

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Older youth are entering a stage of life where faith development tends to shift from reliance on tradition and family to exploration and personal initiative. In this time teens grow to better understand their own faith journey in ways that are truly meaningful to them. In short, they begin to take ownership of their own religious life and personalize it. From quiet reflections to energetic activities, the faith practice of Praying and Making Ritual may help engage and inform the many discoveries older youth will make as they begin to uncover the beliefs they carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Teens are inherently inquisitive. Discovery is a part of their day-to-day lives. Moreover, they are entrenched in ritual. Some of the rituals known to them are specifically religious, such as the celebration of communion or perhaps even baptism. Other rituals are as simple as family meals, regular weekend events, or personal time specified for rest or relaxation. In the same manner, prayer is often thought of in the narrow sense of sitting with ones hands folded and eyes closed. Yet the diversity of prayer is astoundingly broader, calling out for youthful investigation. Through searching and experiencing a greater breadth of prayer and ritual, teens may come to a fuller understanding of themselves, God, and their communities.

Like the nomadic Israelites traveling through the desert, older youth are ever moving toward bigger and better things. For teens, the journey ahead often seems hard and lonely, but they are not alone in their travels. This Exploration is a reminder that God moves with us all. Moreover, God has provided memorials along the route and invites us to evoke the monuments erected along the way as we go. God guides us on as a shepherd revealing the presence of the Divine before us and leading us to the discovery of greener pastures.

About this Exploration

Prayer is a way to seek and find God. Rituals mark the time and space where we encounter God, and through those rituals we recall the story and share it with others. Prayer and ritual are expressions beyond ourselves. Prayer and rituals may go beyond words. From a fearful cry in the dark to the joyful laughter of celebration, prayer is an expression of our heart and innermost being. From the reflex of folded or outstretched hands in prayer to the many layers liturgy may have, ritual is a pattern etched into our lives.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Joshua 4:1–24
Psalms 23

Leader Preparation

As a leader of this Discovery Exploration, prepare yourself not only to hear, but also to understand perspectives that might be outside your normal way of thinking or comfort zone. You will be invited to use all of your senses; you will actively use posture, smell, and touch. Difficult subjects such as sin, confession, idol worship, and even lament will be at the forefront. Make yourself prayerful and ready to approach these topics without judgment, but with all seriousness. You are on an adventure of discovery through prayer and ritual.

Prayer: Our God, help us to focus on the task at hand. Our task is not to provide all the answers or to pretend to know everything about you, but rather to explore together our faith with understanding. Bring us, God, into a place of discovery, and send your Spirit to guide us in this task. 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Prayer and Posture (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity is designed to introduce not only a wider breadth of tradition in terms of prayer and posture, but may also lend itself to a more intimate group life as participants share their God-conversations with one another. In a large circle, place carpet squares or floor pillows on the floor for each participant. At each space, place a Bible marked with one of the following passages: Joshua 7:6; 1 Samuel 1:26; 2 Samuel 7:18; 1 Kings 8:22; 2 Kings 20:2; Psalm 4:4; Ezra 10:1; Daniel 6:10; Matthew 1:35; and Acts 6:6. You may have duplicate passages if you have a large group.

Supplies:

- prepared Bibles
- carpet squares or floor pillows

Invite the participants to sit at one of the designated places in the circle. Ask them to describe the different postures people in your congregation take as they pray. This may include the use of kneelers, standing or sitting for prayer, or the different ways people fold their hands or look up or down, or cover their eyes. Explain that there are many different physical postures that people use when praying. Invite the youth to find the verse marked in their Bibles and read the passage, looking for a particular posture of prayer. Instruct them to assume the prayer posture described in the passage, say a brief silent prayer, and then resume their original position. When everyone has returned to their original positions, invite the group to switch places and do the exercise again. Depending on your time, have the group change places one or more times.

When the group has finished the prayer postures, have them move to the center of the circle surrounded by the prayers that have been offered. Invite the group to reflect on their experiences of praying in different postures and how those postures may have affected their prayers. Conclude this time with a prayer, giving thanks for each person by name.



2 Our Nails, Faiths, and Prayers

Leader preparation: Set up four prayer stations as follows:

1. Place a piece of wood or lumber, several hammers, and some nails on a table or on the floor. Display handout “Isaiah 53:5” in this space.
2. Place a collection of building blocks or interlocking blocks and clay or play dough on a table. Display a card with the word “FAITH?” written on it.
3. On a table place several versions of the Bible marked at Psalm 23.
4. Display the artwork “Tibetan Yellow Monks Using Prayer Wheels” by Landor. If possible, place a candle, or incense and an incense holder, and matches on a table by the artwork.

Praying and Making Ritual

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.

If you have a large group, you may want to set up multiple tables at each station so there are fewer people at each station

Supplies:

- Prayer Station 1: wood or lumber, several hammers, nails, and handout “Isaiah 53:5,” Attachment: Activity 2
- Prayer Station 2: building blocks or interlocking blocks, clay or play dough, card with the word “FAITH?” written on it
- Prayer Station 3: several versions of the Bible
- Prayer Station 4: candle or incense and incense holder, matches, artwork “Tibetan Yellow Monks Using Prayer Wheels” by Landor , <http://www.art.com/products/p12370511-sa-i1740258/henry-savage-landor-tibetan-yellow-monks-using-prayer-wheels.htm?sorig=0>

Direct the participants’ attention to the prayer stations you have set up. Invite them to visit as many stations as they choose and pray there during the time you have designated for this activity. Let the participants move freely. Some may choose to observe, some may remain at only one station, and others might visit all stations. Some might choose to hammer multiple nails into the beam while another might choose only to pray. There is no wrong way to explore these stations. The purpose of these stations is to allow the youth to explore prayer as they interact with scripture, the abstract, and the tangible.

3 The People’s Work

Leader preparation: Gather copies of worship bulletins from recent services of worship.

Supplies:

- copies of worship bulletins

Explain to the participants that the word “liturgy” signals the order of service, or the order in which things are done at your church. Tell the youth that the word “liturgy” literally means “the people’s work.” Invite everyone to take a worship bulletin and look over your congregation’s typical liturgy or order of worship. Invite the young people to identify specific rituals and practices found in the worship services. For each identified item ask the following questions:

- How is this the work of the people?
- What does it mean for us?
- What can we do to help?
- What other elements might be included to get people more involved in the service?

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Prayers of Confession (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Dim the lights, and light candles around the room, if possible. If available, softly play contemplative music in the background. Place markers, sheets of paper, and tape in the center of the room.

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper
- markers
- tape
- (optional) candles and matches
- (optional) contemplative music and music player

Begin with a short discussion about sin. Ask the youth what they think sin is or how they would define sin. After time for discussion, explain that as Christians we believe that no one is free from sin; we are all equal in this regard because no one but God is perfect. Make sure to note that public confession is a common practice in many Christian denominations (perhaps even your own).

Ask the young people to form a circle surrounding the materials laid out in the middle of the room. Invite the participants take a moment in silence to contemplate what sin means to them. Explain that the New Testament word for sin, “harmartia” means: 1. to lose a share; 2. to miss the target; 3. to be mistaken; and 4. to wander from the path. Ask the youth to think of things in their lives that might fit into these four categories. Ask them to think silently about specific sins they may have committed, times when they have missed the mark in their relationship with God, times when they made a mistake in a friendship or with a family member, times when they have wandered from the path that Jesus set out for us, times when they neglected or overlooked someone. After a few moments ask the group members to write the word “sinner” in large letters on a piece of paper and then return to the circle with their sign taped to their body. When everyone has returned to the circle, invite the group to pray together the following prayer of confession by repeating each sentence after you. “Forgive us, God. We have neglected our share. We have missed the mark. We have made mistakes, and we have wandered from your path. We are sinners. God, we ask for your forgiveness. Amen.” Tell everyone that no one is perfect but God and that God forgives. As you say this, invite the youth to rip the sinner sign from their body, hold it high for all to see, tear it up, and drop it to the floor. Then read Romans 6:11, “Count yourself dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

5 Lament Mosaic

Leader preparation: Laments are prayers of deep sadness or grief. This can be a difficult subject, but it is an integral part of our Judeo-Christian faith and heritage. Bad things happen to good people, yet people of faith turn to God and pour out their pain and grief. We trust that God hears our prayers and is present with us, even the deep utterances of our souls. The Hebrew and Christian scriptures contain many laments in the Psalms, in Lamentations, from Jesus himself, and from Paul. Take time to read from Lamentations or the Psalms. Remember that we are not a people without hope. Psalm 22 begins with the lament “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” but Psalm 23 begins, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

Gather the supplies for making mosaic flower pots. Cover the tables to protect the surface. Watch the YouTube video “Mosaic Flower Pot,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbAKehRpn7c>, about making a mosaic flower pot. Note: This activity requires two sessions to complete; one session to break the tile and set the pieces in the adhesive, and then a second session at least twenty-four hours later to finish the pot with grout.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newspapers
- tile for each participant
- several hammers
- small terra cotta flower pot for each participant
- putty knives, one knife for every three participants
- grout
- rubber or disposable medical gloves for each participant
- sponge for each participant
- buckets of water
- soft dry cloths

Ask the youth to identify things that make life difficult to handle. Share from your own life experience. After people have had some time to share, tell the group that the people of the Bible were just like people today; sadness and grief is nothing new. No life is without difficulty. Invite volunteers to read aloud the following passages.

- Lamentations 2:18–19
- Lamentations 5:1–5
- Lamentations 5:15–22
- Psalm 42:1–3, 9–11
- Psalm 61:1–3
- Psalm 137:1–6

These are just a sampling of humanity’s cries to God. Assure the youth that God is big enough to handle their lamentations whatever they might be. The community of faith is present to rejoice when we rejoice and weep when we weep.

Use the following directions to guide the making of mosaic flower pots and the statements in italics to connect making a mosaic to lamenting and hope.

- Place your tile between several sheets of newspaper. Using the hammer, carefully break the tile into desired sizes. *We are like the tile. Life sometimes comes along like the hammer and breaks us down. Hold a piece of broken tile and think about times that you felt beaten down or broken.*
- Take turns using the putty knife. Spread the tile adhesive in small sections on your flower pot, about a quarter of the pot at a time. Spread the adhesive thick enough to hold the broken tile pieces, but not so thick as to cover more than half way up the tile piece. Place the tile pieces in the adhesive making your mosaic. Complete the entire flower pot in this manner. *Each time you place a tile, think of God hearing each of your prayers and holding your broken pieces.*
- Set aside the pots for at least twenty-four hours to let the adhesive set.
- Put on a pair of rubber or disposable medical gloves. Place grout on the pot and spread around generously with your hands. Fill in all the cracks and crevices between the tiles as well as covering all the tiles. Let the pot sit for about ten minutes. *We are not alone because God hears and knows our laments. Christ fills in the brokenness of our lives and creates us anew.*
- With a damp sponge, wipe the dried grout off the tile pieces. Rinse and wring out the sponge often. When the tiles are clean, polish the tiles with a soft dry cloth. *From the broken pieces in our lives, God creates something new.*

⑥ You Can't Always Get What You Want

Leader preparation: Many years ago the rock band the Rolling Stones wrote these very appropriate lyrics, “You can’t always get what you want . . . but . . . you get what you need.” Thousands of years before the Rolling Stones, however, the writer of Psalm 23 praised God for providing all that is needed. This activity may help the group think about the great divide between the things we want and the things we need. Print as many of the different translations of Psalm 23 as you wish. Gather magazines that would be of interest to the youth.

