



Living Stewardship

About this Faith Practice

As a way of life, expressed in gratitude, living stewardship is a practice that involves all that it means to live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. It grows out of a deep caring for and joy in who we are as God's created people and the natural world in which we live. Living stewardship is about how we live our lives and how our lives express our values. It affects all of our decisions, especially the ones we make about the natural and human resources entrusted to us for care. Living stewardship is shalom: living in harmony with others and the world. It is about our relationships, liberation, grace, justice, peace, and mutuality as well as our material possessions. As faithful stewards, we are joined by our common gift of life and the reality of finite resources. We recognize that each of us is a mixture of neediness and fullness and so have responsibility to care for each other as we honor the holy in creation and ourselves. As faithful disciples, we are called to live as generous creatures created by a generous God who mutually shares responsibility with us for all creation. Stewardship involves all people because all are connected in mutually covenanted stewardship within God's original intent for 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.

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- 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 Living Stewardship and may be ordered by clicking on the links provided.

From Imaging the Word Poster Sets:

"Planting" by Rex Goreleigh (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus" by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark ..." by Barbara Reid (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

From AllPosters.com:

"Banjo Lesson" by Henry Ossawa Tanner (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters4>)

"Baobab, Okavango Delta, Botswana" by Pete Oxford (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters5>)

"Orion Nebula" by Stocktrek Images (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>)

Music

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

Jesu, Jesu Fill Us With Your Love, Tune: Chereponi (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>)

Take My Gifts And Let Me Love You, Tune: Talavera Terrace (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>)

God Whose Giving Knows No Ending, Tune: Austrian Hymn (Hymn lyrics: <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6>) (Austrian Hymn tune: <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6a>)

Scripture

Twelve Bible passages are used with Living Stewardship, two with each Exploration.

Discovery	Deuteronomy 8:7-18	Matthew 2:1-11
Scripture	Genesis 1:26-31	I Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19
Discipleship	Isaiah 55:1-3	Mark 10:17-22
Christian Tradition	Deuteronomy 14:22-29	Acts 4:32 - 5:11
Context and Mission	Isaiah 1:10-17	Mark 14:3-9
Future and Vision	I Chronicles 29:1-19	Revelation 21:10, 21:22-22:5

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Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Any group of young adults is likely to be heterogeneous in several respects. Some young adults may be pursuing postsecondary education while others are working at entry level jobs in the marketplace. Some, to survive economically, may still be dependent on their parents or other relatives. Other young adults have launched their careers, and some have started their own families. They are becoming financially and emotionally independent. Typically, young adults are struggling with intimacy-isolation issues in their social-emotional development. While some young adults fill their intimacy needs with partners and friends, others shrink from associations with people and find themselves isolated. As is true in any group, individuals have different modes of learning and different levels of motivation. Some young adults grew up in church-going families; others did not. Although young adults differ, they have commonalities, too. They benefit by sharing their stories and experiences and by widening their horizons.

About this Exploration

For many, stewardship is only or primarily about money and tithing. This Exploration intends to help individuals and churches discover and imagine possibilities of what it means to live into a Christian sense of stewardship that involves all of life. We will explore both what stewardship can mean and how we might integrate it with our life experiences. Because God is still speaking, we listen, envision, and embrace our responsibility as God's people, drawing upon the stories found in scripture and the importance of continuing and sharing the story of what it means to be a disciple who is living stewardship.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Deuteronomy 8:7-18
Matthew 2:1-11

Leader Preparation

Taking stock of your knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about young adults is a good way to begin. Reflect carefully about the developmental stage at which the participants in your group are living and, perhaps, struggling. Consider your own knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about stewardship. For example, do you think that stewardship encompasses more than or only material resources? How is stewardship related to serving others? How is stewardship related to social justice? One major goal for you and your young adults is that all of you grow toward stewardship as a 24/7 lifestyle.

Prayer: God, bless me as I lead these young adults in stewardship experiences. Give me wisdom and discretion in working with those who may be beginning their spiritual journeys. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine 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 with supplies normally found at the

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Stewardship Experiences (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Reflect on what you know about the family backgrounds of the young adults in your group. Are they from a churchgoing family? Are they living on their own or dependent on others? What are their experiential backgrounds related to stewardship? If you don’t know, how might you discover this information?

Supplies: None

After the participants have gathered, use open-ended questions to encourage them to tell stories about their own stewardship experiences—or lack thereof. Examples: When you were a child or teenager, you may have heard your relatives talk about stewardship—or giving to the church, tithing, or, in general, responsibility for others. What did they say? Were the conversations pleasant or unpleasant? Did they talk about stewardship in any other terms than money, for example, time or talents? What is stewardship of time? Of talents? Close this activity by asking a question such as: What is the single most important understanding that you have discovered from these stories? (If you discover that these participants have little or no knowledge of or experience with stewardship, choose another activity that will provide what they need to know.)

2 Hymn Sing

Leader preparation: Study the hymn “God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending” (tune: Austrian Hymn). Note the gifts that God gives us, not only what they are, but also their number. Enlist an accompanist. You can hear the tune at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6> and read the lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6a>.

Supplies:

- copies of the hymn
- newsprint or white board and marker

Distribute copies of the hymn to participants. Ask them to listen as the hymn is played, reading the words to themselves. Ask them to name the gifts identified in the hymn and also to identify what we are to do with those gifts. Record their answers on newsprint or a white board. What conclusions might we draw about stewardship from this hymn? Discuss the significance of the hymn’s title. On the basis of what this hymn says, guide the participants in developing a working definition of stewardship. Finally, sing the hymn again in a spirit of meditation as the close of the activity.

church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.



3 Create a Haiku

Leader preparation: A haiku is a nonrhyming Japanese poem that paints an image about a topic or experience for the reader. A haiku consists of three lines. The first line has five syllables; the second, seven; and the third, five. Here is an example:

God's world is a gift
To be enjoyed by many
For generations.

The three lines usually appear on separate lines, as in this example. Attachment: Activity 3 illustrates this idea. Tap out the syllables so that you're sure of the 5-7-5 pattern.

Write at least two haikus of your own about aspects of stewardship. Plan to share these with the group. Think of stewardship topics to suggest to them when they write their haikus. For additional information about haiku, go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/9zzbo>.

Supplies:

- newsprint or white board and marker
- the sample haikus you wrote
- copies of "Create a Haiku," Attachment: Activity 3
- pens or pencils

Brainstorm with the group about aspects of Christian stewardship (such as talents, time, resources) and record their ideas on newsprint or a white board. Explain the format for haiku and share your own poems. Distribute the handout and show the participants how the 5-7-5 syllable pattern works. Then ask each participant to create at least one haiku. When these are complete, invite all to share with the group what they have written. Consider ways these haikus could have wider use, such as posted around the church or included in a worship bulletin or the church newsletter.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 What's Stewardship? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Consider the ideas commonly associated with stewardship, such as time, talents, resources, abilities, relationships, money, justice, management. Think about your group. If they ever think about stewardship, do they usually think of it in such broad terms? Prepare a list of seven or more stewardship-related ideas (such as the ones listed above).

Supplies:

- list of stewardship related ideas
- paper and pen or pencil

Distribute paper and pens or pencils. Explain that you are about to ask the group to consider whether certain ideas are associated with stewardship. Ask that they number their papers and simply write Y for yes for any idea they associate with stewardship and N for no for any idea they don't associate with stewardship. Read each idea from your list, giving them time to record their answers. The correct outcome is that all items would be marked Y. When you finish the list,

ask if they would be surprised if you said that they all were stewardship related. Discuss all the items, and invite the group to give reasons why they agree or disagree. Use this list of items plus any others the group has added to develop a working definition of stewardship for the group.

5 Good News?

Leader preparation: Study Matthew 2:1–12. As you read this text, think about the decisions Herod and the Magi made. What prompted their decisions? What priorities did these individuals have? Was the good news good for everybody who heard it? In what ways did these individuals use discernment? Prepare to lead a discussion based on these questions and others you may design.

You might also research the value of the gifts and their meaning in the context of this narrative. And, consider rewriting the Matthew narrative to be more of a play than a story.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite the participants to find Matthew 2:1–12 in their Bibles, and choose individuals to read the roles in this narrative (a narrator, King Herod, the chief priests, three persons reading as one the words about the Magi). Read the passage. Discuss the questions suggested in the leader preparation (above). Ask the participants to describe the gifts in this story and to speculate what those gifts may contribute to an understanding of stewardship. What do you think Mary and Joseph thought of these extravagant gifts? What drives Herod? What drives the Magi?

6 Caring

Leader preparation: Locate and study the poster “Planting” by Rex Goreleigh. What do you think the artist might be saying? Why do you suppose Goreleigh selected these particular colors? What do you notice about the proportions of the person to the plant? What might this person be thinking? What decisions might the person be considering? Notice the placement of the person’s hands in relation to the plant.

Supplies:

- poster: Planting by Rex Goreleigh, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>

Display the poster and invite the participants silently to contemplate the artwork. Then use the questions suggested in the leader preparation (above) as well as other items of interest you might note. For example, ask the participants to speculate about why the hands are placed as they are. Who might this person be? Why do you think it is a woman? To what extent does this suggest that the person is careful or caring in whatever decisions are to be made about the plant? How well do we exercise care with all God’s creation, including families, friends, and gifts? Do you think this is a good illustration of stewardship? Why?

Sending & Serving Activities

 **7 Heaven on Earth? (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Read Deuteronomy 8 and study specifically verses 7–18. Note the background information in verses 1–6. Moses tells the people to be careful to remember their hardships in the wilderness when they arrive in Canaan. Note the description of Canaan as well as the warning of what would happen should they forget God.

Supplies:

- Bible
- soft, contemplative music

Set the scene for reading the Deuteronomy text by summarizing verses 1–6 for the group. Invite someone to read verses 7–18 while soft music plays in the background. Then ask the participants to describe life in Canaan. Was this a too-good-to-be-true story? Why or why not? Point out Moses' warning about what would happen if the Israelites forgot that God allowed them to prosper. What actions might show they had forgotten God? Invite the participants to describe any similarities between the actions in the biblical narrative and those of twenty-first-century Christians. What might we need to remember from this story as persons of this century? How might you use this story to help others think carefully about stewardship and ownership?

8 Heaven on Earth, Now?

Leader preparation: Plan a creative activity in which the participants use art materials to portray a modern-day heaven on earth. Some suggestions include: create pencil or crayon sketches, cut and paste construction paper, or choose a medium to make a sculpture. The importance of this activity is the objects and relationships the participants choose to depict. Ideally, this is an individual activity, but if you have a large group, it could be a two- or three-person project.

