



YOUNG ADULTS

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Young adults are increasingly aware that they come from diverse cultures, ethnicities, genders, orientations, and vocations as well as different social, political, theological, and spiritual perspectives. Not only are young adults multicultural, they are also a multimedia cohort in that they were raised in the digital media age with social media and the Internet. Their world is one of rapid exchange and dissemination of information. In the midst of all this, there is still a yearning to hear and respond to that "still voice" of God. As a leader, one will want to help young adults cultivate the spiritual disciplines necessary to listen, hear, and understand what the Spirit is saying for this day and time. At the same time, by learning and living prayer and ritual, young adults will be empowered to integrate and practice faith as they move toward autonomy and new roles in family, work, society, and the church.

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 us. 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 4:1-7, 19-24
Psalm 23

Leader Preparation

A young adult's journey can be described as being on a seesaw. The young adult sits on one end, and on the opposite sit the diverse challenges that present themselves during this time. These range from beginning post-high school education or a work path, searching for and doing well on a first job, finding a life mate, having children, moving away from home, and perhaps changing friendships. The pathway of life is not straightforward for the young adult because we live in an increasingly complex world where there are longer periods of transition, marriage is delayed, children come later in life, geographic and job mobility can be frequent, and second and third careers are common. Many experience separation, divorce, or the death of a spouse among many other possible tragedies and losses. Our task, as we guide them through this Exploration, is indicated by Jennie Wilson, who wrote the song "Hold to God's Unchanging Hand": "Time is filled with swift transitions / Naught on earth unmoved can stand / Build your hopes on things eternal / Hold to God's unchanging hand." A spirituality that encompasses these words is not just taught to young adults; rather it is "caught." As a leader and fellow explorer, you might cultivate an attitude of appreciation for young adults as unique and capable creations of God with their own needs and unique ways of communicating their faith. Open yourself to share with them your prayer life and experience

Exploring & Engaging Activities



① What Is This Thing Called Prayer? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: At the top of each sheet of construction paper, write one of the following words associated with prayer: Adoration, Answer, Boldness, Confession, Fervent, Intercession, Kneel, Power, Praise, Requests, Sincere, Steadfast, Supplication, Thanksgiving, Without Ceasing, and any other words you would like. Post these around the room.

Supplies:

- construction paper
- pens
- paper
- glue sticks or tape

Give participants paper and pens. Invite them to choose one or more words from those you posted and to write or draw on their paper anything that comes to mind at each of their words. Then ask them to describe how they relate their word(s) specifically to the practice of prayer. Invite the participants to share their thoughts with the rest of the group. Encourage others to add any word associations or relations to prayer and add them to the papers to develop the group's own vocabulary of prayer. Have the participants glue or tape their writings onto each sheet of construction paper. Keep these posted in your meeting space, if possible.

② Truth and Prayer

Leader preparation: Take the cards from two suits of the playing cards, such as hearts and clubs or hearts and spades. This will give you thirteen pairs, enough cards for twenty-six people.

Supplies:

- two suits of playing cards (thirteen pairs)

Hand a playing card to each person, making sure you hand out pairs. After everyone has arrived, invite the participants to find their matching card in the other suit. For example, the holder of the number two card finds the other two, and the king finds the other king. Explain that when the pairs find one another, one person shares a "truth," a true prayer need that he or she has, and the other person offers a prayer. Then they reverse roles. If you wish, gather the cards, shuffle them, and hand them out again, having participants meet and pray with new partners.



③ Setting the Table

Leader preparation: This activity engages participants in considering ways prayer and ritual may be a means of "setting the table" for an encounter with God. As you prepare for this activity, envision your life as a table setting. What is "on your plate"? Set a table in the middle of your meeting space with a chair for each participant. Display the artwork "The Moorish Kitchen Maid" by Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez.



of participating in and creating ritual. Be ready to try new ways of prayer and ritual that the young adults might suggest out of their context. Be familiar with the scriptures for this Exploration. Spend time in reflection about the young adults in your group.

