

Working for Justice



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Many older youth (ages 15–19) can be very self-conscious and easily embarrassed, which can hinder their willingness to discover new ideas and concepts. Having knowledge, though, can be a powerful tool for older youth. Knowledge can be a self-esteem booster, leading youth to embrace the act of discovering. It is important to be sensitive to the tone in the room and to be flexible enough to meet the youth where they are, emotionally and cognitively, during each activity.

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

Leader Preparation

Christians have been working for justice for millennia. Welcome to the journey! Whenever we embark on a new adventure and encounter new ideas or concepts, it is crucial to begin with an open mind. Before beginning these activities, spend time in prayer, opening your mind to the wisdom and guidance of our God of justice, the strength of Jesus the Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit so that you might be able to lead and learn about God’s justice in new and transforming ways.

Prayer:

*O God of justice,
 open my ears to hear the power of your Word,
 open my eyes to see your amazing work in this world,
 open mind and my heart so that I might witness the gifts of the youth in my midst,
 and open my hands so that I might work for justice more fully.
 I pray all of this in the strength of Jesus the Christ. Amen.*

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 What Is “Working for Justice”? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: As you prepare to lead the discussion described in this activity, explore your own views about working for justice. Try to answer for yourself the questions asked below. Keep in mind, however, that your role is not to instruct the group about the “correct” answer to these questions. Instead, you are exploring the questions with the group. In this discussion, the role of the leader is to ask guiding questions and create an atmosphere of open-minded inquiry. Think of other questions you might also ask the group.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Lead the group in a discussion about their understanding of working for justice. Begin by brainstorming. Ask: *When you think of working for justice, what comes to mind?* Write participants’ answers on the newsprint or whiteboard. Invite participants to feel free to throw out whatever comes to mind—any words or phrases. Remember to be patient, and give them time to respond. It may take some participants longer than others to come up with ideas. Once the group has developed a list of several ideas, ask them to work together to come up with a definition of “working for justice.” You don’t need to come up with a precise, all-encompassing definition; it’s the process that matters, not the product. Other questions to explore include:

- How do we work for justice?
- Why do we work for justice?
- When do we work for justice?
- What makes what we’re working for “justice”?
- What are some specific justice issues?
- Who are some historical and contemporary justice heroes?

You can also bring up some stories and ask if these are examples of working for justice, and why or why not. Examples that you might suggest include a church housing a homeless shelter, a man collecting signatures for a petition to lower taxes, a family recycling empty soda cans, a group of friends donating the income they don’t spend on necessities, or a woman working at a food bank. *What is it that determines justice work? Is it the motive behind the actions? The effects of the actions?*

Conclude the discussion by asking participants to reflect on the discussion. *What surprised you? What challenged your thinking? What new idea did you encounter? Is there anything you are still going to be thinking about after this? Are you satisfied that you have figured out what working for justice is?*

is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

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

2 Justice Crossword

Leader preparation: Before leading this activity, spend a few minutes thinking about what justice means to you, and make your own list of words related to the concept of justice. Before the participants arrive, write “Justice” in the middle of a whiteboard or a sheet of newsprint.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- Scrabble® tiles or cardboard pieces with all the letters of the alphabet on them (If you use cardboard, make the same combination of letters used in Scrabble®.)

Ask participants to call out words related to working for justice. Write them on a separate sheet of newsprint or one side of the whiteboard. Write every word that is called out. After a few minutes of calling out words, ask the participants to choose 8–10 words that create the most positive view of justice. Take these words and weave them into the word “justice,” much like a crossword puzzle. You can either write the words connected to “justice” with markers or add Scrabble® tiles (or cardboard pieces) to create words related to “justice.” As you place each new word into the growing puzzle, talk about how the different concepts about justice are woven into each other. For instance, when we truly value a person, the idea of fairness for everyone weaves together into a desire for justice.

As the puzzle fills up with words, ask the participants to describe ways they experience this weaving together of ideas toward justice. Using the words that are woven together, write active sentences

3 Go Fish

Leader preparation: Spend time before this activity thinking about how you would answer the questions that you put in the fish bowl. How would you be able to defend your responses? How does your faith influence your answers? Having a clear understanding of yourself and your own beliefs before leading this activity is helpful.

Supplies:

- a small fish bowl
- about 10 small pieces of paper with words, phrases, or questions related to working for justice
- 2 chairs, one labeled “For” and the other labeled “Against”

Place two chairs opposite each other in the middle of the room. Between the two chairs, place an empty fish bowl containing the small pieces of paper with a variety of statements related to working for justice. The pieces of paper might have statements such the following:

- There can never be a just war.
- Being a vegetarian helps the world.
- We should have welfare, Medicaid, and other social services for those in need.

Think of other statements related to justice and include them in the fish bowl as well. Have two participants—one from each team—sit on the two chairs, and ask one to “fish” for a piece of paper in the fish bowl. Ask the participant to read aloud the statement on the paper. Then have the participants sitting in the chairs take a position for or against the statement and debate the issue with each other.



Participants are to look at the issue from the perspective of the “For” or “Against” chair in which they are sitting.

Divide the group into two teams. Have each team choose a person to sit in the chair assigned to the team. When a question is drawn from the fish bowl, the person sitting in the chair may confer with the other team members. Another team member may tag the person in the chair to exchange places. After each question, have the teams change chairs, so that if they debated the “For” side for one question they will debate the “Against” side for the next question. Encourage the participants to think about their responses from a theological perspective.

At the end of the activity, take a few minutes for the entire group to discuss the experience. *How did it feel to argue “for” or “against” certain topics or issues? Did the you always agree with the arguments you were making, or did you have to go against your beliefs to try to make a point? How did this help you see the other side of the argument? How can it be beneficial to see another person’s point of view in real life?*

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Justice Debate (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Isaiah 1:1, 10–18 reads like a debate with one side unspoken. What would happen if the other voice in the conversation was heard? What kind of discussion would it bring about? This activity adds the unspoken voice and offers suggestions for a conversation about the debate.

Supplies:

- “Justice Debate,” Attachment: Activity 4

Divide the group into two sides. Have each side speak alternating lines on the handout. You may want to invite the group to continue the conversation that begins on the handout by creating and adding their own lines at the end. It is also fine simply to use the handout.

After reading the handout, invite discussion. Some possible questions are:

- How does reading the passage in this debate format affect your understanding of the reading?
- How effective is negative reinforcement in challenging people to work for justice?
- In what ways does this reading challenge you to work for justice?



5 Reporting Live, On the Scene

Leader preparation: Make sure your video camera is set up and working properly before you begin this activity. Spend a few minutes reflecting on what is happening in the painting “Shotgun Third Ward” before leading the activity so that you can join in the conversation with the participants, if they need your guidance.

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
- video camera (if available), or make a pretend camera from cardboard
- paper and pens

Show the painting “Shotgun Third Ward” to the participants. Explain that they are all going to have a chance to act out this painting. Assign parts to each participant. One person is a TV reporter who has just arrived on the scene. Another person is in charge of the video camera (if you have one). The rest of the participants will be characters in the painting. The TV reporter will interview the people in the painting in order to figure out what is happening. Give the participants several minutes to discuss how this skit will unfold. They can write down their lines if they want to.

As they discuss the details of the picture, encourage them to think about the following questions:

- Why was the reporter called to this scene?
- What is the underlying justice issue that needs to be reported on?
- Who would the reporter approach first?
- What might the reporter say when arriving on the scene?
- What would the reporter ask each person?
- How do you think the children in the picture are feeling?
- How would their feelings affect how they respond to the reporter?
- How do you think the adults are feeling in the picture? Why?
- How would they react to a reporter?
- What difference might it make if the reporter were African American?
- What if the reporter were white?
- What is the significance of the intact church bell tower, when the rest of the church is on fire?
- How might the reporter’s own feelings affect his or her reaction in this situation?

Once participants are ready to act out the skit, say “action” and let the fun begin! When they are finished, invite the participants to watch the video of their play, if you have time. Also allow a few minutes at the end of the activity for the participants to share their reactions. *What was it like to play your role? How did it help you better understand the painting? How do you understand justice better after studying this painting?*



6 30-Second Rule

Leader preparation: Cut apart the questions on the attachment and tape them to a lightweight ball, such as a beach ball. As you cut and tape, think about how you would answer the questions.

Supplies:

- “30-Second-Rule Justice Questions,” Attachment: Activity 6
- scissors and tape
- lightweight ball
- timer

Invite the participants to form a circle. Explain that you will throw the ball to someone in the circle. Once that person catches the ball, he or she will have 30 seconds to read aloud the question that his or her right thumb is nearest on the ball, think about an intelligent response, and tell it to the group. Use a timer or a digital watch to count the 30 seconds. That will help keep the pace of the game moving. After the response, spend a few seconds either congratulating player or constructively explaining a better response. Then invite that participant to toss the ball to someone else in the circle and begin the question and answer cycle again. Continue until all the questions on the ball have been answered.

All the questions on the attachment are related to working for justice. This activity allows the participants to share what they already know about justice and to learn more in a fast-paced activity that will keep their attention.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 What Is Our Motivation for Making a Difference in the World? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Spend a few minutes thinking about your life and the reasons you do the things you do. What is your motivation? Think about how you would respond in each situation below and how you would answer the questions listed at the end of the activity. Clearly knowing and understanding your own values and being grounded in these beliefs will help you lead this activity more effectively.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Describe two scenarios in which the group is “working for justice” by performing a good deed for a family or another group of people. In the first scenario, the benefactors are grateful and excited about the work the participants are doing. In the second scenario, those whose lives are better because of the work the group has done couldn’t care less and show very little interest in what the group has done for them—and no appreciation.

Ask the participants to share how they would feel in each situation. On newsprint or a whiteboard, list their comments. For example, a grateful person would make the benefactors feel:

- as though they had done something good for someone.
- as though their time had been well spent.
- happy.



An ungrateful person would make the benefactors feel:

- as though they had wasted their time.
- as though the good they had done in the world didn't matter.
- angry.
- frustrated.

Then discuss the following:

- What is our motivation for working for justice or doing good things in the world?
- In what ways does the response of the recipient affect our resolve for working for justice?
- Do we help others because we truly want to serve God regardless of the end result?
- Are we motivated by a feel-good emotion when someone cries in desperate gratitude because we were able to come in and save the day?
- What are your thoughts on the things that we do in the world to make a positive difference?

8 Justice Bumper Stickers

Leader preparation: Spend a few minutes reflecting on how you define “working for justice.” Think about key phrases that might catch your eye and inspire you to work for justice.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- plain contact paper, markers, and other art supplies
- Bible

Invite the participants to make justice-related bumper stickers that they can take home or hang up in your meeting space. To begin, have someone in the group read aloud Luke 4:14–21 and another Isaiah 1:1, 10–18. These will provide a helpful context and, perhaps, some ideas to start the participants thinking. Invite the participants to brainstorm short justice-related phrases together, such as:

- Sow Justice—Reap Peace
- Work and Pray for Justice
- It's “Justice for All,” not “Just Us”

Write the phrases participants suggest on the newsprint or whiteboard. Keep the ideas flowing for several minutes, so that you develop quite a long list of catchy phrases. Then invite each participant to create a bumper sticker using the ideas the group just finished brainstorming. Have them use contact paper and any of the art supplies available.

Invite the participants to take their bumper stickers home so that they can be reminded to work for justice, or decorate the meeting space with the bumper stickers so that they can inspire justice in future activities. Or have the youth distribute the bumper stickers to other members of the congregation. Remind the participants that if they remove the back of the contact paper and stick the bumper sticker somewhere, it may not be removable. For that reason, they must have permission to put these bumper stickers in most public or private spaces.



9 Embracing Peace and Working for Justice

Leader preparation: Spend a few minutes examining “Embrace of Peace” and reflect on what you see in this piece of art. Also think about your answers to the questions listed below. Have a clear understanding of your own thoughts and beliefs before you lead this activity.

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

Hang George Tooker’s “Embrace of Peace” on the wall so that all the participants can see it clearly (without initially revealing the title). Ask the participants what they see in this picture. Spend several minutes listening to the responses. Then share the title of the artwork. Point out that there are two couples in the picture. Spend a few minutes discussing the word “embrace,” emphasizing that you can embrace (or hug) a person or you can embrace (or adopt as part of your belief system) an idea. Ask the participants how we “embrace peace.” Again, simply sit back and listen to all the responses for a few minutes.