Supplies:

- art materials such as construction paper, newspapers, shoe boxes, markers, crayons, paints, glue, tissue paper

Ask the young adults to consider what an ideal situation would be for them in one dimension of their lives (for example, home life, social encounters, work-related situations). Invite them to represent this ideal relationship situation using the art materials. As they work, encourage them to consider their relationships with God and other people. Take mental note of how encompassing stewardship seems to be for each person. Discuss the projects when they're completed and ask each to consider what a first step would be to transform a real relationship world into this ideal world. Why might it be appropriate to think of stewardship and relationships as seriously connected ideas?

9 Service to Others

Leader preparation: The video “Be the Difference” shows people of all ages doing a variety of volunteer jobs and feeling good about doing them. Preview the video at <http://www.tinyurl.com/25arh4p>. Note similar opportunities for young adults to offer service to others in their community.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and projection capability

Prepare for viewing the video by asking the participants to note carefully which volunteer jobs in the video interest them. Show the video. (You might show it twice; once to get the whole picture and once to study.) Invite the participants to identify potential volunteer opportunities they might explore—or in which they are currently engaged. If the group developed a working definition of stewardship in Activity 4, revisit that definition and ask if it is still adequate. How might sharing time and abilities become part of the definition?

Reflect

Look back on the learning experiences with your group. How did the participants demonstrate that they are beginning to realize that stewardship is a way of life? In which activities did they take particular delight? Express negative ideas? Seem uninterested? In each case, try to determine the extent to which their responses were related to the content or to the way it was presented. Keep these ideas in mind as you work through additional Explorations.

Attachment: Activity 3

Create a Haiku

A haiku is a nonrhyming Japanese poem that paints an image about a topic or experience for the reader. A haiku consists of three lines. The first line has five syllables; the second, seven; and the third, five.

Here is a haiku in which words are divided into syllables. Read the haiku a few times to get the feel of the 5-7-5 pattern.

God's world is a gift
 To be en-joyed by man-y
 For gen-er-a-tions.

Now it's your turn to create a haiku. Select a topic related to stewardship. Think about what you want the reader to see in his or her mind's eye when the haiku is read. When you're ready, write your ideas in the spaces and be sure to put only one syllable on each line.

Here's room for another haiku.

If you're inclined, give your haikus a title.

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Because of differences in backgrounds, young adults are likely to vary in their knowledge of the biblical stories. Some young adults may have long associations with Bible stories, while others are new to the church and know little about them. It's also possible that some participants may have more progressive views about stewardship concepts than others. Therefore, carefully lay the biblical foundation for stewardship practices.

About this Exploration

When we hear scripture as a community, we discern its life-giving blessings and reconcile its history of abuse and its potential for misuse with its power to generate health and wholeness. Scripture gives us a foundational image of God that is relational and that embodies difference within the whole. God blesses each part of creation as necessary for the well-being of the whole. We are called to reject an understanding of "dominion" as power over creation. Scripture invites us to accept the gifts God provides for the enjoyment of all, and to embrace "life that is really life" rather than storing up treasures and individual possessions.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 1:26–31
1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

Leader Preparation

Spend quiet time reading and reflecting on the Bible focus passages. What do the creation stories tell you about God? What do they suggest about the relationships God wants with you? How does the 1 Timothy passage help you orient to earthly possessions and set priorities? Answering these questions may help you toward making stewardship a lifestyle.

Prayer: O God, shower your blessings on me as I lead this group of young adults. Grant me wisdom and patience in this important service of stewardship. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine 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 with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 In the Beginning (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Study Genesis 1:26–31. Kerry Nelson says that these creation stories reveal four major ideas: (1) life is relational (that is, everything is connected physically and spiritually); (2) we have reasons for being; (3) creation is diverse; and (4) life is very good. (<http://www.tinyurl.com/26oopva>). Think about what these ideas suggest about the Creator. List these four ideas on a chart along with the Bible reference.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- chart with Bible reference and four ideas from leader preparation
- newsprint or white board and markers

Invite the young adults to sit in a circle and close their eyes as you slowly and deliberately read Genesis 1:26–31. Ask them to keep their eyes closed until you ask for them to be open. While their eyes are closed, uncover the chart with the four ideas. Pause briefly at the end of the reading to allow for meditation. Invite the participants to open their eyes and view the ideas on the chart. Have them get in pairs or groups of three. Read aloud each idea and ask the participants in their small groups to come up with an example for each idea. Provide Bibles for those who may want to reread the text as they discuss. After an appropriate time recall the participants to the large group. Invite each group to report its examples. What does this information suggest about stewardship? Record on newsprint or a white board the ideas that emerge.

2 God’s Magnificent Sky

Leader preparation: Locate and study the poster “Orion Nebula,” photographed by Stocktrek Images. Consider the colors, the ridges, and other details on this celestial body. Consider how the beauty of this nebula affirms the glory of creation. The nebula, which can be seen without a telescope, was formally discovered in the early 1600s and has been subjected to intense study since. What imaginations the early astronomers had! Think also about the many amateur astronomers who have admired this nebula. Not only have many professional astronomers and scientists invested their time and abilities to learn about the phenomenon, but much money has been spent looking for answers to questions. Prepare a chart with these three facts about Orion Nebula:

- This nebula is located approximately 1,344 light years from the earth. A light year is a unit of distance that light travels in a vacuum in one year, or 5,880,000,000,000 miles. Of course, to get the distance to Orion, you would need to multiply this number by 1,344.
- This nebula is believed to measure 24 light years across.
- Scientists are studying this nebula to learn how stars and planetary systems are formed.

Supplies:

- poster: Orion Nebula by Stocktrek Images, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>
- chart with facts about Orion Nebula

Display the poster and invite response. What do you think of the image? How does looking at this image make you feel? Name any scripture passages or hymns that this photograph calls to your mind. Enjoy their responses. Show the chart with the facts about Orion Nebula and allow the young adults to ponder the immensity of the numbers. Conduct a brainstorming session in which the young adults name areas of expertise required for finding out these facts. What does this information about Orion Nebula suggest about God’s world and our place in it? What does it suggest about living stewardship?

3 In God's Image

Leader preparation: The video “In ‘His Image’ or Created in the Image of God” briefly answers three important questions: What does it mean to be made in God’s image? What is God like? What makes us different from all the rest of creation? Formulate your own answers before you preview the video at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/p4mugf>.

Consider how the young adults might answer these questions. Put the questions on newsprint or a whiteboard and leave space to record answers. Keep the chart covered until you are ready to use it.

Supplies:

- Bible
- computer with Internet access and projection capability
- newsprint or white board with questions
- markers

Read Genesis 1:26a. Display the questions you prepared. Invite responses, and record their comments. Then introduce and show the video. This video suggests that the image of God in us is not always readily available, that we cover it up and need help to reveal it. Invite the participants to elaborate on their responses or to the answers given in the video. What is the significance of the idea that we are made in God’s image? What does this suggest about how we live our lives? What does the idea that we are made in God’s image suggest about living stewardship?

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Hymn Sing (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate copies of the hymn “O How Glorious, Full of Wonder is Your Name in All the Earth” (tune: In Babilone).

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

Invite an accompanist to help the group learn the hymn. Perhaps one of the group members is a musician.

Supplies:

- copies of the hymn, <http://www.tinyurl.com/nchymnal>
- an accompanist

Ask the accompanist to play the hymn as the participants read the words. Sing the first and second stanzas and then stop. Ask the young adults to reread the words they sang and to paraphrase what the hymn writer has said poetically, especially these lines: “When we see your lights of heaven, moon and stars, your power displayed” and “born of earth, yet full of yearning, mixture strange of

good and ill.” Sing stanza three. Ask volunteers to describe what an artist might put in a picture that illustrated stanza 3. Sing stanza four. What is the purpose of this stanza?

Within this hymn are several references to relationships between people and God. Ask the participants to identify these references. What’s the nature of these relationships; that is, what has God done? What are the people’s responses? Next, ask group members to summarize in one or two sentences what the hymn writer is saying.

5 Real Treasure

Leader preparation: Study 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19. The opening sentences suggest that Christians should strive for godliness with contentment when it comes to earthly things. Contentment results from a right relationship with God and is to be valued. Material things disappear so they are of transient value. The scripture writer warns against loving money because that love will lead to evil. This isn’t a condemnation of wealth because the second major section gives instructions to those who have it. Consider how you would answer these questions: Describe what makes you feel contented. Explain why material goods can’t buy happiness. Judged by living standards in many parts of the world, most North Americans are wealthy. How are we to live if we are wealthy Christians? See these references for additional information about 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19 at <http://www.tinyurl.com/23j4dnq>.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19. Pause to allow the words and ideas to settle. Pose for discussion the questions in the leader preparation (above). Finally, consider this statement attributed to John Ruskin: “Every increased possession loads us with a new weariness” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/2adlm7f>). How do you respond to this quote?

6 Contentment

Leader preparation: Read 1 Timothy 6:6–8. Think about what “contentment” feels like to you. What pictures or visions come to your mind when you think about contentment? Invite the learners to bring in back copies of magazines for this project.

Supplies:

- magazines known for their photographs (such as *Smithsonian*, *House Beautiful*, *Arizona Highways*)
- newsprint or other inexpensive paper cut to 9” x 14”
- paste
- scissors
- markers
- tape
- relaxing, nonvocal music

Start the music and read 1 Timothy 6:6–8. Invite the young adults to close their eyes and imagine what contentment feels like. Turn off the music. Then say that you’d like them to use their imaginations to picture situations that bring them contentment. Maybe contentment is associated with a particular color, a specific place or type of place, relationships with people/animals, or something else. In-

vite them to look through magazines for pictures that represent these feelings and to clip pictures and paste them onto the large sheet. If words are needed to convey meanings, use markers. Turn on the music again while they work. As they complete their pictures, create an art gallery of the pictures. Suggest that the young adults walk around the gallery and talk with the “artists” about their notions of contentment.

After the viewing, reassemble the group. Conclude: In this activity we thought about what brings feelings of contentment, and we looked for pictures that represented those feelings. It could be said that we used discernment to make our selections. Every day we make decisions based on our discernment in situations. The ability to discern is one of God’s gifts.

Sending & Serving Activities

 **7 Personal Challenge (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Think about the young adults in this group. What do you know about their hobbies and recreational preferences? How important are these things to them?