Supplies:

- assortment of magazines, such as glamour and fashion, sports, entertainment, and popular culture magazines
- copy of Psalm 23 from the following Bible versions and paraphrases:
 - Psalm 23, New Revised Standard Version, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/psalms/23.html>
 - Psalm 23, Good News Translation, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/gnt/psalms/23.html>
 - Psalm 23, Bible in Basic English, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/bbe/psalms/23.html>
 - Psalm 23, Today’s New International Version, <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2023&version=TNIV>
 - Psalm 23, Contemporary English Version, <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2023&version=CEV>
 - Psalm 23, King James Version, <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2023&version=KJV>
 - Psalm 23, The Message, <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2023&version=MSG>
 - Psalm 23, Sailor’s Paraphrase, http://www.appleseeds.org/sailors_23rd-psalm.htm
 - Psalm 23, A Poet’s Bible, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Poet's Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Poet's_Bible)
 - Psalm 23 for Computer Geeks, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Poet's Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Poet's_Bible)
 - Psalm 23, LolCAT Bible, http://www.lolcatbible.com/index.php?title=Psalm_23

Invite the group to look through the magazines and find one or two pictures of things they want. Have them share their pictures with the group. Then ask the youth to find one or two pictures of things they need. Ask them to consider how their needs are different from their wants. Have the youth share these pictures with the group. Hand out the copies of Psalm 23 and tell the youth that Psalm 23 is attributed to the shepherd David and praises God, using his words and experience as a shepherd, for providing what he needs. Invite the youth to read aloud the different versions and paraphrases of Psalm 23. Ask: *Which, if any, of the versions or paraphrases speak to you? Which of your own experiences do you hear in the psalm?* Invite the youth to consider how they might address God in the style of Psalm 23. Close with a prayer in light of this discussion.

Sending & Serving Activities

 7 Everyday Rituals (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: On a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard make two columns. Label the left column “Secular” and the right column “Spiritual.” This activity may help youth begin to think about the rituals they have in their lives and how activities considered as “secular” may be transformed into “spiritual” activities.

Supplies:

- prepared “Secular/Spiritual” newsprint or whiteboard
- eraser or marker

Invite the youth to brainstorm rituals that would be considered “spiritual,” and list these in the “Spiritual” column. These may be activities such as baptism, communion, weddings, funerals, or even prayer or church attendance. As they suggest something, ask them to talk about why they consider these events “spiritual.” Repeat this by listing activities that would be considered “secular” rituals. Write these under the “Secular” column and ask them to talk about why they consider them “secular.” These might be activities such as brushing their teeth, cooking family meals, doing the dishes or other household chores, saying a mealtime or bedtime prayer, celebrating holidays or birthdays. They also might consider habitual conversation routines such as certain ways of saying goodnight or goodbye, phone greetings, or mealtime discussion.

Have the youth consider the two lists. Ask: *What items on the “Secular” column might be more spiritual in nature now that they look at them? Why?* Place a check by these items. With any items left unchecked on the “Secular” list, discuss how they might be reinterpreted as a spiritual activity so that all the items on the “Secular” list may be checked. Then erase or cross out the “Secular” heading and write “Spiritual,” indicating that all our activities may be spiritual in nature. Have everyone choose one or two items from the list that was previously “Secular.” Invite them to be aware of these activities during the week and be intentional about reinterpreting them as spiritual activities in their lives. Say a prayer praising God for being present in our lives and helping us to see the holy in all that we do.

8 Stone Prayers for the World

Leader preparation: Obtain three small smooth stones for each person. Divide the stones into three equal groups. Using a permanent marker, write the names of different countries on each stone of one group of stones. On a second group of stones, write a word such as “justice,” “death,” “poverty,” “war,” “AIDS,” “oppression,” “abuse,” “drinking water,” “housing,” and other such needs to be prayed for in the world. Leave the third group of stones blank. Place each group of stones in a bowl. Place a large map of the world on the floor for all to see.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- three bowls
- three small smooth stones for each person
- large map of the world
- permanent markers

Invite the youth to sit in a circle around the world map. Read, or have volunteers read, Joshua 4:1–24. Ask the youth why they think the Israelites placed stones at Gilgal (verse 20). Explain that the stones were way to remember the power of God in their lives and a way to tell others, especially their children, about God. Pass around the bowls of stones and have the youth take a stone from each bowl. Invite them to look at the place and the prayer need written on two of their stones and say a silent prayer. Tell them to write with a permanent marker on their blank stones a word that came to mind as they were praying. Some suggestions might be love, hope, peace, perseverance, dignity, joy, strength, wisdom, and so forth.

Invite the youth to find the country written on their stone. One at a time, place their three stones on the map offering a prayer using the words on the stones as a guide. For example, one may pray for hope in the midst of poverty for the people of the Philippines or, when the people of Columbia face oppression, may God grant them wisdom to understand the effects of oppression to all peoples. When everyone has finished, ask the youth to pick up their three stones and take them home. Instruct them to carry their stones with them throughout the coming week and to use them for prayer each day at morning, noon, and before bed. Encourage them to put their stones in a visible place throughout the day so that at any point someone might ask, “What do these stones mean” (Joshua 4:21). This will give them the opportunity to share their pray concerns openly with friends and family. The stones may be a reminder that we are all God’s children charged to care for one another.



9 Smashing Idols

Leader preparation: Read 2 Kings 18:3–4. Print handout “2 Kings 18:3–4,” and cut apart cards. Make a card for each participant. Using masking tape, make a cross on a plastic tablecloth and place it in the center of your meeting space. Print handout “Idol Message,” and cut apart the strips. Make a strip for each participant. Place a strip in an envelope and seal it. Prepare an envelope for each participant.

Supplies:

- prepared “2 Kings 18:3-4” card for each participant, Attachment: Activity 9a
- modeling clay or play dough
- masking tape
- plastic tablecloth
- prepared envelope with “Idol Message” strip for each participant, Attachment: Activity 9b

Give the youth modeling clay or play dough and invite them to make a sculpture representing something they idolize. Explain that idol worship is not restricted to actual physical idols, but is about putting anything before God, such as money, popularity, or even religion itself. When they have finished making their idols, hand out the “2 Kings 18:3–4” cards and have each youth read his or her card and consider its meaning. Gather around the cross in the center of the meeting space. Invite the youth to walk to the cross one at a time, place their idol on the cross, and explain what their idol is and why it is an idol for them. Hand each person a sealed envelope and instruct them all to open their respective envelopes, read the enclosed strip of paper, and say the sentence passionately while smashing their idols. When all the idols are destroyed, lead the group in a short prayer committing to make God the center of your lives.

Reflect

The journey of discovery is not always an easy road to travel. At times it can be a valley darkened by shadows and veiled in mystery. Yet, God promises to be present with us even in times of trouble. Our traditions and our rituals are but one small yet important part of that journey. Through careful and loving investigation we may grow in the faith together and know our God more personally. To know God and share God's love with those around us is a divinely appointed task. There is no more noble or beautiful road to travel. Many blessings as you walk the paths before you!

Attachment: Activity 2

Isaiah 53:5 (NRSV)

But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment
that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.

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Attachment: Activity 9a

2 Kings 18:3-4

(Leader: Print out and cut apart cards.)

2 Kings 18:3-4

(Contemporary English Version)

Hezekiah obeyed the LORD, just as his ancestor David had done. He destroyed the local shrines, then tore down the images of foreign gods and cut down the sacred pole for worshipping the goddess Asherah. He also smashed the bronze snake Moses had made. The people had named it Nehushtan and had been offering sacrifices to it.

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Attachment: Activity 9b

Idol Messages

(Leader: Print and cut apart strips with messages.)

“You will not be my God!”

“You will not rule my life!”

“I will have no other gods before me!”

“I choose Christ!”

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Young people are just as diverse as are older folks. Some know scriptures extremely well and can navigate them with ease while others may have trouble locating specific passages or even books. Remember that this is all right; we are all in this together, leaders included! Together, drawing on prayer and ritual, you are about to search out the scriptures and delve into what they might mean for our daily lives. As you do so, remember that the Holy Spirit can speak to and through each person, direct our prayer and ritual life, and affect how we speak with God and with neighbor.

About this Exploration

Scripture is filled with diverse and helpful models of prayer and stories of how faithful people make ritual. At the end of David's reign, in the presence of all gathered, he offers a mighty prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God. The disciples watch Jesus and see how Jesus' ministry flows out of his prayer life. They ask longingly, "Lord teach us to pray." Jesus provides them with a prayer that is still used by many people of faith today. We do not have to fear or wonder if our prayers are acceptable to God. We can know that God welcomes and delights in our conversation.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Luke 11:1-13
1 Chronicles 29:10-18

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 The Prayer of Jesus (The Lord's Prayer)
(Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the handout "The Prayer of Jesus."

Leader Preparation

In this Exploration you will focus on how scriptures are used and how we might better apply them to our lives. Prepare to see the Lord's Prayer in a new light, in the words of the young people themselves. Make yourself open to new interpretations. Be ready to think of the church's offering in terms of talents instead of money. Be willing to experiment with elements of a worship service and even with traditions outside your normal realm.

Prayer: God, grant us new insight. Help us to learn from one another, and make me open to hear your still quiet voice no matter what you might whisper. 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.

Supplies:

- "The Prayer of Jesus," Attachment: Activity 1

Explain to the participants that the Prayer of Jesus is perhaps the most well-known Christian prayer. In fact, it has been suggested that on certain holy days, such as Christmas and Easter, somewhere around two billion Christians may well be praying to God using nearly identical words. If you use this prayer in your church, pray it now together in the form that is used in your congregation. If you do not normally use the prayer, you can find a common version of the prayer on the handout.

Give each person a copy of the handout "The Prayer of Jesus," and invite them to take turns reading one sentence from the prayer either as it is prayed in your church or as it is printed in the handout. Ask the youth what this prayer means to them. Divide the group into smaller groups of three to four people. Invite them to read and discuss the information, questions, and task presented on the handout. When the groups have completed their prayers, have them return to the large group and present their versions of this powerful prayer.



