

# Keeping Sabbath



## Intergenerational

### About this Setting

Have a group ranging from five to eighty-five years old? Have 20 minutes to three hours to fill? Fear not! Intergenerational groups provide an opportunity to involve everyone in the congregation — playing, learning, and working together. There's a valuable place for everyone. Intergenerational resources assume groups that include people of all ages: children, youth, young adult, and adult. There are many benefits from learning to practice one's faith in a group that includes a variety of levels of faith maturity. Leaders are encouraged to remember that each person in an intergenerational group has gifts to offer and to receive from others in the group. Choice is the name of the game! Choose from the activity options what appeals to you and your context, and have fun together! Remember, success in intergenerational group activities depends on leadership from the facilitator: choose appropriate people for appropriate tasks, regardless of age. If a small group is not working out, intervene and reorganize groups as needed.

### Intergenerational Options

These activities may be used to build an intergenerational event for the commencement or conclusion of your series on "Keeping Sabbath" (up to three hours). Or, the activities may be used independently (15–20 minutes each), interwoven with age-specific activities throughout the series. An intergenerational event might be used during a time of year that is already set aside as special, such as Advent, Kwanzaa, Lent, Vacation Bible School, or forty days of prayer for children.

## Keeping Sabbath



## INTERGENERATIONAL

Familiarize yourself with all twelve activities, four from each of the categories of Exploring and Engaging, Discerning and Deciding, and Sending and Serving. Consider the age of participants and the time available for this event, and choose a group of activities that will meet your needs.

For an event lasting one to two hours, choose three or four activities from the list of twelve. There are enough activities for three or four events! Or, choose a single activity (15–30 minutes) to use as the activity at a community meal or other gathering. Wearing name tags is a good idea, as often older and younger members of a church do not know one another's names.

Each activity ends with a prayer appropriate for the end of the session.

Gather as a church family to grow together and have fun!

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

Whether we are new to a particular faith practice or an old hand with much experience, all of us benefit from new opportunities to explore the shape of the faith practice and to engage the issues of faith that the practice offers. Sometimes this is a matter of learning new ideas about the practice. Sometimes this is more about reflecting on what we have done in our practice. The activities in Exploring and Engaging help us figure out how a faith practice intersects with our life and the life of the community of faith.

### Discerning & Deciding Activities

Practicing our faith always involves discernment: naming the realities of our community and world and seeking the will of God for our lives and for the world. We then decide how we will act, what we will do, what values move us forward, what faith has called us to do. The activities in this section give us opportunity to practice by discerning and deciding.

### Sending & Serving Activities

Practicing our faith involves serving others and being sent out as empowered disciples of Jesus Christ. We need time in our exploration to plan how we will serve. We need moments that send us forth blessed by the community from which we venture out. The activities in this section offer opportunities to practice our faith through sending and serving.

### Intergenerational Leader Preparation

Yikes! All these ages! So many people with so many interests and needs! Take a deep breath. Breathe in, thanking God for this opportunity to bring God's people together. Breathe out, releasing your worries and anxieties about how this activity or event will turn out. Check in with yourself. Has the necessary preparatory work been done? Are you feeling excited about the activities you've chosen? Are you eager to help your congregation learn more about the practice of Sabbath? Are you familiar with special needs of folks you expect to participate? Breathe in, "Hear, O Israel: the Sovereign is our God, the Sovereign alone..." (Deuteronomy 6:4). Breathe out, "...and you shall love the Sovereign your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

What about those teenagers? In several of the activities, teenagers and older children engage as teachers or activity leaders with younger children. Invite those teenagers you have chosen for more responsible roles of leadership to gather with you and other leaders/teachers to join in a prayer of preparation.