Supplies: None

Ask the participants to describe their hobbies or recreational activities. How much time do they spend on the activity in an average week? The cost of the activity is unimportant at this point. Any favorite activity takes time. Say upfront that the goal is to challenge them to forgo this activity for one week and replace it with service to someone outside their household who needs special help, such as a neighbor who needs a pet sitter, someone who needs a home repair, a home-bound person who needs a driver for a doctor’s appointment. Describe one of your favorite activities and the amount of time you spend weekly. Then invite the young adults to share. Afterward, challenge each person, including yourself, to use the time normally spent on a favorite activity to help someone else. Say: This is an agreement that each person makes with him- or herself. When the week of service has ended, reflect on the experience by answering this question: How much satisfaction did I receive from helping this person? Explain. After these services are done, think about providing time for sharing with others in a future session.

8 Special Offerings

Leader preparation: Pick up promotional materials related to special offerings in which your congregation participates. Research your denominational Web site or the organization and search for the offering by name, such as One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, Christmas Offering, Heifer Project. Study these materials. In particular, consider how these offerings further the social justice mission of the church. If possible, find out if your church (either local or national) has a goal for these offerings. <http://www.ucc.org/ocwm>

Supplies:

- promotional materials for special offerings

Introduce the special stewardship opportunities that your church supports. Explain that these are special primarily because . . . (complete this sentence with accurate information from your situation). (Examples: Offerings are not part of the church budget; they are taken yearly; they help further the social justice mis-

sion of this church.) Divide the group into clusters, distribute the promotional materials, and ask the participants to locate the purpose and recipients of the offering and to describe how the offering relates to social justice. After an adequate amount of time for them to peruse the information, regather the large group and ask for a report from each cluster. Invite the learners to consider how these special offerings are a response to biblical teachings about stewardship.

9 Sharing Time and Talents

Leader preparation: Talk with the young adults about visiting a group of older adults, perhaps at a retirement home or nursing facility, and set a tentative date for this outing. Make arrangements for a date and time at a facility and find out what types of music the residents enjoy. Also, find out what type of accompaniment will work. Find copies of the music preferred by the older adults, if the young adults don't know the music. Invite learners to consider how this kind of activity can be a response to biblical teachings about stewardship.

Supplies: None

Have the group make plans to visit older adults in a retirement home, extended care facility, or nursing home. What might they include in this visit: music, worship, reading? Where and when would they go? Who will provide transportation? Who will make the arrangements with the facility? Go to the facility at the appointed time. Enjoy both the visit and the company.

Reflect

Look back on the learning experiences with your group. In what ways are the young adults demonstrating that they are beginning to realize that stewardship is a way of life? In which activities did they take particular delight? Express negative ideas? Seem uninterested? In each case try to determine the extent to which the participants' responses were related to the content or to the way it was presented. Keep these ideas in mind as you work through additional Explorations.

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

At this stage of their lives young adults typically feel pulled in multiple directions by work, home, social, and church responsibilities. It's difficult for them to know where to focus their attention, especially during times of rapid social change. They may have financial concerns, time crunches, difficulties with family members—a host of concerns. It's important for them to realize that following Jesus as a disciple provides the basis for answers to their questions and confident direction for their actions.

About this Exploration

Generational and experiential differences condition how we perceive, understand, and practice discipleship. Being an intentional disciple of Jesus presumes being a person of faith who embraces life as a journey of discovery and discernment about who Jesus is and what it means to live as a steward of God's creation. Discipleship involves the stewardship of our whole lives even as it enables our stewardship.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 55:1–3
Mark 10:17–22

Leader Preparation

Take time away from distractions to think about the Bible focus passages. Think about what stewardship entails. Remember that stewardship touches all areas of our lives, including whom we follow as disciples and what we do. Answer these questions for yourself: Whom do I follow? How do I spend my time, talents, and resources? For which causes am I willing to work? Frank answers to these questions may contribute to your growth as a disciple and in making stewardship a lifestyle.

Prayer: O God, I have been entrusted with leading young adults, many of whom are just starting to find their way along their spiritual journeys. Grant me wisdom, tact, and a benevolent spirit as I assist them in their quests. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine 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 with supplies normally found at the

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Relationships (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the young adult group in terms of what you know about their relationships with their own family, their family of origin, work, recreational and social groups, and so forth. In particular, recall what you know of their relationships within the faith community and with God. Note that while young adults choose some relationships, many of their relationships are not their choices.

Supplies:

- newsprint or white board and marker

Invite the participants to describe the many types of relationships they have. Record their responses in a column on newsprint or a white board. Then ask: What are the requirements of a good relationship? Record these responses in a second column. What happens if one party in a relationship does not meet these requirements? How does knowledge of what makes a good relationship influence your choices? How does this knowledge help in relationships that are not your choice? In what ways might these same insights and requirements relate to discipleship? In what ways might these same insights and requirements suggest that true stewardship requires taking care of relationships in ways that benefit all those involved?

2 One Commandment Too Many

Leader preparation: Study Mark 10:17–22. See <http://www.tinyurl.com/25xtg8u> for information and rich details about this story. Note the details you want to emphasize with your group, but be sure to note that Jesus invited the young man to become a disciple by asking him to follow.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Ask the participants to find Mark 10:17–22 in their Bibles and read it silently. Then talk about how the voices of the young ruler and Jesus may have sounded at different points in the narrative. Invite three volunteers to read the story aloud with expression—a narrator, Jesus, and the ruler.

Pose these statements and questions for discussion: Describe Jesus’ reaction to the young man’s question. Describe the young man’s reaction to Jesus’ question. How might these two not really hear what the other person is saying? Why would Jesus recount the commandments to the young man? Is it possible the young man had kept the commandments as he says? Why do you suppose Jesus told the young man to give away his worldly goods and to follow him? What did Jesus really want from the young man? How seriously did the young ruler want eternal life? How might the situation have turned out if the young ruler had said he would do what Jesus answered? Does discipleship for us mean selling all we have and giving the money to the poor? Explain.

3 God’s Abundance

Leader preparation: Read Isaiah 55:1–3. What’s your initial reaction to the notion of getting something for nothing? Befuddlement? Disbelief? Both reactions are usual until you consider that these words describe God’s abundance. In “The

church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Liturgy of Abundance, *The Myth of Scarcity*,” Walter Brueggemann says that the Bible begins by describing God’s abundance and that the people of Israel celebrated that abundance until they found themselves in bondage brought about by Pharaoh’s introduction of scarcity, an evil Pharaoh designed. Moses led the people out of captivity, but they wandered aimlessly for a very long time, living on the food and drink that God provided. This Isaiah reading is an expression of joy and triumph because Israel is about to be restored—God is making an everlasting covenant with David. (Read more of Brueggemann’s comments at <http://www.tinyurl.com/6qvwy>; they are helpful in understanding the passage.) Reread Isaiah 55:1–3 with these ideas in mind. Decide what information you will share with the young adults about “God’s abundance.”

Download and then open and make copies of the Word Search Puzzle, which uses main words from Isaiah 55:1–3. (Don’t open from the site. Download to your computer first, then launch word and open the document.)

<http://www.efree.mb.ca/lectionarypuzzles/cwm/cwma03af.rtf>.

Work the puzzle for yourself.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- copies of the Word Search Puzzle
- pencils

Ask the participants to locate and read silently Isaiah 55:1–3. Then read the scripture responsively—one person reads a phrase, and then the group reads the next. Pose the questions from the leader preparation (above) and share information about abundance as you choose. Notice that three times within these lines, there’s an invitation to “come and do” something. God is speaking, asking hearers to take action—to follow God and to become disciples. How would you summarize what God asks of them? Of us?

To emphasize the main words of this scripture and for fun, distribute copies of the Word Search Puzzle and cover the directions. Words on the list at the end of the page are shown in the puzzle reading left to right or top to bottom. For example, “everlasting” starts on the first horizontal line of the ninth column and is read down the column.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Connections (Easy preparation)

Leader preparation: Unless you have the information already at hand, prior to this activity informally poll your group about their use of online social networking services such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, or similar services.

Supplies: None

Solicit responses from the group about their reasons for using or not using online social networking services. On average, how much time do they spend on a daily basis in this activity? How do they make decisions about the nature and quality of interactions they have with others in these networks? Their methods of interaction, the persons they select for their interactions, and the time used are all reflections of their personal values. If there are those who are not connected this way, ask why not? Follow this informal group survey by asking: Does any one

of the interaction methods fit all the interactions you have with people? Explain. Discuss the advantages/disadvantages of face-to-face contact, voice-to-voice exchanges, and cyberspace exchanges. Invite the participants to think about their choice of methods of interaction: In what ways are the methods appropriate for the messages being exchanged? What is the best use of your time and the time of others with whom you are connecting? How do these relationships support being a good steward of time?

5 A Child Shall Lead

Leader preparation: In the video “Rich Young Man,” a young suburban mother tells her version of the rich young ruler story. See Mark 10:17–22. Preview the video at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2bx8k2f>.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and projection capability

Read or tell the story from Mark 10:17–22. Explain that the video is a twenty-first-century version of this biblical story. Recall for the group Jesus’ words to the rich young man: “Go and sell what you own, and give the money to the poor . . . then, come and follow me.” Emphasize the idea that Jesus invited the young man to become his disciple. Show the video.

Invite the participants’ reflection on the video, particularly the woman’s actions and words. Someone may point out that the woman is rationalizing her behavior. How happy is she with herself at the beginning of the video? How do you account for the change in her thinking toward the video’s end when she says that she needs to clean up her choice-making processes? What part does her daughter’s action play in this change? If any of your participants are parents, guardians, or caregivers of young children, ask them if they’re surprised by their children’s actions—why? Ask the participants to summarize the types of stewardship mentioned in the video.

6 An Invitation

Leader preparation: The video “An Invitation Declined” is a modern-day version of the rich young ruler story that features two young adults, one of whom really likes automobiles; the other is a Jesus follower, possibly a disciple. See Mark 10:17–22. Preview the video at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2abry7w>. Think about how the young adults are likely to react to the video.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and projection capability

Invite the young adults to think about what they do when they’re invited to an event and are supposed to let the host know whether they plan to attend. What do they consider when making a decision about attendance? Perhaps they think about whether the date is open on their calendar, what the event is, who’s hosting it, who else might attend, the appropriate dress for the occasion, the cost, and other considerations. These considerations and the weight you give them are reflections of your values. If you’ve really thought about them, you decided that some considerations were more important than others. These are the products of discernment. Once you’ve made the decision, of course you tell the host.