Discovering prayer and ritual can be an exciting time, especially as young adults may for the first time be experiencing the ability to choose and name their own prayers and rituals. As you work with this group, be mindful of ways to invite young adults to name who taught them to pray or their favorite rituals. Consider asking them also about what things or events they wish they had a ritual for—such as beginning or ending relationships, starting college or a new job, discerning their vocation or purpose. Brainstorm with them about ways to mark these occasions and seasons by rituals that acknowledge God's presence in their everyday lives, struggles, and hopes, and by prayer that gives them a chance to have sacred conversation with God.

Prayer: God, be my shepherd no matter how I and [name each young adult] are burdened down; restore our souls. Let us be powerful and strong going forward in this life, on this earth, and in this society, knowing that with you "all things are possible."
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

Supplies:

- artwork: "The Moorish Kitchen Maid" by Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez, <http://www.ucc.org/the-pilgrim-press/pdfs/ITW-Poster-Set-2.pdf>
- table and chairs
- paper plates
- markers

Invite participants to gaze at the artwork and share their thoughts about how this picture may relate to praying to God. Some suggestions might be:

- She is dressed humbly as a servant, and we come to God humbly as God's servants.
- She is carefully laying out things on the table to prepare the table for a meal. In prayer we lay our thoughts and desires before God, preparing our lives before God.
- The table occupies a prominent place and seems large enough to meet the needs of the dinner party about to happen. May prayer occupy a prominent place in our lives!

Tell the participants that prayer and ritual do not take place in a vacuum. Encourage them to consider how they may prepare a place in their lives the same way that the woman is preparing her table. If the group is not sitting at the table, gather around the table and give each participant a paper plate and markers. On the front of the plate invite them to draw or write the things that are "on my plate" right now: activities, concerns, relationships, and so forth. On the back of the plate invite them to draw or write the things that are obstacles to prayer for them. When all have finished their plates, say, "The table is ready." Invite them to share their plates with one another as they are comfortable. Close in prayer, thanking God that God's table is big enough to provide our every need.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

④ Postures of Prayer (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Your prayer habits probably have changed as you have grown older. Think about the manner in which you pray. What posture(s) do you find most comfortable when you pray, such as kneeling, sitting, standing, lying on your bed, and so forth?

Supplies:

- Bible

Take time to explore how our postures communicate both our emotions and intents. Have the participants spread out, leaving room among them for movement. Invite the group members to demonstrate postures that might be taken when you call out emotions or feelings. Use the following list, and add some of your own, if you wish.

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.

- I'm sad.
- I'm hungry.
- I hurt.
- I'm elated.
- I'm surprised.
- I'm angry.
- I'm confused.
- I'm tired.
- I'm hoping.
- I surrender.

Tell the group that you are going to read aloud Psalm 23, and invite them to pose in postures of prayer as they feel moved as the psalm moves along. Read slowly, pausing between phrases to allow time for participants to strike a pose. Repeat the activity if the group wants to do it again.



⑤ Let Your Fingers Do the Walking

Leader preparation: The labyrinth is a popular tool for exercising one's spirituality. Labyrinths have existed for a long time and have been regaining popularity in recent years. For information about labyrinths, read <http://www.lessons4living.com/labyrinth.htm>. In preparation for this exercise, you might want to go through a labyrinth yourself, or, if that is not possible, use the finger labyrinth that is a part of this exercise.

Supplies:

- "Finger Labyrinths," Attachment: Activity 5
- (optional) quiet, meditative music
- (optional) music player

Explain that a labyrinth is a journey into the center and back out again. It is not meant to trick, not a puzzle to be solved, as is a maze, but is meant to guide. Tell the participants that there are a variety of ways to use a labyrinth, such as for discernment, prayer, meditation, and so forth. Invite participants to share their experiences with the spiritual practice of a labyrinth. If appropriate, share the information you learned about labyrinths and your labyrinth experience. Give each person a copy of the attachment, and invite the group to spend time with the finger labyrinth as they choose moving intentionally and slowly through the twists and turns, resting in the center, and moving back out again. You may wish to play quiet, meditative music. After a little while, invite the group to gather back together and invite them to reflect on their experience of this time of using the labyrinth.