Then ask: *What difference do you see between the two couples in the picture?* One difference is that the couple in the middle of the picture is fully embracing one another. The other couple is working on it, but has not yet accomplished the task.

Just as embracing another is a process, it is also a process to “embrace peace.” Ask: *What is required in order to embrace peace?* Reconciliation, acceptance, forgiveness, and tolerance are just a few of the actions required in order to embrace peace. *What must we do in order to accomplish these goals?* This requires working on relationship building, educating ourselves about differences, good communication skills, and much more.

Then ask the participants to describe the relationship between peace and justice. Some people argue that to embrace peace, there must be justice. *Why might this be true?* Several unjust historical situations could be examples to argue for this point. For example, injustice (i.e., slavery) was at the core of American life before the Civil War. This ultimately led to the fighting of the war. There was no peace in the United States during this period until there was justice (i.e., the end of slavery). Some also say that this is true in the Middle East today. More specifically, there will never be peace (no fighting and killing) between the Israelis and Palestinians until there is justice (everyone owning the land they deserve). Ask the participants their opinion of this argument, and invite them to discuss it in more detail.

Reflect

Spend time reflecting on your group. What have you discovered about yourself as you led these activities? What have you discovered about older youth? What do you think have they discovered about themselves? How have you seen and experienced God working through your group? What changes might need to be made in future activities with this group? Say a brief prayer for your group, asking God to empower all the participants to work for justice in all that they do.

Finish the activity by asking the participants which person they are in the picture. *Are you part of the couple in the middle that has successfully embraced peace and is actively working for justice? Or are you part of the other couple that is at the beginning of the journey? Or maybe you are outside of this picture, without your arms outstretched and just thinking about embracing peace?* However they describe themselves, invite them to share how they might envision working more diligently toward embracing peace and working for justice in their everyday lives.

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Attachment: Activity 4

Justice Debate

Based on Isaiah 1:1, 10–18

- A:** Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!
- B:** We've been hearing, listening, and learning, LORD! What are we missing?
- A:** What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.
- B:** But you told us to offer you our best! Why are you so angry?
- A:** When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more;
- 2:** Have we insulted you? How are we trampling your courts?
- A:** Bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.
- B:** Are you saying that we are doing things for the wrong reason? Are you angry that we are showing devotion to others in addition to you?
- A:** Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them.
- B:** We adopted the practices of other religions because we thought you wanted us to get along better!
- A:** When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.
- B:** What can we do to change your mind? How can we change so that you'll listen?
- A:** Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.
- B:** That's a tall order, God. But we will do better. We will change. We will do good and seek justice.
- A:** Come now, let us argue it out: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.
- B:** Didn't you just tell us how horrible we've been acting? Now you're saying that you forgive us? What happens if we mess up again?



30-Second-Rule Justice Questions

- What is the difference between justice and charity?
- What is one way you can work for justice?
- What is the difference between a Christian working for justice and any other person working for justice?
- Name one famous person who has worked for justice.
- List five injustices that exist in the world today.
- Why should we work for justice?
- How have you worked for justice?
- How is your church working for justice?
- Name three personality traits or characteristics that one needs when working for justice.
- What injustice have you ignored sometime in your life?

Working for Justice



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Many older youth remain biblically illiterate, even though they have participated in church school, vacation Bible school, church camp, and other church activities for years. This is something they will try to cover up and hide for fear of embarrassment. The understanding of scripture for many older youth remains highly linear at this point in their lives. Be aware of this cognitive ability and teach toward it rather than trying to stretch the youth to places where they are not yet developmentally able to go.

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

Leader Preparation

Scripture is at the root of our religion and yet the Bible remains a mysterious book for so many people. Do not be afraid of God’s word, but embrace it as a story of faith, just as if you were sharing your story of faith today. Listen with an open heart and an open mind for God to speak through the words and actions of our brothers and sisters from ancient times.

Prayer: Holy God, sometimes I get so bogged down in the complicated words that I am reading, writing, and hearing that I forget to simply listen for your still small voice. Help me, O God, to focus on your presence above all else and to center in on your prophetic message of justice and freedom for all. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities using one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Do Justice, Love Kindness, and Walk Humbly with Your God (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Micah 6:1–8, and spend time reflecting on what verse 8 means when applied to your life and what it may mean to the lives of your youth.

Supplies:

- markers in 3 different colors and newsprint or a whiteboard
- Bibles

Invite someone in the group to read aloud Micah 6:1–8. Use three sheets of newsprint, or divide the whiteboard into three sections. Write each of these three phrases at the top of the newsprint or whiteboard: “Do Justice,” “Love Kindness,” and “Walk Humbly with Your God.” Divide the participants into three groups, and invite each group to discuss and expand upon one of the phrases. Invite Group 1 to define justice and create a list of how we “do justice.” Invite Group 2 to create a list of ways people are kind to one another. Invite Group 3 to write thoughts about how people of faith can be humble.

After the lists are completed, ask members each group to share what they have composed and explain how and why they agreed upon those ideas. After all the groups have shared their thoughts, invite the entire group into a deeper discussion by asking broader questions, such as:

- How do you think showing kindness relates to working for justice?
- Why is it important to walk humbly with God when working for justice?
- How are love and kindness related in Micah 6:1–8? Why is this significant?
- Why do you think the prophet Micah chose these three items as a way of summarizing what God requires of us, as people of faith?

Close this activity with prayer, asking for God’s guidance and strength as we each strive to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God throughout our daily lives.

2 Prophets

Leader preparation: Both Amos 5:18–24 and Micah 6:1–8 contain the words of two significant Old Testament prophets. Prophets often brought news that was difficult to proclaim and difficult to hear. Messages related to working for justice have always been difficult for some to say and difficult for others to hear. Participants in this activity will imagine what prophets of old were like and how modern-day prophets are similar and different.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Read aloud Amos 5:18–24 and Micah 6:1–8. Ask the participants to listen to the readings from the perspective of the prophets speaking the words. Then invite discussion of these or similar questions:

- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities using at least one activity from each category.
- What qualities do you think a person needed in order to be a prophet in Old Testament times?
- How are the words the prophets spoke in the past similar or different to the words prophets speak today?
- In addition to biblical prophets, who are some people from the recent past or present that you would consider to be prophets? Why?
- What qualities do you think a person needs in order to be a prophet today?
- What words should modern-day prophets speak?
- Could you be a prophet? Why or why not?
- How do prophetic words help us to work for justice?

3 Doing Good or Doing Justice

Leader preparation: Spend time reflecting on your own life. Why do you do some of the good things you do on a daily basis? Do you do them because they are good deeds or because you want to bring about justice throughout the world? Think about how you would answer the questions in this activity, and reflect on shifts you could make in your life so that you are more fully working for justice in all that you do. Having a clear understanding of your own life and personal actions will help you lead this activity more effectively. This activity will help the participants analyze their daily activities and evaluate whether or not they are truly working for justice in all that they do. Set up the meeting space to allow both for movement and sitting.

Supplies:

- Bible

Invite the participants to gather in the center of the room with everyone facing in the same direction. Explain that you will read a series of statements. After each statement participants are to move either to their right or left, based on their responses. Begin each statement with the same phrase. “If I behaved as I normally behave, I would . . .”

- Drive to the store (*move right*) or ride your bike, skateboard, or roller blade to the store (*move left*).
- Eat a hamburger (*move right*) or eat vegetables (*move left*).
- Throw your drink bottle in the trash (*move right*) or keep it with you until you find a recycling bin (*move left*).
- Ride the bus to school (*move right*) or walk to school (*move left*).
- Give a dollar to the homeless person on the street (*move right*) or ignore the person and walk to the other side of the road (*move left*).
- Volunteer at the local soup kitchen (*move right*) or go to a protest fighting for the rights of migrant farm workers (*move left*).
- Open the door for someone in a wheelchair (*move right*) or walk slowly so no one sees you too close to the person with a disability (*move left*).
- Stop someone who is picking on the little guy who sits in the back of the classroom (*move right*) or laugh at him behind his back (*move left*).
- Get a new cell phone every year when eligible for an upgrade (*move right*) or wait until your current phone dies to get a new phone (*move left*).
- Turn on the air conditioning (*move right*) or open the windows (*move left*).



After all the statements have been read and all the participants have responded, invite the group to gather in a circle and ask them what they thought about this activity. *What would cause you to respond differently? What changes would you have to make in your lives in order to give a different answer to some of the questions? Are these adaptations feasible? How might those changes affect your lives and the world?* Read Amos 5:18–24 to the group. In this passage the writer creates two situations: (1) the life the Israelites are currently living, in which they actively worship God by singing and making sacrifices; and (2) the world that God desires, in which justice rolls down like waters and righteousness rolls down like an ever-flowing stream. The Israelites think they are doing a good thing—the right thing—through their acts of worship, but God sees things a bit differently. God wants the Israelites to work for justice and not just do good deeds.

Spend time discussing this concept of how God sometimes sees and understands situations and actions differently than we do. *How would God have wanted you to respond in this activity? When you moved to one side of the room or the other, were you responding as people of faith? Were you thinking about what God desires? How might you shift your thoughts and actions so that you think about situations from God's perspective more often?* Sometimes we think we are doing good, yet the things we are doing are not really transforming the world into a place of justice, as God wants it to be.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 How? What? Why? When? Where? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Micah 6:1–8 and Amos 5:18–24. Think about what questions you have after reading through these passages. Let these readings and questions remain in your heart as you pray for God's wisdom and clarity.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- paper and pens
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Divide the participants into two groups. Invite one group to look at Micah 6:1–8 and the other at Amos 5:18–24. Ask each group to list at least 5–10 questions of things they would like clarified, answered, or discussed about the biblical passage. Have them list their questions on newsprint or a whiteboard. After 10 minutes, each group reports back and posts their questions for all to see. Spend the rest of the time in discussion, as a whole group, so that the participants can find answers to their questions. The participants will often look to you, as the leader, to give all the answers. Try to avoid answering their questions; instead, encourage all the participants to contribute to the responses.



5 Dream God's Dream

Leader preparation: Spend time on your own listening to the song “Dream God’s Dream,” and think about what the verses mean to you. Reflect on their significance in your life and your faith journey.

Supplies:

- song: “Dream God’s Dream” by Bryan Sirchio; video: <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong19>; words: <http://tinyurl.com/FPSong19a>
- 4 large pieces of poster board
- markers, pens, and other craft items to put on the poster board
- (optional) music player for each prayer station

Choose a quiet, contemplative space, and set up a series of four prayer stations that invite the youth to reflect on the themes of this song. Have participants listen to the song “Dream God’s Dream” by Bryan Sirchio. At each prayer station, set out a sheet of white poster board with one of the verses and the refrain from the song written on it.

Invite the participants to spend time in silent prayer at each station, reflecting on the verse from the song as they consider how the words relate to their own journey of life and faith, especially in the context of working for justice. The participants can then respond by writing or drawing something on the poster board before moving on to the next station. You may even want to include a music player at each station so participants can listen to the song as they work.

Close your time by gathering in a circle, reading Micah 6:1–8, and speaking briefly about God’s dream for humanity. End with a closing prayer.



6 Faith Journeys

Leader preparation: Spend a few minutes reflecting on your personal faith journey and how the prophetic role has (or has not) described you throughout your life. Think about how you would describe your faith journey through words or pictures. See the sample on the attachment.

Supplies:

- 8½” × 11” paper
- pens, markers and other craft supplies
- magazines or other sources of pictures
- “My Faith Journey,” Attachment: Activity 6

Spend a few minutes talking with the group about life as a journey. Throughout life we are all on a faith journey. As we grow up, our faith grows, develops, and changes. Invite each participant to create her or his own faith journey in pictures, using the paper and craft supplies provided. Show the sample on the attachment. Everyone expresses themselves differently, so faith journeys can be described in various ways—with words, numbers, pictures or symbols. As they work, encourage the participants to be creative. Ask them to think back over their entire lives and reflect on the following aspects of their faith:

- What did you think about God at certain points in your life, such as when you were five years old or ten years old?
- How has God been involved in your life? Distant or close? Loving? Judging? Fatherly or motherly?



