

# Working for Justice



## Exploration: Discovery

### About this Setting

It is much easier to practice our faith when we are surrounded by others who are committed to the same values and beliefs as we hold. The reality of our day-to-day lives in the family/household setting, at the workplace, or around the community in which we live is that we often find ourselves alone in our beliefs or, at a minimum, unsure of the beliefs of those around us. Sometimes this uncertainty creates tension and a sense of isolation. It also invites us to accept the challenge to change and grow in the practice of our faith in our daily lives.

This setting invites you to find new ways to engage in discovery in your day-to-day life outside the structure and comfort of your church family. The following activities invite you to discover how justice—or the lack of it—is a part of your daily life experience—personally and for others. These activities also invite you to discover ways in which you contribute to the existence of justice or injustice yourself. By engaging in these activities, you may find a deeper understanding of yourself, your family, and your loved ones, as well as those with whom you work, play, and live. In addition to discovering the ways working for justice can give your life direction, you may also learn ways you can make positive, constructive change that will help everyone live in a more just and caring world.

As you begin this Exploration, consider recording and keeping your thoughts in a “Living Practices in Daily Life Journal” rather than only writing them temporarily on a piece of paper. The journal can be any small notebook you can have available to you whenever you participate in activities in this Exploration. By keeping your thoughts and responses in a journal, you can go back to them throughout your different Daily Life experiences and use them as reference points for your con-



tinuing faith journey. Feel free to make entries in this journal any time you find yourself addressing issues of working for justice in the world. It is helpful to date each entry so you can keep track of when the entries are being made.

## About this Exploration

Working for justice is vital in the personal and communal lives of God's faithful people. God desires and requires the faithful to work for justice. Through it, we creatively level the playing field, break down walls, and nurture environments so that all may experience a whole and holy life. This life is free of oppression, degradation, and exclusion. We encounter stories, interpret scriptures, and participate in activities through which we discover how to engage actively in justice work in the home, church, community, and world.

**BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:**  
**Isaiah 1:1, 10–18**  
**Luke 4:14–21**

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### ① Hold a Family Council Meeting (Easy Preparation)

Everyone is busy no matter what our age. It is not easy for families to find time to spend quality time together. This activity invites your family to hold a family council with every family/household member present. To complete this activity, everyone needs to agree to meet together at one time, in one place, with no outside interruptions or diversions for no fewer than 15 minutes and no more than one half hour.

##### Supplies:

- Bible
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- small ball or ruler or other object that can be passed around

Appoint someone to do each of the following tasks (depending on the size of the family, some of these tasks will be done by the same persons):

- Seek and get agreement from everyone on the time/place for the 15-minute family council meeting.
- Keep time.
- Enforce the agreement that this is "uninterrupted time," which means no radio, television, phones, computers, electronic devices, and so forth.
- Read the scripture.
- Ask the questions (the person asking the questions participates in the conversation as well).
- Read the closing prayer.

Once you have gathered together, have the person designated with the reading responsibility read aloud Luke 4:14–21. Once the scripture is read, give all an opportunity to think about what they just heard. After a short while, the person asking the questions begins by asking the following three questions (make sure everyone actively participates in this conversation—give an equal amount of time for each question). The person holding the ball or stick or other object is the speaker. When that person is finished answering, he or she passes the object to another person for a time to speak. This way, everyone gets a chance to answer without being interrupted.



- What do you think the people listening to Jesus read this scripture thought when he said to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”?
- What do you think Jesus meant by making this statement, and how can we, as a family, find ways to make the words of the prophet Isaiah “fulfilled in our hearing”?

How difficult was it to pick one time and one place to meet together as a family to have this conversation? Did anyone have to give something up to do this? Was it fair for everyone? If not, why? (It is important that everyone share his or her thoughts.) For those of you keeping a Living Practices in Daily Life Journal, take a few minutes to record your thoughts in your journal.

When you have completed the activity, have the person responsible for the prayer read the closing prayer: *God, thank you for this time we have had together as a family to study your word and your work. Be with each of us as together we explore ways to make the statement of Jesus come true through the practice of our faith in our daily lives. Amen.*

## Discerning & Deciding Activity

### ② The Art of Creating a Justice Landscape

Justice is about relationships. It reflects the way human beings treat themselves, one another, and the world. The painting “Embrace of Peace” by George Tooker reflects these relationships.

#### Supplies:

- artwork: “Embrace of Peace” by George Tooker, [https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW\\_PRODUCT=true&product\\_id=15626&store\\_id=1401](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401)
- (optional) more information about George Tooker, a justice and spiritual minded painter: [http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:r8PsRUoPBXAJ:www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm%3Farticle\\_id%3D11276+Embrace+of+Peace+II+who+or+what+s+the+painting+about&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:r8PsRUoPBXAJ:www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm%3Farticle_id%3D11276+Embrace+of+Peace+II+who+or+what+s+the+painting+about&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Invite the household members to look at this painting individually, making notes about what they see, feel, and understand this painting to be about. Explore what the painting looks like and how it is put together. Look at it up close and from a distance. Does the further away you look at the painting change what you see? How? What is happening?

When everyone has studied the painting (approximately 5–10 minutes), ask one person to be the facilitator, making sure that everyone has equal time to share her or his thoughts and observations. Be sure that the facilitator has the same opportunity to share as everyone else.

Invite everyone to describe what he or she saw, felt, and experienced when studying this painting. Give each person time to respond with no interruptions. There is no right or wrong in what anyone says, so accept these statements as the truth for what each individual experienced by spending time with the painting. When each person has shared (approximately 1–2 minutes each), the others can ask any questions for clarification.



After everyone in the household (regardless of age) has had the opportunity to share thoughts and answer questions, invite everyone to engage in a full participation discussion regarding what each individual said and how it related to what each individual saw/felt/experienced. Afterward, request someone to conclude by reading the following prayer.

*God, we live in a world of plenty with enough resources to make sure that everyone is fed, housed, and clothed. Yet the world of plenty isn't available to everyone, creating injustice and hardship for people all over the world. Help us understand our responsibility, O Lord, to be good stewards of our storehouse and keep a positive and constructive balance between what is available to us and have us use only what it is we need in a caring, sensitive, and ecologically friendly manner. Amen.*

For those keeping a Living Practices in Daily Life Journal, record your thoughts about this activity.

## Sending & Serving Activity

### ③ Creating a Family/Household Justice Storehouse Inventory

Our family/household “storehouse” is filled with many things: some we need, some we want, and some we just don’t ever use. These things all have to be made by someone somewhere, depleting the earth’s storehouse of resources to satisfy our needs, wants, and desires. The truth is that we hardly ever take a serious look at what we have and why we have it.

#### Supplies:

- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- Bible

For one week invite each member of the family/household to make a list of the things identified in the following list:

- five things that are essential for the family/household to survive
- five things that are necessary for the family/household to exist at the level of comfort you want
- five things that important for the family/household to have in order to live in the lifestyle to which you are accustomed, but do not necessarily need
- five things in the house that negatively impact the ecological environment of the earth
- five things that are harmful to human beings when they are created
- five things that are harmful to human beings or the environment when they are thrown away/destroyed

Pick a time when all members of the family/household can meet. Designate someone to be the “family recorder” and make a master list of all items compiled from everyone’s response to all six questions. Have each individual share an item on his or her list for each of the six questions. Do this around the table or room until everyone has read all five items to all six questions. If there is repetition on the items that people share, put a mark by that item to indicate how many individuals put that item on their list.



When everyone has finished, have the family recorder read the list of answers from each of the six questions. Discuss the list and the items. When you have evaluated what you shared with one another, invite the family to decide what, if any, of the items you are willing to take off the list so that the earth's "storehouse" has more of the resources it needs to take care of all human beings. Agree among yourselves to abide by this decision. You have just finished one activity that does the work of justice in the world. For those of you keeping a Living Practices in Daily Life Journal, record the outcomes of this activity and your thoughts about what you have learned.

Read Deuteronomy 28:8: "The Lord shall command the blessing upon you in your barns (storehouses), and in all that you undertake; he will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### ④ Take Five (Easy Preparation)

Designate a time during your day to "take five." It can be anytime, but make an appointment and a personal commitment to keep that five-minute appointment with yourself no matter what is going on when the appointment is scheduled to begin. When the time comes, stop whatever you are doing and keep your appointment for the full five minutes. If you miss the appointment or feel you can't keep it, don't just begin the exercise, set another appointment and try again. At that time you begin your appointment, read the remainder of this activity.

##### Supplies:

- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- timer

Disengage from whatever you were doing before this appointment began. Take a few minutes to separate yourself from what you were doing before your appointment began. Clear your mind and your heart. You might move to a completely different place. Understand that there is nothing you have to do during these five minutes except experience them. Read each of the following suggestions. If they work, do them. If not, read on until you find something that works for you. You can just think about each item, or you can also choose to write them down. Set a timer, and end the activity after five minutes.

Now, begin: Take note of where you were and what you were doing when you stopped. Did you choose to move to a different place to keep your appointment? Why?

Were you able to keep your appointment the first time? How hard was that to do? Remember what you felt/thought when you knew you had to stop doing that activity. Was it an inconvenience? Were you frustrated? Did you want to put off the appointment and finish up whatever you were doing? Were you looking forward to the appointment?

Remember what was going on around you when you stopped. Is this the place you intended to be when that five-minute appointment was supposed to happen? Listen to the sounds around you. Feel the energy of wherever you are. Look at



the physical space in which you are located exactly at this time. This is just one part of your physical landscape in which you live. How hard was it to spend just five minutes recognizing it, observing it, understanding the impact it has on your life?

Now, focus on what you are experiencing right now. What are you feeling? This is one small part of the landscape of your daily life. What is it like to be/live in this physical environment? Are you doing justice to yourself by paying attention to who you are and what your needs are on a daily basis? If not, what do you have to do to change this and be more responsive to your needs?

Continue to do this until your five minutes is up (be honest and keep the full appointment with yourself). When you finish the five minutes, try to summarize your thoughts. If you run out of time, you can always go back and finish after the activity is completed. If you want, write your thoughts on a piece of paper or in your Living Practices in Daily Life Journal, recording what you thought, saw, felt, and experienced during this exercise. Close by saying this short prayer to yourself (silently or out loud—it is up to you): *This is “five minutes” of my life that the Lord hath made. I am glad and rejoice in them! Amen.*

## Discerning & Deciding Activity

### ⑤ Taking a Personal Justice Storehouse Inventory

One of the best ways to know and understand the power of injustice in the world around us is to focus on our personal experience with injustice. Large or small, temporary or permanent, all of us have a place inside where we store our experiences of justice and injustice. We could call this our personal justice storehouse.

#### Supplies:

- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- Bible

Find a quiet place where you can spend no fewer than thirty minutes alone. Make sure that you have turned off any possible electronic equipment that might interrupt this exercise. Find a comfortable position where you can sit, reflect, and write (a table, a chair, the floor—whatever is comfortable for you).

Now, name those things in your life now that give you a personal sense of justice or injustice. As you think of them, write them down and label each as an event of injustice or justice. After you have made this first list, write down experiences of justice or injustice that have occurred to you during the past year. When you have finished, write down events of justice and injustice that you have carried with you for a lengthy period. There is no limit to how far back you go.

Look at your list for all three periods of time (present/one year/lifetime) and reflect on all three and notice what events came to mind the most: experiences of justice or injustice? Why might this be the case?

Now think about how this exercise can help you focus on the world around you and the way you relate to that world as a person working for justice. What specific action can you take to be more aware of injustice in the world, and what can you do, individually, to address this injustice? Be specific. The more specific you are,



the more likely you are to follow through. Record your thoughts on a piece of paper or in your Living Practices in Daily Life Journal.

Read 1 Timothy 6:19 as a prayer: *"Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."* Amen.

## Sending & Serving Activity

### ⑥ A River Runs through Us

Find a quiet spot where and when you know you will not be interrupted for approximately 15 minutes. Find a comfortable place to sit or, if you prefer, lie down on the floor (whatever position you choose, be sure to be comfortable). Read the directions before you begin so you are not limited by having to read the directions.