*Prayer: God of the Sabbath, thank you for caring for us during work and play. Enable us to relate to all those gathered today, bringing them ever closer to you through our Sabbath activities. Help each of us (name each person in the prayer circle) to be the best leader we can be today. May all of us learn better what Sabbath means and how to practice Sabbath in our own lives and as a church. Amen.*



## Exploration: Discovery

**BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:**

**Exodus 20:8-11**

**Luke 4:16-21**

### **1 Sabbath: A Mixer (Exploring and Engaging)** (Easy preparation)

**Leader preparation:**

We keep Sabbath by building our community of faith. This activity works as a mixer to build community. It can also be used as a time to stretch and move in between more sedentary activities. It's a great way to be sure everyone says something. Be sure to include introductions (of partners), as in many congregations older and younger members do not necessarily know one another by name. If there are several elderly or otherwise less-mobile participants, consider placing chairs in pairs around the room, so one person can remain seated while the second, more mobile person in each pair moves to find a new partner. If you have a participant who is not mobile, be sure that, when people move to find a new partner, someone always goes to that person. If there is an even number of other participants, the leader can sit out and focus on time-keeping. This is an activity for pairs. Groups of three do not work for this activity because of the time restraints.

**Supplies:**

- list of sentences to complete
- a watch or clock with a second hand
- a room in which people can move around easily

Participants will share with one another, one on one, about "Sabbath," allowing people an opportunity to share their experiences and explore various interpretations of Sabbath.

1. Read aloud Genesis 2:2-4 to gathered group.
2. Mixer:
  - Have each person find a partner and introduce himself or herself. If the group is large enough, encourage the participants to find someone they do not know well, or someone of a different age group.
  - One ground rule for this activity is: No interrupting!
  - Each person has one minute to complete this sentence, "When I hear the word 'Sabbath' or 'Sabbath time,' I think..." (if participants find it difficult to complete a sentence, ask them, "Describe what 'Sabbath' or 'Sabbath time' means to you").
  - Call time at the end of one minute, saying something like, "Now the second person has one minute to share."
  - At the end of the second minute, have everyone say good-bye to their partner and find a new partner. Start with introductions again, and then share (each for one minute) on the second sentence/question.
  - With their partner each person has one minute to complete this sentence: "One of my favorite ways to take a break (a Sabbath) during the day is ..." This might be phrased, "What do you do when you want to take a break during the day?"
  - Repeat the process for each sentence/question below, or until interest wanes.

You may find that one minute is too long a time; feel free to make the time shorter if talking has waned.

Sentences to complete: (When reading the incomplete sentence aloud, draw out your voice over the blank spaces to imply there is something missing.)



- When I hear the word “Sabbath,” I think of...
- One of my favorite ways to take a break (a Sabbath) during the day is...
- Something that keeps me from having a break (Sabbath) in my life is...
- One of my favorite (Sabbath) activities at church is...
- Something that draws me closer to God is...
- A song that brings me closer to God is...
- When I am tired, I like to...
- (Think of your own!)

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for this community of sharing and growing. Thank you for Sabbath time during which we draw closer to you as we draw closer to one another. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

## 2 Sabbath Cinquain (Exploring and Engaging) (Easy preparation)

### Leader preparation:

We keep Sabbath by remembering God in word. Cinquains are poems that follow a particular pattern. Familiarize yourself with the cinquain format by writing some trial poems on simple subjects such as “cat” or “flower.” Print the cinquain format on a large sheet of newsprint or poster board. Consider ways the final cinquains might be shared with the wider community, perhaps in your church newsletter or during a service of worship. If you are including a worship component as part of an event, you might plan to include these poems.

### Supplies:

- numerous large sheets of newsprint and markers
- cinquain format printed clearly on large paper

In groups the participants will write cinquain poems on the theme “Sabbath.” Introduce the cinquain format, explaining that a cinquain is a five-line poem using different parts of speech to describe the theme, which is the single word on line 1. In our case, the theme word will be “Sabbath.” The lines get longer, then shorter, resulting in a diamond-shaped poem.

### **Cinquain format:**

Line 1: one word (subject or noun)—theme of poem

Line 2: two words (adjectives) that describe line 1

Line 3: three words (action words ending in “ing”) that relate to line 1

Line 4: four words (feelings) that relate to line 1

Line 5: one or two words (synonym of line 1 or a word that sums it up)

### **Sample:**

Flower  
bright magnificent  
growing bending adorning  
joyful happy glad love  
God’s creation

Closing prayer: *Use the completed cinquain as the main section of the prayer, starting with “God, we thank you for Sabbath,” ending with “Amen.”*



## Exploration: Scripture



### 3 Community Unity Collage (Discerning and Deciding)

#### Leader preparation:

Photocopy several copies of the figures in “The Dance of Youth” by Pablo Picasso. Cut out around each individual figure until you have one cut out for each participant. Prepare a bulletin board with the banner “We Are United through Communion.” This activity is especially meaningful in faith communities where all ages are welcome at communion.