- What have been the roles of the church and people of faith (such as peers, parents, pastors, church-school teachers, youth-group leaders, camp counselors) in your life?
- How have you expressed your faith as you've grown up?
- Could you have been described as a prophet at any point in your life? As a person of faith, have you spoken out against injustices or worked for justice in any way?
- Where do you see your faith journey going from here?

After everyone is finished creating their faith-journey stories, invite the participants to share what they have developed. Some aspects of faith journeys can be very personal, so be aware that everyone may not want to share everything they have written or drawn. Make sure all the participants know that this is a safe place to share and that they may say as much or as little as they want to when they are explaining their faith journeys to the rest of the participants.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 The Bible Tells Me So (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Amos 5:18–24 before leading this exercise, and think about how you would respond to the statements on the attachment. Pray for God to speak through the words of the Bible and through each participant in this activity. This is a creative way to examine biblical passages in depth; it also provides an opportunity for participants not only to think about the text but also to relate it their own faith and the act of working for justice.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- “The Bible Tells Me So,” Attachment: Activity 7

Ask one of the participants to read aloud Amos 5:18–24. Then give everyone a copy of the handout. Ask each participant to quietly reading the Bible passage again and then write (next to the appropriate symbol) what he or she thinks the passage is saying. After ten minutes of individual work, encourage the group to share their findings together. Where there are questions, encourage group discussion to try to find out the answers. Close with prayer, thanking God for the arrows, light bulbs, exclamation marks, and question marks in our lives given to us by scripture.

8 Illustrating Justice

Leader preparation: Think about how you would describe Amos 5:24 artistically. Spend several minutes in silent prayer as you prepare for this activity, listening for the still, small voice of God to speak to you and guide you as you lead this activity. It is often in the silence that we form our most creative ideas.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- craft supplies, such as paints, paper, markers, crayons, scrap fabric, sequins, cotton balls, old magazines



Invite a volunteer to read Amos 5:18–24 to the group. Then ask everyone to read verse 24 again in unison. Explain that often we can articulate our thoughts best through art rather than through words. Using this creative avenue of expression can help bring understanding to abstract texts. Invite the participants to use the available craft supplies to create a piece of art that illustrates verse 24. After each participant is finished, display the illustrations throughout the room.

9 Micah Means . . .

Leader preparation: Read Micah 6:1–8, and reflect on this passage before you lead this activity. Think about how you would answer the questions in this activity. Create your own acrostic poem as a sample to use in this activity.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- pens and paper

Ask one of the participants to read aloud Micah 6:1–8. Invite participants to briefly share their first impressions of this text. Then, invite each participant to create an acrostic poem using the word “Micah.” Write “M I C A H” down the left side of their paper, stacking the five letters on top of each other. Then ask each participant write short phrases beginning with each letter that relate to working for justice. To help the participants think of phrases, ask the following questions:

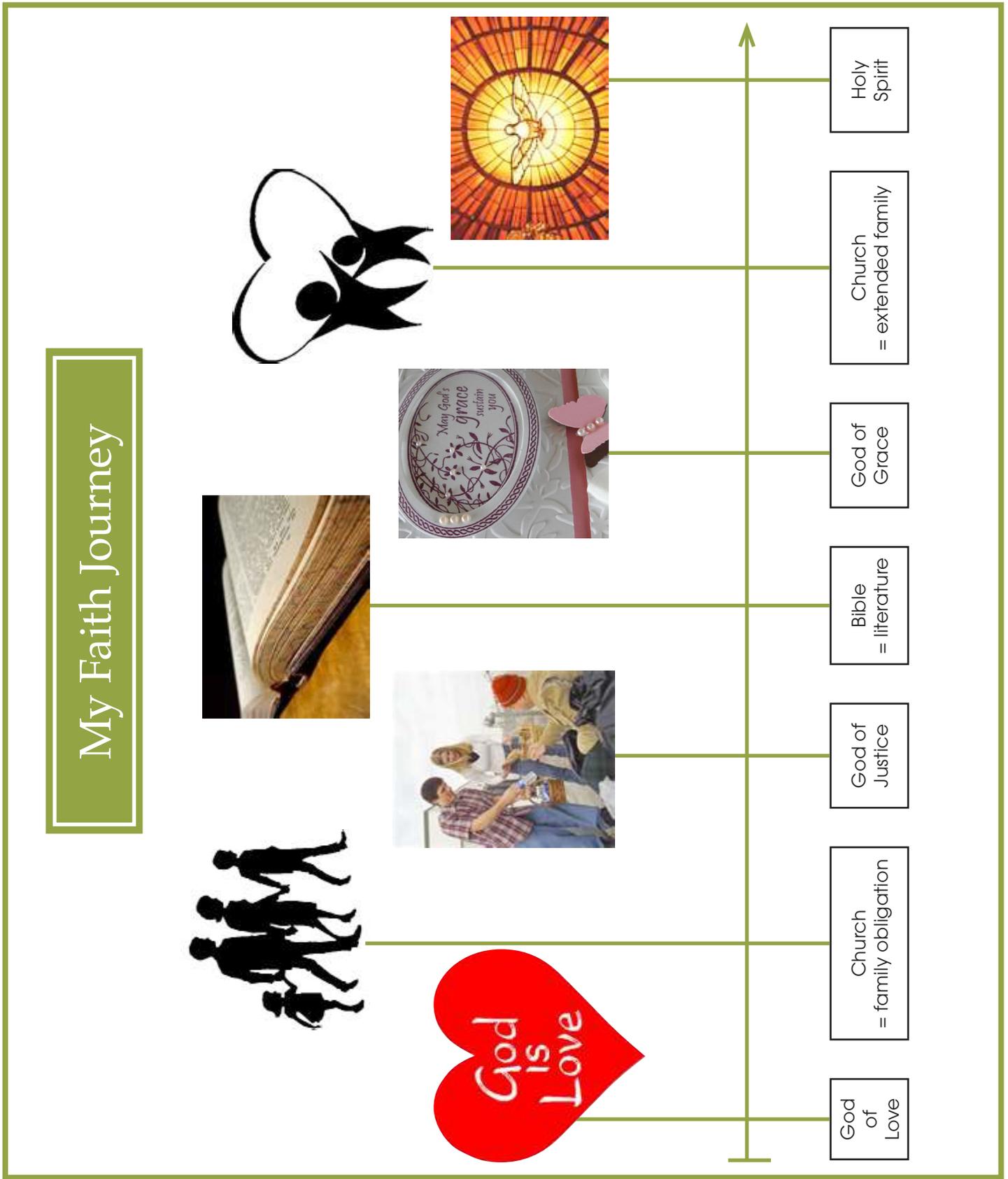
- What catches your attention in this text?
- What major ideas from this reading can help lead you as a disciple of Christ?
- What themes in this passage are good to remember on a regular basis?
- How can ideas from this text help you work for justice?

When participants have finished, invite any to share who want to, including you, and then everyone can take home her or his acrostic poem and use it as a reminder of the prophet Micah and his call to work for justice in her or his everyday life. You might ask permission of the youth to have their acrostic poems published in the church newsletter.

Reflect

What have you learned about scripture by leading these activities? How do you think the participants’ faith has been stretched by doing these activities? What more can you do to continue to grow in faith and wisdom? Say a brief prayer for your group, seeking God’s everlasting love and guidance to be present in each life as you continue to work for justice.

Attachment: Activity 6





Attachment: Activity 6 (continued)

Explanation:

As a young child, my Sunday school teachers taught me about God primarily as a “God of love.” God’s main purpose is to love everyone.

During this time, I often saw “church” as a family obligation. (My mom expected the whole family to be at weekly worship every Sunday morning.)

As a teenager, I began to know the “God of justice” through mission trips my youth group took throughout the country every summer. This became a very important and influential transformation for me and my understanding of God’s purpose and the work of the church.

During college when I was studying various types of literature, I began to see the Bible as a piece of literature, for the first time. It was written by certain people, living in a certain place, during a certain period of time. It was their story of faith. This new perspective on this holy book affected my faith and understanding of how faithful people live, act and speak about their faith. During this time, I also began to know our “God of grace”—whose steadfast love is never ending, no matter who I am or what I do.

As a young adult, I began to see “church” as an extended family. These close relationships became very important to me at this time in my life.

After I spent some time in Africa, I started to become much closer to the Holy Spirit—an aspect of faith that is very important to the people I met in Africa. Knowing the “living God” more personally, helped my faith grow and develop deeper on a daily basis.

Who knows what the future will hold?

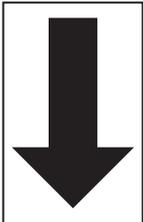
Attachment: Activity 7

The Bible Tells Me So

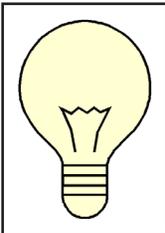
Read Amos 5:18-24. Then write or draw something next to each symbol according to the directions.



What these verses tell us about God:



What these verses tell us about human nature:



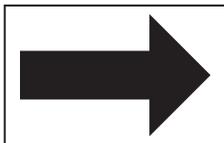
A new discovery I've made in reading these verses:



The most exciting part of these verses:



What I don't understand, or something I want to ask about:



What these verses say about working for justice:

Working for Justice



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Many older youth have been baptized and/or confirmed and welcomed into the life of the church. In some communions, they have been confirmed as members of the church, but most people still see them and treat them as children of the church. Older youth at times embrace this childlike role. At other times, they rebel against it, insisting on more adult roles, responsibilities, and expectations in and from the church. This duality makes for an awkward stage that is always important for leaders, teachers, and counselors of older youth to keep in mind.

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

Leader Preparation

Think about when you first became a disciple of Christ. Reflect on the journey you have been on since as a Christian. How have you always lived out your faith? How have you expressed your beliefs through your actions? Knowing yourself well before leading these activities is very helpful.

Prayer: O God, help me to dig deep inside my soul, to recollect how you have guided me throughout my life. Continue to show me, O God, how I might be a faithful disciple and how I might graciously lead your flock. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

① Building Tour—Taking Inventory (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: What do you know about living “green”? Do you think it is worth the effort? Do you already try to do things that will help save the environment? Before you lead this activity, think about the implications of our actions on the environment and on others in our midst. To learn more about living “green,” visit the website “Green living tips” at www.greenlivingtips.com. Be sure to get permission in advance from the custodial and other appropriate staff or volunteers to look through certain rooms and spaces throughout the building as you plan for this green tour. You will invite some church leaders to join you on this tour, so be sure to make those invitations and explanations early.

Supplies:

- notebook paper
- pens
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Divide into groups of five: four youth and one church leader. Invite each group to spend about ten minutes walking around your church building (or meeting space) to see how your church is working for justice or participating in injustice through the things you use throughout the building. Does your congregation use energy efficient light bulbs? Do you serve fair-trade coffee? Does your custodian use environmentally friendly cleaning supplies? Is your sanctuary (or even the whole building) handicap accessible? Is there a visible location to recycle bulletins after worship? What other ways is your congregation working for justice—or creating injustice—in daily activities throughout the church building? Have one person in the group be the scribe who is responsible for taking simple observation notes throughout the tour.

At the end of the tour, come back together as a whole and spend a few minutes discussing what each small group saw and experienced. Record participants’ observations on the newsprint or whiteboard. The scribes may be able to help remind participants of any details they have already forgotten. If injustices were observed, discuss how those can be changed. If necessary, make an effective plan of action to take to the appropriate committee or governing board about making necessary adjustments in building operations.



② “Hi, My Name Is . . .”

Leader preparation: This activity focuses on how we interact with others. Often we treat those with whom we engage for better or worse not because of anything they have done but because of our internalized assumptions and biases. Before you introduce this exercise to the participants, spend a few minutes thinking about how you treat others and your assumptions about people who may be different from you. Do you let these biases affect your behavior? How can you help your previous experiences influence what the participants gain from this activity?

**Supplies:**

- 2" × 5" piece of construction paper for each participant (a third of the sheets should be green, a third yellow, and a third red)
- "Name Tag Instructions," Attachment: Activity 2
- pens or markers
- masking tape

Invite each participant to make a name tag using a piece of construction paper and a pen or marker. Once completed, have each participant tape the name tag prominently on him- or herself so others can easily see and read it.