2 The Amazing Church Race

Leader preparation: Print the handout "The Amazing Church Race," and cut apart the verses. Place each verse in an envelope. Make a set of verses for each pair of youth. Designate each pair's set of envelopes with a letter: "A," "B," "C," and so forth. *Note:* Do not include the answers provided on the bottom of the handout. They are for your use. Using the answers provided on the handout, hide all but one of the envelopes around the church at their appropriate locations. If you do not have a location mentioned, such as a rainbow, find or make a picture and display it in spot where it will be easily seen.

Supplies:

- Bibles, one for each pair of youth
- "The Amazing Church Race," Attachment: Activity 2
- prepared "verse" envelopes, one set for each pair of youth
- (optional) prize for the winning team
- (optional) prizes for other teams

This activity is a version of a treasure hunt where participants, in teams of two, will be given a verse to look up to determine a clue to where the next clue is hidden in a location in the church. The first team to answer all questions correctly and find all their clues wins the race. For example, one Bible verse to be explored reads, "Mark 10:20: Take up your _____." After looking up this verse in their Bibles, the participants will learn that the answer to this clue is "Cross." They need to go to a prominent cross in your church and find their team's designated clue. Point out that each team's envelopes have been marked with a letter. They should only take their clue and not touch other team's clues. When the race is over, go over the answers. Provide prizes as you wish. Reflect with your group about what the symbols they found around your church mean to them, why they are in the church, and what we can learn from their presence.



③ Painting the Stations of the Cross

Leader preparation: Set up fourteen different areas where posters can be made for future meditation. Each area will need a large painting surface, a Bible, a sheet of poster board, painting supplies, a permanent marker, and the information about each station. Make a copy of the handout “Stations of the Cross,” and cut apart the information to place at each station.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- fourteen sheets of poster board
- tempera or watercolor paints
- paint brushes
- water containers
- paper towels
- fourteen permanent markers
- “Stations of the Cross,” Attachment: Activity 3

Explain to the participants that as a group they will make paintings for the fourteen “Stations of the Cross.” The paintings will be displayed around your meeting space or the church so that they, and others, can travel and meditate on the Passion, the death, and the resurrection of Christ. In making these preparations, they are participating in a ritual with roots that go all the way back to Emperor Constantine in 335 C.E. Assign youth to each of the fourteen stations. Because group sizes vary, you may have some people making more than one illustration, or you may have several people working together on a single painting. Describe what is at each station and what they are to do. First, they are to read the Bible passage for their designated station. Then they are to create a painting that illustrates that station. The painting may be realistic or give an impression of their understanding of that Station of the Cross. Tell them to include the designated number of their Station, as well as the title and all, or key words or a phrase, of the scripture passage in their paintings. Assure them that the paintings do not have to be perfect! When the youth have finished their pieces, invite them to share their painting with the group. Conclude by inviting one of the young people to pray.

Choose a place to display the Stations of the Cross paintings in order and invite people to experience the ritual of walking the Stations of the Cross. See Activity 5 in this Exploration to have your youth experience this ritual.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ What Is the Bible to You? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Clear your regular meeting space of any items to create space for this activity. Make sure that there is nothing to trip over. Block out all the light from the room. You’ll want total darkness. In the room, place four candles in candle holders. You will also need a small candle and holder, such as ones used for Christmas Eve services, for each person. Familiarize yourself with the handout “A Light unto My Path” so you can read it easily to the group.

Supplies:

- two Bibles
- four candles in candle holders
- small candle and holder for each person
- matches or lighter
- “A Light unto My Path,” Attachment: Activity 4

Ask: *What is the Bible to you?* Wait for answers, remembering that there are no right or wrong answers. Invite a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and another volunteer to read 2 Peter 1:16–21 to the group. Ask again: *What is the Bible to you?* After time for discussion, invite the youth to listen to a story. Have them sit comfortably in a circle. Place the four candles in the middle of the circle, light them, and turn out the lights. Read “A Light unto My Path,” and follow the directions in italics. After the story, recite Psalm 119:105: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” Ask one more time: *What is the Bible to you?* Turn on the lights and safely dispose of the candles.

5 Walking the Stations of the Cross

Leader preparation: If you did not make the paintings in Activity 3, use an Internet image search for “14 Stations of the Cross” and choose a set of images you like. Print and display these pictures with the Station designations from the handout “Stations of the Cross,” Attachment: Activity 3. However, creating your own Stations of the Cross may greatly enhance the significance of this exercise.

If your group painted your own Stations of the Cross, display them in order. Near each station place a sheet of paper and a pen to remain there throughout the activity. You might also explore the possibility of doing this activity with other groups or perhaps even the rest of the congregation.

Supplies:

- Stations of the Cross paintings from Activity 3, or pictures of Stations of the Cross
- paper and pens

Invite participants to explore the Passion of Jesus as they move through the Stations of the Cross in designated order. Encourage the youth to pause at each station, read the title and scripture, examine the art, and pray, “God, speak to me. Amen.” Invite them to write on the paper provided whatever comes to mind before moving on to the next Station. When everyone has completed all fourteen Stations, gather together and ask, *What did God say to you?*



6 What Can I Offer?

Leader preparation: On a table in the center of the room place digital cameras, a photo printer with photo paper, a Bible open to 1 Chronicles 29:10–18, pens, and a copy of the handout “My Offering” for each person.

Supplies:

- Bible
- digital cameras, photo paper, and photo printer
- large envelope for each person
- glue sticks or tape
- pens
- offering plate or basket
- “My Offering,” Attachment: Activity 6

Invite a volunteer to read King David's thanksgiving prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10–18. For thousands of years the Judeo-Christian faith has taken up offerings as a part of worship rituals. Note that in David's prayer he says everything comes from God and belongs to God. Ask the participants to divide into groups of two or three people. Invite them to think about all the gifts and talents God has given them. Have them take a copy of the handout and consider what gifts they might be able to give back to God. Instruct them next to strike a pose to illustrate those gifts and be photographed. Print the pictures, making a copy for each person in the group. Tell them to glue or tape their pictures to their offering sheets. Encourage them to label their photographs with a word or verse from the Bible. After all have completed their offering sheets, announce that you are taking up an offering to God, and pass the offering plate or basket around the group. Invite them to place their sheets in the plate. Display the pictures in your meeting space or church. Conclude with the following prayer: *Lord, all that we have is from you, and all that we have is yours. Take these offerings and use them for your will. Amen.*

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Interpreting the Psalms through Art (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the psalms suggested.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- art paper and supplies
- permanent markers

Tell the youth that they are going to express a psalm or part of a psalm through art. Invite them to choose a psalm, such as Psalm 8, 14, 17, 19, 27, 93, 99, 147, or 150. Have each person read and think carefully about the psalm he or she has chosen. Ask: *What does it mean to you? How can you apply it to your life and to the lives of others around you?* Give the youth time to express their psalm through art. Have them their psalm or verse on their artwork. Invite those who are willing to share their artwork and tell why they chose that particular psalm or verse.

8 Benedictions

Leader preparation: Traditionally a benediction ends a worship service as the minister pronounces a blessing upon the congregation. The practice is found often within the Christian scriptures as well as the Hebrew tradition. Familiarize yourself with some biblical examples of benedictions listed. Try writing a benediction of your own. Ask your minister if it might be possible to use the benedictions that the youth write in upcoming worship services. You might also want to use these benedictions in upcoming youth meetings as concluding prayers.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- paper and pens

A benediction is a blessing often given to a congregation at the end of a service of worship. The word “benediction” means “good words.” Share this well-known biblical benediction: Numbers 6:24–26. Have the youth look up and discuss the following benedictions:

- 1 Thessalonians 3:11–13
- Philippians 4:19–20
- Hebrews 13:20–21
- Ephesians 6:24

Have the youth write benedictions. Invite them to share their benedictions with the group. Share the benediction you wrote as well. Conclude with prayer using Numbers 6:24–26 in your closing.

Prayer Closet

Leader preparation: You will need a small, dark, and empty room with one entrance door and one exit. On the entry door post a sign with the words of Matthew 6:6. On the exit door post a sign with the words of Matthew 6:8. In the room set up a prayer station (a table or desk with a small cushion on the floor to kneel on). On the table place a small cross and, if safety allows, several lighted votive candles in glass containers.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- prepared prayer station in a closet or small room
- sheet of paper with Matthew 6:6 printed on it
- sheet of paper with Matthew 6:8 printed on it
- (optional) several candles in candle holders and matches or lighter
- tape
- small standing cross
- table or desk
- cushion for kneeling

Have the young people gather near the entrance to your prayer closet. Ask for the participants to line up at the door. Explain that no words are to be spoken outside the prayer closet; inside the room they may speak as much as they wish, but outside it they must be completely silent. Read Matthew 6:5–8. Instruct the young people to read aloud the Matthew 6:6 sign on the door as they enter the room and the Matthew 6:8 sign as they exit the room. Invite them to enter the room one at a time, pray, and then rejoin the group. As one person exits, another person enters. Repeat this process until everyone has had a chance to be in the prayer room. When it is time to conclude, have everyone enter the room together. Note: If you have candles, you may want to extinguish them if it could be a hazard with many people in the room. Conclude with the following prayer: *Lord, help us to come to you in the quiet of the morning and the still of the evening. Send us out today beyond these walls as a people devoted to you in prayer. Amen.*

Reflect

For thousands of years people have reflected on these scripture passages and sought new meanings and applications. In doing this, we join a great throng of the faithful. As you think back about these Explorations, ask yourself, What did we learn together? How have we grown as the body of believers? What can we do to ensure that we (all of us) keep digging into the meaning of the scriptures for our lives?

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Attachment: Activity 1

The Prayer of Jesus

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Prayer of Jesus, also called the Lord's Prayer, can be found in the Bible in two different places: Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4.

Matthew 6:9–13 (NIV)

This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Luke 11:2–4 (NIV)

He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

When praying the Prayer of Jesus in church, most conclude the prayer with a doxology such as "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever." However, this concluding line is absent from the earliest New Testament manuscripts.

Questions for discussion:

- What does it mean to you that Jesus called God "our Father"? Consider each word individually: "our" and "Father."
- What do you think of the phrase "deliver us from the evil one"?
- What is the most interesting thing about the Prayer of Jesus for you?

Task: As a group, write your own collaborative version of the Prayer of Jesus based on your discussion.

Attachment: Activity 2

The Amazing Church Race

Cut along the dotted lines.

Starter envelope: Mark 10:20 Take up your _____ .

1. Judges 3:20 And he got up out of his _____ .

2. Genesis 8:8 He sent out a _____ .

3. 1 Corinthians 11:21 In the same way he took up the _____ .