#### Supplies:

- Bible
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Read Psalm 46. Once you are situated, close your eyes and start to pay attention to your body. Become aware of all aspects of your body from your toes to the top of your head. Visualize/sense your blood coursing through your entire body, powered by the beating of heart and lungs keeping this vital process going. Do your best to connect everything together and experience this force as it connects your toes to the top of your head and everything in between. Take as long as you want for this activity. Once you reach this "sense of self," relax, open your eyes, and move to the next part of the activity.

Now, think about what you felt when you were aware of how the blood flows through your entire body. How does this internal river connect you to the landscape outside your body?

Make a list of all of the wonderful things this river of life makes possible for you to do with your life. Acknowledge this as a gift from God, the gift of the life force you were given when you were made in God's image.

Make a second list of everything you can think of that you do in your life that causes your river of life to be polluted, unclean, or unhealthy. Do not limit yourself to physical things (smoking, drinking, poor eating habits, and so forth), but also include things that cause you not to take care of yourself, to feel stress, to engage in bad or toxic relationships, or things that make you angry or sad, and so forth.

Finally, ponder the mystery of the source of this river inside that keeps your heart beating, your lungs breathing, and your blood coursing through your veins. Write what you are thinking/feeling/experiencing on a piece of paper or in your Living Practices in Daily Life Journal.

You can do this activity more than once; it is a great way to stay in touch with your body and what you are feeling. Each time you do this activity, end with this prayer: *God, you made me in your image, one with the world and all of its wonder and mystery. Help me live my life so that I acknowledge you as my Creator and so that the river that runs through me is the same positive, powerful, prayerful river that runs through all of creation.* Amen.



## Work Place and Communal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### ⑦ Stop, Look, and Listen (Easy Preparation)

Most of the time we fail to stop and look around at what is happening that informs us about justice and injustice that exist in our daily life in the workplace, and to listen to what is being said. This activity invites you to take the time to become aware of this in your work-place setting.

**Supplies:**

- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

All that is required of you for this activity is for you to stop being so busy and become intentional about taking the time to look and listen to what is going on around you. Take the time to stop being busy. Put down the cell phone, look up from the computer, look out the window as you drive through town—pay attention to what is really going on. You can do this on one single occasion or perhaps pick a time each day to do it. You can do it in the work place or in the community setting—or both.

As you see/hear something, make a mental note of it and, when you have the opportunity, write it on a piece of paper or in your Living Practices in Daily Life Journal. You don't need to do anything with this list, but you should find it easier and easier to notice what is happening around you. When you practice this enough, you will become increasingly sensitive to the number of times injustice occurs right in front of you. This should be a challenge for you to recognize that working for justice isn't something that just happens; it is an intentional choice you must make and sustain. You can't do this if you don't interact in a meaningful way with the workplace and community world in which you work and live. Consider this a "practice run" for how you could work for justice in this setting in the future. For now, pay attention to the details; you will be surprised what you learn if you take the time to stop, look, and listen.

### Discerning & Deciding Activity

#### ⑧ Conduct a Community Justice Storehouse Inventory

Our communities are just like our homes; they have storehouses filled with examples of justice and injustice in the world. Invite your coworkers or neighbors to join you in this activity. Choose some aspect of your community or work place and conduct a storehouse inventory on both the physical environment and the justice landscape.

**Supplies:**

- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Make a list of the resources around you—where you work and where you live—that are used and wasted. Identify those items that are ecologically harmful and/or created as the result of human injustice causing people to work in harmful conditions making pennies a day.



Invite a group to review the list, and decide to target one item on the list for action. Once you pick that item as a group, settle on what you are going to recommend for change. Then, review the community system and identify various ways you could go about getting this proposal considered, for example, a committee/commission, elected official, community forum. Once you identify the best way to move forward, complete the process. Monitor what happens to your suggestion and attend the meetings where it might be discussed. Your suggestion might not make it through the system, but at least you will have taken a step toward working for justice. The action you proposed might not make a big change, but it is a small step in the right direction. Repeat this exercise as many times as you want. The more you do it, the more you will learn about what needs to be done and how hard it is to bring about change. But change has to start somewhere by someone.

It might seem inconsequential, but change doesn't happen all at once or in one fell swoop; it happens one small step at a time. You might feel frustrated because you know your idea is a great idea. It may be that the system is not open to change or to outside ideas, which is a form of injustice in itself. Whatever you choose to do will make a difference. Remember, you are not doing this for yourselves; you are doing it because God has called each of us to work for justice in the world, and this is one way of accepting that call to action. Record your decision on a piece of paper or in your Living Practices in Daily Life Journal.

## Sending & Serving Activity

### ⑨ Stand Up, Stand Up for Justice

Justice was high on Jesus' list of motivations for all that he said and did. Clearly, Jesus saw himself as the fulfillment of God's promise of a rescuer for God's people.

#### Supplies:

- Bible
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Read Luke 4:16–21. This powerful message delivered by Jesus got him into a lot of trouble because he quoted an Old Testament text and thereby stated that he was the fulfillment of that prophecy. You might also read Isaiah 1:1–18. It was a daring and dramatic step. Why would he do this? What did he have to gain? Why would he stand up in front of everyone and draw attention to himself?

Take a small step toward standing up and standing out. Attend a public meeting. Read the minutes of your city council. Track a bill or an action being taken on behalf of the citizens of your community. Learn about those in your community who cannot stand up or stand out for themselves. By learning these things, you are preparing to serve. When the time is right, attend one of these meetings and do what has to be done in order for you to be a Christian working for justice in the world. In other words, stand up and stand out.

Once you decide what you want to do, plan how you are going to stand up and stand out. You might make a public statement in support of some action that will help people, write letters, or speak in a public setting. Ask others to join you in expressing concern about an action or a decision that impacts people who need protection and help making it through life. Take action by standing up for some-



thing you believe in, and encourage decision makers to take into account those who cannot stand up for themselves.

There is no timeframe for this activity. It may take a week, a month, or longer. But this activity invites you to move into a zone of discomfort and go beyond what you have done before. Take a stand for those who need it the most because, when you stand up and stand out for the least of these, you do the same for Jesus.

When you complete this task, remember to thank God for inviting you to work for justice. This will be when you learn firsthand that faith is not a noun (something we have); it is a verb (something we do); and it has more power in our lives when we practice it out loud by doing it. When you have time, write your before/during/after thoughts about this activity on a piece of paper or in your Living Practices in Daily Life Journal.

# Working for Justice



## Exploration: Scripture

### About this Setting

This setting explores what it means to work for a just world rooted in love. Scripture shows us the way. Scripture is the story of God's chosen people—a story full of successes and failures. We can learn from both. Scripture is our map to help us navigate our faith journey. It is our True North, the point on the faith compass that is constant. Our interpretation and application of scripture may change, but the truth and wisdom contained in the scripture is constant.

The activities in this Exploration may help you translate some of these stories into the context of your daily life. Some activities challenge you to achieve a deeper understanding of particular scripture passages. Some are designed for you to actually do the scripture by rehearsing the story in a personal way. Some activities help you translate these stories into the context of the world in which you live outside the church. All are intended to enrich your relationship with God and help you learn to read the map that we have been given to help us work for justice on behalf of a world longing to be helped and to be healed.

As you begin this Exploration, consider recording and keeping your thoughts in a Living Practices in Daily Life Journal instead of just writing them temporarily on a piece of paper. The journal can be any small notebook you can have available to you whenever you participate in activities in this Exploration. By keeping your thoughts and responses in a journal, you can go back to them throughout your Living Practices in Daily Life experiences and use them as reference points for your continuing faith journey. Feel free to make entries in this journal any time you find yourself addressing issues of working for justice in the world. It is helpful to date each entry so you can keep track of when the entries are being made.



## About this Exploration

Scripture asks, "What does God require of us?" and answers the question with marching orders and a road map. It admonishes against oppression, reminds us that we are created in the image of God, and demands that we work for a just world rooted in love. In Jesus we see the embodiment of loving justice, which, like an ever-flowing stream, grows to encompass the whole creation. We discover God's disappointment and anger with injustice, God's care for the poor and disenfranchised, God's zeal for justice as a way of life, and God's expectation that we structure our lives and relationships as did Jesus.

### BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

**Micah 6:1-8**

**Amos 5:18-24**

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity

#### ① All Washed Up and Wiping the Slate Clean

Pick a time when the family/household can be together and is able to spend focused time together. Plan on at least 30 minutes to read, explore, and discuss this scripture.

##### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- small rubber ball or ball of yarn
- Internet access for the YouTube music video "Dream God's Dream" by Bryan Sirchio: <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong19>; words: <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong19a>

Have someone read aloud Amos 5:18-24. When the scripture has been read, invite each person to talk about what he or she thinks is going on. Give one person the small rubber ball or ball of yarn that is the clue for that person's turn. When that person has made a comment, he or she passes the ball to someone else. This gives everyone a chance to participate without any one person dominating the conversation. For the first round pose this question: *How did you "hear" the story of an angry God who is incredibly disappointed in creation?* For the second round ask: *Do you think God still feels the same way as in the time of Amos. Why? Why not?*

When everyone has had the opportunity to respond to both questions, pass the ball around one more time to invite one final thought about what they learned. When this sharing is over, play the song "Dream God's Dream" for everyone to hear (and sing along if they want).

Prayer: *O God, you are creator of all the heavens and the earth and everything, including us. We do not want to disappoint you. We share your dream for justice in the world, and we want to help make that happen. Please hear our song and our prayer and accept them as an expression of our faith. Amen.*



## Discerning & Deciding Activity



### ② Having an Epiphany? (Easy Preparation)

This activity focuses on Epiphany, an important historical event in the life of Jesus and the Jewish people. In the church's liturgy, Epiphany (the first day after the twelve days of Christmas) represents a change in the way God shared God's message of love, reconciliation, and redemption with the world. Epiphany represents God's decision to send God's Son to speak to the Gentiles, not just to the Jews. Personally, we may use the word "epiphany" to describe a personal "a-ha!" moment, a discovery of something we didn't know or understand before. In our faith journey, this discovery represents the "unveiling" of the truth to help us in our journey. Many of the thoughts you have during various faith practices activities are designed to provide you faith epiphanies. This is why keeping a journal can be helpful. Sometimes, little epiphanies that happen at different times can join together and provide a big epiphany.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Invite someone to read Matthew 2:13–16. Pause for a moment for all to process what they heard and for them to write some ideas/thoughts on paper or in their journals. If the family includes young children, someone may need to assist with the writing. Ask someone to volunteer to lead the discussion. Ask each person to share one thought about or response to this story: *What feeling does this story bring to your mind? Does it seem fair or just that innocent children are killed because Herod was deceived by the Magi? Where is justice in this story? How do you think God felt about this massacre? What is going on in our world that might be equivalent to the "massacre of the innocents"? What might we do about it?*

When all have shared their thoughts, talk with one another about how this part of the birth story of Jesus impacts the way we think about Christmas.

Conclude this activity by asking someone to pray for everyone to have a better understanding of the meaning of Christmas, the importance of Epiphany in understanding the story of God's people, and an understanding of our responsibility to stand up to such violence.

## Sending & Serving Activities



### ③ Sitting on Our Frozen Assets (Easy Preparation)

Everyone has talents, abilities, knowledge, and gifts. Human beings are remarkable persons with great strengths. Often we forget that we have these not for ourselves, but for others—to be servants in a world of preference and injustice.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal



Ask everyone in the family/household to make a list of their talents (on a piece of paper or in their journal). Ask: *What makes you special or unique?* Encourage them simply to name what they think God has given to them without feeling they are being boastful. Remind people that gifts are varied, from having a delightful laugh to being able to play beautiful music on an instrument or bake an awesome cake or make a person feel loved. When all have made their lists, invite each person to name one gift or talent on his or her list. Then have everyone else name a gift or talent he or she sees in that person. Sometimes we are not aware of what others see in us.

