader Preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None

From Nehemiah 2:11–20:

We go from this place encouraged to build together. We go from this place committed to the common good. We go from this place trusting that God’s success will be with us as we love God and love everyone. May God go with us until we meet again. Amen.

From 2 Corinthians 3:1–6:

*Let us go now to serve God, not for our own benefit or glory, but because of our devotion.
Let us go now not with celebrity or fame, but with a commitment to share love and life.
Let us go now with God's love written on our hearts. Amen.*

Nehemiah 2:11–20 does not appear as a weekly lectionary reading in A, B, or C.
2 Corinthians 3:1–6 appears as a reading for Epiphany 8B.

Following the Church Year

Lectio Divina

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies:

- Bible

Slowly read aloud 2 Corinthians 3:1–6 for the congregation, instructing them to empty their minds of all thoughts and to simply listen to the reading.

After a pause, again read aloud 2 Corinthians 3:1–6 for the congregation, this time instructing them to listen for a word or phrase that stands out in the passage. Invite individuals to call out words and phrases at the end of the reading.

After many words and phrases have been called out, read aloud 2 Corinthians 3:1–6 one more time, instructing the congregation to listen for whatever they have missed in the first two readings.

Close with “Amen.”

Attachment: Activity 3

One Spirit of Love

♩ = 89
Muted strum
Light Reggae Feel

Paul B. Svenson

G 4 G D Em



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

Em/D C D G



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

C D G D



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

Em Em/D C



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

D G C D



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

C D G G7 C D G



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

C D G F C D G



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

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Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Setting

Practicing our faith includes looking ahead where God leads. We seek to use the gifts of ministry that God gives. In this Exploration we explore where God guides and how we can embrace that direction through our gifts. Each category of activities provides help for us to practice God's way as we discover through worship, music, arts, and story.

About this Exploration

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

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Leader Preparation

Read 1 Samuel 3:1–20 and Philippians 4:1–13, listening for God’s call. Think about the times you have wondered if and how God was speaking to you. Additionally, think about times when you have struggled to work with folks with whom you do not get along. How will you concentrate on what is good and true and just as you lead? How will you help others to listen for God’s call and to focus on what is good and true and just? How do the Bible readings challenge you to discern and use gifts of ministry?

Prayer: God who calls, please help me to concentrate. Please walk with me through confusion and difficult relationships. Please help me to help all to find ways to discern and use the gifts you give to them. Help us all to hold fast to what is good and true and just. Amen.

1 Congregational Welcome (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None

Invite someone to share these words at the beginning of the worship service:

From 1 Samuel 3:1–10, 11–20:

Shhhhh! Listen. What do you hear? Do you ever bring a quietness to your heart—the kind that lets you hear God’s call? Today is a day to listen carefully for God’s call in your life. You may not . . . probably will not hear an audible voice in your ear, but listen closely. Today I invite you to be ready to hear where God leads and how God would like you to use your gifts of ministry to bring love and justice. Welcome! Let’s spend time today listening.

From Philippians 4:1–13:

Did anyone have an argument with someone this morning? I don’t think we can avoid disagreements, crabbiness, and hurt feelings. But we can be people of encouragement to folks who go through the same things we do. We can concentrate on serving God and one another with our gifts. We can pay attention to all that is good, true, and just. We can be encouraged knowing that God calls us and gives us strength.

2 Prayer of Invocation

Leader preparation: Use these prayers of invocation without visible script, or if desired, printed in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The prayer of invocation invites God’s presence in the time of congregational worship. These prayers are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

From 1 Samuel 3:1–10, 11–20:

Calling God, thank you for speaking to us, your servants. Help us to listen for your guidance with ears, hearts, minds, and all that we are. Help us to respond to your call and to use the gifts you give. Thank you for making our ears tingle as we join together in worship today. Amen.

From Philippians 4:1–13:

We are here today, O God, to worship. Some of us come experiencing plenty. Others come experiencing so much need. Help us together to concentrate on what is good and true and just. Help us to be a people of gentleness and prayer. Please be with us as we worship you today. Amen.

3 Art Viewing

Leader preparation: Invite the congregation to celebrate the beginning of worship by viewing and reacting to art. Determine the best method to display the artwork for the congregation.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Pentecost from the Rabbula Gospel,” Anonymous,

https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401

As you display “Pentecost from the Rabbula Gospel” for the congregation, invite those gathered to reflect on and respond to one or more of the following:

- What does this painting look like? What does it sound like?
- What emotions can you make out on the people in the painting?
- How does the condition of the painting affect your connection to it?
- What do you think the subjects are thinking?
- What do you think the artist thought as they painted?
- How does this painting help you to think of gifts of ministry?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Responsive Bible Reading (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Use this responsive Bible reading printed in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

Read together this litany based on Philippians 4:1–13. (The litany here is based on the New Revised Standard Version. Feel free to substitute a preferred translation.)

Philippians 4:1–13

One: Brothers and sisters, stand firm in the Lord.

Many: Shall we stand firm in arguments?

One: I urge you to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I ask you to help those who are struggling to get along.

Many: What else should we do?

One: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

Many: We will rejoice. And we will let our gentleness be known to everyone.

One: Do not worry, but in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Many: We trust that peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.

One: Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure,

Many: We’ll continue! Whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, we will think about these things.

One: Keep on doing the things that you have learned and the gifts you have received.

Many: May the God of peace be with you.

One: Pay attention to the needs of others, take opportunities to show your care.

Many: We are learning the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need.

All: We can do all things through Christ our strength.

5 PowerPoint Devotion

Leader preparation: Using PowerPoint or another presentation software, prepare a visual devotion for the congregation. Use the YouTube video “1 Samuel 3:1–10 devotion” as it is, or use it as an example for your own creation.