#### Supplies:

- bulletin board or large sheet of poster board for collage background
- poster, “The Dance of Youth” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>) by Pablo Picasso
- individual figures cut from photocopies of “The Dance of Youth”—on different colors of paper
- scissors
- markers
- Bibles
- basket(s) to hold cut-out figures
- poster pins or staplers to attach figures to larger bulletin board

The participants will create a congregational collage illustrating that communion and Sabbath draw us together in unity.

1. Ask participants to locate and read 1 Corinthians 11:18 in their Bibles.
2. Ask: What might have caused the divisions and factions Paul describes in the congregation in Corinth? What causes people not to get along? What has caused misunderstandings and hurt feelings in your church? Be sure young and old have a chance to share.
3. Explain: Paul explains that communion, a Sabbath activity, will help us overcome our differences and divisions.
4. Show the poster “The Dance of Youth” by Pablo Picasso. Ask what the participants see. What are the figures doing? Explain that they are united in a joyful dance. The dance brings them together as community, “in communion” with one another.
5. Explain that communion and Sabbath draw us together in unity, as these figures are drawn together in a dance.
6. Give a figure to each person. Have markers ready for people to print their first name on the figure. Have pins/stapler ready to attach each figure to the bulletin board (on and around the poster of “The Dance of Youth”) to join in the dance.

*Closing prayer: God, thank you for the Sabbath practice of communion that unites us in community like dancers in a dance. Help us work in union to overcome any difference we have, so we can joyfully worship and serve you together. Amen.*



## 4 Interviewing Jesus and Moses (Discerning and Deciding) (Easy preparation)

### Leader preparation:

This activity offers an option of interviewing either Jesus or Moses about Sabbath and Sabbath-keeping. If you choose to hold both interviews, they can be done one after the other or at different times.

### **Option 1: Interview of Jesus of Nazareth**

#### Leader preparation:

Be sure the Jesus actor reads Mark 2:23–3:6 ahead of time. Choose someone who will be able to think on their feet and keep the interest of the group.

#### Supplies:

- robe (helpful but not essential)
- Bibles
- paper and pens

Someone, in the role of Jesus, answers interview questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time, referring especially to the incidents of Mark 2:23–3:6.

1. Announce that we are going to have a very special visitor today: Jesus of Nazareth! He will be available to answer questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time. He and his friends were recently in trouble for breaking a couple of Sabbath rules: not to harvest grain and not to do the work of a doctor.
2. Have participants locate and read together (one person reading aloud) Luke 4:16–21.
3. In small groups (three or four of varying ages) brainstorm questions you would like to ask Jesus about what happened and about Sabbath and Sabbath time. Each group will write down their top two questions and decide who from their group will ask Jesus these questions.
4. Jesus arrives! Have Jesus greet everyone saying, “Shalom” and “Peace be with you.”
5. Extend a warm welcome to Jesus. As if you are the host of a panel, let Jesus know the group has several questions to ask him. Invite each group, one by one, to ask their top question. Let Jesus briefly respond to each question. Don’t let one response go too long. If time allows, let each group ask their second question. (A prepared question to ask early on might be, “What is a commandment?” in order to explain that these biblical commandments are more like directives one would receive from a helpful teacher than like commands an army general would give.)
6. Let everyone know Jesus has to get back to Galilee. Thank Jesus for coming. Ask everyone to bid him farewell. Jesus leaves.

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for Jesus, who has taught us about Sabbath-keeping and that doing good is always more important than following the world’s rules and laws. Help us boldly to do good and to work for justice in our community and world. Amen.*

### **Option 2: Interview of Moses**

#### Leader preparation:

Be sure the Moses actor reads Exodus 20:1–17 ahead of time. Choose someone who will be able to think on their feet and keep the interest of the group.



### Supplies:

- robe (helpful but not essential)
- Bibles
- paper and pens

Someone, in the role of Moses, answers interview questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time, referring especially relating the information from Exodus 20:1–17 regarding God’s Ten Commandments.