Have someone read the parable of the talents, Matthew 25:14–30. In the scripture, a talent is a monetary amount given to each individual. After hearing the scripture, discuss it, translating the monetary talents in the scripture to the personal talents each person celebrated in this activity.

Turn the focus to how each person can use his or her talents to work for justice in the world. This may not be an easy conversation to have, but it is an important one. It is essential to connect scripture to our day-to-day lives. Ask: *What can you do with these talents you have been given to help work for justice in the world? Together how can we use our family gifts and talents to work for justice?* Identify one way each person will use a gift or talent in the coming week to work for justice. Make a list and post it somewhere, like on the refrigerator or a bulletin board, so that the list serves as a reminder through the week. As a family, agree on one action you will take together to work for justice in the coming week. Add that to the list as well. Set a time at the end of the week to talk with one another about each person's progress on tasks.

*Prayer: God, we realize that with each talent we have been given, something is expected of us in return. Help us to be honest about our talents and gifts and not to be afraid to do what we can to nurture them. Most of all, help us find ways to use these talents and gifts as we work for justice in the world. Amen.*

## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### ④ Out of the Depths (Easy Preparation)

Many consider the Book of Psalms to be the greatest international prayer book. It is also the most human book because it sings not only of God's love and justice, but also of human failure and injustice. The Psalms give voice to our sorrow, our repentance, and our pain—"out of the depths."

##### Supplies:

- Psalm 130 (any Bible translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

The psalms were written as songs, and the words have more power when you can hear them spoken out loud. Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted and read Psalm 130 out loud. When you have finished, think about what you read. Make notes to yourself about how you felt when you read it; try to remember a time in your life when you felt the same way the psalmist felt—deserted by God. What was going on? The more honest you are with yourself about what you felt, the better able you will be to grasp the meaning of Psalm 130.



Think about someone you haven't seen for a long time. If you are keeping a journal, write your thoughts about this person and the role he or she played in your life. By remembering, you make that person present in your heart and mind. This is the gift of Psalm 130. While the poet writes about feeling deserted by God, the very fact that he is writing about God makes God present in his life—exactly the same way that your thinking about someone you miss or who is no longer there brought that person to you and in your heart.

Celebrate this person you remembered and the gifts that person has given to you. Celebrate the ability you have to use your imagination to remember this person and bring him or her to you. Then read Psalm 130:4–8 again. This is where the real message of Psalm 130 is found. By remembering what is absent, it is brought to us again through the hope that comes from knowing God. This is the hope we bring by working for justice in the world. "This is the day the Lord has made. Be glad and rejoice in it."

### Discerning & Deciding Activity

#### ⑤ Five Great Excuses to Keep God Off Your Back

One of the great and troublesome gifts God gives to us is our ability to think and to rationalize. Some would say that began in the Garden of Eden when Adam began to explain what had happened and how he and Eve knew they were naked, and who was really at fault. Often rationalization is how we keep from acting on behalf of justice.

##### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Read Exodus 3:1–14 and 4:1–18. This is a lengthy reading, so give yourself plenty of time for this activity. Set aside at least fifteen minutes. It may take as long as 30 minutes. After reading the scripture, see if you can list the five great excuses Moses gave to God.

This is a story about how God selected Moses, a fugitive hiding from authorities for breaking the law. He was hiding out as a shepherd in a foreign land when God suddenly appeared to tell him he had been selected to set the Hebrews free. It is a story of redemption. It is a story of justice served. It is a story of God's people. It is also a story of how we make excuses for why we can't do what God calls us to do. Moses gave these four great excuses to keep God off his back:

- Who am I that you should send me?
- Who will I say sent me?
- They will say the Lord has not appeared to me, and they won't believe me.
- I am not eloquent of speech. Please send someone more capable than I.

Do any of these sound familiar? Think about the things you have been asked to do recently. Did you use any of these excuses to get out of doing them? Excuses are why we don't do something; reasons are why we do something. Read the list of God's reasons why Moses' excuses wouldn't cut it with God.



Four great reasons why God won't get off our back (each is a response to one of Moses' excuses):

- You are the one I have chosen; I do not need to justify my choice. I am right.
- I AM THAT I AM. I am the God of Israel. I created you. I need no other name.
- Take your rod and show them my power as creator. You already have the power in your hand; use it.
- You will have the words you need to tell them the truth they must believe, or I will provide you with another way to communicate. I selected you because you are the one I choose. Now do it.

Spend time identifying/listing how you use your five excuses to keep God off your back. It might be helpful to record your thoughts in your journal (if you are keeping one) to review throughout these activities. As you finish this activity, remember you always have the choice of giving excuses or providing reasons. God calls us to work for justice; that should be reason enough.

## Sending & Serving Activity



### ⑥ Make a New Creation Covenant with God (Easy Preparation)

In Jeremiah, God announced a new covenant—one written upon the hearts of all. In 2 Corinthians we are told how the resurrection of Christ makes us all new creations. What covenant are you called to?

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Read Jeremiah 31:31–34 and 2 Corinthians 5:16–20. Consider the implications for your life. The Jeremiah passage announces the new covenant. In 2 Corinthians we realize that this covenant is made possible by Jesus Christ. As a result, when we accept Christ into our lives, we are a new creation. What does this mean for you personally? How are you “new”? What does this say to you about working for justice in the world?

When you have thought about this, write on your paper or in your journal about how being a new creation in Christ helps you work for justice. Think about the things you can do in the context of your personal life. When you have made this list, select one item, one issue, or one act you believe you can do that will help you reconcile some small injustice in the world.

Make a commitment to yourself to honor God for making you a new creation in Christ, and fulfill your commitment. Reread these scriptures, and celebrate the decision made by God to create a personal covenant with each of us. All we have to do is say, “Yes.”



## Work Place and Communal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### ⑦ I Solemnly Swear to Tell the Truth (Easy Preparation)

Working for justice is both personal, that is, individual, and cooperative, that is, a corporate call on our lives.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Invite some friends, coworkers, and/or members of your church to meet with you to explore what it means to work for justice in the world. Read Micah 6:1–8 together.

This Old Testament passage tells the story of God challenging humans to stand up and plead their case before the Creator. God charges humanity with failing to uphold its end of the covenant and showing only the willingness to shed the blood of sacrificial animals, not the blood of personal sacrifice to their God. Verse 8 gives us the conditions of the covenant that God wants enforced—"to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." Think about how these three requirements are related to and connected to one another.

Invite each person to make a list with three columns on a piece of paper or in their journal. Write the three conditions across the top: Do justice; Love kindness; Walk humbly with your God.

Ask everyone to make a list in the appropriate column, under each of these headings, of what each does in her or his daily life, work place, and community to demonstrate where he or she is and is not involved in justice making. In the list participants should include also where and how these take place. Talk about those things all think they do or can do in their work places and community settings. Invite each person to choose one of these new things to do, and then do it. If you are keeping a journal, write about your experience.

*Prayer: We choose to fulfill the covenant you have made with us, God, by doing justice in the world, loving kindness in our relationships, and walking humbly with you. Give us strength and determination to complete the covenant we have reaffirmed this day. Amen.*

### Discerning & Deciding Activity

#### ⑧ Oh, by the Way

The challenge for all followers of Jesus is to figure out how to walk the talk—to live as one who walks with Jesus.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal



Read Luke 24:13–35. This is a story of dejection and redemption combined. The two individuals in the story are going to their home in Emmaus. They are sharing their pain and devastation that their Lord Jesus has been killed. They have been beaten down, defeated, and depressed. Then a stranger appears along the way and helps them to realize they were allowing the defeat and death of their dream to prevent them from seeing the truth (in this instance, literally). Imagine the moment and the intensity of emotion when their eyes were opened and they realized it was the risen Lord with whom they were speaking. Imagine the positive energy they had when they returned to Jerusalem, no longer dragging defeat behind them, but speeding along their way, empowered by their encounter with the now risen Christ. In this sense, Jesus showed them the “Way” to “turn around” their lives. In John 14:6, Jesus says “I am the way, and the truth, and the life . . .” In this story, he actually does it for the two from Emmaus.

The challenge for us is to figure out how to live our lives the same “Way” Jesus did. Acts 9:2 refers to “The Way” as one of the earliest descriptions of the emerging Christian community. The Book of Acts shows us “the Way” Christians worked for justice in the world by forming a Christian fellowship and making sure all had what they needed. Justice thrives in a setting where people’s needs are being met. Likewise, injustice thrives when people’s needs are ignored or denied. Christians know how to do justice in the world because Christ showed us the “Way.”

Translate this story into your own life. Choose a particular experience related to making justice that you share with others at your place of work or in your community. Select some situation that appears to be a defeat. Whatever you choose, play the role that Jesus played. Be an advocate for seeing the truth and power of the event or experience rather than suffering the failure. Your goal is to invite everyone to find a way to see through a different lens and translate what appears to be a failure into something that can become a victory. This is an exercise in changing attitudes and turning defeat into success. Oh, by the Way, that’s what God intended all along. If you are keeping a journal, write about how you felt when you accomplished this task.

## Sending & Serving Activity



### ⑨ Sowing Seeds of Justice

Justice, injustice, and conflict are often triplets. Working for justice means working for peace.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or your Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- artwork: “The Sower” by Vincent van Gogh, [https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW\\_PRODUCT=true&product\\_id=15625&store\\_id=1401](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15625&store_id=1401)
- hymn: “Come to Tend God’s Garden” (tune: King’s Weston), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUZkdjvboh0>

Read James 3:18. Make a list of specific conflict situations that exist within your work place and community that are the result of acts of injustice harmful to people. From this list, choose one situation and make a commitment to do something about it by sowing seeds of peace.



Invite a group of your co-workers, neighbors, friends, fellow parishioners, or other fellow Christians to join you. In the invitation, make sure they understand that you want to talk about some ideas you have to help your workplace and community by addressing a specific situation. When you have at least three people, set a time and date for them to join you.

Begin by showing them the artwork “The Sower” by Vincent Van Gogh. Invite them to talk about what they see in the painting and how it makes them feel. Now tell them about your specific concerns and what it is you want them to join you in sowing seeds of justice. Ask for their input and their perspectives on what is causing the problem. Brainstorm. Make a list. Ask them for their ideas and strategies on how the group could begin to sow seeds of peace to resolve the unjust situation that has created conflict.

When you have completed this list, invite those present to work with you to begin sowing seeds for peace and reconciliation in the identified situation. When you have agreed what you want to do and how you want to do it, set a timeframe for completing the task.

If appropriate, end this meeting by singing the hymn “Come to Tend God’s Garden.” You can find a copy of this hymn being sung on YouTube.

When the group has completed the task, invite them to gather again to review the action and the results. Decide together if there is something else you think can be done, or if what was done is enough for now. If the decision is to continue, review the painting by Vincent van Gogh and talk about it again. Take notes on how the thoughts about this painting have changed or stayed the same. Then begin the process all over again.

# Working for Justice



## Exploration: Discipleship

### About this Setting

We are all called to be disciples. Some of us accept the call gladly; others find ourselves wondering exactly why God would call us and spend our time struggling with the call rather than responding to it. Unfortunately, some of us find ourselves rejecting the call or wanting to pretend it never happened because it is “just too hard” to have to do the task God has called us to do. This is the way it is with working for justice. Hardly anyone ever jumps up and down for joy to accept a call to work for justice. We may be driven to serve God, but many of us are convinced that we aren’t the right persons for the work. Some of us just don’t want to accept the responsibility of making a difference in the world. But God doesn’t give us a choice. We are not allowed to live and enjoy the life of grace and peace without doing what we can to make sure everyone around us has the same opportunity. Where one is without food, we are all hungry. When we ignore the needs of those in the world around us, we ignore God.

This Exploration looks at various individuals in the Bible to see what we can learn about how human beings understand working for justice in the world. By exploring these individuals and learning more about their lives and their ministry, we find ways their lives help us understand our own call to work for justice. In essence, the individuals become our models and our mentors. Their stories are important because they represent our story as well. As we learn about the disciples and the ways they responded to God’s call to work for justice in the world, we learn “the Way” we might do the same. While scripture is our true north, the stories of the disciples are one way we learn from those who have gone before us. This is how we become part of and experience the gift of being in the communion of saints.