Supplies:

- video: “1 Samuel 3:1–10 devotion,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=__JWfQX4BBm8
- computer with presentation software
- digital projector and screen
- prepared PowerPoint presentation

Use these phrases on the presentation slides. The words can be used with a plain background or with background pictures you choose.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Be still.

Still.

Words from God

Were/are

Rare.

Listen.

What do you hear?

In your ears,

In your mind,

In your soul,

Listen.

Listen.

Listen.

Speak, God.

I am listening.

God is still speaking.

God is still making ears tingle.

What do you hear?

God is still speaking.

Still speaking.

Still.

Be still.

6 Playing for Change

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the music, videos, and background of “Playing for Change,” a movement that seeks peace and is dedicated to creating positive change through music, and arts education. Play one of the videos for the congregation and encourage them to think about the many gifts of ministry present in the congregation.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- digital projector and screen
- video(s) from “Playing for Change,” <http://playingforchange.com>

“Playing for Change” is a movement that began as an experimental music recording project. The organizers record performers from all over the globe and from many walks of life and then release a final version of the song with all the recordings mixed together. The ongoing project celebrates the diversity of musical gifts present in so many different people. You may wish to encourage the congregation to start their own “Playing for Change” type project, celebrating the many gifts of ministry in the congregation, in recording a favorite hymn.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Invitation to the Offering and Prayer of Dedication (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Use the invitation to the offerings for the worship leader and, if desired, print the prayer of dedication in a worship bulletin or projected on to a screen in a worship service or other special setting.

Supplies: None

The invitation to the offering and the prayer of dedication encourage all in the congregation to consider the God’s blessings, respond with thanksgiving, and to dedicate the offerings into God’s service. These invitations and dedications are based on the Bible readings for this Exploration.

Samuel 3:1–10, 11–20:

Invitation to the Offering

We've been listening today. And how does what we've been hearing fit with offering time at church? Is it a "God is telling you to give lots of money today" kind of situation? Is it a "Beware! Anyone says what God is telling you just wants your money!" situation? How is God speaking to you today? Please respond to how God calls you. We'll now receive this morning's tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Dedication

Thank you God, for your call, for your gifts, and for your love. We pray that these offerings, given in response to your call on our hearts, would be used to make things better. We pray that through these gifts that you would make the ears of all your children tingle. Amen.

From Philippians 4:1–13:

Invitation to the Offering

We worship, pray, and work together. We also give of ourselves and our resources together. Friends, let us give with rejoicing. Let us give to bring about love and justice. Let us give that those who do not have enough have enough.

Prayer of Dedication

We dedicate these offerings, O God, and ask that they be used to bring truth, goodness, honor, justice, purity, and pleasantness to your world. Please bless these gifts and all the gifts of ministry you give. Amen.

8 Joyful Benedictions

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None

From 1 Samuel 3:1–10, 11–20:

Let's go from here to listen. How will God speak to you this week? What gifts of ministry will God reveal to you? How will you respond to God's call? Let's go from here ready to share God's love and to truly mean it when we say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Amen.

From Philippians 4:1–13:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think on these things. Let us go now to continue God's work. Let us go now to use the gifts God gives. Let us go now with the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding.

9 The Summons

Leader preparation: Use hymnals with the song "The Summons" (tune: Kelvingrove), or prepare lyrics for projection to a screen for use with the congregation.

Supplies:

- Bible
- song: "The Summons" " by John Bell (tune: Kelvingrove), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0aAkOe87mo&feature=related>; lyrics, <http://www.spiritandsong.com/compositions/30338> (for projection or for each person)

Read 1 Samuel 3:10 to the congregation. Before inviting all to sing “The Summons,” ask these questions.

- When God calls your name? How will you be listening?
- How will you follow God’s call this week?

Following the Church Year

1 Samuel 3:1–10, 11–20 appears as a reading for Epiphany 2B and Proper 4B/Ordinary 9B.

Philippians 4:1–13 appears as a reading for Proper 23A/Ordinary 28A/Pentecost +17, Advent 3C, and Thanksgiving C.

Wrap it up

Leader preparation: Philippians 4:1–13 shares some final words—words of advice wrapping up a letter—that seek to encourage the reader and to offer hope. I think we can all do with a little encouragement—often.

Supplies: None

As we seek to live out the gifts of ministry God gives, I think we could all use a little encouragement. Philippians 4:1–13 offers words of encouragement, and so do some other letters in the New Testament. May you be encouraged by these words:

- *Philippians 4:4–5 NRSV:* Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.
- *1 Corinthians 16:13–14 NRSV:* Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.
- *2 Corinthians 13:11 NRSV:* Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
- *Galatians 6:9–10 NRSV:* So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.
- *1 Thessalonians 5:16–19 NRSV:* Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.

What words of encouragement would you like to share this week?

Stay for the Postlude or Post-service Music Event

Leader preparation: Recruit several creative people from all ages to participate in this celebration of God’s gifts of ministry. Invite them to develop motions, dance moves, drum beats, beat box sounds, guitar playing, and so on. that will go with a preplanned Postlude. Encourage those who develop the motions, dance moves, and drum beats to arrange them so that the whole congregation can participate easily.

Supplies: None

Use this idea to encourage folks to stay, listen, and participate with the post service music by making it a celebration of the many gifts of ministry present in the congregation. Before the benediction, tell the congregation that instead of leaving the worship service right away, you're going to have a celebration of gifts involving many people attending today directing the whole congregation in motions, dance moves, and drum and beat box beats to help them appreciate both the music and the many gifts of ministry present in the congregation. Participate yourself as well!