Give each participant a printed copy of the instructions on the handout. Make sure, though, each participant receives an instruction card that describes how he or she is to feel about participants with differently colored name tags but not so he or she know how others will be treated. Those with green name tags are to be treated like the popular ones in the room—everyone likes them, is drawn toward them, and wants to spend a lot of time with them. Those with red name tags are the people in the group disliked by everyone. Those with yellow name tags are liked, but they are neither extremely popular nor regularly shunned. After giving these instructions to each group, all the participants will know how to treat one another, but they still will not know how others will treat them. Be sure to withhold information about its own color from each group.

Invite all the participants to spend several minutes introducing themselves and greeting one another. If they listened properly to the instructions, those with green name tags will receive a lot of attention and those with red name tags will spend most of this greeting time feeling isolated and ignored.

Allow 5–10 minutes for this greeting depending on the size of your group. Then have the group process the activity.

- Did you figure out what was happening? How did it feel?
- Have those of you with red name tags ever been in a situation when you felt isolated and ignored, or was this a new experience?
- How did those of you with green name tags like the attention? Did you notice that others in the room were being overlooked?
- Was there anything that any of you could have done to change the situation?
- Are there times in your own lives when you treat people like they were treated in this activity?
- Sometimes we treat those who are in remedial classes at school, those who are labeled as gay or lesbian, and many others as if they are wearing red name tags. If we act in this way, are we creating a world rooted in justice?

When injustice exists in a situation or in the world, inequalities are often at the root of the problem. When there is justice, everyone is treated fairly and harmony exists.



3 Living with Disabilities

Leader preparation: Before leading this exercise, spend a few minutes thinking about your experiences with disabilities. Maybe you know about disabilities firsthand from your own experiences or those of family, friends, or coworkers. If so, what will you be able to share with participants in this activity that will be beneficial to their learning process? Maybe you have very little experience interacting with people living with disabilities and are somewhat uncomfortable when you must interact with someone with disabilities in the wider society. If so, how will your biases affect how you lead this activity? Be honest with yourself, so that you can be honest and helpful to the participants of this activity.

Supplies:

- masking tape
- Bible
- notebook paper or construction paper
- pens or markers
- ingredients to make a simple sandwich (such as bread, lunch meat, and sliced cheese)

Tape the thumbs of some (not all) participants to the palm of their hands so that they are unable to use their thumbs during this exercise. Invite participants to spend a few minutes trying to do daily activities, such as making a sandwich or writing a note or a sign. To make the exercise more complex, you could also “disable” other body parts, such as the eyes by using a blindfold or an arm by using a sling. After the participants try the activities by themselves, invite some of the “nondisabled” participants to help those who are struggling. Spend a few minutes reflecting on the exercise as a group. *How did it feel to be disabled, even if it were just for a few minutes? Was it nice to have other participants help you accomplish the tasks?*

Invite a participant to read John 10:11–18. Then ask: *What light does this description of Jesus as the good shepherd shine on our discussion and the treatment of others?*

If disabled participants are taking part in this activity, invite them to share how they overcome some of their daily struggles. Being disabled is a very broad term. Some use the term “differently abled” to describe themselves. Those with glasses or contacts, those in wheelchairs, those with a learning disability or a speech impediment are all disabled to a certain extent. Throughout the discussion, help participants see how broad this concept can be. As you talk about disabilities, be sure to help the participants understand how God invites us to interact with and respond to those living with disabilities in our midst—with compassion and a helping hand.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 What If Christianity Were Outlawed? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Make your own list of your daily activities and rank them in order of importance. How does your list come out? Where are “working for justice” and “God” on your list? Sometimes we tend to think that activity leaders are better or know more than participants. In this exercise everyone is equal—everyone is a child of God striving to do the best we can and grateful for God’s grace and forgiveness when we need it.

**Supplies:**

- paper and pens for each participant
- Bible

Invite participants to rank, in a perfect world, how important the following would be in their lives: friends, family, God, working for justice, church, school, sports, Facebook, and hobbies. What else might be included in the list? Then ask participants to rank the items again, this time being honest about how important each item truly is in their real daily lives. Of course, for most of the teens the rankings on the two lists could be quite different, with God often trailing toward the middle or bottom of the second list. Then invite participants to imagine that they live in a world, in the not-too-distant future, when it has been determined that religion is the cause of too much suffering and violence in the world and so all religion is outlawed. That means that Christianity is no longer legal in the United States. Ask the participants: *If you were living in this future, could you be arrested for being a Christian? If someone looked at your life, would it be obvious to them that you are a Christian? What would such a life look like?*

To aid this discussion, encourage the participants to consider if they could be accused of doing any of the things for which Jesus is remembered. Read John 10:11–18 in this context and invite participants to “wonder” about how Jesus as the good shepherd informs how we should think about what matters most.

This will not be an easy conversation. It may be challenging for some participants—and for you—to consider to what extent faith is “lived” or simply something a person has “declared.” You may also want to lift up God’s grace (especially when we fail to do what we know we should). Ultimately, the participants might leave this activity thinking a little more seriously about working for justice and their Christian walk, seeing it not simply as a one-time decision but as a life-long process of joining in God’s mission of justice, peace, mercy, forgiveness, and grace for all.

**5 Who Would Jesus Torture?**

Leader preparation: Think about what you know about torture. As a Christian, what are your beliefs about torture? Say a prayer for both those who are or have been tortured and for those accused of torturing.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- computer with Internet access and projection device
- recent images of torture in our world via the Internet (if possible)
- “U.N. Statement on Torture,” Attachment: Activity 5
- video: clip from the television series “24,” www.tv.com/24/show/3866/summary.html
- results of a poll about torture from the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, <http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/The-Religious-Dimensions-of-the-Torture-Debate.aspx>

Set the tone for this discussion by gathering recent images (via the Internet or news magazines) related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the 9/11 attacks, the Abu Ghraib prison, or other recent torture cases. Display the images around the room or on the floor, or pass them out among the youth. Invite youth to share what words come to mind as they look at the various images. (Be thoughtful about how—or whether—you present these images because the images can be horrific.)



Explore with the youth how to define torture. Distribute copies of the attachment with the United Nations statement regarding torture.

Then show a clip from “24,” a recent television series that ran for eight years on the Fox Network. The show was presented in the semblance of real time, with each 24-episode season covering 24 hours in the life of the lead character, Jack Bauer. Bauer employs the use of torture in almost every episode in order to coerce a confession or needed information from terrorists.

Start a discussion regarding this show:

- How would you describe Jack Bauer’s character?
- What do you think of his actions in this scene?
- Would you view his actions differently if you had more of the context for his motivations?
- Why do you think that torture is often included as part of the plot in current TV shows and films?

Then share with the group the recent findings of a Pew Forum survey that asked people of faith: “Do you think the use of torture against suspected terrorists in order to gain important information can often be justified, sometimes be justified, rarely be justified, or never be justified?” How would your youth respond to this survey? Designate different points along an imaginary line as “often,” “sometimes,” “rarely,” or “never.” Pose the question from the survey, and invite each participant to stand on the continuum according to how he or she would respond. As you pose each of the following questions, have the participants move or change their position:

- Would your answer differ depending on the identity of the person being tortured?
- What if the person to be tortured was a terrorist?
- What if the person to be tortured was a woman?
- What if the person to be tortured was a child?
- What if the person to be tortured was a personal friend?
- What if the person to be tortured was a family member?

Share the responses from the Pew survey and ask: *What, if anything, surprises you about the findings of the survey? What might be the reason for the results the researchers gathered? Do you think there is a correct response on this issue for Christians? What might it be, in your opinion? What ought we or can we do in the face of torture? Should we protest it, change it, or make sure it doesn’t happen again? How?*

6 Who Will You Follow?

Leader preparation: Set up the obstacle course keeping safety in mind. This activity has the potential of getting a little chaotic. Before beginning the activity, center yourself, so that you do not add to the chaos of the activity.

Supplies:

- an outdoor grassy area to be used as an obstacle course
- objects that can be used as “road blocks” in an obstacle course, such as chairs, tables, luggage, foot stool, bench, candelabra, and other rather large items
- blindfolds



Divide the participants into small teams of three or four. Set up a simple obstacle course, ideally outside in a grassy area. The goal is for one member of a team to walk blindfolded through the obstacle course from one end to the other. Emphasize that this is not a race, even though more than one team is involved at the same time. Teammates are allowed to give the blindfolded member verbal directions but are not allowed on the obstacle course itself. This will probably require the team to have to shout orders at a teammate. Because it would be total chaos if everyone is shouting—"Go right! Go left!"—encourage teams to come up with a code. Perhaps they can use the words "red and green" in place of "right and left," or they can use one animal sound for right, one for straight ahead, one for left, and so on. The challenge for the blindfolded team member will be to discern his or her team members' directions amidst all the other voices in order to complete the obstacle course.

When everyone has finished the obstacle course, ask: *What was challenging about the situation? What helped you succeed? How this might be like real life? How is this like trying to stay focused on the messages of Jesus and justice in the roar of noise from our secular culture? How do we stay focused on the most helpful "voices"?*

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Justice Planes (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: What does justice mean to you? Consider all the different justice issues that exist in the world today. This activity has the potential to get a little noisy and wild while the "planes" are being thrown around the room, so remember to center yourself with a calming prayer before the activity begins.

Supplies:

- paper and pens
- markers
- "Basic Plane Folding Instructions," Attachment: Activity 7
- Bible

Invite the participants to write on pieces of paper two or three ways they might work for justice (one per sheet). Then have participants create paper airplanes out of those papers. The attachment provides instructions for folding a basic plane. The youth may know of other more elaborate designs. Participants can add some color to their "planes" with the markers, if they want.

When everyone's plane is finished, invite the participants to stand in a circle and try throwing their planes to someone across the circle. Once all the planes are in the air, everyone needs to catch one. As each participant unfolds a new "plane," invite him or her to read what is written on the paper and share his or her thoughts on justice by expanding on the written idea. Read aloud Jeremiah 14:7–10, 19–22, and invite conversation about how our ideas of justice and God's ideas of justice are the same.



8 Carbon Footprint

Leader preparation: Our carbon footprint relates to the amount of greenhouse gases (i.e. carbon dioxide and methane) we produce in our day-to-day lives by burning fossil fuels for electricity, heating, transportation, and other activities. When we measure our carbon footprint, we measure the impact our activities have on the environment. The more greenhouse gases we produce, the more heat energy is trapped in the atmosphere. Determining your carbon footprint is a very powerful tool to understand the impact of personal behavior on climate change and global warming. Most people are shocked when they see the amount of greenhouse gases their activities create.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- carbon footprint calculator at the website of the National Environmental Education Foundation, www.eeweek.org/carbon_calculator
- computers with Internet access

Invite the participants to describe what they know about climate change and global warming. Record their ideas on the newsprint or whiteboard. This is not a time for a quiz but it is a way for participants to set the stage for the following online activity. None of these terms should be new for the participants; these are common terms in science classes at school. Make sure, though, that everyone has a clear understanding and can agree on a common definition for each term.

Visit the National Environmental Education Foundation's website, and invite each participant to calculate her or his carbon footprint. The carbon footprint calculator on this website is specifically tailored to teens' daily activities. The participants will be invited to respond to a series of questions about what they eat and what they throw away, along with several other topics. At the end of the survey, the participants will be able to see how many "earths" it would take to maintain the level of carbon dioxide that they produce from their lifestyle if everyone produced the same amount as they do. The carbon footprint calculator also gives participants some great tips about specific behavioral changes that will help them reduce the amount of greenhouse gases they contribute with their daily activities.

After participants determine their carbon footprint, invite them into a discussion about how we, as Christians, are called to respond to the damage we are doing to the environment through our daily activities. *What does scripture say about how we ought to treat the earth?* Have youth check out Genesis 1 or Psalm 8. *How can we reconcile our desire for "stuff" with God's plea to be kind to the earth and all that is in it?*

Challenge each participant to make a commitment to modify at least one action that will lessen his or her carbon footprint.



9 First Impressions

Leader preparation: Think about how you would answer the questions below as you examine the “Kopf” painting. Art interpretation is not always easy. Be kind to yourself and to the participants during this activity. Be patient and open minded.