1. Announce that we are going to have a very special visitor today: Moses, leader of the Israelites! He will be available to answer questions about Sabbath and Sabbath time. He recently received the Ten Commandments when he was on Mount Sinai and has just shared them with the Israelites. One of the commandments is about remembering Sabbath. Read Exodus 20:8–11.
2. In small groups (three or four) brainstorm questions you would like to ask Moses about what happened and about Sabbath and Sabbath time. Each group will write down their top two questions and decide who from their group will ask Moses these questions.
3. Moses arrives! Have Moses greet everyone saying, “Shalom.” (You might explain this is a common greeting in Hebrew, Moses’ language, that means “peace.”)
4. Extend a warm welcome to Moses. As if you are the host of a panel, let Moses know the group has several questions to ask him. Invite each group, one by one, to ask their top question. Let Moses briefly respond to each question. Don’t let one response go too long. If time allows, let each group ask their second question. (A prepared question to ask early on might be, “What is a commandment?” in order to explain that these biblical commandments are more like directives one would receive from a helpful teacher than like commands an army general would give.)
5. Let everyone know Moses has to get back to the Middle East where he and the Israelites live. Thank Moses for coming. Ask everyone to bid him farewell. Moses leaves.

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for Moses, who taught us about Sabbath and your directives and commandments. Help us learn them and understand them for ourselves and our time. Amen.*



## Exploration: Discipleship



### 5 Creating Sacred Sabbath Space (Discerning and Deciding) (Easy Preparation)

#### Scripture Focus:

Exodus 20:8, “Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.”

Leader Preparation: Review the questions and adapt them as necessary for your group.

#### Supplies:

- chairs arranged in groups of three or four
- large newsprint or poster board
- colored markers for writing and drawing
- paper and pens for groups



- crayons
- tape to hang paper/board
- magazines that can be cut up
- scissors

This activity invites participants to reflect on what they find restful and renewing. Remembering Sabbath is an activity of the mind. By reflecting on what is restful and renewing for us, we can better know how to keep Sabbath in our lives.

Directions: Work in groups no larger than three or four so that each person will have ample time to share. Be sure each group has a span of ages.

1. Discuss the following questions about Sabbath, remembering that Sabbath is a time of rest and renewal when we focus on our relationship with God. Smaller children may understand “feel calmer” or “get stronger” more than “renewal.”
  - When you think of Sabbath, what story or book comes to mind or is especially meaningful to you?
  - When you think of Sabbath, what room, space or place comes to mind or is especially meaningful to you?
  - When you think of Sabbath, what food comes to mind or is especially meaningful to you?
  - When you think of Sabbath, what song comes to mind or is especially meaningful to you?
2. Write or paste the words and illustrations from all the groups on a large paper or poster board beneath the phrase “Sabbath Space.”

Closing prayer: *Spirit of peace, thank you for Sabbath space in our lives. Thank you for special things in our life that help us remember Sabbath, that help us rest and renew ourselves. Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.*

## ⑥ Letting Go and Letting God (Deciding and Discerning)

### Leader preparation:

Read Exodus 20:8–11. Particular elements of our lives separate us from God, while other elements draw us closer to God and one another. Sabbath is a time to draw closer to God and one another.

### Supplies:

- Bible
- table (safe area for lit candles)
- one candle for each participant (tapers in sand or tea lights work well)
- matches
- pieces of colored yarn about 8" long (one for every participant)

This activity encourages participants to reflect on the things that separate them from God and those things that draw them closer to God.

1. In groups of twos, answer the following questions:
  - What worries you about home, school, health, family, friends, the world?
  - What work or activities separate you from God? Another way to ask this is, What work or activities make you feel stressful?
  - What behaviors or activities do you do that you wish you did not do?
2. Explain that Sabbath practices of lighting candles and praying can help us draw closer to God and one another.
3. Invite each person to light candles for the worries, stresses, and compulsive behaviors they mentioned.



4. Pray: God, we offer our worries, stresses, and behaviors to you. Amen.
5. In groups of two, answer the following questions:
  - When you have a holiday or vacation, what do you look forward to?
  - What draws you closer to God? Another way to ask this is, What work or activity makes you feel more peaceful and good about yourself?
  - What draws you closer to others? Another way to ask this is, What work or activity makes you feel more peaceful and good about others?
6. Give a piece of yarn to each participant. Have their discussion partner tie it on a finger, around their wrist, or onto their clothing somewhere, for example, around a button or a purse strap. Explain that tangible objects can help us remember God and draw closer to God.