As you begin this Exploration, consider recording and keeping your thoughts in a Living Practices in Daily Life Journal instead of just writing them temporarily on a piece of paper. The journal can be any small notebook you have available whenever you participate in activities in this Exploration. By keeping your thoughts and responses in a journal, you can go back to them throughout your Living Practices in Daily Life experience and use them as reference points for your continuing faith journey. Feel free to make entries in this journal any time you find yourself addressing issues of working for justice in the world. It is helpful to date each entry so you can keep track of when the entries are being made.

## About this Exploration

When Jesus bids us come and follow, what does he mean? It means following Jesus in justice work. Disciples are invited to practice their faith by making conscious choices, exploring ideas, and acquiring skills for the lives to which Jesus calls us. The activities in this Exploration lead disciples to ask: How do our daily plans and routines show our commitment to working for justice?

**BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:**  
**Jeremiah 14:7–10,  
 19–22**  
**John 10:11–18**

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### ➊ Perplexed and Confused

Working for justice is no easy task. It is not unusual for a person trying to do justice work to experience confusion and uncertainty—even a sense of defeat: “O Lord, the sea is so large and my boat is so small.”

#### Supplies:

- Bible (one Bible in any translation for each individual participating)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- artwork: “Kopf” by Joan Miro, <http://tinyurl.com/FPArt18>

Gather the family/household group together. Read Jeremiah 14:7–10; then invite each person to offer a thought about the interpretation of this scripture. In what ways does this scripture relate to the world in which we live today? There are no right or wrong answers, only each one’s personal understanding. Encourage people to talk about what they think the prophet Jeremiah is really talking about in this passage.

Display the artwork “Kopf” by Joan Miro. Ask each person what the painting expresses. *What is your reaction to the painting? What are you feeling? What do you think the figure in the painting is feeling?* Give time to study the painting and, if people are keeping a journal, write their responses before sharing.

Invite the individuals in the family/household to talk about what the relationship between the scripture passage and painting might be. Invite each person to share a reaction to the two different expressions of what someone thought life was like. Does the painting describe any of the feelings expressed in the scripture? Something different?

End by having someone offer a short prayer about finding peace in the midst of a world of confusion.



## Discerning & Deciding Activity



### **② Unlikely Leaders, Unwilling Servants (Easy Preparation)**

There are many ways that God calls us to discipleship. In the Old Testament, God often called individuals directly (such as Abraham and Moses). In the New Testament, many of those called to discipleship were called by Jesus. One connection among many of those called individuals is that most of them were unlikely leaders, and many of them were unwilling servants.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (one Bible for each individual participating)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- “Called by God,” Attachment: Activity 2

Read John 10:11–18, Jesus’ teaching about the Good Shepherd. Here he defines his own role and, thereby, invites us to think about our relationship to others in the world. We are all shepherds; we are all sheep. See the list of people in the Bible who were called by God or Jesus. Look up their stories in the Bible. Which do you think were the most unlikely—or most unwilling—leaders? Why? What were their reasons? What was their response? There are many other stories of people God and Jesus called. These are just a few. Select one or two people on the list to research about that person’s experience of being called to discipleship, the way he or she responded to that call, and what he or she actually did to fulfill the call to justice discipleship. Pick a time within the next week or so for you to gather as a family/household to share what you have learned about these disciples.

When you come back together, share what you learned in your research. Describe what the person was doing before and after he or she received the call. Discuss what this means about being called to discipleship. *What can we learn from this information?* Talk about what each person in the family/household believes about his or her own call to discipleship. *Do you think you are an unlikely leader? What might God think? Are you a willing or unwilling servant? Why?*

End this activity with an agreement that each individual will continue to explore what it means to be a disciple called by God to work for justice in the world. For those who keep a journal, write your thoughts about those unlikely leaders and unwilling servants who remind you most of yourself.



## Sending & Serving Activity

### ③ Cars

In many places in the United States, car travel is the most convenient way to get from place to place. Public transportation is not always an option. But there is a price we pay for the convenience of this form of transportation: pollution, traffic, highways, signs, and sometimes the development of bypasses that leave communities out of the mainstream, creating a threat to the economic and cultural survival of that community.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (one Bible in any translation for each individual participating)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- video of Disney cartoon movie *Cars*, <http://kidstvmovies.about.com/od/cars/a/carss.htm>

This activity entails several meetings and could take a few days or perhaps weeks to complete. Make sure everyone is willing to make the commitment to see this activity through to the end. During the first family/household meeting, watch the animated Disney movie *Cars*. To get background information on the movie, go to <http://disney.go.com/cars/movie-production-notes.html>.

Watch the movie and talk about what happened to this small town when the highway bypassed it. How does this movie relate to your community? Before you conclude this portion of the activity, ask everyone to accept an assignment to get information about the community where you live.

Ask one person to check on the major roads/highways that come into or miss your community. Ask someone else to research the history of the community and how the use of cars has changed the community. Someone should drive around your community, noticing the presence of cars and how this impacts where you live.

Talk about whether this is a good thing or a bad thing. Is the community suffering because of how car transportation has influenced the development of our neighborhoods, business areas, and access to places around you?

Gather together again and talk about how your family uses your car or cars. *Do you use a car only when you need it? Do you take care of the car so it doesn't contribute to pollution anymore than necessary? Could you do without your car or the number of cars you have? What alternate means of public transportation could you use? Do you live in an area where you could walk for more of your errands?*

*Cars* is an animated film. Yet the story is the story of hundreds and thousands of rural, small communities all across our country today. As a family, make conscious decisions about how often the car will be used and the carbon footprint your family makes because of it.



## Individual and Personal Life Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity

#### ④ Gentle Angry Hope

The struggle in working for justice is often the struggle to stay loving and hopeful and not to descend into despair and cynicism.

**Supplies:**

- song: "Singing for Our Lives" by Holly Near; words: <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong21a>; YouTube video: <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong21b>
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- Bible (any translation)

Listen to the words of Holly Near as she sings verses from the song she wrote following the assassination of Harvey Milk in San Francisco. If you want, explore YouTube for other versions and verses of this song. Think about what the main verse of the song says, "We are a gentle, angry people."

Read Jeremiah 14:19–22. Think of this scripture and the song. How are they similar? Jeremiah tells us about an angry God, but there has to be more than anger. What is there to be gained in admitting we are angry?

Think about your life and the issues facing you. Think about your faith and your call to service in working for justice. Think about the "just anger" you feel when someone you love is hurt or harmed by violence and hate. Be honest about the confusion and the conflict you have between this anger and the hope you have to bring about change.

Write your own verse. Write words that fit into the meter of the song by Holly Near; do what others have done and make the song yours. When you are finished, find the place on the YouTube video with her humming the song and join in singing your verse.

### Discerning & Deciding Activity



#### ⑤ Open Your Eyes That You May See (Easy Preparation)

We are constantly surrounded by noise and nuisance through television, radio, newspaper, and the Internet. The clamor in our lives is unyielding. We experience a constant flow of messages and news of injustices in the world around us—so much so, it is hard to take it all in. In fact, we have so much information coming in that most of us ignore most of it. The greatest crisis facing our culture isn't the "dumbing down," but the "numbing down" of our citizens as a way to survive. This is sometimes true even for people of faith. In fact, it is becoming easier and easier to ignore these messages and events simply because they can be so overwhelming.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

This activity invites you to spend one half day (twelve hours) writing down all of the incoming messages, information, sights, and sounds you experience that communicate specific instances of injustice. You do not need to do anything different than you usually do during the day except pay attention to what is happening and make a list of every instance of injustice you can identify.

At the end of this experiment, take time to review the list. If you are keeping a journal, write about what you saw, felt, and experienced. Review the kind of things you wrote down. Give thought to how many of these items of injustice you might have normally ignored. Finally, pay attention to the way you feel about that list and the enormity of the injustice that occurs on a daily basis. Try to decide what you could do in response to that situation, especially if you were directly or indirectly connected.

Make a personal commitment to be more open to hearing the messages of injustice that surround you. More importantly, be proactive and think about things you might be able to do in response to any of those situations.

*Prayer: God, help me open my eyes that I might see the injustice that happens every day. Help me open my heart that I might feel the pain of those who suffer this injustice. Help me open my mind that I might find ways to help change the world in which I live by being willing to be aware of the injustice happening around me. Amen.*

## Sending & Serving Activity



### ⑥ Small Steps (Easy Preparation)

Sometimes the reality of injustice is so overwhelming that we can barely take it in. The sad thing is that injustice is so prevalent in our world that we are often in despair—so frustrated that we simply do not know what to do. Often, we just shut down.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

In order to overcome despair, this activity invites you to think about small steps you can take to make a difference. Think about the personalities in the Bible that interest you the most. What attracts you to that individual? What is it about his or her story that intrigues or interests you? Identify passages that give you information about this person and the things he or she engaged in that can give you insight into how you can become more active and engaged in addressing your own call to the discipleship of working for justice. What did that person do? How did he or she do it? On what resources did that person rely? What difference did his or her life make by taking this action?

Make a list of the things that you could do to take a small step toward changing an injustice in the world in which you live today. When you have completed the list, make a decision to do just one of those things on the list. It doesn't matter how large the step is; what is important is that you decide to take an action and then follow through by doing it.



When you have taken action, think about what you did and write about it in your journal (if you are keeping one). Write how you felt and whether you think it made a difference. If you think it made a difference, decide what next small step you could take to make even more of a difference. Do this until you think your small steps have become a major step in fulfilling your call to discipleship to work for justice in the world.

## Work Place and Communal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### ⑦ Who? Me? (Easy Preparation)

Every disciple who has ever served God first received a call to discipleship. It may not have been a burning bush or the piercing eyes of Jesus staring you down and saying, "Follow me. I will make you fishers of men." But, there was some experience that set each disciple on the path of discipleship. It is much easier to look at the major figures in the Bible and say, "Sure, they were disciples because they were important and had special skills and gifts given to them by God" than it is to understand that we are all called to be disciples just like they were called. And they were probably just as unprepared as each of us feels we are to respond to that call.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- "Different Gifts," Attachment: Activity 7
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

The first challenge is to believe that God has actually called us to be disciples. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 25–31 and translate this passage within the context of your life, your family unit, your workplace, and your community. You might use the attachment "Different Gifts" as a guide. It is the scripture from *The Message* paraphrase.

Invite a group of friends to have a conversation about the strengths that each of you brings to your work and community. It may be awkward to list your strengths and gifts, but it is possible to be honest about who we are without boasting.

Read 1 Corinthians 12 and talk with one another about the gifts each of you brings to the group and how, by working together, you could accomplish more than by being alone. Name your gifts for yourself and those around you and identify what you can do to share them. Celebrate the gifts you were able to name for one another, and be thankful there are those around us who have gifts we do not have ourselves.



## Discerning & Deciding Activity



### 8 Civil Discourse (Easy Preparation)

Individuals in our communities struggle with how to communicate with someone when we so strongly disagree with them. One result of this is an ever increasing incivility. One condition for civil discourse to succeed is for each person to enter the conversation believing that the person with whom they disagree might actually be right. Many people think that if someone doesn't agree with them, not only is that person wrong but there also is no possibility of relationship.

**Supplies:**

- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal
- bowl or basket
- “Guidelines for Civil Discourse,” Attachment: Activity 8, one for each participant
- a stick with a ribbon tied on the end to use as a talking stick

Gather friends together for a relaxed evening of conversation. Distribute pens and small pieces of paper and ask everyone to write on the paper a topic that can be considered to be controversial. It doesn't matter how controversial or difficult the issue. The purpose of this exercise isn't to resolve any particular issue, but to practice civil discourse. Fold the paper and put it into a bowl or basket. Randomly pick one.