Show the video in which an invitation is offered. Then read or tell the story from Mark 10:17–22. The young adults in the video seem to differ about following Je-

sus' command. Ask the participants to compare and contrast the views of the two men about following Jesus. How did the video end? (There may be differences of opinion.) What's the meaning of the ending? What are the likely next steps for the man who carried a Bible? For the man who liked automobiles? Remind the group that decisions carry consequences, often unpredictable. Is it still better to consider the consequences of our decisions (even if we can't predict the outcomes) or just to deal with what happens? Why?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Worship Support (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Talk with the person(s) who recruit volunteers to help with worship services about using the time and talents of young adults for these jobs. Ask about the number of people required as greeters, ushers, and those who restore order to the sanctuary pews and hymnal racks following worship, helpers with the fellowship hour, or other service-related activities. Based on the number of young adults in your group, ask about the specific responsibilities for whichever of these activities you anticipate the young adults would willingly handle. Take note of the necessary arrival time and preparation the young adults will need. Discuss at least two future preliminary dates on which the young adults could carry out these responsibilities. Some of the participants in your group may already be involved in these responsibilities.

Supplies: None

Talk with the group about the variety of tasks related to providing a service of worship at your church. With the group, define the responsibilities of those responsible for these tasks. Which of these responsibilities would the young adults be willing to accept? Which responsibilities do they already carry? This may be an opportunity to demonstrate discipleship as you serve others, a role that Jesus demonstrated frequently. Get commitments from the participants about the tasks they will do. Select dates for carrying out these responsibilities. At the end of this session report to the person(s) about the selected date and name the young adults who plan to serve.

8 Hymn Study

Leader preparation: Study the hymn "Take My Gifts" (tune: Talavera Terrace). You can read the lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>. Read the words, noting the many expressions of gratitude. Then be aware of the order of ideas. The composer says clearly that the desire to give one's gifts is the result of being loved by God. Note, too, the unusually expressive language (such as "spiced with humor," "tang of risk and new adventure"). Listen to the tune and note its joyfulness. Study the message and construction of the hymn's words. There's a word phrase in the first line or two of each stanza that is followed by examples of that word phrase in the next lines. Stanza 1: gifts—*light, food, shelter, life, freedom*; Stanza 2: fruit—*juice for wine*; Stanza 3: unknown gifts—*skills, talents, service*. Put this information on a chart, leaving off the italicized words. (Information for Stanza 1 is complete, but Stanzas 2 and 3 are incomplete.)

Supplies:

- copies of the hymn
- an accompanist
- chart with information

If this tune is unfamiliar, ask the accompanist to play it a couple of times while the group follows along. Then sing the hymn. Next, use the chart to lead a discussion about the hymn. Show the participants the arrangement of the word phrase and examples for stanza 1. Then ask them to complete the information for stanzas 2 and 3. Next, ask the participants to think about “gifts they have yet to find, skills they are slow to sharpen, talents of their hand and mind” that culminate in “things made beautiful for others in the place where they are.” Invite each person to examine his or her life to see what she or he has to offer. Then ask: How will you use your gifts and talents? Who will benefit? When will you begin? When you use your gifts and talents in God’s service, you are heeding Jesus’ call to discipleship.

**9 Sharing Talents**

Leader preparation: Locate and study the poster “The Banjo Lesson,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters4>. Henry Ossawa Tanner, the first internationally acclaimed African American artist, painted it in 1893. Portraying African Americans in ways other than as minstrels was unusual in that era. For additional information about the painter, go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cr5jqv>.

Observe the two people who dominate the painting. The household furnishings merely provide a setting. Note the lighting and the colors of various objects. What moods does the painting suggest? What inferences do you make about the relationship between the two people? Is the boy sitting on the man’s lap only so that he can hold the banjo? Because the artist included the word “lesson” in the title, one of these individuals is sharing his expertise with the other. Whoever is the follower is trying on a discipleship role. One is sharing his talents with the other in a hands-on way, demonstrating stewardship of talent. An easy inference is that the man is teaching the boy, but is it possible that the boy is showing the man how to play the banjo? What feelings does this painting evoke in you? To what extent does the painting suggest a personal, devoted relationship between disciple and leader?

Reflect

Look back on the learning experiences with your group. In what ways are the young adults demonstrating that they are beginning to realize that stewardship is a way of life? In which activities did they take particular delight? Express negative ideas? Seem uninterested? In each case try to determine the extent to which the participants’ responses were related to the content or to the way it was presented. Keep these ideas in mind as you work through additional Explorations.

Supplies:

- poster: Banjo Lesson by Henry Ossawa Tanner, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters4>

Display the poster so all can see it. Introduce the painter and this picture. Pose the questions from the leader preparation (above) to help the group reflect on this painting. Invite the young adults to name at least one of their talents. Who, or what group, might benefit if that talent were put to use? Get commitments from the participants about their intentions to use their talents.

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Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Depending on their backgrounds and where they are in their lives, some young adults are more comfortable with tradition than their peers are. Whatever their situation, young adults may understand that traditions within organizations and practices are necessary for sustainability and for maturity. Traditions within families provide identity. The challenge is to know when tradition sustains and when it restricts. Knowledge of the past may help prevent making the same mistakes in a new generation and the discipline of a tradition can be powerfully formational

About this Exploration

Our ancestors in faith have given us a rich inheritance of living stewardship. The spiritual practice of tithing is a gift that forms us as a community and provides for all even as it honors God. From tithing as joyful celebration in community among our Hebrew forebears and the “holding all things in common” of the earliest Christian churches, we see that people of faith before us were formed and challenged by God’s call—as we are today—to live generously and compassionately, sometimes at great cost. From the beginning of the church, shaped for stewardship by worship, education, fellowship, and service, as intentional disciples of Jesus, we embrace life as a journey of discovery and discernment about who Jesus is, what it means to live as stewards of God’s creation, and as workers for justice, peace, wholeness, and inclusion. Exploring this legacy can inspire us to add faithfully to the tradition through our own acts of generous and compassionate stewardship.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Deuteronomy 14:22–29
Acts 4:32–5:11

Leader Preparation

Study the Bible focus passages. These could be foreign to you or young adults. Using tithe money for a party and giving the proceeds from the sale of your worldly goods to the church are unusual ideas. However, these practices represent traditions recorded in the Bible. As you prepare to lead the young adults, think of the traditions you associate with stewardship. What did your church’s early members pass on to later generations? How have those legacies enriched your life? What kinds of new traditions are emerging in your congregation? Are you helping to design the new traditions? Answers to these questions are important.

Prayer: O God, bless me as I assist young adults in making the resources of the church available to them. Grant me wisdom and an understanding heart to help them on their way. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Party Time (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Study Deuteronomy 14:22–29. Are you surprised at the thought of using tithe money for a party? Notice that the party is for everyone—the poor, Levites, aliens, widows, and orphans. This instruction was given to guard against covetousness, selfishness, and distrust. Moreover, giving the tithe promoted friendliness, liberality, and cheerfulness; it also created a fund for the relief of the poor. This was a tradition for the Israelites. For more information see <http://www.tinyurl.com/22rdvsj>. Think about typical celebrations that you and the young adults enjoy. What are the occasions? What are the purposes of the celebrations? Who are the invited guests?

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite the participants to name their favorite celebrations—personal, family, religious, and civic. Describe why they are held, how they are celebrated, and who the usual guests are. Discuss the likely outcomes of these celebrations. Then have a volunteer read Deuteronomy 14:22–29. Ask the participants to compare and contrast that party with their celebrations. Possible similarities include: occasions, reasons for celebrations, and guests. Possible differences may include the locations and the guests. Explore why the poor, Levites, aliens, widows, and orphans were to be invited and provided for. This instruction from God was given to the Israelites to help them overcome covetousness, selfishness, and distrust. How would that work? The scripture also suggests that paying the tithe promoted friendliness, liberality, and cheerfulness, and that it provided for the poor. In what ways might these same results come from giving in today’s world? What might we learn from this account?

2 Church Legacies

Leader preparation: Obtain names and contact information of older, longtime church members who have a strong interest in the church. Perhaps they were instrumental in starting programs or in contributing to the physical plant and furnishings. Perhaps they or their ancestors were influential in establishing this congregation. Whose family has been in the congregation for more than one generation?

Supplies:

- list of names and contact information

Invite the participants to tour the church to look around the facilities and consider the work that made the church what it is today. Look for memorial windows, plaques, artifacts. Suggest that it would be a good idea to learn more about the people who worked, in the past, to help the church grow. Ask the young adults to take a name from your list, but only if they are willing to contact that person to talk about early days in the congregation.

As a group, brainstorm specific inquiries they will make to reveal what the older generation experienced while working in that church. Build a common set of questions, such as these: What were your dreams for the church? How nearly were your dreams fulfilled, or were your dreams exceeded? What financial challenges did the church face? What motivated the church to meet those challenges? What specific things would you name as your legacies for the young adults?

Living Stewardship 

to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

What do you want the young adults to be good stewards of? Why?

Set a date for everyone to report back to the group about their conversations. Following the reports, offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the people who looked ahead and shared their resources. Encourage the young adults to stay in touch with their new older friends.

Another option would be to invite several of these older, longtime members to come to your group and talk with the young adults.

3 Help for the World

Leader preparation: Read Deuteronomy 14:27–28 with its instructions to care for the poor, the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows. With this as a background, learn about Heifer International, a nonprofit organization begun in 1944 with a mission to end hunger and poverty and to care for the earth. Explore this organization’s Web site at <http://www.tinyurl.com/29rem97>. Click on “Our Work” and then on “Learn,” where you’ll find a great deal of information about how this organization carries out its mission. Note the variety of programs that Heifer International undertakes, and view some of the videos that describe their programs. Decide which are likely to be of interest to the young adults.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- computer with Internet connection and projection capability

Read Deuteronomy 14:27–28. Note that there is a strong motif throughout the whole Bible about our responsibility to take care of those who are poor and disadvantaged. In what ways as disciples of Jesus are we to take care of the poor, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows? Log onto <http://www.tinyurl.com/29rem97>. Click on either the “Our Work” or the “Learn” tabs and explore. After studying and viewing, ask the group to identify what they learned about how the work of Heifer International addresses the command in Deuteronomy.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Special Care for Children (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about opportunities for providing special care for children within your church or community. How does your church provide care for its children? Do you have a Safe Sanctuary program in place? How are the children’s areas furnished? What is your congregation’s policy for children and communion? What accommodations are made for children at all-church events, such as worship and fellowship dinners? See the handout for ideas on Attachment: Activity 4. Add these to any opportunities that your church already offers or any that you know about. If the ideas are new to your congregation, think about beginning a tradition of reaching out to help children through activities such as these. How would the tradition benefit the children? The young adults?