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for all things in our lives that give us comfort, peace, and goodness. Help us take Sabbath time to remember these things when we feel worry or stress. Amen.*



## Exploration: Christian Tradition



### 7 Creating a Sabbath Worship Center (Exploring and Engaging)

#### Leader preparation:

Keeping Sabbath means we cease work and remember and communicate with God through worship. This Sabbath worship center may be created at the outset of the event and then used throughout the event. Other objects might be added. A closing worship time might use this same worship center as its focus. Be sure to blow out the candle after this activity. While communion elements are brought to the Sabbath table, this activity does not include sharing in a communion meal. If you wish, you could share communion from the table at some time during the event.

#### Supplies:

- candle in holder and matches
- Bible
- bread on plate or in basket
- red juice in a cup
- small table
- tablecloth (a special one if available),
- bowl
- pitcher of water
- reading parts printed out, Attachment: Activity 7

The group brings items to create a Sabbath worship center. Each item brings meaning and part of the Christian story, to enhance our Sabbath time by reminding us of God, Jesus, and our community.

Put a table in center of circle or front of room. Distribute items among the participants for them to bring forward at the appointed time. Designate two children to bring items forward, one to carry the item and the other to read, allowing non-readers to fully participate.

- Bring forth the tablecloth. A child reads, "This tablecloth reminds us of the Sabbath cloths that adorned the Sabbath table in Jewish homes long



ago and today. Our worship tables are often covered with special cloths. This tablecloth makes this ordinary table special.”

- Bring forth the candle and light it. A child reads, “This light reminds us of God, who created by saying, ‘Let there be light.’ Light gives warmth and life that we might live.”
- Bring forth a bowl and pitcher of water. Place the bowl on the table and pour in the water. A child reads, “This water reminds us of the springs of life. Water quenches our thirst and grows our gardens. This water also reminds us of our baptism into the community of faith.”
- Bring forth a Bible. A child reads, “This special book reminds us of the stories of our forebears in the faith like Sarah and Abraham, Moses and Miriam, Mary Magdalene and Jesus, and many others. It also helps us know how to follow Jesus.”
- Bring forth bread and cup. A child reads, “This communion meal of bread and juice reminds us of Jesus, who shared a meal with his friends before he died. Sharing this bread and juice, we are one with Christ and with one another.”

We gather around this worship table to have Sabbath time, time to rest and think about God.

*Closing prayer: Dear God, Creator, Christ, and Spirit, we pause from the hustle and bustle of our lives to remember you. You are the source of our being, the light of our lives, the bread and juice that feed so much more than our bodies. You feed our spirits too. These symbols of our faith -- fire, water, word, communion -- draw us away from the distractions of our lives and draw us closer to you. May each of us feel you in this Sabbath moment. Amen.*

### 8 Meditation on Mandalas (Exploring and Engaging)

#### Leader preparation:

Read Mark 6:30–32. Browse through the numerous mandalas created by children on display at <http://www.tinyurl.com/cgd2g>. Creating mandalas is a traditional form of Buddhist and Hindu meditation in Tibet. Sometimes the intricate design is made with sand and lasts only a short time. The process, not the outcome, is the focus. Print out a mandala pattern to be colored for each participant. To download a free black and white mandala pattern to color, go to <http://www.mandali.com/sample/> or <http://www.tinyurl.com/7pxgea>, which also features numerous brilliant mandalas. To order a mandala coloring book, go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/28w4vfm> (\$11) or <http://www.mandali.com> (\$8-\$10). Set out all coloring materials on the tables. Place an uncolored mandala sheet at each place.

#### Supplies:

- a mandala pattern for each participant
- bright colors for drawing (pencils, markers, and/or crayons),
- tape or pins to hang up finished mandalas
- tables and chairs
- CD player
- CD of soothing music
- a printed copy of a colorful mandala

A traditional Sabbath activity is meditation. Coloring the intricate patterns of a mandala provides a meditative centering activity that appeals to all ages.

1. Invite all the participants to find a place at a table, creating a blend of ages and abilities at each table. At their place they will find a mandala pattern sheet.