Supplies:

- small candy (i.e. Tootsie Rolls, bite-size Snickers, peppermints, caramels, hard candy, and others)
- candy bowl
- artwork: “Kopf” by Jean Miro, <http://tinyurl.com/FPArt18>

Invite the participants to sit in a circle. Display “Kopf” someplace where everyone can see it. Pass around the candy dish and tell the participants that they may have as much candy as they like up to a limit of 10 pieces each. Encourage them to get a good variety of candy. As they pass around the candy dish, invite them to look at the painting and think about its meaning. When everyone has candy, explain that everyone must answer the following questions based on which candy they now have in their hands (if you have different kinds of candy, simply assign one of the following questions to the different candy):

- Tootsie Rolls—What might the artist have been thinking about or feeling when he painted this piece of artwork?
- Snickers—Why do you think the artist used these particular colors in the painting?
- Caramels—What is the significance of the shapes the artist used in this painting?
- Hard Candy—What emotions does this painting evoke in those who look at this painting?
- Peppermint—How does this painting inspire us, as disciples of Christ, to work for justice?

Go around the circle, and have each participant answer a question. If a participant has more than one piece of each kind of candy, then keep going around the circle. A participant must come up with a different answer each time until all the candy is gone.

Reflect

Growing as a disciple is a life-long process. How have you and the participants in your group grown by participating in these activities? How have these activities helped you to be better disciples? What growing edges do you have? In what areas do you think more growth is needed? Say a brief prayer for all of God’s disciples, praying for the Spirit to continue to move in transforming ways throughout the world.

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Attachment: Activity 2

Name Tag Instructions

Green Name Tag

(Give these instructions to the participants with green name tags.)

- Those with yellow name tags are liked, but they are neither extremely popular nor regularly shunned.
- Those with red name tags are the people disliked by everyone.

Red Name Tag

(Give these instructions to the participants with red name tags.)

- Those with green name tags are to be treated like the popular ones in the room. Everyone likes them, is drawn toward them, and wants to spend a lot of time with them.
- Those with yellow name tags are liked, but they are neither extremely popular nor regularly shunned.

Yellow Name Tag

(Give these instructions to the participants with yellow name tags.)

- Those with green name tags are to be treated like the popular ones in the room. Everyone likes them, is drawn toward them, and wants to spend a lot of time with them.
- Those with red name tags are the people disliked by everyone.

Attachment: Activity 5

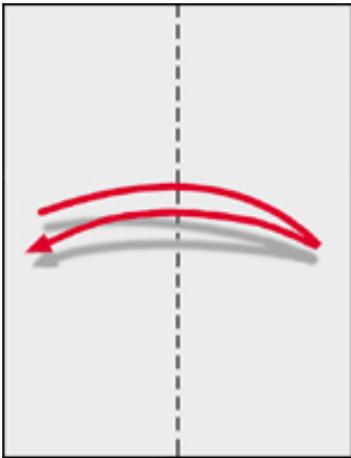
U.N. Statement on Torture

For the purposes of this Convention, torture means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions. The U.N. Convention said that “no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat or war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.”

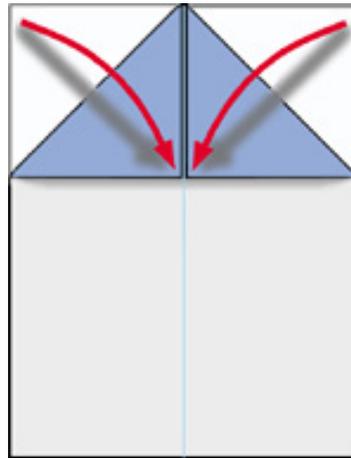
From The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly, December 1984.

Attachment: Activity 7

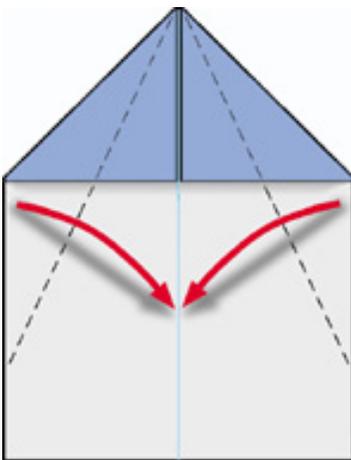
Basic Plane Folding Instructions



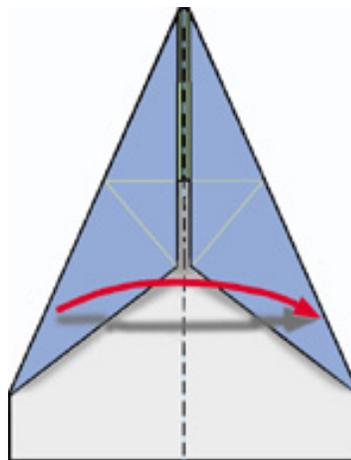
Step 1



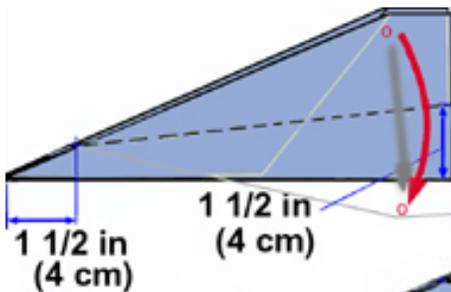
Step 2



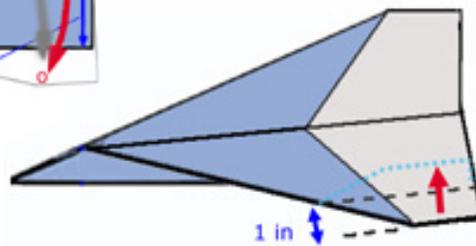
Step 3



Step 4



Step 5



Step 6

Step 1

Use a sheet of 8½" × 11" paper. Fold the paper in half lengthwise, and crease it sharply. Then unfold the paper.

Step 2

Fold down the top corners, as indicated by the arrows.

Step 3

Fold the two edges toward the center line, as indicated.

Step 4

Fold the paper in half. Then turn the plane 90 degrees (as shown in figure of Step 5).

Step 5

Create a wing crease that begins at the nose, as shown.

Step 6

Form a 3-dimensional shape, as shown in the figure. Bend up the tailing edge of the wings for lift if it has a tendency to nose dive.

Working for Justice



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Some older youth were baptized or dedicated as babies and have been a part of the church community their entire lives. Others are just coming to the church as older teens, accompanying friends and those outside of their immediate family. Because of this mixture, older youth will have different understandings of and experiences with Christian tradition. Even those who think they “know it all” because they have been a part of church their whole lives may remain largely uneducated about many historical events and influences.

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

Leader Preparation

Although we live in a very individualistic society, it can be empowering to remember that we are following years and years of Christian tradition. We are not the first to work for justice, nor will we be the last. We are part of a larger movement from which we can learn a great deal.

Prayer:

*Everlasting God,
 open my perspective to see beyond myself.
 Remind me of where I have come from
 and where we, as your followers, aim to be.
 Teach me to pass this tradition on to others.
 Amen.*

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities using one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Exploring the Cross (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about things in our world that can have more than one effect and thus can be understood in very different ways. For example, we need water in order to survive, and yet water also causes much destruction through floods and other natural disasters. Examine how your faith influences your view of certain objects or ideas, such as the cross, which can also have many meanings. Keeping this perspective in mind when guiding discussions throughout this activity will be helpful.

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper
- pens or markers
- scissors

Read aloud Ephesians 2:11–22. Then discuss why the idea of the cross—the idea of the Christian story ending with Jesus dying instead of defeating his enemies—is foolishness to the world yet also declares the wisdom of God’s way. This is a big question! Ultimately, the discussion might lead to the idea that human-made empires, like the Romans, die off and yet Christ’s message of justice, peace, unity, community, and love continues on. Why is this?

Invite the youth to work in small groups to make two lists: a list of things the world values (such as money, material items, and power) and another list of things God values (justice, peace, and love). Ask them to think about the idea that the cross, once a symbol of tyranny and terror, now represents God’s justice values. In essence, as Christians we have adopted this symbol of violence and reclaimed it as a symbol of God’s justice and peace.

Using paper, pens and markers, invite the participants to reclaim the cross by creating their own cross that somehow communicates those things they believe God values. Instruct them to write words from the group’s list or other nouns or adjectives on their crosses that express feelings the cross invokes for them as they work for justice. Give each youth time to create her or his own individual cross, and then invite volunteers to share their efforts with everyone.

Before ending the activity, remind the participants that for most of the world as Christians they are like a “living cross.” They tell the real story of the cross each day in the way that they live in the world, in the way they care for others, and in the way that they work for justice.

2 Gentle, Angry People

Leader preparation: It is important to know and understand the historical context of the song “Singing for Our Lives.” Holly Near (www.hollynear.com) wrote this song after Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone were killed in a homophobic hate crime in 1978 in San Francisco. Milk was the first openly gay man to be elected to public office; he was on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Moscone was the mayor of San Francisco. They were murdered because of their open stance on homosexuality. As you prepare to lead this exercise, say a prayer for all those who still suffer from malicious hate crimes of all kinds today, more than thirty years after this song was written.

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

Supplies:

- song: “Singing for Our Lives”; lyrics, http://www.hollynear.com/and_still.html
- video presenting some of the historical connections in this song: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbXq0oU5osg>
- video with a meditative presentation of images related to the song: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcT3JKNgqHg>
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Invite participants to listen to the song while they read the lyrics. Then invite them to sing the song a few times.

Divide the newsprint or whiteboard into two columns, and label the columns “Gentle” and “Angry.” Ask participants to create a definition for each term and then list synonyms, antonyms, names of biblical characters, and historical, fictional, or contemporary individuals that they would describe as either “gentle” or “angry.”

Discuss why they think Holly Near chose these lyrics.

- Why might people against whom hate crimes are committed be a “gentle, angry people”?
- How could these attributes be helpful when working for justice?
- Which of these traits do you possess?
- How might you increase your ability to be gentle or to express your anger in healthy ways when working for justice?

3 Guide My Feet

Leader preparation: Learn the lyrics of this African American slave spiritual on your own. It is a hymn sung by people living in bondage and needing to know that God is close by. The race mentioned in the song is a metaphor for a life lived in the face of injustice. This powerful, yet simple lyric is a sung prayer seeking God’s guidance and protection. It can serve as an anthem for youth to accompany them as they grow in faith and work for justice.

Supplies:

- song: “Guide My Feet”; lyrics, <http://www.hymnary.org/hymn/PH/354> ; video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-WVIppNBls>
- tambourines and other musical noise makers

Lead the youth in learning the lyrics to this song and understanding its history. It was both a slave spiritual and a song of the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Then Invite participants to add lyrics that reflect their own situation. For instance, one version includes a fifth verse: “Wheel with me while I run this race.” This lyric was created by a 5th-grade church class to include persons who use wheelchairs instead of their feet in running the race. You may wish to consider these verses: “Guide my mind while I study in school,” “Guide my feet while I walk in my neighborhood,” “Guide my heart while I work for justice.”

Sing the song in its entirety, including all the new lyrics, several times as a way to help participants connect more fully to God and to gain experience asking for God’s guidance in all aspects of their lives. Don’t forget to use tambourines and other musical noise makers as you sing. It is often helpful to get the rhythm section going before the singing begins.



Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Teaching Prayer (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the Lord's Prayer as it is used by your congregation. Think of all the places and times you have recited it. Say each line aloud slowly, reflecting on how you, your community, and the world today strives to live out (or falls short of accomplishing) everything that is included in this prayer of Jesus.

To prepare the nine stations, print one line of the Lord's Prayer on a separate sheet of paper, and place one of those papers in each station. A station can be as simple as a chair on which you have placed the piece of paper or a corner of the room where you have taped the piece of paper. You just need to designate nine different places in your meeting area. If your space is too small for nine, combine some of the lines of the Lord's Prayer to accommodate your space.

Supplies:

- "The Lord's Prayer," Attachment: Activity 4, or printed as is it prayed by your congregation
- nine stations throughout the room, each supplied with a piece of paper, a pen, and space to write

Read aloud the Lord's Prayer from the attachment or as it is prayed by your congregation. Stop after each line of the prayer. Allow each participant the time to visualize what this part of the prayer means. Then invite the participants to visit each station throughout the room and add their comments to each line of the prayer. As they contemplate the line of the prayer, what questions come to mind? Have them add their questions and comments on the sheet of paper.

For example, for the first line, "Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name," the participants might reflect on questions such as: Is God's name masculine or feminine? Loving or consoling? General or specific? Where is heaven? How do I hallow God's name?