Supplies:

- copies of “Special Care Activities for Children,” Attachment: Activity 4

Invite the group to think about how they can use their time, talents, and money to help children. Children are often the most vulnerable persons in any society.

Distribute the handout. Talk about any opportunities that your church offers and describe how these opportunities fit as tradition. Discuss any opportunities that you may not have tried. Ask the young adults to think about how they might participate in reaching out to children. These deliberations require the participants to practice discernment regarding their priorities. Encourage the group to commit to do at least one of the activities and decide dates for the activity. How will they keep one another informed of what all are doing? How will they hold themselves accountable?



5 Strength

Leader preparation: Carefully study the poster “Baobab Okavango Delta Botswana” by Pete Oxford. What do you see? What’s your reaction to the color choices in this poster? What elements seem unusual to you? What qualities come to mind as you look at the tree? Why do you think the artist put the vehicle in this picture? What can you say about the area in which this tree is located?

Supplies: None

- poster: Baobab, Okavango Delta, Botswana by Pete Oxford, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters5>

Display the poster and invite the group to spend time studying it. Pose the questions in the leader preparation (above) and others of your choosing. The baobab tree is one of the largest on the African continent. These trees may reach heights of 100 feet and may have trunk diameters of up to 36 feet. Some baobabs are thought to be thousands of years old (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adansonia>). Their size and longevity suggest strength and durability, perhaps in some ways as does the church. When you think about the strengths of the church, what examples come to mind? In what ways are these strengths part of our church’s traditions? How important is it to pass on this tradition to the next generations? What might we do to insure that the church continues?

6 Worldly Possessions

Leader preparation: Study Acts 4:32–5:11. Focus on the views about possessions of the people named in this scripture passage. What views did the believers have about possessions? What was Barnabas’ view? What were the views of Ananias and Sapphira? What decisions resulted from these views? What were the results of those decisions? For additional information, read Kevin Beck’s paper “Hedging Bets: A Theological Reading of Acts 4:32–5:11,” available at <http://www.tinyurl.com/25m8vh5>.

Beck discusses this scripture passage and provides a useful context and interpretation.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- computer with Internet access and projection capability (optional)

Ask the participants to locate Acts 4:32–5:11 in their Bibles. The passage is about how people at one time in the early church viewed and dealt with their possessions. Ask a volunteer to read the passage and for the remainder of the group to follow in their Bibles. As they read, suggest that they think about the different ways that people viewed their possessions. Pose the questions from the leader preparation (above). Why is it difficult for people to acknowledge God as the owner of everything? How might our lives be changed if we did make this acknowledgement?

Optional: Show a video on Ananias and Sapphira in which a group of older youth or young adults dramatize the story from Acts. Several videos are available on YouTube, <http://www.tinyurl.com/27xxbw6>.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Help for Community People in Need (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: It's traditional that some churches maintain a supply of non-perishable food or clean used clothing that can be given to individuals, typically nonchurch members, who seek emergency help. The church may also keep emergency funds for people in need. These supplies are usually replenished through donations by church members. Find out if your church provides this service and, if so, inquire about the status of quantities on hand. Try to get information about the usual amount dispensed. If your church doesn't have this tradition, locate a community organization—or another church—that offers these opportunities for people in need and inquire about their replenishment needs. Perhaps your church contributes to a local food pantry through which it serves the community. Check about ways the group members could help with that.

Supplies: None

Discuss the findings of your inquiries about emergency food, clothing, and dollars. Ask for suggestions about contributions that the participants might make. Encourage the young adults to act on their own suggestions. Consider this as an ongoing stewardship tradition for your group.

8 Stepping Up

Leader preparation: Skim the articles at the Internet addresses listed on Attachment: Activity 8, "They Stepped Up." The group will need Internet access to do this activity. For those without Internet access, print and photocopy the material.

Supplies:

- "They Stepped Up," Attachment: Activity 8
- computer with Internet access

Over the centuries many people have lived out the Christian tradition through service to others. They became living stewards: saw a need, shared their gifts and skills, and thereby brought God's love to the world. This activity has two parts. The first part involves research about someone who stepped up and met a need. The second part is to meet again after the research to share the results.

Distribute the information sheet and make the assignment to visit one of the Internet addresses, find a person's name, and answer three questions:

- What need did the person(s) meet?
- How did the person(s) meet it?
- What did you learn? How did their actions speak to you?

Invite each person or small groups of persons to choose a name and let all know which one you choose. Cover as many different persons as possible. If there is

time in the session, do the research now. If not, have everyone bring their reports to the next session. These people stepped up to respond to God’s call to nurture others through using their gifts and skills. What are you being called to step up to?

🕒 “Jesu, Jesu”

Leader preparation: Study the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (tune: Chereponi). You can read the lyrics and hear the tune at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>.

Note the need for copyright permission in order to copy the hymn. This hymn was written by Tom Colvin, a Scottish missionary to Africa, and is based on a Ghanaian folk song. Read the history of this hymn at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/24kjkj6>

and think about which parts of that history to share with the group. What is the message of this hymn? The first stanza portrays Jesus as servant; the second and third stanzas describe identities of neighbors and tell us we should serve them; the fourth and fifth stanzas describe what happens when we follow Jesus’ instruction to serve our neighbors.

See the suggestion about using drums or tambourines at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/24twl5t>. Locate accompanist(s).

Supplies:

- copies of the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love”
<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>

Introduce the hymn by telling some of its history. Invite the participants to listen as the hymn is played in upbeat fashion; then sing the hymn. Ask the participants to describe the messages of this hymn stanza by stanza (see leader preparation above). Sing the hymn a second time, this time as a meditation. Invite spoken reflections on the group’s reaction to this challenging hymn.

Reflect

Look back on the learning experiences with your group. In what ways are the young adults demonstrating that they are beginning to realize that stewardship is a way of life? In which activities did they take particular delight? Express negative ideas? Seem uninterested? In each case try to determine the extent to which the participants’ responses were related to the content or to the way it was presented. Keep these ideas in mind as you work through additional Explorations.

Attachment: Activity 4

Special Care Activities for Children**Valentine's Day**

Obtain names of children in the congregation whose parents have agreed to allow their children's names to be included. About three weeks prior to Valentine's Day, hang these names on a bulletin board and ask church adults, including young adults, to select the name of one child. Make sure that all names that are posted are selected. Do not leave out any child. The adult should not divulge the name of the child, but may send one or two "secret" friendship communications to the child prior to Valentine's Day. On the Sunday nearest Valentine's Day at a time adjacent to worship, plan a small party at which adults meet their "adopted" children. Plan a few simple activities that allow adults and children to get acquainted. They may read a poem together, read a scripture about family or friendships, do a word search, or play a simple game, and so forth. The purpose, of course, is to help children get acquainted with people outside their immediate family and to feel that the church is a family.

Midsummer

Locate a school at which numbers of families need financial assistance to purchase back-to-school supplies. Talk with that school's administrator/social worker to find out what school supplies are needed. Ask the young adults to obtain these supplies and to bring them to church by a certain date. See that the young adults deliver the supplies to the school by the due date. These supplies will be distributed by the school personnel.

Christmas

Locate a school or preschool in which numbers of families need assistance in providing holiday gifts for children. Talk with that school's administrator/social worker to supply first names and three gift suggestions for children having this need. Hang these names and gift suggestions on a Christmas tree. Ask church adults, including young adults, to select the name of one or more children, obtain one of the requested gifts, and bring the gift by a certain date. See that young adults deliver the gifts to the school prior to the beginning of the holiday recess. The gifts will be distributed by school personnel.

Any time of year

Find out from a local hospital what need they have for volunteers to provide respite care for parents of children. Perhaps there's a neonatal unit where infants live for several weeks following birth. Or there may be a hospital or a hospital division in which children live who are undergoing long-term treatment. Young adults may volunteer to spend time with these children when their parents take rest periods. Tasks include rocking the babies, telling stories, singing, or playing games.

Any time of year

Contact a child care facility or a public library that offers story time for children. Make arrangements for young adults to read to children. The young adult obtains appropriate reading material and reads aloud to the children. The young adult's own children may be included if their age is similar to that of the group who participate in the reading activity.

Attachment: Activity 8

They Stepped Up

Find the article listed by the Internet link. Read the article, find the name (listed in order of appearance), and then answer these questions:

- What need did the person(s) meet?
- How did the person(s) meet it?
- What did you learn? How did their actions speak to you?

www.ucc.org/about-us/hidden-histories/american-indians-missions.html

Tibbitts and Frazier families

Harold and Eva Case

Robert Fox (two in the article with this name)

John Stacy

Mitchell Whiterabbit

www.ucc.org/about-us/hidden-histories/blacks-and-the-american.html

Lewis Tappan

James Pennington

Henry Garnet

Mary Ann Cary

Mary Smith Peake

Edmonia Highgate

Thomas Tucker

Barnabas Root

Adam Spence and George White

www.ucc.org/about-us/hidden-histories/the-deaconess-movement-in.html

Theodore Fliedner

Gertrude Reichard

www.ucc.org/about-us/hidden-histories/sho-chiku-bai.html

Neesima Jo (Joseph Hardy Neesima)

Shinjiro Okubo

Joseph Fukushima

George Aki

Galen Fischer and Ruth Kingman

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Media often suggest that some young adults are becoming involved with their communities through service projects. Despite challenging economic times, they see the need for improvements in the larger community and willingly work toward this goal. In doing so, these individuals may actually take paths different from those of their parents or friends. However, other young adults continue the patterns they've seen and strive for individual goals with little thought for the welfare of others. Their focus is on what's good for themselves and their families. The former group needs encouragement and the latter, a change of heart.

About this Exploration

We live in relationship with God and one another in a world created and sustained by God. The scriptures help us to discover how God intends for us to live as stewards within a grateful community, moving beyond rituals to serve the needs and celebrate the potentials of our neighbors near and far with extravagant grace and generosity.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 1:10–17

Mark 14:3–9

Leader Preparation

Seek some quiet time to study the focus scriptures. Think about the context and mission in which you and your young adults live. What are some challenges you face? What calls to service do you hear? How do you answer? Sometimes you answer boldly and with resolve; at other times, your answer may be barely a murmur. God blesses both answers.