⑥ Ritual and Remembrance Activity

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is to consider what makes a space sacred. Think about the places where you have worshiped God. Consider those places outside the church that you would call "sacred." What was it about these places that claimed them as sacred for you, such as a waterfall that calmed you, or a river where you threw rocks and watched the ripples?

Supplies:

- Bibles
- small river rock or pebble for each person



Ask the participants to describe places and times in their lives that they consider sacred or where they felt the presence of God. How might they mark an ordinary place or time as sacred? Invite them to consider that sacred space or time may be marked with special objects or architecture, such as in a church. What objects or features of your worship space, or other spaces they mentioned, tell them that the place is sacred? Suggest that one way to mark a space as sacred is to consecrate it with prayer and ritual.

Invite volunteers to read aloud Joshua 4:1–7, 19–24. *How did Joshua mark the space and time as sacred?* Gather the group in a circle for prayer. Invite the participants to name in prayer the places or times they mark as sacred. Give thanks for these places and times and for the gift of a God who cares for all God's creatures. After the prayer, give each member a rock or pebble to remind them that they can mark this as the day that they prayed to the God who hears our prayers, just like the Israelites of Joshua's time.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Prayer and Creation Care (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Care for creation is mandated in Genesis 1. The Gulf oil spill of 2010 has had a tremendous environmental impact on the Gulf States of the United States. Read the letter sent in solidarity to the communities of the Gulf Coast by the heads of a multitude of denominations and faith communities and consider the issues it calls us still to address today.

Supplies:

- “Gulf Coast Letter,” Attachment: Activity 7a
- “Poisoned Sea, Impoverished Soul,” Attachment: Activity 7b

Invite group members to discuss memories of the Gulf oil spill of 2010, of the news coverage, and how it made them feel seeing the gushing oil every day. Ask if participants know anybody that is or was personally affected by the spill. Distribute copies of the “Gulf Coast Letter” and invite them to respond to the corporate ownership of culpability in this disaster as well as the bullet points set forth for action. In what ways can we appropriate both the culpability in not caring for the environment in our own “backyard”? What steps might we take individually and corporately? Close with the “Poisoned Sea, Impoverished Soul” litany on the attachment.



8 Dinner Time Traditions

Leader preparation: Look at artwork “The Last Supper Detail” by Crespi and spend time meditating on your mealtime rituals or routines, either current or past. Imagine yourself back at a particular time and place. Even though you may not have been aware of it then, think of how the preparing, serving, and eating of meals for and with loved ones, family, and friends can be a spiritual enterprise.



Supplies:

- Bible
- 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>
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- snack, such as bread or crackers, cheese, fruit, juice, or water

Display the artwork "The Last Supper Detail" by Crespi, and invite the participants to take a good look at it. Invite them to describe what they think is happening in the picture. Ask the group to name some things that are common, usual, and ordinary to happen at dinner. Write their responses on the newsprint or whiteboard. What may be spiritually significant about these "common" elements or actions of a meal?

Gather around a table and invite the group share the food that you prepared as you continue your conversation. Ask the participants to recall special mealtimes in their lives, such as times, foods, places, preparation, serving, blessing, people present, and so forth. Read about the Last Supper from Mark 14:22–25 and about Jesus sharing a meal with faithful followers on the road to Emmaus from Luke 24:28–35. Invite the participants to reflect on the ritual of celebrating the Lord's Supper, considering the same questions as for their mealtimes: times, foods, places, preparation, serving, blessing, people present, and so forth. Close with prayer, thanking God for the times meals are shared and stories are remembered.