For the phrase "Your Kingdom come," one might ask: What does the kingdom of God look like to you? How do you imagine the realm of God in today's world? Who would be in God's kingdom?

As participants visit each station, remind everyone to add to the paper by posing questions or responding to questions that have already been written. After each participant has visited all of the stations throughout the room, gather the papers from all of the stations. Come together and read each line of the Lord's Prayer, adding comments that have been added at each station by the participants. Then pray the prayer together.

5 A Letter to You

Leader preparation: Read Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus and consider what it means to us today. Reflect on the main themes of the letter, and think of how we live them out in our daily lives. This activity helps participants see that the letters from Paul and his messages for peace, unity, and justice are not just thousands of years old and meant for ancient communities but are intended to inspire us today as well.

**Supplies:**

- Bibles
- pen, paper, stamp, and envelope for each participant

Talk with the participants about Paul's epistles. Remind them that Paul wrote letters to his friends, the people in the churches that he helped establish. He wrote letters to encourage the new Christians along the path of becoming disciples and followers of Christ. Explain that each letter was intended to be quite personal and used common phrases and concepts of the day.

Read aloud Ephesians 2:11–22. Invite the youth to identify the main ideas in this section (such as peace) and how they are related to themes throughout the entire letter.

Then invite each participant to rewrite this epistle, as if Paul were writing it to each one of them today. For example, each participant will write the salutation (the beginning of the letter) similarly to the way it is written in Ephesians 1:1–2 (or they could also use modern-day phrases and language) while also adding their own personal information: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in [your city] and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ."

When all the letters have been written, invite the participants to put their letter in an addressed envelope, with a stamp on it. Gather them up and later in the week mail the letters to the participants.

**6 Justice Leaders on Facebook**

Leader preparation: How many people do you know who have truly worked for justice, in your lifetime and throughout history? How much do you know about these individuals and the causes for which they worked? Review the list of people on the attachment, and, before leading this activity, do some research of your own about those historic justice leaders.

Supplies:

- Internet access and a color printer
- "Historic Justice Leaders," Attachment: Activity 6
- copy paper
- pens, scissors, glue

Invite participants to think about the justice leaders named on the handout. Ask for volunteers to identify any of the justice leaders they recognize. Then form pairs, and have each pair do a quick search on the Internet for information about one of the justice leaders on the handout. Make sure no two pairs are researching the same justice leader. Explain that in doing the research participants should look for information they could use to make a fictitious Facebook page for that leader.

After all have had a chance to gather information, ask each pair to design a fictitious Facebook page for the justice leader researched. Each pair can make its page on a sheet of copy paper, using pens, scissors, glue. For a photo of the leader, youth can print a color picture from the Internet. For the form of the Facebook page, participants might want to review their own or a friend's Facebook page.

When pairs are finished, have them post their Facebook pages on a wall for everyone to see. This will help everyone become more acquainted with a number of justice leaders in a short amount of time.



Sending & Serving Activities

7 Our Congregation (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: If you have the time, check out your church's archives and/or ask the pastor or other long-time staff and long-time members to share stories with you about the history of your congregation. Ask specifically about ways working for justice has shaped your congregation. If possible, invite a long-time member to visit your group to tell stories to the youth.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Discuss with the participants what they know about the history of their congregation.

- What were some memorable events in the life of the congregation?
- How have those events shaped the congregation today?
- How has the church addressed working for justice in the past?
- How has that shaped how the church is working for justice today?
- What challenges lie ahead for the congregation?
- What ways can the church continue working for justice?
- What ways does the congregation need to improve?
- How would the participants like to be a part of what will come next?

On newsprint or a whiteboard, list key points from the discussion. Ask the group to pick one or more that they can focus on to encourage the youth or the entire congregation to work for justice.

8 Praying through Origami

Leader preparation: Watch the YouTube instructional video on how to make an origami game tool, and try it out on your own before leading this activity. Spend a few minutes brainstorming on your own, as well, about which justice issues you ought to pray for and think about the implications of your prayers.

Supplies:

- Internet access
- video: "How to make an origami game,"
www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeldtokVypU
- origami paper or copy paper
- pens for each participant
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Talk with the youth about the importance of prayer. Prayer is all about talking to God and listening for God's response. People of faith have been praying for millennia, and we continue this tradition today. Prayer can be a powerful tool in creating change in our lives and in our world. We need God's help—which we can receive through prayer—as we work for justice.

Invite the participants to create a list of contemporary justice issues that could be included in our prayers. Help the youth think both locally and globally. Write all their ideas on the newsprint or whiteboard.

Then ask the participants to create their own origami prayer tools, which may



help them continue to pray for many of the justice issues they just named. Show the online instructional YouTube video so that each participant clearly understands all the steps involved in making this origami prayer tool. Once the origami paper is folded, the participants can write the different justice issues inside the prayer tool.

Encourage the youth to take home their origami prayer tools and continue to pray for justice.

9 Justice Prayer Beads

Leader preparation: Gather all the craft supplies needed for this activity and organize the activity space well. During craft projects like this one, participants tend to be very good at making a large mess. Be prepared for some cleanup and reorganization time when the activity is finished.

Supplies:

- Bible
- string
- beads and other trinkets, including letters that spell out “justice” and other related words

Using prayer beads during times of meditation has been a spiritual practice for millennia. Some of the Desert Fathers of the 3rd century A.D. used prayer beads when they prayed to God. In our busy, fast-paced lives, it can be difficult to concentrate on praying with so many distractions all around us all the time. Occupying our hands with the prayer beads as we pray can help us relax and help us concentrate on the thoughts that we want to share with God. Encourage participants to read Psalm 34:15–22 thoughtfully before they begin work on their beads. This will help to remind them of God’s attentiveness to and care for each one.

Demonstrate for participants how to make Justice Prayer Beads. Begin by cutting a piece of string 10 inches (or less) in length. Tie a knot at one end of the string. Creatively add beads and other trinkets until you reach the end of the string. Tie a knot at the open end of the string so that the trinkets will not fall off. You can tie the two ends of the string together to make a bracelet, if you wish. After your demonstration, provide materials and encourage participants to make their own Justice Prayer Beads.

The participants can take home these Justice Prayer Beads and use them while praying for justice throughout their daily lives.

Reflect

So much in our past has influenced who we are today. Many aspects of our Christian tradition continue to teach us how to live as people of faith today. What aspects of your faith have you learned more about by doing these activities? In what ways was it helpful to explore Christian tradition when learning about working for justice? What aspects of Christian tradition are important to keep alive in the future? How might you do this?

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The Lord's Prayer

1. Our Father, who art in heaven.
2. Hallowed be your name.
3. Your kingdom come,
4. your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
5. Give us this day our daily bread.
6. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
7. Lead us not into temptation,
8. but deliver us from evil.
9. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Attachment: Activity 6

Historic Justice Leaders

Dorothy Day

Bill Wilson

Jimmy Carter

Father (Saint) Damien

Harvey Milk

Bernice Johnson Reagon

Desmond Tutu

Bernie Whitebear

Oscar Romero

Bayard Rustin

Nelson Mandela

Dorothea Dix

Dr. Paul Farmer

Julia Butterfly Hill

Ruby Bridges

Mother Jones

Ella Josephine Baker

Working for Justice



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Many older youth are actively exploring the world around them. Many have opportunities to travel beyond their home towns to other cities, states, and countries. The Internet has also opened up the entire globe to older youth, who tend to be quite proficient at Web surfing, making the world accessible in ways that were never available for older generations. As older youth are growing up, their interests beyond the immediate family and physical location are exploding. Yet they still have much to learn about context, mission, and how the world really works.

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**

Leader Preparation

Imagine we are all living in a large, dark building and can only see what is in front of us—a tiny window, revealing for us a unique perspective on the world outside. I see something very different out my tiny window than you can see out yours. We each have our own perspective and have no way of understanding others' viewpoints. Fortunately, we do not live in such a world! This is what context and mission is all about. We can indeed learn from one another around the world, we can grow deeper in our faith, and we can work more fully for justice if we learn about and understand context and mission. Thanks be to God!

Prayer:

God of the world,

your world is so vast and so complicated.

Enlighten me to all of your creation,

show me the diversity you have created in your image.

Help me come to know you better by connecting on a deeper level with my brothers and sisters around the globe.

Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from "Exploring and Engaging," at least one from "Discerning and Deciding," and

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Famine Trivia (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: According to the Christian humanitarian organization World Vision, nearly 8,000 children die every day and a billion people around the world go hungry each night. This is a serious justice issue that needs to be combated. But there already is more than enough food in the world to feed everyone, if it is distributed properly. World hunger is curable, if we work for justice!

Supplies:

- a copy of the "Famine Trivia Test" for each participant, <http://www.30hourfamine.org/images/stories/PDFs/FamineTrivia.pdf>
- pens

Have the youth consider how world hunger is a justice issue that can be overcome. *What aspects of world hunger do you see as just or unjust?* Invite the participants to take the "Famine Trivia Test." When everyone has finished the test, review the correct answers together. Allow the responses to the test questions to be conversation starters. After reading all the test answers, ask the participants which ones surprised them. Invite them to share how they feel, knowing these facts about world hunger. *In what ways are you contributing to the increase in the number of people who are hungry around the world? What can you do to combat this injustice?*

Although World Vision actively fights global hunger and many other justice issues throughout the world, many denominations and communions do similar work. Check your denomination's website. Have participants look at the website for Church World Service (CWS), www.churchworldservice.org. CWS is comprised of over 30 denominations that work together in mission around the world. The United Church of Christ, for example, is working in this area. Check out the UCC Global Ministries website, www.globalministries.org. Youth will find some fascinating stories about what one church is doing to share throughout this discussion on world hunger.



2 Pineapples

Leader preparation: Explore the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website, <http://www.usda.gov>, and familiarize yourself with some of the basic concepts of agriculture and international trade. Study Diego Rivera's painting, and reflect on how his subject matter might be related to international trade.

Supplies:

- Internet access
- artwork: "Vendedora de Piñas" by Diego Rivera, <http://tinyurl.com/FPArt17>

Place "Vendedora de Piñas" by Diego Rivera in a prominent place in the meeting space. Invite the participants to study the picture, and ask them what they see. Spend a few minutes listening to the ideas that all of the participants formulate.

Then explain that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website includes a chart of top pineapple producers, top exporters, and top earners of export dollars. (If you have Internet access, you can show this chart to the participants.) This chart shows that in 2005, Mexico (the native country of Diego Rivera) was the tenth-

Working for Justice

at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

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

highest pineapple exporter, preceded by Brazil, Thailand, Philippines, Costa Rica, China, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Kenya. This chart also shows that Mexico is not included at all in the top earners. Are the Mexicans really making a fair and adequate amount of money on the high volume of pineapple they export?

Review this data with the participants, and then discuss justice in relation to the global food economy:

- What does this data indicate about the global food economy?
- Is it possible to create solutions to the problems with our global food economy that will not harm the original producers and collectors of our food?
- How can we, as individuals, work for justice in the global economy?
- What is or ought to be the role of the church in this fight for justice?
- In light of these statistics, what do you think of Diego Rivera’s artwork?
- How do you think the young girl in the picture feels?
- How can an image like “Vendedora de Pinas” help us as we work for global justice?

3 Speech Bubbles

Leader preparation: As you search for images to use in the activity, think about your own assumptions. What influences the way you see these particular images and the world in general? How often are you aware of these influential factors in your life? Having a clear understanding of your own experiences will help as you lead this activity.

Supplies:

- photos related to justice taken out of magazines, such as *National Geographic*
- scissors
- glue
- white paper
- pens and markers

Give each participant one or two photos related to justice from magazines or other sources. Invite the participants to cut out speech bubbles from white paper, glue them on the image, and fill in the bubbles with what the people might be thinking or saying about justice. When finished, ask everyone to share their pictures and speech bubbles. Ask the participants how they determined what was being said in the photo, even if there were no words printed in the original version. Lead a brief discussion about how we make assumptions about what others around us are thinking or doing based on our own perceptions, personal experiences and biases. Then ask the participants how they can affect how others act or what they say, particularly in the face of injustices.



Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 How Do You Spend Your Time? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: “Context” can be defined as our surroundings, the circumstances that define a situation, the environment around us. Context is crucial to our ability to determine, specify, or clarify the meaning of an event. Think about your own context. Think about what you do every day, where you go, and with whom you interact. Then write a weekly schedule that reflects all these activities. Think about where God is in all of this and how working for justice fits into your context and your daily schedule.