4. Proverbs 20:27 The spirit of people is the _____ .

5. Judges 6:36 A _____ full of water

6. Luke 24:42 And they gave him a boiled piece of _____ .

7. 1 Corinthians 13:13 For now we see through a _____ .

8. Ephesians 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one _____ .

9. Genesis 4:21 . . . handle the harp and _____ .

10. Revelations 10:1 And a _____ was on his head.

11. 1 Kings 11:12 and put the _____ on him.

12. Song of Songs 2:12 The _____ appear on the earth.

Answers

First/Starter Envelope: cross 1. seat 2. dove 3. cup 4. candle 5. bowl 6. fish
7. glass 8. baptism 9. organ 10. rainbow 11. crown 12. flowers

Attachment: Activity 3

Stations of the Cross

First Station: Matthew 25:36–41 Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

Second Station: Mark 14:43–46 Jesus, betrayed by Judas, is arrested.

Third Station: Luke 22:66–71 Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin.

Fourth Station: Matthew 26:69–75 Jesus is denied by Peter.

Fifth Station: Mark 15:1–5, 15 Jesus before Pilate

Sixth Station: John 19:1–3 Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns.

Seventh Station: John 19:6, 15–17 Jesus bears the cross.

Eighth Station: Mark 15:21 Jesus is helped by Simon the Cyrenian to carry the cross.

Ninth Station: Luke 23:33–34 Jesus is crucified.

Tenth Station: Luke 23:39–43 Jesus promises his kingdom to the good thief.

Eleventh Station: John 19:25–27 Jesus speaks to his mother and the disciple.

Twelfth Station: Luke 23:44–46 Jesus dies on the cross.

Thirteenth Station: Matthew 27:57–60 Jesus is placed in the tomb.

Fourteenth Station: Mark 16:1–8 The empty tomb

Attachment: Activity 4

A Light unto My Path

As you begin the story, go around the room and light all the candles. Keep one candle in your pocket for later.

When I was a boy about eight years old, I lived in a house out in the country. We had a quaint, but comfortable home with an extremely large yard, as is often the norm far outside the city. About eighty feet behind the house we had a nice large shed that housed our riding lawnmower, various other things, and, of course, our bikes. This was important to me because each day I rode my bike for miles on end, and each night I'd lock my bike away in the safety of the shed. But one night after dinner, it suddenly struck me that I'd left my bike in the backyard. I looked outside. It was pitch black, and I could see nothing.

Turn out all the lights. Only candle light should remain.

I had to put my bike away, but I really didn't want to. I loved my bike, but at this point I was almost willing to let the thieves, or the rust, or the wolves take it if it meant I wouldn't have to go outside. But for some reason, my parents told me I had to lock it in the shed. (Oh, and did I mention that I was terrified of the dark!?) I begged and pleaded and asked them to do it for me, but there was no convincing them. I had to go. So I grabbed the flashlight, stepped outside and shut the back door behind me.

Blow out the first candle.

As the door closed, coyotes cried in the distance, and the small motion-sensitive light above the back door popped and went out.

Blow out the second candle.

My young imagination went wild. I walked slowly and nervously with my flashlight trying my hardest not to step in a hole or twist my

ankle. I whistled and tried to convince myself that I wasn't scared. But I was.

Blow out the third candle.

As luck would have it, I made it. My trusty flashlight had done its job. It lit the path and got me where I needed to go. I locked the padlock and started my walk back to the house with confidence. But just then . . . my flashlight went out.

Blow out the last candle.

I could see nothing. In the distance there was a blurry mass that must have been the house, but I couldn't be sure. Out in the country there are no car lights, no street lights, no neighbors . . . nothing! Nothing but darkness to get lost in; to stumble in. Fear took hold of me, and I ran like the wind. I ran faster than any eight-year-old kid has ever run in the history of running. And in doing so I tripped over a garden hose in the dark, flew forward, and smashed down hard to the ground. And then IT happened. As I looked up I realized that my fall had jostled the battery just right and turned my flashlight back on.

Begin relighting all the candles as you talk.

What's more, I realized that the motion-sensor light on the house had not gone out. In my fear I had simply been moving so slowly that it had gone off, only to return to light once more as I came flying full speed toward the house.

Begin lighting individual candles and handing one to each person.

Now all of a sudden, after being surrounded by darkness, I was surrounded by light. I could see everything clearly and made it home safe and sound.

Attachment: Activity 6

My Offering

I,

(Place photograph here)

, give

to You, my God.

Signed: _____

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

The world is always changing. Today's youth are largely a technology-based culture. Often this is viewed by critics as a problem, but it doesn't have to be. The technology that young people use can be an asset just like all the other gifts they bring to the table. Remember also that young people may express emotions more readily, are usually willing to get moving, like to get their hands dirty, and want to change the world, or their corner of it.

About this Exploration

The practice of prayer and ritual incorporate "being" and "doing" when applied to discipleship. Mentors in scripture and faith tradition have nurtured others in the art of praying. Paul calls us to prayer as part of life. The invitation to rejoice always, to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in all circumstances informs our daily discipleship. This attitude of prayer embraces the rhythm of life so that prayer becomes as natural as breathing. Rituals have been handed down that followers continue to use and find meaning in, as well as interpret and create new ritual in contemporary contexts.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Deuteronomy 26:1-1
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Leader Preparation

Young people are not just disciples in the making—they are themselves disciples and discipleship makers. Brace yourself to engage diverse learning styles, to use ritual to burn away sins and wash others’ hands. In the activities in this session you will need to be invested and involved and also prepared to hear confessions and emotion that might take you off guard. Make sure to take time out for yourself for prayer and reflection and be willing to seek advise where needed.

Prayer: Lord God, make my mind clear and ready me for what might may lie ahead. Grant me the mind of a disciple in order to better disciple those around me. 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.

 **1 Disciples (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: In the Christian scriptures, also called the New Testament, the Greek word *mathetes* appears nearly three hundred times. It is usually translated “disciple,” but in simple terms it means student or follower. What then does it mean to be a student or follower of Jesus? In order to investigate, write the following verses on sheets of newsprint. You can put three verse references on one sheet and four on another sheet. Leave room between each citation for writing.

- Matthew 8:23
- Matthew 9:37
- Matthew 11:1
- Mark 8:33–34
- Luke 10:23
- John 8:31
- John 15:10

Supplies:

- Bibles
- prepared newsprint with verse citations
- markers

Explain to the youth that the Greek word *mathetes* or “disciple” in simple terms means “student” or “follower.” Invite youth to read the scripture references listed on the sheets of newsprint, and then ask the following two questions.

1. What does this tell us about discipleship?
2. What can we do to be better disciples?

Have someone record on the newsprint what is shared under each reference. When all the passages have been read, ask the youth what they know about being a disciple now that they did not know before. What, if anything, surprised them? Conclude with prayer asking that God show us how to be better disciples; noting any insights gleaned from this exercise.

2 Lifelong Love

Leader preparation: In 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24 Paul points out that disciples must pray “in all circumstances,” “test everything,” and “avoid every kind of evil.” As disciples our relationship with Jesus is a lifelong love, but it is not without difficulties. Many things can pull us away from him and often do. Familiarize yourself with the YouTube video “Lifehouse’s Everything Skit.”

Supplies:

- Bible
- computer and Internet access
- digital projector
- YouTube video “Lifehouse’s Everything Skit,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyheJ480LYA>

Show the YouTube video “Lifehouse’s Everything Skit.” Read aloud 1 Thessa-

Praying and Making Ritual

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

lonians 5:16–24. Invite the youth to discuss what things in their lives may test them as disciples of Christ. *How might these things be avoided or changed?* Divide the young people into groups of three or four people and ask them to come up with their own skit about discipleship. Bring the groups back together and have the groups present their skits.

3 Electronic Prayer

Leader preparation: Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and think about ways young people communicate.

Supplies:

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

Pass around a piece of paper and ask the young people to write their names and the best way to contact them, such as a cell phone number (if they use text messaging), Facebook, or e-mail. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to the group. Explain that prayer is a part of discipleship. As a way to experiment with “praying continually,” they are going to have electronic prayer partners. Divide the group into pairs. Have the partners exchange contact information. Rituals such as prayer can easily be made a part of one’s daily routine. Suggest that throughout the week the partners continue this practice by sending a short prayer or prayer request each morning to each other.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Building a Church/Building Disciples (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Set out several building blocks or interlocking blocks, such as Legos®, making sure there are lots of pieces for everyone to work with. You may be able to borrow these from a younger group in the church. If building blocks are not available, use anything that’s available in your room, in the church kitchen, or in the janitor’s closet.

Supplies:

- Bible
- building blocks or anything with which to build, such as books, chairs, paper, newspaper, buckets and so forth

Invite participants to sit quietly and reflect on these two words: “church” and “disciple.” Use the following questions to engage them in conversation.

- What do these two words mean to you?
- Who or what is the church?
- What does a disciple look like?

Direct participants’ attention to the pile of building materials, and invite them to build “church” and “disciple.” Have them work individually at first for a little while. Read John 13:34–35 and Matthew 18:20. Then have the youth work together as they build “church” and “disciple.” Invite them to reflect on the experiences of building on their own and then as a group.

5 Our Sins: Burned Away

Leader preparation: Prepare a safe place for a small fire outside, such as a large tin can, and place kindling at the bottom. Make sure to have a fire extinguisher in close proximity. Inside, where you regularly meet, have Bibles, paper, and pens for each person.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- pens and paper
- large tin can
- matches or a lighter
- kindling
- fire extinguisher

Confession is a common practice in many churches. Some confessions are silent, while others are spoken aloud; some are individual, and some are corporate. Throughout the Christian tradition, confession has been widely practiced and cherished. Ask for volunteers to read the following verses: John 3:16, John 10:10, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, and Romans 5:8. After a few moments of contemplation, have the youth write their own prayers of confession. When they are finished, invite everyone to the place you prepared for a fire. Stand in a circle around the tin can. One at a time, have each person light his or her prayer of confession and drop it into the tin can to be burned away. As they do so, read Psalm 103:12. When all have finished burning their confessions, proclaim, “Though we have many sins, various modes of confession and many traditions, God has but one response . . . forgiveness.”

6 Silent Skit: Thief

Leader preparation: Prepare the room by making three large crosses on a wall using painter’s tape. Use the entire wall. Preview the YouTube video “Thief” by Third Day.

Supplies:

- Bible
- painter’s tape
- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- YouTube video “Thief” by Third Day, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awzt5uMzVkU&feature=related>
- “Thief” lyrics by Third Day, <http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Thief-lyrics-Third-Day/00DCD26EF52AE52E48256D6E002B54F1>

Invite volunteers to take turns reading Luke 23:26–43 to the group. Project the “Thief” lyrics by Third Day and invite the group to read the words to the song. Show the YouTube video “Thief” by Third Day. Invite the youth to create a silent skit reflecting the lyrics to the song and use the crosses taped to the wall. As you play the song again, invite the youth to present their skits. Initiate discussion by posing the following questions:

- What most affected you?
- How would it feel to be one of these three men on the cross?
- What does this say to you about who Jesus is?