9 Cutting a Covenant

Leader preparation: When one develops the ability to do prayer and ritual, one also develops the ability to commune with God in sacred time and space. That space is not always static or fixed, occurring in a church, but can be mobile and flexible in nature. As you prepare for this activity, which allows participants to experience the practice of creating holy ground or making sacred space, look at the article about worship space: "The Symbols, Space, and Sanctity of the Place of Worship." Obtain a music recording of "Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters" (tune: Beach Spring).

Supplies:

- Bibles
- items for the *mishkan*: flowers (real or artificial), various fabrics, potpourri, candles or incense, ribbon, rocks, shells, and so forth
- table for the *mishkan*
- recording of "Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters" (tune: Beach Spring), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHEvIRiqBYo>
- music recordings for a particular mood of your choice: solemn, joyous, meditative, and so forth
- music player
- apple for each participant
- knife
- cutting board
- article: "The Symbols, Space, and Sanctity of the Place of Worship," <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/dipko-12-principles-behind-the-bow.pdf>



This activity has three parts. Lead the group in this ritual of creating sacred space and mood, and cutting a covenant.

Step 1. Create a Sacred Space: Tell the group that in the wilderness the Jewish people built a *mishkan*, a portable sanctuary. Both men and women participated in its creation, by weaving fine cloth, making ritual vessels, beautifying the holy place. Invite the participants to create their own *mishkan* and consider how to make the space holy for the time you will be using it. They may want to physically create sacred space by forming a circle, delineating boundaries with ribbons or flowers, drape fabric, and so forth. Show the participants the items you have gathered so they may choose what they want to use to make their *mishkan*.

Step 2. Create a Mood: Play "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters" as people create the *mishkan*. Then play music of your choice depending on the mood you want to create.

Step 3. Cutting a Covenant: Invite a volunteer to read Joshua 4:1–7, 19–24 to the group. Explain that what happened there was the creation of sacred space to mark a significant encounter that the people had with God. Suggest that prayer is a covenant communication because it implies that relationship exists between God and us. There is a familiar saying in the Hebrew tradition, "to cut a covenant." The *bris*, or circumcision, is an example of such a cutting. To show that a covenant is being cut, some people make a vow and cut an apple. When an apple is cut across its midsection, a star forms from the seeds and core.

Invite the participants to take turns cutting an apple to represent cutting a covenant with God in prayer. Invite them to express a prayer concern and then to cut their apple in half across the midsection. As each person does this, instruct the group to respond, "Amen, and so it is." Once everyone has had a turn, say a prayer blessing all the covenants that have been cut. Give thanks for the sweetness of the apples marking the sweet life in faith. Invite everyone to enjoy the apples.

Reflect

What did you discover about the young adults in your group? Who is aware of the rituals in their lives, and who is searching for such meaning? What rituals and prayers were new to you? What next steps might you take to address each of the prayers and concerns raised in this session?

Attachment: Activity 5

Finger Labyrinths



Attachment: Activity 5 (*continued*)

Finger Labyrinths



Attachment: Activity 7a

Gulf Coast Letter



July 8, 2010

The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Isaiah 58:11-12

As leaders of faith communities in the United States, we write as we prepare, within our community, for the long-term needs of God's children and God's Creation in the Gulf Coast. We are watching with distress as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and tragedy unfolds, but our faith traditions teach us that from within this darkness, we may find light. We are called by God to use the gifts of this earth wisely, to act as stewards of all creation and to care for our neighbors in need. We call on you, our elected leaders, to heed this call to stewardship, justice and love as you begin to address the short and long-term needs of the Gulf Coast.

We confess our own complicity in this disaster. As the dark cloud of crude oil poisons the Gulf's waters and its fragile coastline; as we grieve over images of oil-soaked birds and oil-drenched workers, all struggling to survive; as we hear the stories of economic calamity befalling coastal people, we understand that we are each to blame for the dependence on oil that has led us to this place. But even as we lament with the people and creatures of the Gulf and confess our own culpability, we turn our attention to the daunting task of restoring the coastline and of caring for devastated communities and ecosystems. As we begin this slow process of healing and rebuilding, we stand in hope.