Prayer: *O God, I shoulder responsibility for leading young adults, some of whom want to make the world a better place. Give me wisdom and courage to lead by example toward the greater good for all. Amen.*

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine 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 with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Budget for Church Missions (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Make arrangements with the finance committee chair and another committee member to meet with your group to discuss how priorities are assigned to mission projects in the church budget. Let the group know in advance the purpose of the meeting, and encourage them to think of questions they might ask about mission allocations. Perhaps you could develop some “pump priming” questions that would help the conversation begin and also model the kind of questions that are appropriate.

Supplies:

- copies of the church budget

Introduce the budget makers and invite them to describe the mission projects included in the church budget. Ask them to share how the particular projects were selected and how priorities about allocations are made. Encourage the young adults to ask about matters such as adding new missions and prioritizing allocations. Thank the leaders for their time with your group and with their commitment to the financial well-being of the church. You might also pray for them and their important task. Ask the participants what they learned from this presentation.



2 Service Anyone?

Leader preparation: Study the poster “The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus” by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez. What do you notice first? After looking for a while longer, what do you see? Do you have different ideas now? How does the use of darkness affect your interpretation of what’s going on in the picture? How would having additional light change your interpretation? What do you imagine is going through the woman’s mind? What do you think the figures in the background are doing? Is the woman preparing to serve these individuals, or has she just cleaned up after serving them? Is she eavesdropping? Is it conceivable that the woman spends much of her time in service to others? What do you think the woman feels about her situation, at least as indicated in this painting? Explain.

Supplies

- poster: The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>

Display the poster and invite the group members silently to contemplate the art. After several moments, pose the questions from the leader preparation (above) and others you’ve thought of after your time with the painting. Follow with questions such as these: Do any of you have, or have had, a paid position that is service oriented? What are its advantages? Its disadvantages? Regardless of your job, all of us encounter workers whose business is serving others. What distinctions can you make between workers who not only embody the spirit of service, but who also let this spirit show, and workers who deal with you quickly and hurry on to the next person? With which workers do you prefer to deal? Why?

3 Listening for the Message

Leader preparation: These two sources of information may be helpful as you study Isaiah 1:10–17: “Worship: Meaningful or Meaningless?” at <http://www.tinyurl.com/257gqv3> and Isaiah 1:10–17 at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2c24nql>. Become familiar with the African Bible Study Method, also known as the Lambeth Method, as outlined on Attachment: Activity 3. Check in your church library or ask your pastor for different Bible translations.

Supplies:

- Bibles in several translations
- “African Bible Study Method,” Attachment: Activity 3

Ask the participants to sit in a circle and to open their Bibles to Isaiah 1:10–17. Distribute Attachment: Activity 3. Say the opening prayer together, and then follow the African Bible Study Method. When you are finished, ask the participants to share the insights they gathered from this intensive study. What about insights for the church? For yourself? For the group?

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Difference in Priorities (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Study Mark 14:3–9. According to Mark, this episode takes place two days before the Passover, and Jesus is already marked for death by his enemies. Think about where this episode takes place, who was present, who spoke, and what was said. A denarius was the usual day’s wage for a laborer.

Locate copies of the hymn “A Woman Came Who Did Not Count the Cost” (tune: Wexford Carol). You can hear the hymn at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2aazg8q>. Invite an accompanist.

Supplies:

- Bible: *The Message* or another modern paraphrase or translation
- copies of the hymn “A Woman Came Who Did Not Count the Cost”

Mark 14:3–9 describes a situation involving conflicting priorities about a gift. Just prior to Jesus’ death, he is eating with friends at a private home when there’s an intrusion. Invite a volunteer to read the passage. Explain the value of the woman’s gift in monetary terms. Ask the participants to identify the conflict in priorities. Knowing human beings as we do, how reasonable is it to believe that if the gift belonged to someone in the dinner group that it would have been used for the poor? Why? What do you make of Jesus’ comment that she performed a good service for him and that she would be remembered. Whose priority counted here?

Distribute copies of the hymn. Ask the group to listen as the hymn is played. Then sing it in a spirit of meditation.

5 Fund-raiser Planning

Leader preparation: Gather ideas from the young adults about their areas of concern for local and global missions. They may name things such as: food, medical care, shelter, clean water. Any one of these may be the focus of a planning session for a fund-raiser.

Supplies:

- newsprint or white board and markers
- computer with Internet connection

Invite the group to plan a fund raiser for a mission cause. Describe some possibilities, such as those named above. Then ask for additions to the list. Use computers to look for information about suggested mission causes, such as their mission and how they use donated funds. Weigh the pros and cons of each cause. Based on this, ask the participants to select no more than two causes.

As a group envision a fund raiser that would generate dollars. What type of event would they want to host? What would be its purpose? Who would be the target audience? How many people would be needed to work at the fundraiser? Would people other than young adults be needed as help? When and where would it be held? What are reasonable expectations about donations? Would there be expenses associated with the fund raiser, and, if so, how would they be covered? How would publicity be handled? When it looks as if a consensus is forming, ask which cause they wish to select. Facilitate the group's planning: set dates, create a committee, and follow through, but keep the mission of this event always in the forefront of planning and implementation.



6 Personal Inventory about Community Missions

Leader preparation: Because this Exploration focuses on context and mission, it's important to know how the young adults view community missions. The handout asks young adults to provide information about their knowledge, abilities, and inclinations to engage in community missions. Study the handout and complete it for your own information. Answers to questions 1 and 2 provide brief information about the respondent's knowledge of community missions; answers to question 3 name brief service categories that a respondent feels qualified to handle; and answers to questions 4–8 provide summary information about how a respondent views community service. Try to anticipate any questions the young adults may raise in response to question 8. Be advised that this handout provides only partial information about the respondent's knowledge, abilities, and inclinations. Furthermore, the information is only as accurate as the respondent chooses to make it.

Supplies:

- copies of "Personal Inventory about Community Missions," Attachment: Activity 6
- pens or pencils

Invite the participants to make a self-assessment about their knowledge and views regarding community missions. Emphasize that no answer is better than another and that you hope they will see the benefit of considering the questions carefully before answering them. Distribute the handouts and allow time for everyone to complete them. When they finish the inventory, offer them the opportunity to ask questions. Say that you'll get answers to any questions they have

for which you don't already have answers (see question 8). Ask them to focus on what this assessment might say about their own personal mission. Suggest that they keep their inventories and continue to think about them for the duration of the stewardship emphasis.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Stewardship in Action (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate an area where littering is noticeable (perhaps at a local neighborhood, a park, near a lake). Invite the young adults to show up to pick up litter at an agreed upon place and time. Be sure to secure any required permits, if necessary.

Supplies:

- garbage/recycle bags
- gloves
- safety vests

As a group go to a place where litter is noticeable, and pick up the litter. If recycling service is available in your area, separate the recyclables. Take the bagged litter to appropriate disposal sites. Thank the participants for giving their time for the project. If you have a group meeting soon after the project, provide an opportunity to reflect on this activity and ask if they would like to make it a “tradition” for their group.

8 Local Mission Work

Leader preparation: Get information about local missions that would interest the members of your group as places where they could invest their time and possibly their expertise (examples: Habitat for Humanity, serving food at homeless shelters, after school tutoring for children, literacy education for adults).

Supplies:

- whatever is needed for the chosen mission

Invite the young adults to discuss the possibility of their helping at a local mission site, even if it's on a short-term basis. Doing so would be evidence of their stewardship of time and talents—and, perhaps, an expression of their own God-given mission. Ask if they know of local missions where they would like to volunteer. If they do not, share your information and answer questions. If needed, help the young adults connect with the appropriate supervisory persons at the local missions. Encourage the young adults to be clear when talking with the supervisor about the amount of time they can give and their levels of expertise. Be available to counsel the young adults, if needed, once they begin their service. If you have a group meeting soon after the project, provide opportunity to reflect on this activity and ask if they would like to make it a “tradition” for the group.

9 Setting a Course of Action

Leader preparation: Think about the young adults, their experiences with missions, their personal mission, and their questions about stewardship of time and abilities.

Supplies: None

Invite the group to sit in a circle. Ask if anyone has a personal mission statement or a life verse that gives focus to what they do with their life, their work, and their faith, and to share about their experiences with mission activities. Ask volunteers to share stories based on these experiences. Inquire about the things the young adults learned from their experiences and whether their personal mission was challenged or informed by the experience. What effects did their service have on the lives of others? Encourage them to say how they felt as a result of becoming involved in the service. Remind them that God has no hands but ours, no feet but ours, no voice but ours. Ask the group to consider whether they are willing to integrate service into their lifestyles. Perhaps they already have!

Reflect

Look back on the learning experiences with your group. In what ways are the young adults demonstrating that they are beginning to realize that stewardship is a way of life? In which activities did they take particular delight? Express negative ideas? Seem uninterested? In each case try to determine the extent to which the participants' responses were related to the content or to the way it was presented. Keep these ideas in mind as you work through additional Explorations.

Attachment: Activity 3

African Bible Study Method

This Bible study method was introduced by the African Delegation to the Lambeth Conference. Hence, it is known by both names: “Lambeth” and “African.” The Lambeth Conference is a gathering of bishops of the Anglican Communion.

The Lambeth Conferences are decennial assemblies of bishops of the Anglican Communion convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The conferences occur every ten years. The first such conference took place in 1867. As the Anglican Communion is an international association of national and regional churches and not a governing body, Lambeth Conferences serve a collaborative and consultative function, expressing “the mind of the communion” on issues of the day. Resolutions that a Lambeth Conference may pass are without legal effect, but they are nonetheless influential.

Opening Prayer: *O Blessed God, you caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

1. One person reads passage slowly.
2. Each person identifies the word or phrase that catches his or her attention (1 minute).
3. Each shares the word or phrase around the group (3–5 minutes, NO DISCUSSION).
4. Another person reads the passage slowly (from a different translation, if possible).
5. Each person identifies where this passage touches his or her life today (1 minute).
6. Each shares (3–5 minutes, NO DISCUSSION).
7. Passage is read a third time (another reader and translation, if possible).
8. Each person names or writes “From what I’ve heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me to do or be? Is God inviting me to change in any way?” (5 minutes)
9. Each person shares his or her answer (5–10 minutes, NO DISCUSSION)
10. Each prays for the person on the right, naming what was shared in the other steps (5 minutes).
11. Close with the Prayer of Our Savior and SILENCE.

Attachment: Activity 6

Personal Inventory about Community Missions

These questions ask about your knowledge, abilities, and inclinations to engage in community missions. Take time to think about your answers before writing them in the blank spaces. You are writing to yourself when you answer.