Distribute the “Guidelines for Civil Discourse,” and review them. Describe the use of the talking stick. The person holding the stick is the only one who can speak. When that person is finished, others may ask questions for clarification but may not dispute the person's statements. Name someone to act as the facilitator. The facilitator's role is to keep the conversation civil and to make sure that no one forces an opinion or challenges someone else's thinking. The facilitator is not permitted to participate in the conversation and express personal views. When everyone has had an opportunity to express an opinion, invite everyone into the discussion, using the guidelines for civil discourse. Spend at least 10–15 minutes on this topic, making sure that all have the opportunity to express their opinions. Don't allow people simply to state an opinion and stop. The facilitator's role is to have the group carry on a civil conversation about the topic, not just take a poll.

At the end of the conversation, invite everyone to reflect on how hard the task was to talk about a controversial topic without trying to convince someone your views are the “right” views. Then have the facilitator talk about the challenge he or she felt in being a facilitator who was unable to express an opinion.

When the group has finished with one topic, pick another and follow the same guidelines. The group can do this as long as you want (or spread it out over a series of meetings). This activity will challenge everyone to be a better listener.



## Sending & Serving Activity

### ⑨ Creating a Bully Pulpit

The term “bully pulpit,” coined by President Theodore Roosevelt, referred to the White House as a “bully pulpit,” a terrific platform from which to advocate an agenda. Because of the stature and publicity of the office, a bully pulpit could bring issues to the forefront that were not initially in debate.

The contemporary issue of bullying is different, but we could use our Christian faith as the platform from which to address the issue. Being bullied diminishes a person’s sense of self, strips that person of dignity, and places her or him in harm’s way (physically and emotionally). The scars can be devastating. Physical and emotional bullying is made even more possible and pervasive through the Internet, which has an enormous impact on our youth. One way to address the toll bullying takes on people is to talk about this issue with others with whom you live and work.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)

Gather people from your work place or community. Invite them to join you in a conversation about the impact of bullying on our society. Invite the group to discuss why they think bullies do what they do and what might be done to stop them. Bullies dominate because people are afraid. Working together as a group can change that fear into action. Come to an agreement about working together as a group to intervene in a bullying situation where someone at work, in the community, or in the neighborhood ridicules and bullies someone because of sexual orientation, gender, age, race, social class, disability, intelligence, emotional sensitivity, or anything else that is hurtful to someone. Identify the impact this action has on this person and the people around him or her. Name the power of the injustice this creates and the anger it creates inside of you.

Create a specific strategy that may enable each individual in the group to be prepared and willing to intervene in a bullying situation. If this happens to any member of the group, agree to reconvene and discuss the outcome. Talk to other members of the group and give feedback on what your action accomplished, if anything. Review and revise your strategy, if necessary, but agree that all of you will maintain vigilance about the bully and be willing to intervene and help the victims. Your actions will become a “bully pulpit,” a message of care and concern for one another that proclaims this is a “bully free environment.”



## Attachment: Activity 2

## Called by God

Name	Scripture	Response	Result
Abraham	Genesis 12		
Moses	Exodus 3		
Deborah	Judges 4:1–5:31		
Jonah	Jonah 1:1–3		
Amos	Amos 7:14–15		
Isaiah	Isaiah 6:1–13		
Jeremiah	Jeremiah 1:4–19		
Mary	Luke 1:26–39		
Zechariah	Luke 1:8–20		
Esther	Esther 4:1–17		
Saul/Paul	Acts 8:1; 9:1–22		
Disciples Philip and Nathaniel	John 1:43–51		

## Attachment: Activity 7

### Different Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 25-31  
*The Message*

God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful:

- wise counsel
- clear understanding
- simple trust
- healing the sick
- miraculous acts
- proclamation
- distinguishing between spirits
- tongues
- interpretation of tongues

All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. God decides who gets what, and when.

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.

You are Christ's body—that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything. You're familiar with some of the parts that God has formed in his church, which is his "body":

- apostles
- prophets
- teachers
- miracle workers
- healers
- helpers
- organizers
- those who pray in tongues

But it's obvious by now, isn't it, that Christ's church is a complete Body and not a gigantic, unidimensional Part? It's not all Apostle, not all Prophet, not all Miracle Worker, not all Healer, not all Prayer in Tongues, not all Interpreter of Tongues.

**Attachment: Activity 8**

## Guidelines for Civil Discourse

**1.** Affirm basic ideals, or guidelines, such as:

- We agree that all human lives have value and inherent dignity.
- We seek to be one in the spirit of caring and compassion. As such we will attempt to look beyond differences to see one another as caring, compassionate people.
- We will listen to one another with open hearts and minds.
- We affirm the right of persons to hold different convictions.
- We agree to seek not simply to be understood, but also to understand.
- We commit to strive together toward finding answers that uphold the dignity of all human life.

**2.** Establish ground rules, such as:

- Discuss policies and ideas, not people.
- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Use helpful, not hurtful language.
- Respectfully hear and listen to differing points of view.
- When unsure, clarify what you thought you heard. Realize that what you say and what people understand you to have said may be different.
- Speak from your own experience. Use "I" statements.

**3.** Spend the necessary time to allow all persons to share their life journeys relative to the formation of their position on the topic.**4.** Seek to find whatever common ground is evident out of the personal sharing.**5.** Continue educational efforts individually and as a group on the subject.**6.** Work toward a consensus decision on some common action to take, such as the formation of new groups led or supported by original group members.

# Working for Justice



## Exploration: Christian Tradition

### About this Setting

As Christians, we often believe we have *the* answers to the problems of the world. Unfortunately, sometimes the church has been as much a part of the problem as it has been a solution. This Exploration invites us to look at the history and tradition of the church and the various ways that it has contributed to injustice as well as what it has done to eliminate injustice.

In order to do this, we must be willing to look at history and explore what lessons can be learned. We must think about different periods of time in the history of the church and how those periods influence decisions. Most importantly, we must consider what our history says to us today as we struggle to honor both the traditions of the church and remain open to the ways God calls us to continual change and growth as Christians working for justice in the world.

As you begin this Exploration, consider recording and keeping your thoughts in a Living Practices in Daily Life Journal instead of just writing them temporarily on a piece of paper. The journal can be any small notebook you can have available to you whenever you participate in activities in this Exploration. By keeping your thoughts and responses in a journal, you can go back to them throughout your Living Practices in Daily Life experience and use them as reference points for your continuing faith journey. Make entries in this journal any time you find yourself addressing issues of working for justice in the world. It is helpful to date each entry so you can keep track of when the entries are being made.



## About this Exploration

In working for justice, as in everything, our past is our prologue. Christian tradition calls the church to confess its participation in the creation and perpetuation of injustice. It also calls us to celebrate as Christian people who claim and test our heritage through doing the work of justice. Grounded in this history, we follow God's leading and discover new ways to practice our faith working for justice.

**BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:**

**Psalm 34:15–22**  
**Ephesians 2:11–22**

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### ① A Family Affair (Easy Preparation)

This activity is an invitation to explore the words of Paul through a conversation about the tradition of being Christian. The first scripture talks about the formation of the new church in Acts. The second is a selection from Ephesians about the role of the family in the Christian tradition. This short passage contains a great deal of wisdom and guidance about what it means to live as a Christian.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Gather the family/household together and ask someone to read Acts 2:43–47. After hearing the scripture, invite everyone to identify those things the first church did following Pentecost. Talk about how the passage in Acts describes the formation of the new church family. Consider these questions: Is it realistic for us to believe the contemporary church can continue this early tradition? Why? Why not?

Then have someone read Ephesians 6:1–4. After the reading, invite all to talk about Paul's description of what it means to be a Christian family. What does it mean to obey and honor your father and mother? What is the responsibility of the father and mother to bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord? Do these words ring true and have meaning for Christian families today? Why? Why not?

Finally, talk about the two different scripture passages and what they might have in common as you explore the Christian tradition of the church family and the individual family unit. What do these and other passages of scripture give you to help you understand and honor the tradition of being "a family"?

End with the following prayer: *God, as we read about those first Christians and the traditions they developed to take care of one another, help us honor those traditions by doing the same. As we work to grow and love one another as a family/household, guide us in following the traditions Paul outlines for us. In the name of the One we all follow. Amen.*



## Discerning & Deciding Activity



### ② Standing on the Sidelines

This activity is designed to give the family/household the opportunity to bring an important twentieth-century artist's work to life by creating a story about what they think the people in the painting are talking about to one another.

#### Supplies:

- artwork: "Shotgun Third Ward" by John Biggers, [https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW\\_PRODUCT=true&product\\_id=17101&store\\_id=1401](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401)
- about John Biggers, [http://americanart.si.edu/search/artist\\_bio.cfm?ID=414](http://americanart.si.edu/search/artist_bio.cfm?ID=414)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

To complete this activity, select a time when the family/household can be together for at least an hour.

Show the artwork "Shotgun Third Ward" by John Biggers. Appoint someone to take notes on what everyone is saying. Ask everyone to describe what she or he thinks is going on in the painting. What are the people in the painting feeling or talking about? When each person is finished sharing thoughts, perhaps making notes on a piece of paper or in a journal, invite the group to discuss those things you can come to agreement on about the painting.

Now, invite each individual to give one or more individuals in the painting a name and a story to tell. (This is a creative exercise, so there are no rules or boundaries.) These questions may help:

- What is happening?
- Why are they standing on the street?
- What are they looking at?
- What happened to bring them all together?
- What does this painting have to do with working for justice in the world?

Allot at least 15 minutes for this exercise. You may want to give more time, or agree on a time when you will reconvene to complete the activity. When you have gathered together again have each person share the story he or she created. When everyone has shared, talk about the experience of hearing about those individuals come to life. *How do your stories relate to one another? Can you create one larger story from what everyone shared?* Talk about your response to the experience and whether it changes the way you look at the painting. *How do the individual stories join together to tell a larger story of a family, a neighborhood, or a community?* As you do this, remember that the challenge of this activity is to focus on how this painting can be used to help you understand the Christian tradition of working for justice.

Conclude by reading 2 Corinthians 4:13–15.



## Sending & Serving Activity

### ③ Unpacking Our Hurt Locker

At one time or another, all of us have been hurt by something someone said or did to us. Many of us carry the scars of this painful experience to this day, storing that event in our own personal “hurt locker” to which no one except us has the combination. This creates a dividing wall between us and the individual or group that hurt us. In Ephesians 2:11–22, Paul talks about “the Way” we can be reconciled and our differences overcome.

This activity invites members of the family/household to identify some experience in their lives that caused them to feel the presence of a dividing wall—an argument, a statement someone made without thinking, something you wanted that you didn’t get, a perceived insensitivity to who you are and what you need, an injustice you just can’t forget or let go. Any of these can be a resource of deep resentment and anger, making it difficult to forgive. The invitation is to be willing to give that hurt a name and be willing to share it with the others around you. Individuals are invited to write their thoughts on paper or in their journal. This can be used later on to help you work through what happened in this activity.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Gather the family/household together and designate one person to serve as convener. In advance, explain what the meeting is going to be about. Keep it general, but indicate that everyone will be invited to identify a dividing wall that exists in your life. Indicate you will invite them to share that dividing wall and the hurt it caused you.

This activity is not intended to heal the pain caused by these experiences. All that is asked is that all (including the convener) share something that has caused them hurt and created a dividing wall in their lives. The intent isn’t to “fix” anything. The activity is designed only to acknowledge that there is hurt, that there is a dividing wall, and there is a need for healing.

After each person shares, invite the family/household to say this prayer in unison: *God, hear our prayer and help us break down the dividing wall of hostility between us. Amen.*

Read Ephesians 2:11–22 and end the meeting with a benediction: “May God add blessing to the reading of this scripture—and to our time together.”



## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### **④ I Didn't Mean to Say That (Easy Preparation)**

How many times have we said something, and the moment the words came out of our mouths we immediately regretted saying them? Unfortunately, most of the time when this happens people think we are mean spirited or hurtful. We don't always listen to ourselves. Sometimes we fail to pay attention to how people respond to our words. Because meaning is in people and not in words, it is easier than many of us think to say something with one intent and have the person hear what we say and perceive it in a totally different way. These are constant challenges in our day-to-day communication.