In this time, we call on you to rise above partisan politics to ensure a comprehensive and effective response to this crisis. You are doubtless receiving many recommendations. We emphasize the following:

- Work with stakeholders: As our elected officials, you must be bold in the action you take and you must work with the stakeholders in the region, particularly the affected communities, to develop a response strategy that meets the needs of the people, the creatures and the environment that are suffering as a result of this spill.
- Hold responsible parties accountable: BP and other responsible parties must be held fully accountable for this calamity and they must assume responsibility for the economic and environmental repercussions. The federal government should ensure that these responsible parties set aside sufficient resources to respond to the spill and to help communities and ecosystems fully recover.

Attachment: Activity 7a (continued)**Gulf Coast Letter**

- Ensure that help reaches those in need: In the short-term, the federal government must ensure that the financial resources from the responsible parties actually reach the people, communities, schools, clinics, small businesses and ecosystems that most need it. Without federal leadership, we fear that many who are suffering from the results of this spill, both directly and indirectly, will not be helped. Further, the social safety net in the region must be strengthened, in order for it to respond to such increased need
- Commit to a long-term recovery: In the long-term, the federal government should ensure that environmental and economic recovery efforts meet the needs of the affected communities and are based on sound science. In addition, the long-term impacts on the Gulf and coastal ecosystems must be scientifically monitored; research and monitoring must be conducted by neutral institutions, not by the oil and gas industry; federal government agencies responsible for monitoring and oversight must be fully funded and fully staffed; the affected community must have effective mechanisms for giving input and feedback, and for participating in monitoring their own living space.
- Take steps to prevent future disasters: The United States government must take steps to ensure that this kind of disaster does not happen again. Examples of such steps include structural changes in the oil and gas permitting process; government regulations that are objective and not unduly influenced by industry; greater transparency and local participation in permitting decisions; increased monitoring and oversight; guaranteed protections for whistleblowers; and increased liability for companies that violate rules or engage in risky behavior.
- Respond to yet-unknown needs: Some needs of the recovery and the affected communities are not yet evident. Government, responsible parties and the nation at large must be attentive to such needs and flexible enough to respond to them as they arise.

The situation that continues to unfold in the Gulf demands a comprehensive, but more importantly, a moral response. The bonds that connect us to one another and to all Creation have been damaged in the Gulf. We have failed as a country to protect not only ourselves but the gifts with which we have been blessed.

As we begin to move forward and prepare as a nation for our recovery from this spill, we urge you to remember God's commitment to us and to Creation, and to honor God's vision of health and wholeness for all.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Black
President and General Minister
United Church of Christ

Dr. Harry Blake
President
Louisiana Missionary Baptist State Convention

Kim Bobo
Executive Director
Interfaith Worker Justice

Simone Campbell, SSS
Executive Director
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice
Lobby

Attachment: Activity 7a (continued)

Gulf Coast Letter

Marie Dennis
Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Rabbi Steve Fox
Chief Executive
Central Conference of American Rabbis

Rabbi Steve Gutow
Executive Director and CEO
Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

David A. Harris
Executive Director
American Jewish Committee

Bishop Thomas Hoyt
Senior Bishop
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Bishop Neil L. Irons
Executive Secretary
The Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon
General Secretary
National Council of Churches of Christ USA

Bishop Chuck Leigh
Apostolic Catholic Church

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley
General Secretary
American Baptist Churches USA

The Rev. Dr. Elizabeth D. Miller
President
Moravian Church, Northern Province

Rev. Peter Morales
Unitarian Universalist Association of
Congregations

The Reverend Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Dr. Walter L. Parrish III
General Secretary
Progressive National Baptist Convention USA

Nancy Ratzen
President
National Council of Jewish Women

Rolando L. Santiago
Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Dr. Carl Sheingold
Executive Vice President
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

Ervin Stutzman
Executive Director
Mennonite Church USA

Rabbi Arthur Waskow
Director
The Shalom Center

Dr. Sharon E. Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the
United States and Canada

Rabbi Eric Yoffie
President
Union for Reform Judaism

CC: Majority Leader Harry Reid, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell,
Minority Leader John Boehner, Members of Congress

Attachment: Activity 7b

Poisoned Sea, Impoverished Soul

A litany of lament over a despoiled ocean

In the beginning, darkness covered the face of the deep.