Sending & Serving Activities

**7 The Prayer Circle (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Lay out a large stack of paper and pens.

Supplies:

- pens and paper

Tell the youth that they are going to have a time of prayer where they will pray for each other. Invite them to gather in a circle and think of things in their lives that might need prayer. Have them write a prayer request on a piece of paper, fold it up, and place it in the center of the circle. They do not need to put their name on their request. If they are not comfortable sharing details of a prayer request, they can simply write a word indicating the prayer request, such as patience or trust. When everyone has written their requests, invite the group to get in a prayerful posture, such as eyes closed, hands in lap or folded. Then read each prayer request aloud. Close by praying, *God, our concerns are many, but you are great. Be with us in times of need and be strength for us when we are weak. Amen.*

**8 The Reader**

Leader preparation: Prominently display the artwork “The Reading” by S. Wilson in the room.

Supplies:

- artwork: “The Reading” by S. Wilson, <http://www.art.com/products/p10278691-sa-i852604/s-wilson-the-reading.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=6acc8b6e6b0347f498d112cbdaf18251&searchstring=the+reading+wilson>
- pens and paper

Invite the participants sit and reflect upon the artwork “The Reading” by S. Wilson. Engage the youth in conversation about the artwork using the following questions:

- What does this say to you about discipleship?
- Who are you in this picture, and who are the other two people?
- What would happen if you were to trade places and be one of the other characters in the picture?

Invite the young people to think about what it means to be disciple and what it might mean to disciple others. Have them each write a letter to someone each saw represented in this artwork. Explain that they may keep their letters to do with as they wish. Conclude in prayer saying, *God, thank you for the people in our lives who took the time to mentor us, and thank you even more that you offer us opportunities to do the same for others. Amen.*

9 Foot Washing

Leader preparation: Because this activity is based around Maundy Thursday, you may wish to read Wikipedia’s article on this Holy Day at “Maundy Thursday” article (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maundy_Thursday.) It may prove helpful should any specific questions arise about the history and practice of this ritual. Prepare the worship space by placing a chair and footstool in the center of the room with a kneeling pillow nearby. Next to the pillow place a large bowl of

water with a small amount of dish soap in it. Near the water place a small towel for each participant. Obtain a music recording of the song “Wash, Oh God, Our Sons and Daughters” from an Internet music site, such as <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHEvIRiqBYo>.

Supplies:

- Bible
- chair
- kneeling pillow
- bowl of water
- dish soap
- small towel for each participant
- music recording of “Wash, O God Our Sons and Daughters,” such as <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHEvIRiqBYo>
- music player

Invite the youth to sit in a circle with the chair and the basin in the center. Read aloud John 13:1–15. Jesus washed his disciples’ feet in order to set an example for them. In Jesus’ day feet were particularly dirty and the act very symbolic. Jesus’ act told the disciples that they should be servants to the world around them. Though the disciples were the students and Jesus their Lord, Jesus washed their feet as a servant might do. When Jesus had finished, he instructed the disciples to go and do likewise. Many churches continue this ritual by offering a special foot washing service often held on Thursday of Holy Week, because that is when Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. Suggest that because it is not feet that regularly become dirty, but our hands, they will be washing hands instead of feet. Tell the youth that as a disciple of Jesus you will begin the ritual by washing one of their hands. Then, in turn, each person will wash the hands of another person.

Play and repeat the song “Wash, Oh God, Our Sons and Daughters” throughout this ritual. Invite one youth to sit in the chair. Kneel down and gently wash this person’s hands and dry them with a towel. Then have that person kneel and invite the next person to come to the chair. Repeat this pattern until everyone’s hands have been washed. Close by saying, “Disciples! How will you serve the world around you? Go and do so!”

Reflect

What did it mean to share sins, prayers, and personal lives with one another? What may it have meant for you and for these young people to have washed one another’s hands and sent prayers to one another? How far will this travel and where will it all go? In the quiet, sit and reflect on these questions and brace yourself for the answers.

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Young people are often rooted in tradition. They remember the way it's "always been done," even if it was only one time! Tradition can provide stability to an otherwise quickly moving and quickly changing life. Some traditions, however, may also seem old, staunch, out of date, and out of touch. Young people may be more willing than most to make simple tweaks and changes to old traditions in order to bring about fresh new meaning and impact. Their ideas and perspectives not only may give new life and understanding to traditions, but embracing these new ideas allows the young people to have ownership and a stake in what they do.

About this Exploration

Christians pray and engage in rituals to draw closer to God and participate in God's vision of a world of justice and peace. Christians across time and cultures stand in a tradition in which we receive God's blessings and share that experience with others. Opening the treasury of Christian traditions can help us express our thanksgiving, laments, petitions, and celebrations. Prayer strengthens our relationship with God as we both speak and listen to the Divine. As we recall God's acts of faithfulness in the past, we are encouraged that God is present with us today.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Matthew 6:7-15
1 Corinthians 11:17-26

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Leader Preparation

Prayer need not be mere words softly whispered upon folded hands. Prime yourself to search out the diverse practices of our faith and the meaning of these things for daily life. Know that together with the youth, you might come to see the Lord's Supper as a living and evolving thing. Be prepared to blur the lines between song and prayer. In these activities you will need to be willing and honest about your personal need for prayer just as the young people are. As a group, you are about to find new ways to remind others of God's love as you explore the traditions of the Christian church.

Prayer: God, prepare in me a spirit of openness. Help me to express my faith and to listen for the faith of those around me. And together let us make tradition something that speaks to past, present, and future alike. 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



1 Symbols of Faith (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the Christian symbols that you know. Which ones speak to you? If you could create a symbol that is meaningful to your faith, what would it be?

Supplies:

- variety of magazines
- glue sticks
- scissors
- colored construction paper
- large sheet of construction paper for each person

Throughout Christian tradition, followers of Jesus have used symbols to express their faith. In the early church the lamb was a common symbol for Christ. Later Christians also used the crucifix, cross, and fish as symbols of faith. Traditions are ever changing, expanding, and developing as Christian faith is expressed at different points in history and in different cultures. For instance, tattoos are now common ways of expression through body art. Ask what symbol(s) the youth in your group would choose as a way to express their faith. Allow time for discussion. Distribute large sheets of construction paper as a canvas. Have the youth rip shapes from the colored construction paper to create their symbol and to find words in the magazines to express their faith. Invite the youth to share their symbols. Display the symbols in your meeting space.



2 Sticky Note Prayers (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Prepare a clean space on a wall. Using the handout "Prayer Words," write each word from the list on individual sticky notes (some words appear more than once). Place the prepared sticky notes randomly on the wall you are using. If sticky notes are not available, simply cut apart the words on the attachment and tape them to the wall or to any available space, even on a table.

Supplies:

- prepared sticky notes using "Prayer Words," Attachment: Activity 2
- blank sticky notes or index cards or slips of paper, at least two for each person
- markers
- paper and a pen

Invite the youth to write a prayer, one word at a time. Divide the group into groups of three or four people. Have them take a few minutes to look at all the words you posted on the wall. Instruct each group to create a prayer using as many of the words on the wall as they choose. Give each person two blank sticky notes to use to add words to the wall. Invite each group to come to the wall, create their prayer, and then invite the whole group to say it aloud. Record the prayer on a separate sheet of paper. Conclude by leading the youth in prayer using all the prayers that were created out of the sticky notes.

Praying and Making Ritual

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

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

3 U2Charist

Leader preparation: Print the U2Charist article (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U2charist>) and familiarize yourself with this celebration of the Lord’s Supper using the music of U2 in place of hymns and prayers. Review “Yahweh” lyrics by U2.

Supplies:

- order of worship that includes a celebration of the Lord’s Supper, one for each person
- computer and projector to display “Yahweh” lyrics: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U2charist>

Distribute copies of an order of worship that includes a celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and invite the youth to look at what takes place during this service. Summarize the U2Charist article for the group. The band U2 has always been a Christian band, but did not promote itself as such to limit its audience to only those who listen to Christian music. When they sing about “You” in their songs, it is often referring to God or God addressing humanity. Their songs all contain elements of faith and spirituality, as well as social justice and doing one’s part to bring about the reign of God.

Ask the young people to think about the elements of your traditional communion service and to think about music that might be substituted for the traditional elements, such as hymns and prayers. Invite them to create an alternate service for communion. Suggest that they could ask that their service be used to celebrate communion with the whole congregation. Display “Yahweh” lyrics, a song by U2, and invite the youth to read the words aloud as a closing prayer.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Traditions: What Are They Good For? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the traditions of your church. Which ones are meaningful to you? Which ones are not as meaningful?

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Invite the youth to gather in a circle and engage them in conversation about traditions using the following questions. Write their responses on newsprint or a whiteboard.

- What are some traditions of this church?
- Which of those traditions do you find particularly meaningful, and why? Which do you not find meaningful, and why?
- What new traditions do you see developing, and how do you feel about this?
- What new tradition would you like to see instituted?

Invite the youth to get into groups of three or four people and choose one tradition from the list they just created. It may be a tradition that they particularly like, or one that they don’t find meaningful. Invite them to think of what might

change that tradition—would enhance its meaning or give it new meaning. Have the groups share their thoughts. Conclude with the following prayer, filling in the blank spaces with the words and phrases found on your newsprint or whiteboard: *God, thank you for [traditions] because by these things you show us [what is meaningful]. Also, thank you for discovering new ways to worship and praise you, showing us that our traditions are always developing as each new generation comes to know you. Amen.*

5 Standing in the Need of Prayer

Leader preparation: In many churches today traditional “Prayers of the People” (or sometimes called “Prayers of Intercession”) are common to Sunday worship. Yet, how often do young people stand up and ask for prayer? How often are the names of our youth read aloud from the pulpit? Do our youth also need prayer? Let’s ask them! Set up chairs in a circle facing each other. Watch the YouTube video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cFdFL5ag0k&feature=related>.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- YouTube video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cFdFL5ag0k&feature=related>

With a world torn by war and poverty, oppression and disease it can sometimes be so easy to pray for the needs of others that we may forget ourselves. While it is important to pray for others, it is just as important to ask for prayers concerning our needs. Assure the participants that God does not get too busy, nor does God have “enough to deal with,” and God is big enough to hear all our concerns. Invite the youth to sit quietly and contemplate their own needs. After time for contemplation listen to the song “Standin’ in the Need of Prayer” on the YouTube video.