1. Name some community organizations (or types of organizations) that you know where service is possible.

2. The jobs or services that volunteers can do at these organizations include: (check all that apply and add to the list, as needed)
 - games/arts and crafts with children
 - literacy activities with children and youth
 - literacy activities with adults
 - respite care with adults
 - minor home repairs
 - home construction projects
 - office work
 - music activities, such as leading or accompanying singing
 - other (please specify)

3. Circle beside each job in the list above that is one for which you have the qualifications and abilities. Circle all that apply.

4. How would your doing this service benefit *others*? Be specific.

5. How would your doing this service benefit *the organization*? Be specific.

6. How would your doing this service benefit *you*? Be specific.

7. About how much time could you devote to this service on a weekly basis?

8. What questions would you need to have answered before you volunteered your service?

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group or Setting

Young adults may believe that most of their life is still ahead of them. In most cases, this is true. This is an age during which they lay the foundations for later adulthood. It's important that they build a sound foundation. The stewardship practices they develop at this point can be especially beneficial as they confront life's bumps in subsequent years.

About this Exploration

As we move into the future, a clear vision of where we are headed emerges out of our understanding of stewardship. This growing understanding is enhanced as we consider far-ranging questions like: What kind of persons do we want to be? To what purpose do we devote our lives? What are our core values and beliefs? That vision will also benefit by wrestling with more immediate questions such as: What choices and decisions are we making every day in our use of the money, time, talents and abilities, the environment, and other resources that have been entrusted to our care? Living stewardship comes down to individuals and the communities of which we are a part. It also involves acting in new ways, growing out of our reflections on how we are living our lives and the journey we are on, discerning the messages that we've received throughout our lives from culture, family, and God, experiencing ourselves in community, and deciding our next explorations.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
1 Chronicles 29:1–19
Revelation 21:10,
21:22–22:5

Leader Preparation

Find a quiet place and time to study the focus scriptures, both of which are forward-looking. Think about the young adults and the future they're likely to inherit. In many cases that future is less bright than was that of their parents. The young adults will need to know and decide for themselves who they wish to become and what their purposes are. Through your leadership and example, they start to answer these questions.

Prayer: O God, help me as I point young adults toward the future. Give me wisdom and a caring heart to ease them on their way. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine 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 with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Principles for Giving (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Study 1 Chronicles 29:1–21. Stuart Tullis says these scriptures contain timeless principles that guided the Israelites' giving and can guide today's giving as well. The principles are: giving that pleases God is both purposeful and intentional, gifts to God are to be consecrated, gifts are to be voluntary, and God is glorified in generous gifts (see <http://www.tinyurl.com/2b7jl2s>).

Think about how these principles can inform our giving. List them on a chart along with the Bible reference. Keep the chart covered until you are ready to use it.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- chart with the Bible reference and principles (see above)

Invite the participants to locate 1 Chronicles 29 in their Bibles. The Bible passage features King David when he is about to leave his throne to his son, Solomon. This chapter describes events at the end of David's life. Ask individual participants to read sections of the chapter as follows: verses 1–5; 6–9; 10–13; 14–19; 20–25; and 26–30. Reveal the chart containing the principles. Invite the participants to locate the scriptural basis for each principle, talk about the principle, and give at least one example of how the principle works in today's world.

2 The New Jerusalem

Leader preparation: Study Revelation 21:10 and 21:22–22:5. Notice John's word descriptions of the holy city, the river of the water of life, the tree of life, and the activities within the holy city. Imagine the perfection of this place and what living there would be like.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- 8 ½" x 14" paper
- colored pencils or crayons

Ask the participants to tell in a couple of sentences what they think heaven looks like or will be like. After all volunteers have spoken, remind them that John, the author of the book of Revelation, gives a detailed description of heaven. Ask a volunteer (or more than one) to read Revelation 21:10 and 21:22–22:5, as all follow along. Ask how their sense of heaven and John's description match up, pointing out that no one knows for sure what heaven is like. Next, ask the young adults to sketch their favorite aspect of heaven (either from their own imagination or from John's) using the art supplies. After the sketches are complete, suggest that the participants share their sketch and tell why they selected the particular aspect for their drawings.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

3 Rivers in Trouble

Leader preparation: Read Revelation 22:1–5 and picture the river of the water of life, which is described as bright as crystal. Think about the conditions of rivers in your region. It's doubtful that they flow freely and unobstructed because many have been dammed. It's unlikely that they will be as "bright as crystal." Numerous organizations exist to help save rivers, one of which is River Network. Read about the work of this organization at <http://www.rivernetwork.org/about-us>. (There may be an active river/water watch group in your community; check their work out as well.) At this site, click on "Key Issues"; select and read those of probable interest to your young adults.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- computer with Internet access and projection capability
- a crystal (optional)

Ask a young adult to read Revelation 22:1–5. Then ask individuals to describe the river and what "bright as crystal" might mean. (If you have a crystal, you might bring it in and pass it around.) Talk about the benefits of this river to the fruit trees and living creatures along its course. Next, ask the participants to contrast this idyllic picture with at least one river in their vicinity and to note the differences. Before we can make substantial change in today's rivers, it is helpful to find out more about the problems. Ask that they log onto

<http://www.rivernetwork.org/about-us>

(or the local site) and read the brief introduction. Then click on the "Key Issues," select one issue, and read about it. Encourage the participants to view different key issues. Ask them to report the main ideas for that key issue to the group. When all have completed a study of their issue, hold a large group discussion that focuses on the main ideas about key issues related to river problems. Why would we think about a local polluted river as part of a study of the crystalline rivers of heaven? What does this have to do with stewardship? What does this have to do with the prayer Jesus taught us to pray—"Thy kingdom come"?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Stewardship Practices and Values (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: It's relatively easy to say that a stewardship practice is a value—but is it really? Consider that most young adults are in the process of building their stewardship values. Such values emerge as people, young and old, engage in discerning and coming to decisions about what matters most. By their very nature, values are not imposed; they must be learned. Sometimes we say they are "caught, not taught."

Study the criteria for values shown in Attachment: Activity 4. Note that these criteria pose questions that require discernment. Be clear about three ideas:

- Impulsive or thoughtless choices do not lead to values as defined here; that is, choosers must be aware of the results of each possible choice.
- Action is required for a practice to be a value (people who talk about something but never do anything about it are dealing with something other than a value).
- It's only after all the criteria are met that a value can be claimed. Because actions are typically based on values (and our practices reflect our true values), it's important to know if a practice really is a value or if it's something to which we give lip service.

To see if these criteria are meaningful, apply them to your situation. Ask yourself if using your talent as a leader of young adults is a value. Was accepting this job a free choice for you? Was this choice of how you use your talent selected from alternatives—could you have done other jobs? Did you consider the consequences of not only leading young adults, but also of using your talent in other situations? Are you happy with your decision to lead young adults? Is it known that you are a young adult leader?

Think of some areas of stewardship in which the young adults in your group may be developing values, such as using their time/talents in after school tutoring, working on a Habitat for Humanity project, serving food at homeless shelters or other projects, or sharing their resources for mission projects.

Supplies:

- copies of “A Stewardship Practice Can Be Considered a Value . . .” Attachment: Activity 4
- pens or pencils

We have talked frequently about stewardship practices and values. However, for a practice to be a value, it must meet several criteria. Distribute the handout and discuss the seven criteria, especially emphasizing the three ideas mentioned in the leader preparation above. Explain why it’s important to distinguish between values and things we think are values, but are not. Then guide a discussion using the example on the handout about time as a scout leader. Interject the idea that if this individual answers “no” to any question, then this is probably not a value even if the person continues service. His or her heart isn’t in the service. What does this say to your participants? Do they agree with this definition of a value?

Invite the young adults to put one of their stewardship practices to the test. Be sure they state the practice carefully and specifically—not generically (for example, giving money to outreach missions rather than giving money; service work at the retirement home rather than service work). Ask each to share whether the stated value passes the test. What are they going to do about it if it does not?

5 Thanks Giving

Leader preparation: The video “Thanks Giving” provides much numerical information about world hunger. The numbers clearly show that Americans are capable of doing much more to relieve hunger than they do. Preview the video at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cnv4qo>. Then, look at it a second time and make notes about important statistics or contrasts that you want to discuss with your participants. For example, the amount of money required to do away with hunger is seven times greater than the amount donated (35 million compared to 5 million dollars). The numbers have worsened since this video was made in fall 2008. According to the November 17, 2009, issue of *The Christian Century* more than 1 billion people are undernourished.

Supplies:

- Bible
- computer with Internet access and projection capability

Indicate that world hunger is a pandemic in our world. Use the statistics from the leader preparation in this activity. The context for the specific verse we are going to look at is 1 Chronicles. Here King David addresses his people about voluntarily giving back to God out of what God has given them. Read 1 Chronicles 29:14. Prior to showing the video, give the young adults a couple of things to look for as they watch (see the leader preparation). Then show the video. Start the fol-

low up by asking about the specific things you asked them to look for. Then show the video again. Broaden the discussion by asking questions such as: What do the numbers in this presentation suggest about our priorities for spending money? Are most of us aware that hunger is a major world problem? How might we increase people’s awareness of this problem? What strategies would help people to join in solving the problem? How is this a personal stewardship question? A congregational stewardship question? A denominational stewardship question? A question about the future?

 **6 Grand New Day**

Leader preparation: Study the poster “With Hoot and Squawk and Squeak and Bark . . .” by Barbara Reid. What do you notice first? What else do you notice after looking for awhile? Do you have different ideas? What mood does this artwork project? Why do you say so? What textures does this artwork suggest? What instances of whimsy do you find? What messages do the animals project as they leave the ark? If they could speak, what would they be saying? What messages do the figures on the ark’s deck project?

Supplies:

- poster: With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark... by Barbara Reid, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>

Display the poster and invite the participants to spend some time in contemplation; listen for laughs. Use the questions in the leader preparation (above) and others of your choosing to begin a discussion. What explains the fact that the animals resumed their built-in transportation modes when they departed the ark? The animals may not know their destination, but it’s evident that they are moving forward into their future. Think about times in your life when your spirits were cramped by life events, much as were the lives of people and animals on the ark. What was your energy level like? What happened to release the cramping? Did you practice discernment about the cause of the cramping difficulty? Did you make decisions that helped bring about release? What was your energy level like after the release? Did you sense new purpose for living? Do you think God was present in these processes? Be grateful for energy each day and remember that you were made in God’s image. What does this teach us about how to live as stewards in the future?