2. Explain that this activity is about meditating and meditation – going to a quiet place to be renewed, which is a traditional Sabbath activity in Christianity and a common practice in other religions, specifically Hinduism and Buddhism.
3. Show an example of a finished mandala. Invite everyone to begin coloring a mandala, using the activity as a time to center themselves, to enter into the quiet space and the beauty of the design, thinking about God and God’s beautiful creation.
4. Play the soothing music in the background. Allow as much time for drawing as the participants are comfortable with.
5. Hang the completed mandalas in a meditation gallery.

Closing prayer: *God of quiet places, thank you for Sabbath time and Sabbath activities that help us slow down and appreciate the beauty around us in your creation. Amen.*



## Exploration: Context and Mission

### 9 Sabbath—Time to Remember Others (Sending and Serving)

#### Leader preparation:

Read Luke 4:16–21. Prayerfully consider those in your congregation who are unable to be at this intergenerational event. To expand this activity, prepare a list of the names and addresses of a variety of people beforehand: inmates at a local jail or prison, homeless people in your community, residents at a local care center, prisoners of conscience (list available from Amnesty International, <http://www.tinyurl.com/pfjta6>), global mission partners of your denomination, children sponsored by members in your congregation, etc.

#### Supplies:

- Bibles
- pens
- blank greeting cards (church stationary works well, but any cards will do)
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers
- church directories (ideally with photos)
- stickers
- crayons or markers

Moving from exclusion to inclusion, the group first remembers those often excluded in our communities. Then the group focuses on those from the congregation who are marginalized and absent from this intergenerational event in order to include them by sending cards of greeting and prayer to them.

1. Read: Luke 4:16–21.
2. Brainstorm: Turn to the person next to you and think of people in your community and the world who are “poor, captive, blind, oppressed.” (You might use more familiar words for different ages such as: lonely, unhappy, sick, in jail, marginalized, excluded, forgotten.)
3. Plenary: Have each pair share one person or type of person they thought of. Write these on newsprint or a whiteboard (or just listen).
4. Ask the large group: Who is not here today at this event? List them by name on newsprint or a whiteboard. Who is sick? Who is in the hospital?



- Who is elderly and shut-in? Who is away or abroad? (Peace Corps and Vista volunteers, service men and women, missionaries, others.) Who is away at college?
5. Divide into groups to write cards to people on the list. Ask each group to take one to three cards and write the name of a recipient on a card. Have groups decide what to write on the card and how to decorate it (if blank). Smaller children can put stickers on or draw something. Be sure everyone signs their name, or has their name added (if they cannot write).
  6. Option 1: Pass out envelopes with the cards and have each group address the envelope and place the card inside, ready to mail. Distribute church address labels to be affixed. Option 2: Collect the completed card (with name of recipient clearly printed on each) and send later.

Closing prayer: *Great Spirit, you call us into relationships, and Jesus reminds us on that Sabbath day long ago that we are connected to the poor, the oppressed, the captive, and the ill. We pray for all your people, especially those whom we have remembered and written to today. Thank you for your word in our midst that compels us to reach out beyond our comfort zones. Amen.*

### 10 Create a Sabbath Space for Birds (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation: Gather and set out supplies. Decide if participants will share jars of peanut butter and bowls or bags of seeds, or if it will work better to dish out smaller quantities of peanut butter and seeds into bowls or paper cups. Identify places where the feeders may be hung.

#### Supplies:

- Bibles
- pine cones (the bigger the better)
- peanut butter
- birdseed
- kitchen knives for spreading peanut butter on pinecones
- sturdy string or twine for hanging bird feeders outside
- scissors
- one or two large flat ceramic baking or serving dishes (to serve as bird baths)
- water for bird bath

Create a bird-friendly area outside the church by making and hanging bird feeders and setting out bird baths.

1. Invite the participants to locate and read aloud Exodus 20:8-11.
2. In groups of three (including different ages) have participants discuss: Who and what rests on the Sabbath, according to God's wishes in this story? (family, workers, slaves, men and women, livestock [working animals], foreigners; everything that works, including livestock) What are livestock? Which animals are "working animals"? "Sabbath is a chance for nature to rest from human interference," explains Cath James of the Methodist Federation for Social Action. What does this quote mean to you?
3. Explain that while birds are not "livestock," we're going to use our Sabbath time to make life easier for the birds that live near our church.
4. Have participants divide into pairs, with different ages in each pair, ideally an adult and a child or youth. Each pair receives one pinecone, twine/string, and access to peanut butter and birdseed.