Ask the youth to reflect on the words to the song, making sure to draw attention to the phrase: “It’s me.” Play the video again and invite the youth to stand and join the song at “It’s me” when they feel the need for prayer. Play the song a couple times, singing this song together, until all are “Standing in the Need of Prayer.” Conclude by praying the following prayer for each person by name personally and passionately: *God, we pray for [name], who is standing in the need of prayer.*



6 The Last Supper: Words and Oil

Leader preparation: Display the artwork “The Last Supper Detail” by Crespi and spend time reflecting on it. Make a copy of Attachment: Activity 6 and cut apart the strips, keeping each set of questions together: Artwork Questions #1, Bible Questions, and Artwork Questions #2.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- artwork: “The Last Supper Detail” by Crespi <http://www.art.com/products/p12061746-sa-i1508087/daniele-crespi-the-last-supper-detail-of-the-food.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=6acc8b6e6b0347f498d112cbdaf18251&searchstring=the+last+supper+detail+of+food+by+crespi%09>
- prepared “Lord’s Supper Questions” strips, Attachment: Activity 6

Invite the young people sit in silence and look carefully at the artwork “The Last Supper Detail” by Crespi. Divide the group into four small groups. Give each group one of the Artwork Questions #1 to discuss in their small groups. After

time for discussion, have each group share their question and their thoughts, and invite the rest of the youth to share any thoughts they have about that question as well.

Have the youth turn to 1 Corinthians 11:23–28 and follow along as you read aloud. Give each group one of the Bible Questions to discuss in their small group. Follow the same format for sharing responses as for Artwork Questions #1.

Next give each group one of the Artwork Questions #2. Invite the youth to look at the artwork once again and reflect on their questions in their small groups. Follow the same format for sharing responses. Ask the whole group the final two questions:

- What about the meaning of the Lord’s Supper has changed for you?
- What might you think of the next time we celebrate communion together?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Taking Rituals beyond Church Walls (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the various rituals that take place within the walls of your church. Imagine them happening in different settings outside of the church.

Supplies: None

Take the youth on a tour of the physical space of the sanctuary, if possible. If this is not possible, invite the young people to sit with eyes closed and imagine the sanctuary space. Ask them to think of what rituals happen in the sanctuary. As answers are shared, ask why they think each ritual mentioned is done here. After discussing the rituals that take place in the sanctuary, invite the youth to imagine those same rituals happening in different settings outside the church. What settings can they imagine? What might the ritual look like there?

8 Baptism Cards

Leader preparation: Baptism cards celebrate the anniversary of a person’s baptism. In this activity you will make baptism cards to keep on file for future use. Post Pheoris West’s “Baptism of Christ” in the center of the room along with different colors of card stock and other craft items.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Baptism of Christ” by Pheoris West: https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401
- card stock in a variety of colors
- scissors
- pens
- markers
- craft items and embellishments such as fancy papers, ribbon, watercolor paints, and so forth

Invite the youth to study the artwork “Baptism of Christ” by Pheoris West, but do not tell them the name of the picture. Ask them what they see in the picture, what images or symbols they see in the artwork. Invite them to describe how this artwork makes them feel, what emotions it evokes in them. Tell them the name of the picture, and ask if knowing that this picture is an artist’s representation of the baptism of Jesus allows them to see anything new or different in the picture.

Ask the youth what it means to them when someone remembers to send them a birthday card. A date of a person’s baptism may be much like the date of a person’s birth. It can be something to celebrate together as a community of faith. Invite them to make baptism cards to send to people or families on the first anniversary of their baptisms. The cards will be a reminder of God’s love for them shown on that special day and of the community of faith that surrounds them. Give the youth the supplies and have them each make several cards so that there may be a supply of cards on hand for the church to use.



9 Making Communion More Personal

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the directions for making communion bread. Print a copy of the recipe to use with the youth. You may want to try out the recipe in advance. Determine how much bread you wish to make, and multiply the recipe as needed. Inquire if the congregation can use the bread the youth make for a celebration of the Lord’s Supper at your church.

Supplies:

- Bible
- “Communion Bread Recipe,” Attachment: Activity 9
- ingredients and supplies for making communion bread (see recipe)

Read aloud Mark 14:12–16. Engage the youth in conversation using the following questions:

- What might it have been like to be there with Jesus and his disciples?
- What do you imagine it might have been like and meant for the disciples to prepare the Passover meal for Jesus?
- What would it mean today for you to prepare the communion meal for your congregation?

Often traditions can be enhanced simply by an increased level of participation. Invite the group to make bread that could be used for communion at their church. Sharing bread is always an experience of fellowship. Follow the directions on Attachment: Activity 9. After the bread has cooled, either prepare it to be used for communion by storing it properly, or share the bread among yourselves. Conclude with prayer, thanking God for the gift of bread and the fellowship it creates.

Reflect

Think back on what you have done together as a group. Which activities helped make your traditions more personal? What might have made the youth uncomfortable, and why? How do we, as the church, keep the message faithful and yet update the medium so that the traditions of the church aren’t lost on future generations?

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Attachment: Activity 2

Prayer Words		
Bless	Savior	Who
Love	Spirit	Was
Friends	Parent	Us
Family	God	Us
Sick	Comfort	From
Government	Our	Here
Poverty	Our	For
Are	Our	Presences
Are	And	Has
You	And	Help
Is	And	Beautiful
Is	The	Grace
You	The	Mystery
Your	The	Forgive
Yours	Please	Lead
Church	Be	
Lord	Watch	

Attachment: Activity 6

“The Lord’s Supper” Questions

Artwork Questions #1

Group 1: What does this painting say to you?

Group 2: What seems odd or out of place?

Group 3: What do you think the positions of the hands mean?

Group 4: Where do you see yourself in this painting?

Bible Questions

Group 1:
What do you think it means to say that the Lord’s Supper has been “passed on to you”?
What do you think it means for Jesus to say “This is my body”?

Group 2:
How do you think the Lord’s Supper is done “in remembrance” of Jesus?
What do you think is the “new covenant” in Jesus blood?

Group 3:
What does it mean to “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes again”?

Group 4:
What is an “unworthy manner”?
What does it mean to “examine” oneself before eating?

Artwork Questions #2

Group 1: What do you think the positions of the hands mean?

Group 2: Where do you see yourself in this painting?

Group 3: What does this painting say to you?

Group 4: What seems odd or out of place?

Attachment: Activity 9

Communion Bread Recipe

Sift dry ingredients (important!) together three times:

- 2 c whole wheat flour
- 1 c white flour
- 1¼ tsp baking powder
- 1¼ tsp salt

Stir in 4 tsp oil. Set aside.

Mix together wet ingredients until dissolved:

- ¾ cup + 2 Tbsp very hot water (minimum of 180 degrees F)
- 3 Tbsp honey
- 3 Tbsp molasses

Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and mix well. Dough should be slightly sticky. Do not knead.

Divide into four balls and flatten each into a ¼-inch thick disk.

With a knife, score the top of each loaf into eight pie-shaped sections, so that the sections can be more easily broken off while serving. Alternatively, you could score a cross onto the loaf.



Lay the loaves on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and brush the tops of the loaves with oil. Bake an additional 5–8 minutes.

Let cool.

Yield: Four 8 oz. loaves. Each loaf serves 60–70 people, depending upon the size of the piece given. The loaves freeze well.

Recipe from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Young people today are surrounded by images and information about the world that people of earlier generations simply could not have imagined. Teens know the plight of the hungry. With the click of a mouse they can speak to refugees and people that have known oppression. Most importantly, young people want to help. They want to take part in the variety of the missions of the church. They only need to be pointed in the right direction.

About this Exploration

Ritual helps us understand ourselves and our relationships—within our immediate and extended families, communities of faith, and the world. The prophet Joel reminds us that in a hurting and troubled world God calls us together in community and God's Spirit is poured out among all people. The Holy Spirit aids us as we practice prayer and ritual. Engaging in prayer and ritual directs our focus away from ourselves and toward our communities, our global community, and God. When we embrace prayer and ritual in this context, we may experience God's transforming power here and now.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
Philippians 1:3-4

Leader Preparation

In this Exploration you will speak about people who need prayer support, but you will also have to consider what support you personally need. You will share what you are thankful for and be open to hear the needs of others. Prepare to contrast financial support with prayer support. Prepare to learn about mission in terms of evangelism and the environment. Prepare yourself to invite others into your prayer life not only as subjects but as partners. Make yourself ready to participate in worship and prayer, developing a new ritual to remember as a part of your mission together.

Prayer: God, help us to seek out what you are doing in this world. Help us to see our place. Most of all help us to join that mission once you have revealed it to us. Amen.

Session Development

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 When I Remember (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about someone in your life for whom you are thankful and often remember in your prayers. Be prepared to share the name of that person and why you are thankful for him or her.

Supplies:

- Bible

Paul wrote a letter to the church in Philippi while he was in prison. It is sometimes called a “love letter” to “the saints” of that church who cared for him when he needed them most. Invite a volunteer to read Philippians 1:3–4 to the group. Tell about someone in your life that you are thankful for. Ask the young people to think about a person in their lives for whom they are thankful and would like to remember in prayer. Invite them to talk about these people as they feel comfortable. Provide a time of prayer together, remembering these people. Invite each person to pray, “I thank my God every time I remember you, [name].” The group responds to each prayer with, “Thank you, God, for [name].”

2 Offering Cards

Leader preparation: Make an “offering” card for yourself as an example to show the youth.

Supplies:

- blank index cards
- markers and crayons
- variety of magazines
- scissors
- glue sticks

Invite the young people to think about the mission of the church. Mission often takes money, but it always takes people. Invite the youth to spend time thinking about what talents and passions they have that they can give as an offering to support the church in its mission. Have them imagine an image, symbol, and/or words that would illustrate their offering. Using the supplies provided, invite them to make an “offering” card that they can put in the offering plate during worship. When everyone has finished their cards, invite the youth to share them with the group. Encourage the youth to present their cards as the offering is collected in church as a sign of their commitment to the mission of the church.



3 Breath Prayer

Leader preparation: Breath prayer is a simple practice of focused prayer. To prepare the environment, make the room calm and quiet. Consider turning down the lights, lighting incense, or burning candles. Empty the room of any chairs or tables, anything that might make the room “school like.” Place large pillows or cushions on the floor for participants to use. You might want to “borrow” cushions from couches or chairs. Familiarize yourself with the handout “Breath Prayer.”

Praying and Making Ritual

- 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.

Supplies:

- “Breath Prayer,” Attachment: Activity 3
- (optional) incense or candles and lighter or matches
- large floor pillow or cushion for each participant

Ask the young people to take a place at one of the pillows. Invite them to participate in a guided meditation that is a breath prayer. A breath prayer uses the rhythm and activity of breathing to offer prayer to God. Ask the youth to be silent and focus on their breathing during the meditation except when they are instructed to speak. Lead the group in the guided meditation using the attachment, “Breath Prayer.”