##### **Supplies:**

- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

This activity invites you to listen to the words you say and pay attention to the words of those around you. Take notice of how many times insensitive comments are said that cause someone hurt. Listen to the way language is used to put people down, bully them, or make them feel bad about themselves. In other words, for a designated period of time—a day, a week, or whatever you decide—take a half step back and “listen in” on the communication going on around you, including your own.

The purpose of this activity is to remind you that while you may not intend to hurt someone by what you say, it happens nonetheless. By paying attention to what you say and how people respond to the words you use and the way you use them, you may be able to improve the quality of communication in a relationship that is important to you. Be purposeful in listening to what others around you are saying and how that impacts people (including yourself). Listen to what you hear yourself say and what you hear others saying. Pay attention to tone and attitude. By making this conscious effort, you may become more sensitive to the role that poor and ineffective communication can have on relationships and ourselves. We can't take back our words, but we can try to be more careful in the way we use them in the first place. It can also help us make sure that whatever we say, we mean to say it instead of not paying attention and saying something mean.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### **⑤ The Divine Nudge**

The Bible is full of stories of individuals who encountered God and changed their ways. To be converted literally means to turn around 180 degrees. Perhaps no individual in the Bible experienced the power of this conversion more than Saul. A devout Jew, Saul was serving his God the best way he knew how. To him, the Christ believers were a threat to his religion, his nation, and most importantly, his God.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

This activity is an invitation to explore the conversion experience of Saul and how his conversion affected him and his influence on the traditions of the church, especially his concept of what it means to be “justified by faith.” Read Acts 9:1–31.

While we focus on working for justice in the world, we should also focus on the centuries-old tradition of struggling with the concept of “being justified” before God. The religious converts in this narrative were deeply affected by their personal conversion experience with Jesus. As a result, each helped shape the tradition we know as being “born again.” As you explore the conversion experience of Paul, think about its impact on his life’s work and ministry. How did it shape his thinking, his writing, his sermons to the Jews and to the Greeks? In addition, see if you can figure out how his experience on the road to Damascus influenced his perception of how God acts in the world and what each of us has been called to do as we work for justice in the world.

Think about the invitation to discern and decide the question: Can we work for justice in the world if we have not been justified ourselves? What is the “divine nudge” that moved you to accept Christ, to tackle issues of working for justice in the world, and to hang in there to serve God? Is that divine nudge still there in your life? Does it still have power to motivate you to serve? These are good questions to ponder and write about and explore. These are deep questions of faith.

## Sending & Serving Activity



### ⑥ Faith Is a Verb, Not a Noun (Easy Preparation)

This activity invites you to determine an issue of injustice about which you feel strongly and to take some action to address, resolve, and heal it.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

It doesn’t matter what subject you choose. Think about the things in the world about which you feel strongly and want to change. Write them down, think about them, and pray about them; then choose one on which to focus. To help you make this decision, read Psalm 34:17–22. In fact, reread this psalm throughout the time it takes you to complete this activity, using it as a strong statement of the tradition of God responding to the cries of the afflicted.

Once you have decided on the injustice you want to address, what do you need to understand it? From where does this injustice come? What is its root? Why is it allowed to continue? Who is responsible for the injustice? Who benefits from this injustice? Have you contributed to it? How? Has the church contributed to it? Addressed it? What single thing can you do to make a difference in stopping or eliminating that injustice?

Read Luke 4:16–21. This is the story of Jesus reading from the prophet Isaiah. Those words contain the clarion call to all of us to work for justice in the world. By referencing this scripture, Jesus did more than draw attention to himself—



he invited all to understand that they are called to be like him. Now read Matthew 25:31–46. This passage provides insight into the ways Jesus calls us to serve God—by recognizing God in everyone around us. Use these scripture passages to help you define more precisely what issue of injustice you are addressing and to help you make your decision. When you have decided on an action, spiritually prepare yourself through prayer, meditation, reading scripture, and openness to the Holy Spirit as your guide.

When you feel ready, implement your plan of action to turn your faith from a noun (a thing you have) to a verb (something you must do because you have faith).

When you have taken that action, acknowledge it, perhaps share it with someone, and spend time in reflection regarding the effect you sense your action had. Reflect and evaluate your effectiveness in bringing about awareness, change, transformation, or healing regarding the injustice you have named and addressed. You can do this by thinking about your experience or by writing your thoughts on a piece of paper or your journal.

## Work Place and Communal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities



#### ⑦ The Fellowship Dinner

This is an invitation to invite your friends and colleagues to join you in a feast of local and regionally produced food. The task is simple: identify individuals you want to invite into your home to enjoy a meal that is fixed by everyone who attends. This is the long-standing tradition of the fellowship supper held by Christian congregations all across the land. The twist in celebrating this feast of fellowship is to have everyone agree that whatever they bring must represent some local or regional food that is grown and harvested in a way that doesn't take advantage of any individual or ethnic groups.

##### Supplies:

- locally/regionally produced, home-cooked food
- artwork: "Vendedora de Piña" by Diego Rivera, <http://tinyurl.com/FPArt17>

When you gather for your fellowship supper, ask everyone to be prepared to explain the food he or she prepared and brought to the meal and to celebrate how the food represents the richness and bounty that is part of the agriculture of your geographical area. After each person has shared this information, the host should give a blessing for the tradition of bounty that is supplied when people gather together and share food at the same table.

Following the meal, invite your guests to view the painting by Diego Rivera, "Vendedora de Piña." Invite people to reflect on the tradition(s) they see expressed in that painting. Invite the group to talk about the challenges they faced as they identified local and regional food they could use and ensured that no injustice resulted from that food being grown, harvested, and made available for use.



## Discerning & Deciding Activity

### ⑧ Just War?

There is not a war that has been fought by our country that someone has not defined as a “just war”—that is, a war no one wants to fight but must be fought because of what is at stake. Understanding the concept of the just war goes to the heart of what it means to be a Christian. There are some who question whether the concept of the just war is valid. This activity invites you to gather a group of workers, friends, and fellow citizens to take some meaningful action to express your concerns about war and what it does to our world. This is an emotional subject and difficult to talk about without being accused of being unpatriotic. But this reality is often used to avoid talking about what actually happens to people during war. This activity is designed to enable you and some coworkers, friends, and fellow citizens to gather together in a safe place a talk about war and what happens when countries wage war.

#### Supplies:

- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

One way to complete the task is to invite everyone to look up the term “just war” on Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_War)). Invite the group to read the article and share their understanding of the history and definition of the term. Now have the group reference the last portion of the article that lists alternatives to the just war and discuss which, if any, of those alternatives persons in the group might consider a viable alternative to the concept of the just war. Ask people about their cultural and religious attitudes as well as their beliefs about war. Open the discussion to all perspectives. The only rule is to have each member of the group make a commitment to keep the conversation civil and constructive. The intent of this exercise is not to come to a decision about some action the group needs to take or to convince the others your point of view is right. Rather, strive to create an environment in which a diverse group of people can engage in a meaningful conversation about a difficult subject and be respectful as you learn what they think, feel, and believe.

Bring focus to the discussion by inviting the group to address the question: Is there such a thing as a just war or as some believe, is there just war?

After the discussion, invite any who want to offer a prayer for guidance, discernment, and peace.

## Sending & Serving Activity

### ⑨ “This Land Is My Land!”

Before the treaty of 1855 with the United States, the Nez Perce hunted and fished on land that totaled between thirteen and fifteen million acres. Following the Treaties of 1855 and 1863 and the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887, the Nez Perce lands were reduced to 250,000 acres. Between the loss of lands and the development of boarding schools that forced—some say “kidnapped”—children away from their families and forbade them to speak their native language, this tribe almost disappeared.



This story is told over and over again about Native American peoples all across North America. In the United States injustice against Native Americans has existed since the members of the first Puritan colony landed on the shores of the east coast. Along with the land that was taken away from them, there are hundreds of treaties with major Native American tribes that have been broken by the U.S. government.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any version)
- information on local Native American tribes or nations (an Internet search engine will help you locate these)
- video/DVD: *Thunderheart* (1992); for information about this film: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0105585/>

Invite a group of friends, coworkers, church members, and/or fellow citizens to watch the video/DVD of the 1992 movie *Thunderheart*, starring Val Kilmer. After the movie invite the group to share thoughts about the movie, the reality it portrayed, and whether they think those issues exist in your community. Some (perhaps all) of the group may be interested in learning more about this and want to continue to meet about this issue. Almost every community has some connection to Native American land and tradition.

When you have completed this conversation, invite the group to discuss all the ways the government and the church (all faiths, all denominations) have contributed to the injustice presented in the video *Thunderheart*. Consider the tradition of Christian evangelism that tried to end the spiritual traditions of Native Americans in its attempt to convert them to Christianity. *Was this just? Was this fair? Is this tradition one we have inherited that we need to evaluate and rethink? How could this injustice ever be resolved?*

The suffering of the Native American nations across the United States is still an open wound that reminds us that as great as this country is, much of what we have accomplished is the direct result of injustices we committed against the indigenous peoples who were here before we came. This activity may also encourage all of you to decide to become more involved in the resolution of these issues at the local level. There is a great healing needed. You and your fellow citizens can become the catalyst for helping this healing to happen in your community.

# Working for Justice



## Exploration: Context and Mission

### About this Setting

Romans 13:8–10 tells us that the only obligation we have is to love our neighbors. In many ways, working for justice is this simple. All we have to do is love one another. Yet there can hardly be a more complicated and demanding commandment. As if that weren't enough, Paul quotes Jesus in telling us that we are to "love our neighbor as we love ourselves." The command is simple: we are loved, justified by grace through faith because of the love we receive from God. Because of this, we must share that same love with those around us. But is it really that simple?

Members of the early church took seriously the charge to love their neighbors. They sold all possessions and shared in common as was needed. Those who had gave to those who had less. The quest for richness wasn't based on how much a person could acquire, but rather how much a person could give. It is clear from these stories of the early church that love is the common denominator of working for justice. Working for justice is not a chore; it is not a burden; it is an opportunity to give back what has been shared with us.

The problem for most of us is that we are more aware of the magnitude of pain and suffering in the world now than ever before. It is easy to become overwhelmed by it all. The mission of the church community has been, from the beginning, to make sure all had the food, the clothes, the shelter, and the dignity to live a meaningful life. Denying people these basic rights is at the root of every injustice in the world. The challenge for us is to find a way to meet this need in healthy, constructive, and supportive ways. The activities in this Exploration are designed to help you accomplish these goals.

As you begin this Exploration, consider recording and keeping your thoughts in a Living Practices in Daily Life Journal instead of just writing them temporarily on a piece of paper. The journal can be any small notebook you can have available to you whenever you participate in activities in this Exploration. By keeping your thoughts and responses in a journal, you can go back to them throughout your Living Practices in Daily Life experience and use them as reference points for your continuing faith journey. Feel free to make entries in this journal any time you find yourself addressing issues of working for justice in the world. It is helpful to date each entry so you can keep track of when the entries are being made.

## About this Exploration

All are created in the image of God, children of God, unique and diverse in our own context. Jesus imagined a different reality from the one in which he lived; Jesus imagined the realm of God, rooted in love and justice. When working for justice, we see the face of God in others around us. God is angered by injustice and we are called to respond. When we explore context and mission, we wake up to the just and unjust realities of our local communities and world—and are called to action.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:  
**Proverbs 22:1-2,  
8-9, 22-23**  
**Romans 13:8-14**

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity

#### ① Drawing Our Mission Map

A world of need surrounds us, but it is a world we do not always see. The abundance and comfort of our lives often shields us from the harsh reality many people live with every minute of their lives. For some, the needs are large. For some, the needs are small. But the common denominator is that there is need for help.

##### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- large drawing or construction paper
- felt pens/crayons
- magazines/newspapers/scissors

This activity invites the family/household to create a single Mission Map. Using different colored felt pens or crayons, each individual will create a map that shows his or her community and the people and places who need help in that community. Use the different colors to indicate different kinds of needs. If they are readily available, use images from magazines and headlines from newspapers to create a collage titled Mission Map. Invite everyone to be creative. Remind them that what they are creating is not just a map of needs, but also a map that will help all decide how the family/household can work for justice to address as many of these needs as possible.