5. For feeders: Tie twine around top section of pine cone, making it secure for hanging. Spread peanut butter on each pine nut (petal) of the cone. Press birdseed into the peanut butter. Hang feeders outside if weather permits. Otherwise, keep to be hung later.
6. For birdbaths: Have groups of two or three take the ceramic birdfeeders outside, locate a safe and protected spot, and fill them with water.

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for animals, for those that help us by working in fields, and for those that live independently of humans. Thank you that we can use this Sabbath time to remember them and provide the birds of this community a place to enjoy. Amen.*



## Exploration: Future and Mission

### Making Eyes of God (Exploring and Engaging)

#### **Leader Preparation:**

The Huichol Indians of Mexico and the Aymara Indians of Bolivia weave brightly colored yarn on a simple frame of two crossed sticks to create a design called ojo de Dios or eye of God. Review the illustrated instructions at <http://www.tinyurl.com/3hh6ge> or <http://www.tinyurl.com/ydktccr> and make at least one eye of God, so that you are familiar with the process. This can seem difficult initially, but with patience the task is easily completed, even by young children, and the results are usually pleasing. The more contrasting the colors of yarn, the brighter the finished product. Plan to pair up each child with an adult, or two children with an adult.

#### **Supplies:**

- several skeins of medium weight bright colored yarn
- sticks for the X-shaped frame: popsicle sticks, craft sticks, twigs or chopsticks work well (two for each participant)
- craft glue
- scissors

Create eyes of God as Sabbath meditation focal points.

1. Read Psalm 119:105.
2. Hold the sticks in an X or cross position. Wrap the yarn around the center of the two sticks to hold them together in a cross shape.
3. Take one color of yarn and wrap it over and around one stick, then over and around the next, over and around the next, and so on. Keep doing that until the color is used up.
4. Tie a different color string onto the old one with a tight knot.
5. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until complete.
6. Take a piece of string for a hanger, cut it, and tie or glue it to your eye of God.
7. Hang up your eye of God as a focal point to use during Sabbath exercises of prayer and/or meditation.

Closing prayer: *God, thank you for beautiful symbols that remind us of you. Bless these eyes of God that they may help us enrich our Sabbath life. Amen.*



### **Keeping Vigil: Proclaiming the Good News (Sending and Serving)**

#### **Leader preparation:**

Read and reflect on Matthew 26:14–27:66. The Sabbath after Jesus was executed was a quiet day of fear and hiding; many of Jesus' friends abandoned him, and like Peter, denied even knowing him. Keeping vigil is for many Christians an important response to injustice, so that we do not succumb to the fear and hiding of those first disciples. Familiarize yourself with religious groups that hold regular vigils, such as those listed by state at <http://www.utahpeace.org/vigil.htm>. (Note: Bellingham, Washington, is home to the longest-running peace vigil in the United States. Started by Howard and Rosemary Harris more than forty-six years ago, it has lasted more than four generations. Members of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ in Bellingham,

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2ayuwhm>,

are instrumental in keeping that weekly vigil going every Friday, particularly Alfred and Dotty Dale, both in their mid-eighties!) Prayerfully consider injustices or special needs of which members of your church might already be aware: e.g. children at the local school who receive free meals, homophobia in your community or in the news, a local business with unfair employment practices, the exploitation of coffee growers by large corporations (if your church uses Fair Trade coffee and tea, some members will be familiar with this concern), a local environmental concern, a current war, families who need food (and come to your church's food bank), children sponsored by your church or individual members, etc. Gather supplies to make placards for the vigil. You may need to check with local authorities to determine if a permit is needed for your vigil.

#### **Supplies:**

- poster boards
- wooden slats
- staple gun
- poster paints or large markers
- Bibles
- poster, "Guatemala: Procession" (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>) by Betty LaDuke

A Sabbath vigil: a response to injustice. This activity can be broken into parts: reflection and discussion, clarifying the message of the vigil, preparing posters, holding the vigil. The actual vigil might be a culmination of your Sabbath event, or a follow-up at a different time. If there is already a regular local peace and justice vigil, consider joining in. Some regular vigil groups already have plenty of signs for participants to hold.