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Mission Statements (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: You will need newsprint or a whiteboard for this activity. Lay out pens and paper for each person.

Supplies:

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

Read Joel 2:13. Ask: *What do you think it means that God is “slow to anger and abounding in love”?* Engage the youth in conversation using the following questions, and record their responses on newsprint or a whiteboard.

- What would it mean for us as a country to be “slow to anger and abounding in love”?
- What would it mean for us as a church to be “slow to anger and abounding in love”?
- What would it mean for us as individuals to be “slow to anger and abounding in love”?

Invite the participants to write a short mission statement for themselves based on discussion. Begin with the prompt, “Because God is slow to anger and abounding in love I will strive to . . .” Conclude by having everyone read his or her personal mission statement to the rest of the group.



5 To Rule!

Leader preparation: Print enough copies of the attachment for pairs of youth. Become familiar with the instructions for making a papier-mâché globe. Cover the working space with plastic or newspapers.

Note: This activity takes two sessions to complete. In the first session, the youth will make papier-mâché globes. The globes need to dry at least twenty-four hours. In the second session, the youth will paint the globes and make a banner for them.

Supplies:

- Bible, New International Version (NIV)
- “Papier-mâché Globe” for each pair of youth, Attachment: Activity 5
- round balloon for each pair of youth
- lots of newspaper
- prepared flour and water glue (see papier-mâché globe instructions)
- plastic containers for each pair
- spoon or stick for each pair
- globe or world map
- pencils
- blue and green tempera paint
- paint brushes
- markers
- 2” x 11” strip of paper for each pair

Part of the mission of the church is to care for the environment. Read Genesis 1:26–28. These verses say that God has made us to “rule over” God’s creation. Suggest that to “rule over” the earth, or “have dominion” in other translations, is intended to be done in the image of God, as we were created. Ask the youth to imagine what this means, to rule over or have dominion over creation as God would rule.

Session 1:

Have the youth get into pairs, or a triad if necessary. Give each pair or a copy of “Papier-mâché Globe” and have them follow the directions. Set the globes aside to dry for at least twenty-four hours.

Session 2:

After their globes are completed, have the pairs draw the continents on their globes. Display a globe or world map so they may see the approximate shapes and locations of the continents. Assure the youth that perfection is not the goal! Have them paint their globes with green and blue tempera paint. As the paint dries, have the youth use the 2” x 11” strip of paper to make a banner to place on their globe with a statement about how they would rule over the world. Have them attach their banners to their globes. Display the globes.

⑥ Inviting Others to Pray

Leader preparation: Preview the YouTube video “Down to the River to Pray.”

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- YouTube video “Down to the River to Pray,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1FQqSGxBso>

Show the YouTube video “Down to the River to Pray”. Invite the participants to think about the words of the song using the following questions:

- Who are you in this song, and why?
- Tell about a time when you were invited to pray.
- Tell about a time when you were the person inviting others to pray.
- Who in your life could be asked today to “go down to the river to pray?”

Mission can be thought of in different ways: sometimes as people sent out to tell

others about the gospel, and other times as acts of social justice. Invite the youth to reflect on these two interpretations of mission and share their feelings about them. Sometimes mission may be about prayer and praying together. Encourage the youth to pray for the person that they mentioned or thought of earlier, whom they would like to invite “down to the river to pray.”

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Mission for All Ages (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: On four sheets of newsprint write each of the following headings: “Children,” “Teens,” “Adults,” and “Seniors.”

Supplies:

- prepared sheets of newsprint
- markers

Tell the youth that you would like them to consider how people of different ages might participate in the mission of the church. Divide the group into four small groups and give each group one of the prepared sheets of newsprint with an age group on it. Invite the groups to brainstorm and write down ways in which their age group can be engaged in mission. Encourage them to think broadly, in big and small ways. When the groups have finished, gather the youth back together and invite each group to share their ideas. Invite the rest of the youth to add any ideas to the newsprint as necessary. Ask the youth to circle any of the suggestions that they know are happening in their congregation. Conclude with prayer thanking God that no matter what age we are, all of us can support the church’s mission in a variety of ways. Ask God to bless the church as it moves forward into new missions and new opportunities.



8 Artist, Me, and Mission

Leader preparation: Display the artwork “Guatemala Processions” by Betty LaDuke. Write the following scripture references on a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard:

- Matthew 4:19
- Matthew 5:16
- Matthew 18:11
- Matthew 18:20
- Matthew 28:19–20
- Mark 16:15
- Luke 4:18–19
- Acts 2:4–6, 20:7

Supplies:

- Bibles
- artwork: “Guatemala Processions” by Betty LaDuke, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401
- prepared newsprint with scripture references
- pens
- blank index card for each person

Invite the youth to study the artwork “Guatemala Processions” by Betty LaDuke. Distribute Bibles and blank index cards. Invite the youth to choose one scripture passage from the list, look up that verse, and write it on their cards. They may want to look up several verses and choose one that is the most meaningful to them. After they have written their verses, discuss the following three questions together.

- What might this verse mean to the artist?
- What might this verse mean for me?
- What might this verse mean for my mission in this world?

Encourage the youth to take home their cards and read them each morning of the coming week as a reminder of their mission in the world.



9 The Ritual of Light

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with handout “Ritual of Light.” Decide if you will read all the “Reader” parts, or if you will assign parts and have the youth take turns. Memorize the first line, as you will want to say it in darkness and then light the first candle. Obtain a small candle and holder for each person such as those used on Christmas Eve or at candlelight services. As an alternative, obtain a tea light candle and holder or small plate for each person.

Supplies:

- candle and holder for each person
- matches or lighter
- “The Ritual of Light,” Attachment: Activity 9

Invite the youth to sit in chairs in a circle and to participate in a “Ritual of Light,” acknowledging and celebrating the gift of God’s light in the world. Give each person a candle with holder and a copy of the handout. Instruct them to follow your directions as you give them, while being aware of candle safety. Tell them that when one lights a candle from another, the unlit candle is tilted toward the lit candle. Turn off the lights and begin the “Ritual of Light.”

Reflect

With your group you have shared in the Exploration of mission as something done within and without the church. You have seen prayer and ritual as a part of that mission. Now ask yourself, “What have I learned about God’s mission and how we fit into it?”

Attachment: Activity 3

Breath Prayer

Read the following guided meditation slowly and calmly. Pause between phrases.

Listen carefully to the sound of my voice. Be mindful of your breathing. Slow your breathing down. In . . . out . . . in . . . out Pay attention as your breath slows down. Relax. Say with me, "Holy Spirit, I seek your direction." Focus on your breathing . . . in . . . and out Think about each breath . . . in . . . out . . . Feel your breath releasing your prayer. Again, say with me, "Holy Spirit, I seek your direction." Now pray with each breath. Breathe out words of prayer Breathe in God's response. In . . . out . . . in . . . out . . . Breathe out words of prayer . . . Breathe in God's response. In . . . out . . . in . . . out . . . Breathe in . . . "Lord Jesus." Breathe out . . . Breathe in . . . "grant me mission." Breathe out . . . Breathe in . . . "Lord Jesus." Breathe out . . . Breathe in . . . "grant me mission." Breathe out . . . Now thank God for the breath of life. In . . . out . . . in . . . out . . . And say, "Amen."

Attachment: Activity 5

Papier-Mâché Globe

Materials

- newspapers
- round balloons, inflated
- 1 lb. flour for every three globes
- water
- large pail for papier-mâché mixture (old plastic containers work well)
- paint stick or spoon to stir the glue
- green and blue tempera paint
- brushes
- markers
- printed maps of the earth

A way to work

1. Tear the newspaper into 1" strips. The length doesn't really matter.
2. In the large pail mix flour and water to a paste consistency.
3. Dip newspaper strips in the paste mixture, wipe off excess, and wrap around the balloon. Make at least four layers of strips. You may want to apply the layers over a period of a few days to let them dry fully.
4. Place finished globes on clean newspaper to dry.
5. When the globe is dry, pop the balloon and remove it.
6. Make prints of a map of the earth. You may choose color map printouts (Western Hemisphere and Eastern Hemisphere) <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/globe/Earthcolorwhtemplate.shtml> or <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/globe/Earthcolorehtemplate.shtml> or black-and-white map printouts (Western Hemisphere and Eastern Hemisphere). <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/globe/Earthbwwhtemplate.shtml> or <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/globe/Earthbwehtemplate.shtml>
7. Draw the continents on the globe: Using a pencil, draw a line around the midsection of the balloon representing the equator, and draw a dot for each of the poles.
8. Draw the continent in which you live. To draw each continent, note the shape of that continent, how big it is in relation to the globe, and where it is positioned (with respect to the equator, the poles, and the other continents). Using a pencil, draw that continent on the globe.
9. Repeat this process for the other continents.
10. Paint in the continents on the globe with green tempera paint. Allow to dry overnight.
11. Paint in water masses with blue tempera paint. Allow to dry overnight.
12. Use a marker to label the continents and the water masses.

Attachment: Activity 9

The Ritual of Light

(Turn off lights and begin in the dark.)

Reader 1: God said, "I command light to shine!" And light started shining. Genesis 1:3 (CEV)

(Leader lights his or her candle.)

Reader 2: God looked at the light and saw that it was good. Genesis 1:4 (CEV)

(Leader uses the lit candle to light the candles of those on either side.)

Reader 3: The God of Israel spoke. The Rock of Israel said to me: "The one who rules righteously, who rules in the fear of God, is like the light of morning at sunrise, like a morning without clouds, like the gleaming of the sun on new grass after rain." 2 Samuel 23:3-4 (NLT)

(Participants use the lit candles to light the next two candles.)

Those whose candles are lit: Our God is like a beam of light.

Reader 4: By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go. Nehemiah 9:12 (ESV)

(Participants use the lit candles to light the next two candles.)

Those whose candles are lit: Our God lights the way.

Reader 5: For it is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness. Psalm 18:28 (ESV)

(Light the next two candles.)

Those whose candles are lit: Without God we are lost.

Reader 6: The unfolding of (God's) words gives light; it imparts understanding. Psalm 119:130 (ESV)

(Light remaining candles.)

All: We thank God for the gift of God's word, but we cannot merely sit here holding the light of God.

Reader 7: Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you." Isaiah 60:1 (ESV)

(All stand.)

Reader 8: He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. Daniel 2:22 (ESV)

(Leader walks around the circle and looks into the eyes of each participant.)

All: Nothing hides from the glory of God.

Reader 9: You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 5:14 (ESV)

(All raise their candles.)

Reader 10: Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Matthew 5:15 (ESV)

(All lower their candles and cup their hands around their candle lights, shielding the light from the rest of the circle.)

Reader 11: In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:15-16 (ESV)

(All remove their hands and let their lights shine!)

Reader 12: Yet not only should your light shine, but also spread "to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." Luke 1:79 (NIV)

All: Amen.