When the map is completed (this should take approximately half an hour), place it where everyone can see it and talk about the different areas and individuals of need. Working together, talk about the size and magnitude of the needs expressed on the map and how realistic it is that anyone could really make a difference. Then pick just one area or one individual need and start talking about what you might do to help address that need. Talk about what each member has that might meet this need (something you own, some ability or talent you have been given, and so forth.). Have someone make a list. As you do this, recognize that the more you narrow your focus, the more likely it is for you to come up with something that can be done. Use this Mission Map to help your family/household understand that you cannot live in the world of need that surrounds you without responding to those needs. Conclude by reading aloud Romans 13:8-14.



## Discerning & Deciding Activity



### ② Love Knows (Easy Preparation)

For many people who experience injustice, the worst part may be the feeling that each is alone and there is no hope anything will change. Sometimes a simple act of acknowledging people and expressing support for the person in his or her struggle can be as powerful as any other action.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any translation)
- note paper/envelops/postage

Read Proverbs 22:1–2, 8–9, 22–23; create a list of the wisdom presented. Use the list as you invite the group to identify one person each believes has experienced some form of injustice in his or her life. Invite each person to write a note to this individual, indicating that the writer is thinking of that person, hoping, and praying for that person in his or her struggle. Make the words personal. The length of the note is less important than the feelings expressed. What counts here is that you not only know these individuals are in need, but also that your love and prayers for them have now been expressed and they know they are not alone. Love knows.

When everyone is finished, ask each person identify the individual to whom he or she is sending a note, and then (if willing) read the note to everyone. At the end of each note, have the family repeat the following phrase together: “Love knows there is a need. Let this note become a justice deed.” Following this activity, each person will need to decide whether to send or give the note to the person to whom he or she wrote.

## Sending & Serving Activity

### ③ Standing in the Company of Strangers

One of the first things we teach our children is stranger danger. There is good reason for this caution, but it does create an environment of fear for the unknown. Hebrews 13:1–3 reminds us that we are called to show hospitality to strangers, “for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” If we become so fearful of the strangers in our lives that we avoid them at all cost, we close the door to the possibility of serving Christ by showing hospitality to the stranger in need.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Read Hebrews 13:1–3. While encouraging caution and thoughtfulness, invite all to keep their eyes and hearts open to strangers they meet so that they might give assistance. It can be as simple as helping someone across the street, letting someone holding too many items in a grocery line go in front of you, or intervening when you see someone needing help to get something done. When you engage in these “random acts of kindness,” remember to share with the rest of the family/household when you meet at the end of the week. Consider how the wisdom in



Romans 13:8–14 and Proverbs 22:1–2, 8–9, 22–23 applies to this activity and your work with the stranger.

At the end of the week, gather the family/household together and invite all to share the different opportunities they had to reach out to strangers. Also invite them to share the stranger's response. After everyone has shared, read Hebrews 13:1–3 again. For those keeping a journal, write about your experiences with this activity throughout the process of completing it.

## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### ④ Being Neighborly (Easy Preparation)

It is not unusual for us to live in a neighborhood and not know the names of the people who live even next door. Some have called the United States a nation of strangers. Yet Jesus calls us to embrace the stranger, even when the stranger is our enemy. Read the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37).

##### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Read Hebrews 13:1–3. This activity invites you to take the initiative to introduce yourself to any of your neighbors whom you do not know. This could be persons within a few houses and apartments of where you live or an entire neighborhood, depending on how extensive you want the activity to be.

As you introduce yourself to your neighbors, tell them who you are and explain that you feel it is important to know your neighbors. While encouraging caution and thoughtfulness, let them know you are available to help them should they have a need. Perhaps you will get beyond initial introductions and begin forming more meaningful relationships. If you want, periodically check in with these neighbors to see how they are doing. Go out of your way to be friendly and hospitable. You will be glad you did.

### Discerning & Deciding Activity

#### ⑤ Finding Justice

The movie *Finding Forrester* is a moving account of how friendships can be built between the most unlikely people. One character is a Caucasian Pulitzer Prize-winning writer. The other is a young African American male who is a gifted athlete and good student. This young man's life is changed when he is recruited to attend a private school because of his state test scores (and his ability to play basketball). Through a strange set of circumstances beyond their control, these two men meet and begin to interact with each other, eventually affecting each other's lives in important ways. The prize-winning author begins to mentor the young man's writing. The young man unknowingly mentors the author by re-



minding him that life cannot be lived hiding behind locked doors in a third floor apartment in the middle of the city.

#### Supplies:

- video/DVD: *Finding Forrester* (released in 2000); information on this film can be found at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0181536/>.
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

This activity invites you to take approximately 90 minutes of your time to watch a movie that tells a story of two people in need although neither one knew it.

After the movie, name those individuals who mentored you. Remember the contributions they made to who you are today. Now, look at those around you for whom you are (or could be) a mentor. Celebrate the opportunity to be a person who works for justice in their lives by being there, challenging them to be their best, and standing beside them when they need someone to believe in them and help them persevere. Do more than just think about this. Encourage yourself to act on your commitment to work for justice in the world.

## Sending & Serving Activities



### ⑥ Get Engaged (Easy Preparation)

Every community has nonprofit organizations that work for justice in the world. Your church is one, but there are many more. Look around you to see what is going on in your community when it comes to taking care of other persons.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Read Luke 4:16–21. This activity invites you to explore various nonprofit organizations (including your own congregation) in your community that provide a meaningful service. Select one that interests you and contact it to see if it needs volunteers. Commit to volunteer for one event or one cycle of need. This will give you the opportunity to learn about the organization and give the organization the opportunity to learn about you. If you have a positive experience and feel your time was worthwhile in making a difference, perhaps you will choose to continue volunteering. If that organization is not a match for you, consider finding another organization and doing the same thing.

Healthy communities consist of healthy individuals, and healthy individuals are engaged in their community. The more we are engaged with our community, the less we are only residents living in a place, and the more we become citizens. Luke 4:16–21 tells us of the charge that God has given to us to serve the world. The only way we can respond to this call to work for justice is to get engaged.



## Work Place and Communal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activities



#### ⑦ Speak Up and Speak Out (Easy Preparation)

It would seem the easiest thing to do would be to speak up when you see an injustice occur. Unfortunately, speaking up and speaking out can be hard, especially if no one else is with you. That is why injustice continues to exist. Speaking up and speaking out against injustice draws attention to yourself and makes you vulnerable to the same kind of injustice you are challenging. But isn't that what working for justice means? Are we not called to take the risk for those who are unable to take it themselves? Is this not the Golden Rule in action: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"?

**Supplies:**

- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

This activity invites you to speak up and out when you see an injustice occur. Perhaps it is something someone says that disparages another person, an inappropriate joke that makes fun of a particular group, or a name or action that mocks a person or a person's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, financial status, and any other characteristic in a demeaning way. Whatever it is, speak up and share your discomfort and disapproval with what has been said. Remember, you aren't alone. Christ is with you, in you, giving you the strength of faith you need to take this step.

Be calm, but be assertive and confident in saying you are unwilling to stand by and let this injustice go unnoticed. Indicate to those around you that you do not feel it is appropriate or acceptable for this kind of injustice to occur in the workplace or communal setting. Challenge the person who said it to be more careful, and then challenge the people who didn't say anything to become less tolerant of that kind of language or activity.

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

#### ⑧ Create a Civility Code

The way people communicate with one another is increasingly negative. We are not as careful in what we say or how we say it, especially when we do not agree with an individual over something important to us. It seems people are more willing to argue with one another than we are to treat one another in a civil manner.

**Supplies:**

- resources on civility; two examples can be found at [http://www.lacityneighborhoods.com/code\\_of\\_civility.htm](http://www.lacityneighborhoods.com/code_of_civility.htm)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

This activity invites you to work with fellow workers and citizens to address the lack of civility in the work or community settings. There are many resources available to provide examples of organizations, businesses, governments, and



social-service groups that have adopted civility codes. This is not a code that imposes political correctness. A civility code is an agreement between people that there are ways in which you can disagree, engage, and decide that do not have to be hurtful or harmful to individuals in the process.

This process will take time. If you get an agreement from those in positions of authority to do this, work within the system. If not, if you see a lack of civility in a work or public setting, work with others to create a code and submit it to those in positions of authority for consideration. If some workers or citizens adopt the code, it might encourage others to do the same. If you are in a community setting, attempt to get media coverage of your efforts. Encourage them to publish the code. In this way, even if it isn't adopted, it will encourage the citizens of a community to be more considerate of each other, creating a more just and constructive environment in which to do the community's business.

## Sending & Serving Activities

### ⑨ Create a Work Group at Work

Many workplaces invite employees to form special project work groups. Some corporate organizations require their employees to participate in service work for their community. Smaller businesses may also do this but may find it harder to give workers release time to do the work.

#### Supplies:

- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Check with the people with whom you work and find out the possibilities that exist to form an employees' work group to address a specific need in the community. If you are told "no," persevere and ask why. Indicate that all you want is the opportunity to serve. If the company will support the project, but won't give time off to do it, invite fellow workers to volunteer their time as well as their efforts to make a difference in the community.

Call an organizing meeting to identify a community need everyone thinks is a worthy cause. Ask people to assume certain responsibilities to ensure the work group is ready to complete the project, and make assignments to each individual who has volunteered. When you have completed the task, make sure that you share the results with your supervisors and people in charge at the organization so they realize what was accomplished. In addition, make sure to give your organization credit for the effort, even if they didn't give time off for the project. You started this as a work group and it is appropriate to credit the people in charge. Perhaps, if they weren't initially willing to support this effort, they will change their mind once they see the results.

# Working for Justice



## Exploration: Future and Vision

### About this Setting

We talk so much about the past when it comes to the church. We look at rituals, traditions, scripture, and stories that come from the past and shape our present. What we don't realize very often is that what we do today will be the future's past. This challenges us to start planning for a world where justice is the norm; where people are honored and treated with dignity; where diversity is celebrated; and where human beings have a relationship with the earth based on the concept of stewardship rather than ownership. In other words, the earth and all therein will be in unison, in harmony, cooperating and collaborating with God in creation.

Organizations and corporations often create vision statements to help them determine where they want to go. Unfortunately, knowing where you want to go does not do any good unless you know where you are. You can have the best map in the world, but it will be useless unless you have a starting point. The activities throughout the Living Practices in Daily Life are designed to help you make this assessment. More than that, they are designed to help you learn and implement the vision God has for the world. We are in God's hands. More importantly, God made us co-creators, and we are called to change the world for the better.

The activities in this setting invite you to become more than map makers for the future. These activities invite you to become map dreamers. Being created in God's image, we have a responsibility to continue the act of creation. By using our imagination and our determination to create a world based on justice, we can begin to shape the future by what it is we do today.

As you begin this Exploration, consider recording and keeping your thoughts in a Living Practices in Daily Life Journal instead of just writing them temporarily on a piece of paper. The journal can be any small notebook you can have available to you whenever you participate in activities in this Exploration. By keeping your thoughts and responses in a journal, you can go back to them throughout your Living Practices in Daily Life experience and use them as reference points for your continuing faith journey. Feel free to make entries in this journal any time you find yourself addressing issues of working for justice in the world. It is helpful to date each entry so you can keep track of when the entries are being made.

## About this Exploration

Imagine a world where all are in right relationship with God, other human beings, and all of God's creation. Jesus calls us to help create this future where we live out God's love in all that we are and all that we do. We do justice because we are inspired by God's vision of healing and reconciliation, restoration and wholeness, and abundance for all. As a people of hope, we accept the call to be God's hands and feet. In this Future and Vision Exploration, we are challenged to stay focused on this hope as we live out God's call to do justice.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:  
**Matthew 25:31-46**  
**Isaiah 58:1-14**

## Household and Family Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



#### ① Scout's Honor (Easy Preparation)

Risk takers are people who engage the future. They can be central to the work of justice. This story is about scouts sent into enemy territory to see what it was like; they brought back very different stories. But the future depended on their work—and the response of the people. Who are the risk takers, or "scouts"?

##### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Read aloud Numbers 13:25–33 and 14:1–3. Talk about what it must have been like to be one of the individuals Moses sent to scout out the new land—the “promised land.” What report would you bring back? How would you mix the good news and the bad news? How hard would it be to share the news that “There are giants in the land, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers”? Finally, talk about the first three verses in chapter 14 that record the people’s response to the message. What did they hear? How did they respond? Why do you think they focused on just one part of the report—the negative part?

Think about some recent and contemporary disciples who accepted God’s call to work for justice in the world, such as Marian Wright Edelman, advocate for children; Mary McCloud Bethune, civil rights leader; David Beckman, head of Bread for the World; Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, volunteers with Habitat for Humanity; Susan B. Anthony, leader in the women’s rights movement. Think of leaders in your community who have organized homeless shelters, food pantries, and other social justice programs. Who has been named Volunteer of the Year in your community? Select one and invite the family/household to talk about whether that person might have been selected to be a scout to explore the future. What might that “scout” see in the future? What is that person working toward and calling others to work for? How do people respond to the message being delivered? What would our response be?

Discuss different ways in which each person in the family/household is called to be a scout, a disciple working for justice. What message is the world looking for?



What are people most afraid of today? Can we share the good news of hope in Christ without sharing the challenges that go along with it? What can we do to stop people from murmuring when they become afraid that working for justice will not be easy?

*Prayer: O God, we pray that we have the strength to hear your word and to accept your call to be scouts, with honor, sharing what you envision for our future. May we have the strength and courage to cross that river into the promised land to which we have been called. Amen.*

## Discerning & Deciding Activity

### ② Mapping the Future

This activity invites the family/household to do some “future” map making. Few of us get to determine how our community will look or be in the future. Yet, as citizens, each of us has the right and the responsibility to influence how our community develops. It is up to us to make sure we maintain those parts of our history, culture, and heritage that are critical to who we are as a community. It is also important to be able to plan for the future, taking into account environmental and ecological issues that are increasingly under pressure. To do this kind of planning and thinking about your community invites you to engage in the democracy of civil discourse.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- large construction paper
- markers/crayons
- community map
- push pins
- pen/paper

Appoint someone to find a street map that shows your community. Sometimes a good place to get something that gives an overview with important sites is a map from the tourism information center or chamber of commerce. You might also check the front pages of your community phone book. Lay out that map for everyone to see. Then invite the family/household to talk about the things they think are important to keep as part of the community. These might be schools, parks, buildings, landmarks, hospitals, museums, library, and so forth. Use push pins to mark these on the map, and have someone make a list. Then discuss what things you think the community needs. Pay particular attention to those aspects of your community that will be sensitive ecologically and environmentally as well as to issues such as accessibility and affordability. Finally, along with the physical infrastructure and building/structure landscape, emphasize those things they believe will provide an emotional and spiritual environment that guarantees dignity and justice for all human beings by focusing on the community’s health, wholeness, and wellness.

When you have finished this activity, you should have a fairly comprehensive (if not creative) map of your community’s future. What has to happen to bring this “dream” into reality? That discussion can take place over several meetings, hopefully resulting in everyone agreeing to one action—a first step—your family/household unit can take to help make that future map a map of the present.



## Sending & Serving Activities

### ③ Guide Our Feet, O Lord

Satchel Page, the pioneer African American baseball player, once said, “Sometimes I sits and thinks, and sometimes I just sits.” Sometimes we need to sit and think and ponder to understand the will of God. Sometimes we need to just sit and be open to God in our life.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- song: “Guide My Feet,” African American traditional, (tune: Guide My Feet); YouTube video: <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong20>, words and music: <http://www.hymnsite.com/fws/hymn.cgi?2208>
- Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Read Hebrews 12:1–2. Listen to the words of the traditional African American tune, “Guide My Feet,” a song about running the race and making sure it isn’t in vain. It is a call to have God be our guide so we don’t lose our way. Take time to live with these words and to think about how your feet walk justice ways. Ask, *Where do we need to ask God to guide our feet in matters of justice?* Record your thoughts in your Living Practices in Daily Life Journal.

## Individual and Personal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



### ④ Not My Will, but Your Will (Easy Preparation)

Jesus prayed in the garden to have the cup taken away, but after all his requests for himself, his last words were “yet, not what I want, but what you want” (Mark 14:36 NRSV). We constantly find ourselves thinking we know what we want out of life, but we don’t as often ask what God wants with our lives.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Reflect on the question: What does God want from me? This is not an activity that happens in one sitting; it requires conscious focus, thought, and prayer. To begin, read Isaiah 58:1–14. This passage is full of insight and wisdom and focuses on issues related to how we act and how our actions affect our ability to work for justice. It mirrors the scripture story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and, therefore, reminds us that we are called to serve others and not to be served ourselves. The challenge in this activity is to be honest about what we want for ourselves and what God wants from us. If there is no creative tension in what you come up with, the possibility exists that you may not be fully honest with yourself. This kind of personal mapping is a challenge and not easily accomplished.

Think of this as an ongoing activity because it merits several visits. If you can find an expansive Bible commentary (perhaps from the church library), it will help you look at individual selections of verses within this passage. Take your



time, and read the scripture more than once. Pray for openness and guidance before you read the scripture. When you are finished reading it, pray again. This scripture passage requires time and dedication to understand and incorporate the truth it speaks to us. As appropriate, write about your thoughts and prayers in your Living Practices in Daily Life Journal.

## Discerning & Deciding Activity

### ⑤ Write a Personal Values/Vision/Mission Statement

It is not unusual for organizations, corporations, and communities to engage in comprehensive planning. Oddly, individuals rarely do this. This activity is an invitation to write a personal, one-page values, vision, and mission statement.

#### Supplies:

- (optional) mission statement builder, <http://www.franklincovey.com/msb/> (If you need help to develop your statement, the process outlined here will help.)
- (optional) sample mission statements. [http://www.missionstatements.com/personal\\_mission\\_statements.html](http://www.missionstatements.com/personal_mission_statements.html)
- pen/paper/or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

This exercise will help you think about who you are (your starting point and why you are at that point), where it is you want to be as an individual, and finally what you have to do and how you have to do it to get there. Each statement should be no more than two paragraphs long and should finally fit on one page.

Start with a description of where you are in your life at this point. Is it where you want to be? Are you happy? Are you doing what you think you should be doing with your life? Is your religious life where you think it should be?

Next, write your personal values statement (for example, who you are, what you believe, why you believe it). This will be the foundation for determining where you want to go. Then write your vision statement, that is, where you want to be in two, five, and ten years. Finally write your personal mission statement (for example, what you have to do and how you have to do it to get there). When you are finished with this, work on editing it and getting it to fit on one page. Put it in a place you will see it regularly so you don't forget; include it in your Living Practices in Daily Life Journal.

Now you have a map. Remember, maps change every day. Keep yours updated. Now you can start your journey with a more clear idea of just where it is you are going. Oh, by the way, did you ask what God wants for your life?



## Sending & Serving Activity

### ⑥ A Voice Cries in the Wilderness

The future has to be proclaimed. A vision has to be presented; people need to have a sense of possibilities—of what could happen—of peace. We are all called to prepare the way for the future to arrive.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Read Isaiah 58:1–14. As Christians we believe that Jesus is the realization of the Messiah Isaiah prophesied, and John the Baptist is the one who was the preparer of the way. And who are you? You are the one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way. Isaiah 58:1–4 and Matthew 25:31–46 present two different pictures of what matters to God—the shalom of God. This activity invites you to decide what it is that needs to be said to the world so others will be prepared for the coming of the Messiah. Pretend you are John the Baptist. What do you feel must be said to have people ready for Christ? Write about it. Use your journal if you are keeping one and prepare a welcome statement that will prepare the crowd for what it is you believe is going to happen. Then write what it is you think Christ is going to do. What will this world be like? What possibilities exist for Christ to bring peace and grace to all? Dream big. God does.

## Work Place and Communal Life

### Exploring & Engaging Activity



### ⑦ Do Unto Others (Easy Preparation)

It is possible that there is no scripture in the Bible that more clearly speaks to the challenge of working for justice than Matthew 25:31–46. This is a clear statement by Jesus that we do not get to pick or choose the people for whom we will work for justice. The call to discipleship is clear: Jesus says that what you do for those around, you are doing for me, whether what we are doing is good or bad, positive or negative, destructive or constructive.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- pen/paper or Living Practices in Daily Life Journal

Gather friends, coworkers, neighbors, and/or fellow parishioners, and read and discuss Matthew 25:31–46. *What do you hear? What part of this passage “hits you between the eyes”?* Identify some specific instances of situations and individuals who need help. Decide what needs to be done to begin to address those needs and do so with the urgency that one of these individuals may well be Christ. We cannot afford to turn our backs on anyone. We must live with an impassioned impatience that requires us not to accept a world that does not provide justice for every individual. Invite the group to decide on a course of action that could be taken to put your thoughts into motion. Do this activity together and celebrate making a difference in the world.



## Discerning & Deciding Activity

### ⑧ Guide Our Feet, O Lord

Sometimes we get ahead of God. Sometimes we think we know best what needs to be done. Sometimes we think we know all the answers. This song reminds us that we are workers for God and that we take our directions from the One who calls us to be disciples.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (any translation)
- song: "Guide My Feet," African American traditional (tune: Guide My Feet); YouTube video: <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong20>, words and music: <http://www.hymnsite.com/fws/hymn.cgi?2208>

Read Hebrews 12:1-12. This is an invitation to stop what you and your fellow justice workers are doing and to sit and listen to the words of "Guide my Feet." Use this song as a meeting begins or ends. It could be done in the midst of a justice project or just at a time when you are gathered with people who are special in your life. It is an activity that is appropriate at any time because it reminds us that we need God's guidance in all that we do. The tune is a prayer, sung in the tradition of the antiphonal psalms. The Internet site in the Supplies list has words and music should the group decide they want to participate in the singing. Listen to it once, and then invite the group to join in singing when it is played a second time.

## Sending & Serving Activity



### ⑨ Faith's Flight of Fancy

Lives can be full of pain and struggle, but as long as people can dream, they have hope. This is the power of metaphor—the unconditional grace of the imagination. "Tar Beach II" is a work of art that celebrates the power of the imagination. It is a lithograph on silk that shows the dreams of a young girl in Harlem. Her "Tar Beach" is a rooftop. Some would consider that a limitation, but her imagination empowers her to achieve her dreams. Her "Tar Beach" (the asphalt on the rooftop) was her launching point and her imagination was her feathers—and this work of art celebrates her taking flight.

#### Supplies:

- large construction paper
- art supplies
- artwork: "Tar Beach II" by Faith Ringgold, <http://tinyurl.com/FPArt16>

Visit the artist's website for a wealth of information: [www.faithringgold.com](http://www.faithringgold.com), and check out Ringgold's picture and storybook *Tar Beach*, of which this artwork is a companion piece.

Gather friends, coworkers, fellow citizens, and neighbors to join this young girl in her faith's flight of fancy. What could your world and your community be like? What is it that needs to be done to set all of you free to become what God has called each of you to be? How can you unlock your creative and spiritual imagi-

nation to use of the power of hope that comes when we believe God is in the world, working for us, helping us, and guiding us?

Get together and talk about what you want to see your community or workplace become. Expand your horizons and talk about the challenges that exist. Be honest about the barriers: the injustice, the hurt, and the people in harm's way.

As you engage in this discussion, invite the individuals in the group to use the materials and work together to create a picture that portrays the group's flight of fancy. Make sure everyone participates. When you are finished, talk about how real this faith's flight of fancy could be by actually doing something to make it a reality. Agree together that this is a shared dream and a shared faith, a shared flight of fancy that can happen only if you all work together to turn it from fantasy into reality.