1. Invite the participants to locate and read aloud Matthew 27:27–56.
2. Ask: When Jesus was being tortured and was suffering, who tried to help him? Point out that the male disciples are not around and the female disciples are standing and watching from a distance, not getting involved.
3. Ask the participants: Have you ever seen someone be treated badly? What did you do? It is likely someone will say they were afraid to do anything to help. Use this as a segue to talk about fear, and how fear can protect us by keeping us safe, but how it also can stop us from helping someone who needs our help.
4. In pairs or groups of three (mix different age participants as much as possible, to encourage intergenerational interaction), have the participants consider: Who in our world is suffering as Jesus did? Who is being tortured? Who is being kept from food and safe water? Who is being abandoned by our society?



5. Ask each small group to share one or two examples with the larger group. Write out a list, noting those mentioned by more than one group. They may share a wide variety of responses. Listen respectfully, and, if helpful, guide the conversation to the things upon which you were reflecting during your time of preparation.
6. Explain that it is important for faithful Christians to turn to God when they are afraid, and to ask for (pray for) courage to do the right thing.
7. Back in pairs and groups of three, have participants share: What are some injustices (something that is not fair or good) in the world that make you angry to hear about? For example, war, hungry children. Then have each group share with the large group one or two things they listed.
8. Describe the ancient practice of vigil-keeping and its relationship to Sabbath keeping (a time set aside when we work and witness for justice). Display the poster “Guatemala: Procession.” Explain that sometimes people walk (or march) as part of a vigil.
9. Have participants choose one issue of injustice on which to focus.
10. Invite the participants to make posters related to the issue of injustice they have chosen: for example, Christians for peace; Jesus fed the hungry. So should we; God is love; Everyone is God’s child; God loves everyone--gay and straight; Honk for peace--make God smile! Be sure statements are faith-based and not just an opinion. Staple the decorated poster boards to the slats. Be sure they are secure, with the slat going up almost to the top of the poster board to avoid bending.
11. Pray before heading outside: God, help us not be afraid to speak out for what is right. Grant us courage as part of our Sabbath keeping practice boldly to share our faith with others. May we not be caught silent and hiding on the Sabbath as the first disciples were when Jesus was crucified. May our Sabbath actions help those who, like Christ, suffer injustice at the hands of those more powerful. Amen.
12. Be sure to talk about tolerance before heading out to the vigil. Consider what to do if rude actions or comments are received from people driving or walking by.
13. Stand by the road near the church holding the signs high for passersby to see (or join a preexisting vigil). Be sure there is enough room for pedestrians to pass by easily and safely. Joyfully proclaim the Good News of God’s love, peace and justice.

### Reflect

What an amazing group of people have gathered here: young and old, energetic and thoughtful, brash and timid, faithful and doubtful. What a privilege it is to work with them, to teach and learn together, to stretch and grow. How has God used you during this intergenerational event? What moments were filled with delight? What challenges did you face? Is there any follow-up needed, regarding either activities or relationships? Who stands out for you from this event? Who may need special prayers or pastoral care? Now it is time for you to think of ways to renew and refresh yourself, to take Sabbath time, to apply the lessons presented (and hopefully learned) to your own life, starting now. May God be with you as you continue to grow in the faith practice of Sabbath-keeping.



### Attachment: Activity 7

*Tablecloth is brought forward.*

A child reads, "This tablecloth reminds us of the Sabbath cloths that adorned the Sabbath table in Jewish homes long ago and today. Our worship tables are often covered with special cloths. This tablecloth makes this ordinary table special."

*Candle is brought forward and lit.*

A child reads, "This light reminds us of God, who created by saying, 'Let there be light.' Light gives warmth and life that we might live."

*Bowl and pitcher of water are brought forward.*

Place the bowl on table and pour in the water. A child reads, "This water reminds us of the springs of life. Water quenches our thirst and grows our gardens. This water also reminds us of our baptism into the community of faith."

*A Bible is brought forward.*

A child reads, "This special book reminds us of the stories of our forebears in the faith like Sarah and Abraham, Moses and Miriam, Mary Magdalene and Jesus, and many others. It also helps us know how to follow Jesus."

*Bread and cup are brought forward.*

A child reads, "This communion meal of bread and juice reminds us of Jesus, who shared a meal with his friends before he died. Sharing this bread and juice, we are one with Christ and with one another."