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group or Setting

It's often said that children are our future. However, this is only a part of the picture. In reality it might be better to say, "Children are our present and our future." Young people may or may not be aware of this. Often they feel as if they are just along for the ride. This should not be the case. Young people need to know that they are valued and that they have the highest stake in the future before them.

About this Exploration

The practices of our faith are happening within us and around us. Through awareness and attentiveness, we may be beckoned toward a new vision for the future in our relationships with both the Divine and with one another. An openness to and discovery of the things going on around us will focus us upon the spiritual conversations already taking place. By exploring prayer and ritual in the present we can find new ways to build a vision for a future grounded in God's love and faithfulness.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
2 Samuel 7:18–29
Philemon 1:1–9

Leader Preparation

How do we look back and yet keep moving forward? How do we seek God while admitting that the future is not always rosy? In these activities you will explore ways of making old rituals new again. You will be helping the young people to take their rightful place in the worship of the church, not just as bystanders, but as a legitimate and active part of the congregation. Together you will share faith with others, discuss the evolution of worship, and ask, “What is God building, and how can we be a part of it?”

Prayer: God, lead me ever into the future. Set my heart caringly upon new ideas whether or not they speak to me, and help me to see that worship is for all of us and should speak to all of us. 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,

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 A Call to Worship (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The Call to Worship is a common element in most worship services. The ritual is quite simple, a reminder that God has spoken and invites us to respond with worship. This may be done by one person, as a call and response, or even as a sung call to worship. In this activity, the youth will write a Call to Worship. You may want to use these calls at the beginning of future sessions.

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper and pens

Ask the youth what is the first thing that happens in a worship service. Depending on your service of worship, they may mention a music prelude or announcements. When someone mentions the Call to Worship, ask the youth what purpose it serves. Invite the youth to open their Bibles to Psalm 95:1–6. This passage is a wonderful example of a Call to Worship using scripture. Read the psalm responsively: you read a verse, the youth respond with the next verse. Ask the youth to think of different ways that they have experienced or could imagine a Call to Worship. Some suggestions might be scripture, one voice, call and response, singing, shouting, dramatization, and so forth. Have them divide into groups of three or four people, and invite each group to write a Call to Worship. When the groups have finished, invite them to share their work with the large group. Save the Calls to Worship to use at future sessions.

2 No Traveller’s Borne

Leader preparation: Display the artwork “No-Traveller’s Borne” by Jess.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- artwork: “No-Traveller’s Borne” by Jess, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401

Read or invite a volunteer to read aloud 2 Samuel 1:18. Invite the group to look at the artwork “No-Traveller’s Borne” by Jess. After a few minutes, have the participants turn to Psalm 8. Invite the youth to take turns reading Psalm 8 one verse at a time, pausing after each verse for the following two questions: “What has this meant in the past?” and “What might this mean for the future?” Conclude with unison prayer using verses 4 and 6 as your prayer.

3 Prayer Bracelets

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the “barrel knot” so you can teach the youth how to do this. An instructional video can be found at “How to Tie a Sliding Barrel Knot,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJ1oiABYAw0&feature=related>. Make a sample prayer bracelet.

Praying and Making Ritual

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.

Supplies:

- sample prayer bracelet
- 14"–16" piece of hemp yarn for each person
- scissors
- super glue
- beads: black, red, white, blue, green, and yellow, one set of beads for each person

Show the youth a piece of the hemp yarn and tell them that the piece of yarn represents their lives. Give everyone a piece of hemp yarn and invite them to make a beaded prayer bracelet. Show them the prayer bracelet you made. Have them slide on the beads in the following order, explaining the meaning of each color as you add it to the yarn.

- The black bead is for our sins.
- The red bead is for the blood of Christ that redeemed us from our wrongs.
- The white bead is for our lives resurrected anew.
- The blue bead is for the promise found in our baptism.
- The green bead is for our growth in faith.
- The yellow bead is for the promise of life eternal.

Demonstrate how to tie the barrel knot on their bracelet. Cut off any excess yarn. Encourage the youth to use their prayer bracelets each night before bed in the coming week: touch each bead, remember its meaning, and pray with the beads as reminders of their lives lived in faith. Close by praying the following Prayer: *God, we don't know what lies ahead of us. Our future is uncertain. But we thank you because though we do not know all the places we might go, we do know you are with us. Amen.*

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Sharing Your Faith (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: On a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard make three columns with the headings: "Family," "Friends," and "World."

Supplies:

- Bible
- prepared "Family, Friends, and World" newsprint or whiteboard
- marker

Read aloud Philemon 1:6. Draw the group's attention to the newsprint or whiteboard. Invite them to think about this verse and how it relates to each category: Family, Friends and World. Invite the participants to identify ways they can share faith with someone in each column.



5 Musical Prayers

Leader preparation: The music suggested for this activity is from Matisyahu, a Hasidic Jew and a hip hop/reggae artist. Watch the YouTube video “One Day” and the Daily Motion video “King without a Crown.”

Supplies

- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- YouTube video “One Day,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRmBChQjZPs>
- Daily Motion video “King without a Crown,” http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1t6ka_matisyahu-king-without-a-crown_music
- “One Day” lyrics, <http://www.lyricsreg.com/lyrics/matisyahu/One+Day/>, and “King without a Crown” lyrics, <http://www.lyricstop.com/k/king-withoutacrown-matisyahu.html>
- “Prayer for the Day,” Attachment: Activity 5

Invite a volunteer to lead the group in prayer by reading “Prayer for the Day” on the attachment. Display “One Day” lyrics and “King without a Crown” lyrics so that the youth can read the lyrics to these two songs. Show the YouTube video “One Day” and the Daily Motion video “King without a Crown” that correspond to these songs. After the videos, ask the youth to consider what defines a prayer. Ask them if they thought that Matisyahu’s songs were prayers and explain why they thought so. Invite the youth to give examples of different ways prayers may be prayed. Suggest, if necessary, chanting, screaming, silence, movement, and song. Conclude with the following Prayer: *God, thank you for the gifts of prayer and music. Prayer is amazing. And because music is going on all around us, opportunities to pray are going on all around us. This week help us to take the ordinary and give it to you. Help us to use the music going on all around us as prayer. Amen.*

6 Trumpets, Harps, Lyres, Tambourines, Dancing, Strings, Flutes, and Clashing Cymbals?

Leader preparation: Prepare to display “War of Ages” lyrics and “Boomin” lyrics for the group. Preview the Myspace video “Collapse” and the YouTube video “Boomin” by Tobymac.”

Supplies:

- Bible
- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- Myspace video “Collapse,” <http://www.myspace.com/warofages/videos>
- YouTube video “Boomin” by Tobymac, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSXBgoBYFr4>
- “War of Ages” lyrics, <http://www.burblur.com/war-of-ages-collapse-lyrics.html> and “Boomin” lyrics, <http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/boomin-lyrics-tobymac/c6a468e8680511e4482572ba002a19fa>

Read, or invite a volunteer to read, Psalm 150. Show the Myspace video “Collapse” and the YouTube video “Boomin” by Tobymac. Display “War of Ages” lyrics and “Boomin” lyrics and invite the youth to read the lyrics. Show the videos again, if it would be helpful. Ask the youth to reflect on what the future of music may be in the church considering these two videos and knowing what music is currently like in your congregation. Invite the youth to consider how the church moves forward into the future while still maintaining the same message.

Sending & Serving Activities

 **7 Our History, Promises, and the House of our Future (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Read 2 Samuel 7:18–29. Notice how David repeatedly thanks God for what God has done in David’s past. At the same time notice that David appeals to God for the sake of the future: David pleads with God to do as God has promised and reminds God that God has said, “I will build a house for you.”

Supplies:

- Bibles
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Invite volunteers to take turns reading verses of 2 Samuel 7:18–29. Invite the participants to recall things that God has done for them in the past. Write responses on the newsprint or whiteboard. Pray, or invite the youth to offer prayers of thanksgiving for the things listed. Invite the young people to name promises that they believe God has made and add these to the list. Pray, or invite the youth to offer prayers of thanksgiving to God for promises mentioned. Invite the youth to consider what house God is building for us in the future, and write their responses on the newsprint or whiteboard. Pray, or invite the youth to offer prayers to God to help guide us into that future.

8 Yes, No, and Not Yet

Leader preparation: Cut a slit in the top of three shoe boxes large enough for an index card. Label each shoe box with one of the following titles: “Yes,” “No,” and “Not Yet.”

Supplies:

- prepared “Yes,” “No,” and “Not Yet” shoe boxes
- blank index cards
- pens or pencils

Give everyone a blank index card and invite them to write one prayer request that they are comfortable sharing with the group. Have them write their name on the other side of the card. When everyone has finished writing, invite the youth to come forward one at a time, share their prayer request, and drop it in the box labeled “Not Yet.” Explain that they are placing their requests in this box because these prayers have not yet been answered. Tell the youth that each time you meet they will revisit the prayer boxes and, as prayers are answered, move the cards from “Not Yet” to “Yes” or “No,” as appropriate. Assure the youth that “Not Yet” is a valid response to prayer, as we may not yet know how God has answered prayer. It may be a long time, or looking back in hindsight to understand an answer to a prayer. On the other hand, an answer may be right around the corner and quite clearly a “Yes” or a “No.” Invite the youth to continue to write prayer requests and drop them in the “Not Yet” box.

9 Hurt

Leader preparation: Watch the YouTube video “Hurt,” which is Johnny Cash’s reenvisioning of the Nine Inch Nail’s song.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- computer with Internet access and digital projector
- YouTube video “Hurt,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o22eIJDtKho>
- paper and pens
- envelope for each person

Show the YouTube video “Hurt.” Invite the young people to think about a time in their lives when they felt sad or hurting. Read, or invite a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 30:3–6. Even the Bible’s greatest king, David, felt the sting of depression. Invite the young people to write a special prayer or words of encouragement for someone who might be facing a difficult emotional time. This could be as simple as “You are not alone.” When this is done, have the young people place their prayers in envelopes and seal them. Write out the verses of Matthew 11:28–29 on the outside of the envelopes. Gather in a circle and invite the youth to turn to the person on their left and give that person their envelope. Tell the young people to take these prayers home and put them away. When the time is right and they feel they need prayer, the prayers of their neighbor will be there for them.

Reflect

As you conclude the Future and Vision Exploration ask yourself, “What is my vision for the future? How has it changed, and how might it continue to change in order to present the good news of Jesus to each new generation?”

Attachment: Activity 5

Prayer for the Day

Our gracious God, we come before you today, knowing that it is only through the name of Jesus that we can stand before you. We praise you and thank you for your goodness in allowing us to do so. We recognize that we are unworthy of this honor, this privilege, apart from your grace. We come before you to seek your blessing on our day and our service to you. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.