Then the Breath of Heaven swept across the waters, blessing the sea with all manner of creatures.

The sea knows its Maker and roars its applause; the fish therein leap at the sound of God's voice.

Through the baptismal waters of the Red Sea did the Israelites escape their tormentors and emerge to freedom's demand.

Surely, says the Prophet, the day will come when the whole earth will be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Through the waters of obedience did Jesus enter the Way. By the Galilee Sea did he call disciples; on its waves did he come to them; by his power, its storm subdued. On its shore he revealed his resurrection insurrection.

But now, on our border, the sea has been poisoned. The deeps, made for praise, now drowning, voice hushed.

Poisoned sea, impoverished soul. Hear now our plea; come, make us whole.

The oil of sweet gladness, the mark of rejoicing, now chokes the earth's womb, its legacy crushed.

Poisoned sea, impoverished soul. Hear now our plea; come, make us whole.

The fowl overhead, the fish down below, are fouled by the rupture of greed-driven lust.

Poisoned sea, impoverished soul. Hear now our plea; come, make us whole.

Have mercy upon us, bring our hearts to repentance; and bind us again to your covenant trust.

Poisoned sea, impoverished soul. Hear now our plea; come, make us whole.

LET US NOW PRAY FOR THE OCEAN AND THE LIFE IT SUPPORTS.

—Ken Sehested, 4.30.10. *A litany of confession in light of the oil spill along the Gulf Coast*



YOUNG ADULTS

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Young adults ages eighteen to thirty-five come from a wide spectrum of faith experiences. Some may have grown up in a faith community and know the Bible inside out. Others may be seekers encountering scripture for the first time. Others will be in between. Many young adults may be hungry to understand how scripture is relevant for their experience and context. Cultivating an attitude of wonder, joy, and appreciation for scripture and its examples of prayers and rituals will serve all young adults well as they mature in their faith and meet challenges of adulthood in the twenty-first century.

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

Leader Preparation

Spend time in reflection on your own experience with and knowledge of scripture. Do you have a regular habit of reading scripture outside of worship? What questions do you bring to the study and reading of scripture? Which portions of the Bible especially speak to you? Where do you turn in scripture when you face a triumph or crisis? Perhaps you will journal some of your answers to these questions. Then turn to the Bible Focus Passages for this session. It can be helpful to read all of 1 Chronicles 28:1-29:25 that contains 1 Chronicles 29:10-18. These verses tell the full story of ritual and prayer being passed from father to son as King David, at God's command, turns the building of the temple over to his son Solomon. Instructions and help are given to Solomon in chapter 28. At the beginning of chapter 29, King David initiates a ritual, a free will tithe, to collect the necessary and exquisite materials for the temple. Then in 29:10-18 David offers up a mighty prayer of praise to God. His prayer is followed by another ritual of giving burnt offerings to God. In 29:22-25, Solomon in a final ritual is anointed the new king before God and the people. While this is a story of a king and succession and building a home for God, it is also the story of a young adult receiving instruction in faithful living and the promise of God's blessing from an elder.