Supplies:

- pens and paper

Explain the importance of “context.” Discuss how sometimes we do not have a lot of control over our context, but other times we can determine what we do and with whom we interact. Ask participants to write out their weekly schedules, making columns for each day on a sheet of paper and listing the activities they generally do on those days. The schedules don’t need to be precise; what is important is that participants think about how they spend their time.

Ask youth to think about where in their schedules they are working for justice. *Where in your daily activities are things that make the world a more just place? Where are you working against justice? Where are you “dozing off, oblivious to God”? Are there any places where you are absorbed and exhausted in taking care of all your day-by-day obligations that you don’t have time for God?*

Invite participants to rewrite their weekly schedules. Many obligations such as work or school can’t be changed in the short term, but are there any of these things they would like to change in the long term? What can or should they change? Where can they change the activities they are doing, or the way they are doing them, to make more time for God and justice?



5 Candlelight Worship

Leader preparation: Global hunger is a justice issue that is easy for many of us to ignore. So often it takes place in a far-off location—“out of sight, out of mind.” Nevertheless, it is a serious global concern. As you prepare for this activity, say your own prayer for those who are suffering from hunger or malnutrition, and ask God to help you discern how you might address this global reality. Older youth participants will model your attitudes and actions. Be prepared to enter into this activity in a somber yet serious manner. If you cannot obtain 900 tea-light candles, or if your space cannot accommodate that many candles, use what candles are available and adjust the length of the service in the same ratio.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- 900 tea-light candles
- lighters and candle snuffers
- hymnals or hymn lyrics
- “Candlelight Worship Service,” Attachment: Activity 5

Choose a small, intimate and, if possible, dark room for this worship experience. Set up the worship space by placing candles throughout the room and lighting all of them. (Some of the candles will be burning during the entire activity, so make



sure the candles are large enough to last and dripping wax will not harm furniture, tablecloths, or anything else in the room.) During the 15-minute worship service, invite two or three volunteers to extinguish one candle every 10 seconds, until all the candles are blown out and the worship service ends in darkness. The candles represent children around the world who suffer from hunger or malnutrition.

As each candle burns out, a child dies; every 10 seconds a child dies around the world from hunger or malnutrition (www.30hourfamine.org/hunger/hunger-facts).

Using the Candlelight Worship Service, lead a simple 15-minute worship service focused on hymns, prayers, and inspirational stories. Try to get all the activity participants involved in worship setup and tear down as well as reading and song leading during worship. The more involved youth are, the more engaged they will be. Close the worship by reading Proverbs 22:1–2, 8–9, 22–33, reminding all that we are rich and God expects much from those who are rich.

6 A Handout, or a Hand Up?

Leader preparation: Explore the Church World Service website to become familiar with what is included in their school and hygiene kits. Also investigate to see if there is a local organization near you that distributes similar kits. Think about how you have given charity or worked for justice throughout your own life. Have one of these activities (providing charity or working for justice) been more effective or more beneficial, or are they equally needed? Gather your thoughts on this topic before leading this session. Several weeks before this session you may want to invite the entire congregation to donate items for the kits you place to create.

Supplies:

- school kit or hygiene kit supplies at the Church World Service website, www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=how_vol_kits

Many injustices exist across the globe that lead the world today to be a world of “haves” and “have nots.” There are two basic ways to change this situation: by putting “band aids” on the situations, as those with more resources give handouts to those in need (which we often call charity), or by recreating a world based on equality and justice rather than injustice

Invite the participants into a discussion about charity versus justice. Ask: *Is it bad to just provide “band aids,” such as giving food and clothing to the poor, which really only cover up the underlying justice issues?* After discussion, direct the conversation toward the understanding that handouts can alleviate hunger or poverty, but will not eradicate it. Only addressing the fundamental justice issues such as unfair wages, racism, sexism, or globalization will truly eliminate poverty. As the leader, do not dominate the conversation, but gently lead the participants to the consensus that both charity and justice work are needed to best meet critical needs in our world today.

Invite the participants to create school kits or hygiene kits to donate to Church World Service or to a local organization. While the participants stuff the kits, continue the conversation by exploring how these kits will help the recipients and what else (beyond charity) can be done to help those in need even more.



Sending & Serving Activities

7 Charity or Justice? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Make your own list of activities that can be defined as charity and another list of activities that can be defined as working for justice. Consider the difference between the two lists. Which is easier to do? Which do you tend to do more often? Why? It will be helpful to have these thoughts in mind before you lead this activity.

Supplies:

- Bible
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- pens
- 8½" × 11" sheets of paper

Read aloud Romans 13:8–14, and invite questions and comments. On the newsprint or whiteboard, write the words “charity” and “justice.” Invite the participants to define each word, and write their ideas on the newsprint or whiteboard. Be sure that the definitions highlight the differences between the two concepts. Charity is often like putting a “band aid” on a situation—it helps improve the immediate suffering, but it does not often affect the underlying root causes of the problem. Justice, on the other hand, addresses the underlying root causes of inequality and unfairness that created unjust situations. Both charity and justice are needed in our world today. Ask: *How does the Romans 13 passage help us understand our responsibilities?*

Next, invite the participants to add specific tasks to each list, those that can be defined as charity and those that can be described as working for justice. For example, helping at a soup kitchen is charity, whereas lobbying for more governmental aid to go toward food stamps is an act of working for justice. Remember to think locally and globally. *What activities can be done in your own context—your own church and local community?* Also remember to add activities that could affect charity and justice work throughout this country and the world. Continue this discussion of activities until the list is fairly substantial.

Ask the participants to make their own list of acts of charity and justice that they realistically think they can do in the next six months.

8 From My Perspective

Leader preparation: Study “Tar Beach II.” What do you see? Allow yourself enough preparation time to take in all the details of the picture. If you have a clearer comprehension of the picture before leading this activity, you will be better able to help the participants fully understand the implications of the image.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Tar Beach II” by Faith Ringgold, <http://tinyurl.com/FPArt16>
- paper and pens

Display “Tar Beach II.” Invite everyone to study the picture, taking in all the details. Then invite each participant to write a brief story about what is happening in the picture, from the perspective of one of the characters in the image. As they write, encourage the participants to think about what that particular character is seeing. *Who or what is around them? How are the colors, the buildings, the people and the other aspects of life affecting the character’s story? How is that person feeling? What*



specific smells might shape that individual's perspective? Is that individual thinking about working for justice? Why or why not?

After a short time invite volunteers to share their short stories with the entire group. Lift up differences and similarities among the stories, and talk about the participants' influences as writers and how each person's perspective and context affected what different participants wrote.

9 Peace Cranes

Leader preparation: When the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, a two-year-old girl named Sadako was among those caught in the attack. In the years immediately after the war, Sadako seemed to have survived without negative effects. Then, despite being an active, athletic young woman, she developed leukemia. While undergoing treatment for her illness, a condition assumed directly related to the perceived effects of atomic radiation, she began making origami (folded paper) cranes. Amassing a total of one thousand such cranes was assumed to ensure the granting of a wish—and Sadako desperately wanted to live. Unfortunately, despite reaching her goal, she died at the age of sixteen.

Her classmates and friends continued folding cranes in her honor and then dedicated the origami cranes as a prayer for peace. Eventually a Children's Peace Memorial, using a model of the folded-paper crane as one of its central motifs, was dedicated in Hiroshima's Peace Park to the hundreds of child victims of the atomic bomb as an eternal prayer for a peaceful future world. Thereafter, individuals and groups from around the world began bringing their collections of a thousand paper cranes to the monument as a concrete expression of their own personal or collective prayers for peace.

Read more about the Peace Crane Project on Global Ministries' website, <http://globalministries.org/resources/youth-and-children/fold-paper-cranes-for-peace.html>. Familiarize yourself with the story of the Peace Cranes and the instructions on how to make them before you lead this activity.

Supplies:

- origami paper or other lightweight paper (preferably colored on one side and plain on the other)
- instructions for folding paper cranes, <http://www.origami-resource-center.com/paper-crane.html>

Talk about the events in Japan in 1945. It may be helpful to invite to join you an older church member who can remember the bombing of Nagasaki, to help with this discussion. After talking about history, share Sadako's story and explain how the peace crane project started. Also talk about the importance of peace to people of faith. Remember, Jesus was the Prince of Peace.

Then invite the participants to create peace cranes. You can set a goal for how many cranes you want to make, or just start folding, and finish when your time is up. You can also encourage the participants to take home some paper and continue making peace cranes, so that you can reach a certain goal, if the time allotted to the activity is not sufficient.

If you want your peace cranes to hang near the Children's Peace Memorial in Hiroshima to honor children killed by the atom bomb, you can mail them to:

Office of the Mayor, City of Hiroshima
6-34 Kokutaiji-Machi
1 Chome Naka-ku
Hiroshima 730
Japan

Reflect

What have learned from these activities? What do you think the participants in your group took away from these activities? How have you grown, so that you are no longer the same person, as when you started these activities? How has God transformed you into a more globally aware follower of Christ? How do you view your own context differently now? How do you see the world differently after completing these activities? Lift up a brief prayer for the world, giving thanks that God is known in so many different ways throughout the globe.



Attachment: Activity 5

Candlelight Worship Service

Opening Song

“We Are One in the Spirit”

We are One in The Spirit,
 We are One in The Lord.
 We are One in The Spirit,
 We are One in The Lord.
 And we pray that all unity may
 one day be restored.

And they’ll know we are
 Christians by our love, by our
 love,
 Yes they’ll know we are
 Christians by our love.

We will work with each other,
 We will work side by side.
 We will work with each other,
 We will work side by side.
 And we’ll guard each one’s
 dignity
 And save each one’s pride.

And they’ll know we are
 Christians by our love, by our
 love,
 Yes they’ll know we are
 Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other,
 We will walk hand in hand.
 We will walk with each other,
 We will walk hand in hand.
 And together we’ll spread the
 news that God is in our land.

And they’ll know we are
 Christians by our love, by our
 love,
 Yes they’ll know we are
 Christians by our love.

Prayerful Reflection

God Bless the world . . .
 the sick
 the starving
 the poor
 the disheartened
 the landless
 the homeless
 the weak
 the oppressed
 those who cry out
 those who have no voice
 inside this country and beyond.

For sorrow knows no
 boundaries—
 no lines of race
 or religion or ethnicity
 or gender or sexual orientation
 or economic status
 or nationality
 or living conditions—
 but neither does compassion.

Hate can arise anywhere, but it
 sees only the boundaries,
 the black and white,
 the “us” and “them.”

Love, likewise, springs up
 anywhere, but there are no
 limits,
 no marks of distribution or
 quantity.
 For love is transcending
 and surpassing
 and infinite!

God bless us all with your
 everlasting love,
 and teach us how to share
 that grace with all whom
 we encounter!

Inspirational Story

UCC Global Ministries’ website (www.globalministries.org) has several good stories about individuals around the world suffering from malnutrition and hunger.

Closing Song

“We Are Marching the Light of God”

We are *marching* in the light of God,
 we are marching in the light of God.
 We are marching in the light of God,
 we are marching in the light of God.

We are marching, marching,
 we are marching
 Oh, we are marching in the light of God.

We are *singing* in the light of God . . .

We are *living* in the light of God . . .

We are *praying* in the light of God . . .

Working for Justice



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group or Setting

Older youth are at a point in their lives when they feel a lot of pressure to think about their future. What will they do after high school? What career should they pursue? Where will they live after they move out of their parents' house? There are so many unmade decisions about the future looming for older youth. Yet, ironically, their view of the future is very short term. To think about life in ten or twenty years is nearly impossible for this age group because the next five years of their lives are so up in the air. This limited view of the future often makes activities about future and vision difficult for older youth to fully grasp and embrace.

About this Exploration

Imagine a world where all are in right relationship with God, with 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

Leader Preparation

Think back to when you were an older youth and what you thought about your future at that point in your life. Has your life turned out anywhere close to how you imagined it would be? How has your understanding of justice and your desire to work for justice changed since you were a teenager? How do you envision the future now? Keep this information about your life in mind as you lead these activities. It can be helpful to be aware of your personal perspectives, but do not let your thoughts project too much onto the participants. Leave plenty of room for them to explore and express their own views and thoughts.