Sending & Serving Activities

 **7 Choosing Simpler Living (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Think about personal areas of living in which simplification would be helpful and represent stewardship of resources and time, such as combining errands instead of handling them individually; giving away a garment each time you put a new one in your closet; asking, “Is this something I want or is it something I really need?” prior to any purchase. Think about the options most of us have for life functions. Do we choose carefully from our options? With the young adults, plan to have a discussion about choosing to live more simply.

Supplies:

- paper and pens or pencils

Begin by asking a few questions, such as: About how many choices did you have for your last meal? For what you are wearing? For the method by which you traveled to this meeting? Allow time for the participants to answer each question. In most cases they will report that they had many choices. Discuss the advantages of having many options, and then of having only a few options—or none. Next, discuss the disadvantages of having many options, and then of having only a few options. During these discussions, introduce the idea that fewer options can save time, money, and energy and may be better for the environment.

Distribute the paper and pens or pencils. Either individually or in small groups, ask the participants to consider three areas of their lives in which they have several options. Ask them to write one way to simplify in each living area, indicating if the simplification would save time, money, or other resources. Ask if they are willing to adopt these simpler approaches as part of daily living. Invite sharing of any resolutions that emerge out of this discernment time. Consider a time in the future for accountability follow-up.

8 Benefits of Decluttering

Leader preparation: Look around your working or living space. Are your belongings or those of your family/housemates lying about not serving any immediate purpose? Would your work/living be helped/hampered if those things were put out of sight, or if those things were recycled or discarded? If you need to declutter, take time to do so. Make arrangements for the recycling of unnecessary items. Now take a deep breath and consider how you feel about the “new” environment. Are you reenergized and ready to take on new challenges? Who might benefit from things that you gave away?

Supplies: None

Prior to the arrival of the young adults, purposefully mislay items in the meeting space to the point that they are noticeable (examples: chairs are not organized, hymnals and Bibles are strewn about, trash is on the floor, graffiti on the newsprint or white board, items for a rummage sale and leftover bulletins from a previous service are lying about). Notice what happens when the young adults arrive. Do they attempt to restore order or do they just continue with whatever they were doing as they entered the room? Invite them to look around this room. Does it look like it’s ready for us to meet here? Unless the participants actually restored order when they arrived, request that they do so now. When things are in place, ask if they are now ready to have their conversation. Some individuals may acknowledge a better frame of mind, but others may not register any difference in how they feel.

How does owning things make you feel about them? Do those feelings change over time to be more positive? Negative? What are reasons for changes in feelings toward things? What do you do with things you no longer care about? Could some of these things be recycled and used by others? Give examples. What do you do about things that need to be discarded? Give examples. How does finding a new home for unwanted things, either in the give-away box or dumpster, make you feel? Is there a clearing of your mind so you can move forward? Are you willing to see how decluttering your work/living space can make you feel by actually trying it? What can we learn about life stewardship from this activity?



9 Help Save a River

Leader preparation: Help the young adults make an effort toward preserving and restoring clean and healthy waters. Log onto the River Network Web site at <http://www.tinyurl.com/24sua6a>. After reading the general information, click on “Action” and see the options for active involvement. Think about which of these might interest your group. Open “What You Can Do at Home,” read the general information, and click on the “Ten Tips” attachment. Plan to use these tips in discussion.

Supplies:

- computer(s) with Internet connection(s)
- copies of “Ten Tips;” Attachment: Activity 9

Ask the participants to identify local or regional waterways or rivers and to describe their general condition (for example, changes in water levels in recent years, signs of pollution). Next, discuss any known attempts to correct the problems and what the outcomes of those attempts were. Suggest that participants log onto <http://www.tinyurl.com/24sua6a> and examine the options for actions. Discuss those options. Then say that there are things all of us can do to help save rivers and that the handout you’re distributing will help clarify your statement. Ask the participants to read the ten tips and to choose at least three actions they are willing to make as part of their daily routine. Talk about the savings that accrue from these actions. How is this a stewardship activity? What biblical understanding is operating here?

Reflect

Look back on your experiences in leading the young adults in these stewardship experiences. How have you grown in your realization of stewardship as a way of life? Are you modeling the practices advocated in the activities? Consider the young adults. About what percentage of them seem to realize that stewardship is a 24/7 commitment? What evidence have you seen either in their statements or actions? Pray that each person will continue to grow toward making stewardship a lifetime commitment.

Attachment: Activity 4

A Stewardship Practice Can Be Considered a Value . . .

If it meets each of these seven criteria.* The practice is:

- chosen freely
- chosen from alternatives
- chosen after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative
- prized and cherished
- affirmed or made public
- acted upon
- repeated

Example: Time given to serve as a scout leader is a value if you:

- voluntarily choose to give your time for this service
- choose to serve as scout leader rather than spend that time on your own hobby, working for extra pay, or resting
- choose to serve as scout leader because/in spite of these consequences: it brings good feelings about helping children (some or all of whom aren't your own), allows you to serve as a positive role model, means less time for your hobby, means less take home pay, means less rest, takes energy, delays a major home purchase that could have been bought with extra take home pay
- are happy about serving as a scout leader (you prize and cherish this opportunity to give your time)
- allow people to know that you are serving as a scout leader (you're not embarrassed or shy about letting others know you spend your time this way)
- actually serve as scout leader (you do more than just talk about using your time in this service)
- continue to use your time as a scout leader

Identify a stewardship practice that you believe is a value for you. See how it measures against each criterion. Put it to the test.

The practice is (be specific): _____

Was it chosen freely? Yes or No

What were alternatives to the practice? (be specific)

What were the consequences for each alternative?

Are you happy about the stewardship practice? Yes or No

Do others know about your stewardship practice? Yes or No

Have you actually engaged in the stewardship practice? Yes or No

Do you continue with/repeat the stewardship practice? Yes or No

*See <http://frank.mtsu.edu/~u101irm/valuedef.html>

Attachment: Activity 9, page 1

TEN TIPS TO HELP OUR RIVERS

Here's a list of **TEN TIPS** for some simple things you can do in and around your home to help our rivers. You'll find there are many easy ways you can save water and prevent pollution. Pick three (or more!) of these actions and commit to make them part of your daily routine. Add up the instant savings for you and our rivers!

1. Repair leaky faucets and toilets right away: *Leaky sinks and toilets can waste 50 gallons of water in one day, depleting our rivers. For a leaky faucet, look for a faulty O-ring or valve seat. Toilet leaks aren't always so obvious. Try pouring colored liquid into the tank. If after 15 minutes you see dye in the bowl, you may need to replace the flapper.*

- I will repair my **leaky faucet**. **Savings:** 180 gallons/week
- I will repair my **leaky toilet**. **Savings:** 1750 gallons/week

2. Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth and washing the dishes: *You can save 3-5 gallons each time you brush your teeth. Try using a cup when brushing and shaving. And fill up the sink first when washing vegetables or doing a load of dishes. It's a small change that will make a big difference.*

- I will turn off the tap **while brushing my teeth**. **Savings:** 25 gallons/week
- I will turn off the tap **while washing the dishes**. **Savings:** 20 gallons/week

3. Run the washing machine and dishwasher only when they are fully loaded. *You can save between 300-800 gallons of water each month.*

- I will run the **washing machine** only when fully loaded. **Savings:** 160 gallons/week
- I will run the **dishwasher** only when fully loaded. **Savings:** 45 gallons/week

4. Dispose of household cleaners, paint and other chemicals safely. *Many cleaning products found in our homes and garages are too dangerous to be disposed of in the trash or down the drain. Read the label: anything marked "Poison" or "Danger" should be taken to your local hazardous waste center. Use water-based paints and dry off excess paint with a paper towel before rinsing your paintbrush.*

- I will dispose of **household cleaners, paint and other chemicals** safely. **Savings:** preventing added pollution from entering your local river.

5. Sweep off instead of hosing the driveway, patio or sidewalk. *Hosing for 15 minutes wastes 150 gallons of water. Water run-off from our driveways or sidewalks carries contaminants, such as dirt, motor oil, fertilizers and animal waste, into our rivers.*

- I will sweep my driveway instead of hosing. **Savings:** 75 gallons/week

Attachment: Activity 9, page 2

6. Install water-saving showerheads and high-performance, low-flush toilets. *An outdated showerhead wastes 20 extra gallons a day or 7,200 gallons a year—and that's just for one person! An average family of four can save 14,000-17,000 gallons of water a year by replacing pre-1993 toilets with new high-efficiency ones. High-efficiency toilets, washing machines and dishwashers not only save our rivers, they save us money.*

- I will install a **water-saving showerhead** that uses 2.5 gallons per minute.

Savings: 140 gallons/week

- I will install a **high-performance toilet** that uses 1.6 gallons per flush.

Savings: 70 gallons/week

7. Fix car leaks promptly. Leaky cars leave drips or puddles of motor oil and other fluids on our streets and driveways. *When it rains, these contaminants run down our streets, through the storm drains, and into our rivers. So clean stains on your driveway or street and fix car leaks right away. Preventing polluted runoff will help keep our rivers and drinking water safe.*

- I will fix my **car leaks**.

Savings: preventing added pollution from entering your local river.

8. Take care when changing your car's motor oil and dispose of the oil safely. *One quart of motor oil can pollute 250,000 gallons of river water, so use a large pan if you are changing motor oil yourself. Never pour leftover oil down a storm drain or into the trash—instead, drop it off at your local hazardous waste center.*

- I will take care when **changing my motor oil** and dispose of it safely.

Savings: preventing added pollution from entering your local river.

9. Water your lawn and garden only in the morning or evening. *Water evaporates quickly during the middle of the day. Remember, a lawn only needs 1 to 1.5 inches of water per week, and you can set out a can to measure for you. Watering less creates deeper, stronger roots and a healthier lawn. Or you could try letting the lawn go brown, as nature intended during summer months. Another option is to plant native plants or xeriscaping that require less water altogether.*

- I will take care to **water my lawn and garden** in the morning or evening.

Savings: preventing added pollution from entering your local river.

10. Buy and use environmentally friendly products. *Choose safer, multipurpose cleaners marked with only a "Caution" warning, rather than products with "Poison" and "Danger" on the label. Avoid chlorine, phosphate products and solvents like paint thinner. Be sure to check out the link at the top of this page, to view recipes for inexpensive, safe alternatives.*

- I will buy and use **environmentally friendly products**.

Savings: preventing added pollution from entering your local river.

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