Prayer:

Dear God,

*You knew me before I was formed;
 you know what I have experienced
 and what I have yet to experience.*

*Guide me, O God, in your ways and on
 your path into the future. Amen.*

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Prophetic Vision (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: When you think about the future, what do you envision? Do you think the world will continue to be plagued by injustices? Where do you see yourself in such a world? Gather your thoughts about the future before leading this activity.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- pens and paper

As youth enter the room, greet everyone by their first name, adding this proclamation: “You are a prophet of God, with a vision of the future.” After everyone is seated and settled, ask them to describe the role of a prophet. Explain that prophets in the Bible brought messages of God to the people, often predicting destruction and despair in the future, as a way of motivating them to change their behavior. Write these questions on the newsprint or whiteboard.

- Prophet of God, from the perspectives you gain through everyday activities and occurrences in your life today, what kind of future do you see for yourself, your friends, your family, your church, your nation, and your world?
- Prophet of God, is the future filled with justice or wrought with injustices?
- Prophet of God, what is your role in this imagined future?

Invite the participants to reflect silently on these questions for several minutes. Give them paper and pens to jot down their responses. Encourage them to answer each question with at least three points. This will help them to think carefully about these complex questions. After everyone has composed their responses, invite them share their thoughts with the entire group.

In closing, emphasize that what we think, say, and do can have prophetic value in helping shape the future. End with a prayer, asking God to help form and bring shape to our thoughts, words, and deeds—and to believe that our actions as individuals play an important role in shaping a future based on peace and justice.

2 If the World Were Only 100 People

Leader preparation: Review the statistical information on the website “100 People: A World Portrait.” Reflect and pray about the questions included in this activity. Awareness of your own emotions and values is important as you lead this activity.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- website: “100 People: A World Portrait,” <http://www.100people.org/index.php>; statistical information, www.100people.org/statistics_100stats.php

What would the world be like if it was reduced to just 100 people? Share the thought-provoking facts found at the “100 People” website. Ask what the participants think. Discuss, using the following questions:

Working for Justice

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

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

- What surprises you about this list?
- What saddens you?
- If the world were more like the reign of God, how would these numbers be different?
- What response do you feel compelled to make?

Compare the statistics to the membership of your congregation or to the population where you live. *How different is your context from the rest of the world? What difference does that make as you think about working for justice? What might you do to make a difference in those statistics in ten years, twenty years, fifty years?*

3 Deadly Disease

Leader preparation: The statistics in this activity are harsh. Be sure your group is mature enough to handle such devastating information. Before beginning this activity, say a silent prayer for all those around the globe affected by HIV and AIDS.

Supplies:

- Bible
- candle and matches
- computer with Internet access

For over twenty-five years, HIV and AIDS have spread throughout the world. Swaziland, a small country in southern Africa, has been disproportionately affected by this disease. According to UNAIDS, Swaziland currently has the highest HIV prevalence rate in the world—26.1 percent of the population is HIV positive. That is, about one in four Swazi people currently live with HIV. Statisticians estimate that at this rate, the kingdom of Swaziland will become extinct sometime within the next forty years. If this prediction becomes a reality, Swaziland will be the first nation in modern history to die out because of a disease.

Even though there is not yet a cure for HIV or AIDS, it is completely preventable. Read Matthew 25:3–46. Ask: *Would Jesus include Swaziland or victims of HIV/AIDS on his list? What might we do to help change this tiny country's forthcoming demise?* Discuss how our actions (or inaction) affect what happens on the other side of the globe. Check out your denomination's website, or go to the United Church of Christ's Global Ministries website (www.globalministries.org) and find out how the church is working in partnership with the people of Swaziland to bring about justice. *How can you join these efforts?*

Light a candle and say a prayer for our brothers and sisters in Swaziland and all others affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 The Church of the Future (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: When you think about the church in the future, what do you imagine? Reflect on this question before leading this activity. Having a clear understanding of your own thoughts will help you guide the discussion in this activity.

**Supplies:**

- paper and pens or pencils

Eunice Attwood, vice president the British Methodist Church, gave an inspiring address at their 2010 Annual Conference, as she imagined the church of the future that she would like to be a part of. She said:

I want to be part of a church that throws parties for prostitutes,
 A church that welcomes those who seek asylum,
 A church that longs and yearns for justice,
 A church that listens to those no one else wants to listen to.

I want to be part of a church that believes in transformation not preservation,
 A church where all that are lost can be found,
 A church where people can discover friendship,
 A church where every person takes responsibility in sharing the good news.

Eunice Attwood, British Methodist Church, <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentogod.newsDetail&newsid=448>

After reading this inspiring vision statement, invite the participants to create their own list of at least five things they would like to see as part of the church of the future. To help them come up with ideas, you might spend a few minutes brainstorming as a whole group, but don't just give out answers. Be sure to provide enough time for the participants to reflect individually and develop their own ideas. After they have developed their lists, come back together as an entire group and invite the participants to share their ideas with one another.

5 Overcoming Differences

Leader preparation: *Out in the Silence* (2009) is a documentary that takes place in Oil City, Pennsylvania. This small town ignites into a firestorm of controversy when Joe Wilson, filmmaker and Oil City native, announces his same-sex marriage in the local newspaper. The announcement catches the attention of Kathy Springer, a local woman whose gay teenage son, C.J., is being brutally abused at school. With nowhere else to turn, Springer seeks help from Wilson—the only openly gay person she knows in the town.

With camera in hand, Wilson and his partner, Dean Hamer, return to Oil City to engage the traditional values activists, conservative politicians, local leadership, and townsfolk. They confront school authorities, follow the trials and tribulations of a grassroots effort to promote diversity and tolerance, and form an unlikely and transformative friendship with an Evangelical preacher. Become familiar with the video clips (and watch the whole documentary, if you have time) before leading this activity. Also, reflect on your own views of homosexuality and think about how you have interacted (in positive and negative ways) with others who feel differently than you on this issue and other divisive topics.

Be aware that this is a controversial and fairly mature subject. Make sure your audience is appropriate for this activity.

Supplies:

- film: *Out in the Silence*, <http://www.hulu.com/out-in-the-silence>
- equipment to show the film to participants



If possible, arrange for the participants to watch *Out in the Silence* in its entirety. If you cannot show the whole documentary, summarize the movie for the participants and explain that you are going to watch a couple of clips of the film that describe Joe's (the narrator) relationship with one of the local pastors in Oil City, Pastor Micklos. Use clip 1 (5:39–6:35 minutes) and clip 2 (35:22–37:57 minutes).

After showing the video clips, invite reactions.

- What surprised you in the videos?
- Do you think it is possible for individuals to change their beliefs, like Pastor Micklos did?
- Do you think Pastor Micklos and Joe will ever completely agree with each other?
- Have you ever disagreed with another religious person's opinion on a justice issue?
- How did you react to that person?
- Is it possible for individuals who adamantly disagree with one another to work together for the common good? If yes, then how?

Discussing these questions may help the participants articulate their beliefs and may help prepare them for future disagreements with others who have different beliefs on justice issues.

6 Not Too Heavy, Not Too Light

Leader preparation: Have you ever had the experience of being in a room or on an elevator when someone wearing very heavy cologne comes in? It can be overpowering. Have you ever walked by someone and gotten a whiff of a pleasant cologne? That light touch can be very attractive.

Supplies:

- (optional) video cameras
- (optional) computers with Internet access

Discuss how we can come on too strong or not strong enough when we do many things in life. This is especially true when we work for justice. When we work for justice, we cannot be effective if we come on too strong. Likewise, if we do not come on strong enough, we will never be able to make an effective difference in the world.

Jesus is an excellent example of someone who truly understood the importance of this concept of "not too heavy, not too light." He was never "too heavy." For example, Jesus didn't try to impress everyone with his abilities to perform miracles; he simply did what was needed. Nor was he too light; he continued to work on the Sabbath and eat with outcasts even when others criticized him, because he knew all of this was required in order to bring about justice in his world. Using Jesus as an example, brainstorm how we can come on too heavy or too light as we work for justice today.

Divide the group into teams of three to four people. Have each team create a scenario of working for justice with two perspectives: one of "too heavy" and one of "too light." Have each team present its scenarios to the whole group.

Option: Have each team use a video camera to record the scenarios. Remind the youth to plan well before they start recording. After the participants finish, invite them to share the videos with the entire group and continue talking about how we cannot be "too light or too heavy" when we, as Christians, work for justice.



Sending & Serving Activities

**7 Message to the Future (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: What will be the justice issues in the future? No one knows for sure, but they will likely have to do with people or groups of people who are forgotten or rejected by others. In this activity participants will write a letter to justice workers 10 years in the future, telling them about the struggle for justice today and what they hope will be accomplished in the next 10 years. If desired, change the time frame to 50 or 100 years.

Supplies:

- Bible
- pencils or pens
- paper or journals

Have the participants write letters to those who work for justice in 10, 50, or 100 years. In the letter describe the work they are doing today and what they hope will have been accomplished by the time a future generation reads the letter. Participants may also write about what they think the issues will be for future justice workers. If desired, share the letters with the whole group.

Read Isaiah 58:1–4 and Matthew 25:31–46 to the group. Ask: *What changes do these passages suggest for what you wrote in your letter? In what ways do these passages confirm what you have written?* Allow time for rewrites. Ask the participants to save the letters to look at in the future.

8 Community Connections

Leader preparation: Create a list of Internet addresses of several local organizations that respond to the needs of the hungry, homeless, or those experiencing illness. If possible, invite someone from one of these organizations to be present with your group during this activity.

Supplies:

- computers with Internet access
- guest from a local serving organization

Explain that there are numerous organizations in your community that work for justice. Because of the work of these dedicated groups, the lives of many people in your community are improved. Invite the participants to search the Internet to find out more about these local groups. Remind them to find out the organization's mission, where it is located, their hours, and how individuals and groups can participate in their work. Then invite the group to develop a plan to get more involved in the work of at least one of these local organizations.

**9 Harvesting Justice**

Leader preparation: What are your preconceived notions about farm work and farm-worker justice? Study "The Sower" by Vincent van Gogh, and review websites about farm workers. Be aware of your biases and try not to let them influence how you lead this activity. Let the participants explore the topic and make their own decisions about these topics.

Supplies:

- artwork: “The Sower” by Vincent van Gogh, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15625&store_id=1401
- computer with Internet access
- website: “Farmerworker Justice,” www.fwjjustice.org

Show the participants “The Sower.” Allow them to look at it for several minutes, taking in and processing all the details of the image. Then ask them to describe the picture in their own words.

- How would you describe the picture to someone who was blind?
- What is the subject of the image?
- What is the mood of the painting?
- What is happening?
- Is there a message that the artist is trying to portray?
- Why is the farmer not following the path?
- Why does the path disappear in the painting?

After you have spent several minutes discussing the picture, ask the participants what they know about farming. Maybe they are very familiar with it (i.e., they live on a farm) or maybe they do not know much at all about what happens on a farm. A wide range of responses is possible.

Explain that some farmers are not always treated as fairly as they ought to be. Direct the participants to the “Farmerworker Justice” website. First go to the web page that explains who farm workers are (<http://www.fwjjustice.org/our-mission/52-who-are-farmworkers>). Invite the participants to read the information aloud. Ask: *What surprises you?*

Go to the next web page (<http://www.fwjjustice.org/our-mission/51-a-vision-for-the-future-of-public-policy-on-migrant-farmworkers>), and ask a volunteer to read out loud about this organization’s future vision for public policy on migrant farm workers.

Reflect

The future can be so unpredictable, yet we actually do have so much control over what happens in the days and years to come. We have no way of knowing what injustices will plague our society in the future. We can decide, though, whether or not we will continue to work for justice or if we will give up the fight. The future is in our hands. How did these activities help you envision how you will live out your life in the future? Pray for the future of our world. Pray for those who will continue to struggle through injustices. Pray for strength to help those who are in need of a companion in this journey.

Continue skimming through the organization’s web pages. Ask: *What do you think about this organization’s mission and vision?* If they are supportive of this organization’s message, invite the participants to brainstorm ways your church could embrace some of their ideology. *How could your congregation work for the rights of farm workers?* Make a list, and choose at least one or two specific activities that the youth will commit to work on. Be sure to describe the activities in detail, with a specific time line and particular individuals assigned to precise tasks so that it will be easier for everyone to follow through.