Read the scripture again with your young adults in mind. An interesting

Exploring & Engaging Activities



① Teach Us to Pray (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Luke 11:1-10 and Matthew 6:1-14 and note comparisons and contrasts between the two passages and the text of the Prayer That Jesus taught (the Lord's Prayer). You will lead conversation about the passages and assist young adults to learn the prayer afresh, or remember it and pray it together.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Initiate a basic conversation about examples of prayer in scripture. If your community regularly prays the Jesus Prayer in worship, talk about this tradition and its place in the service. Answer questions about the meaning of the prayer and wonder aloud about sins and debts in this time and place as well as what times of trial the young adults may be facing for which they would like to ask God's help. Consider, too, the phrase "give us each day our daily bread" in the Luke passage. Invite the participants to reflect on what it means to trust God to provide what is needed each day without worrying about the next day's needs. Invite the young adults to read the prayer in Luke 11:2-4 silently until they have it fairly firmly in their minds; then gather together to recite it unison. Invite the young adults to say this prayer each day until the next meeting and then to share their reflections and experiences in using this prayer in their daily lives.

② Building a Home For God

Leader preparation: Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-25 and Ephesians 2:11-22 and think about the structural elements and human elements needed to create a church. Have fun with the young adults brainstorming and building a twenty-first century house for God.

Supplies:

- Bible
- Legos® or other building bricks
- paper
- markers
- scissors

Invite volunteers to take turns reading 1 Chronicles 29:1-25 to the group. Point out that this passage is about the materials being gathered for the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Invite volunteers to take turns reading Ephesians 2:11-22 to the group. In this passage the apostle Paul describes how the community of believers down through the generations forms the body of Christ—a house for God. Out of these two descriptions, engage the participants in conversation about what structural elements and human elements are important to build a house for God in this time and place. Use the following questions to stimulate the conversation, if necessary.

discussion to have with your young adults is to find out who passed along knowledge of scripture and prayer to them. Next read Luke 11:1–13 for its simple beauty and power as the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus gives them a prayer that has lasted through the centuries and a reminder that God is available to all who seek. Receive the gift of the promise that asking, searching, and knocking will all yield a relationship with God. Read Luke 11:1–13 aloud. Conclude your preparation time with a prayer of your own or this one:

Blessed are you, O God.

Your power and majesty are present throughout creation.

Grant me an open mind and heart to share scripture, prayer, and ritual with

[name each person in your group] that they and I may draw closer to you and make your love visible in the world through our living faith.

Amen.

- What would be important to include?
- What symbols? furniture? windows?
- What about a particular shape for the church?
- What would help show Christian faith and support a life of prayer and discipleship?
- Who is included in the community both as described in scripture (multiple generations and both living and previous generations) and in current reality?

Invite the young adults to use their imaginations, the building blocks, and paper to work together to create a church that includes the elements that they find important and meaningful.



Scripture Sharing

Leader preparation: In this activity you and your young adults have a choice. They may share stories from scripture with much younger children in the nursery or visit homebound or care facility-bound elders and share scripture with the residents. You will want to make arrangements for either setting or both prior to the activity. Your young adults will consider the artwork “The Reading” by Wilson and then take part in the ritual activity of sharing scripture with other people. Remember, in experiencing the artwork there are no right or wrong observations about the piece. In taking part in sharing scripture and stories they will be practicing the transmission of faith through oral reciting and storytelling.

Supplies:

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

To share with young children, use Bible storybooks, such as *The Pilgrim Book of Bible Stories* by Mark Water and Diana Shimon, *Noah's Ark* by Jerry Pickney, *The Miracles of Jesus* by Tomie DePaola, *The Parables of Jesus* by Tomie DePaola, or other Bible storybooks found in your church library or local library.

To share with older adults, use large print Bibles.

Gather the young adults together, stand in a circle, and invite them to take time to breathe deeply. After a minute or two, invite the young adults to look at the artwork “The Reading” by Wilson. Ask them to put all their senses to work silently. Then engage the participants in conversation using the following questions.

- What do you think the image is about, or what is the story of this picture?
- Name two details from the picture. What colors, shapes, objects, or people do you see in the picture?
- What feelings does the picture evoke in you?
- How do you relate to the picture? Do you see yourself in the picture? Where? How?
- What do you think is the meaning of this picture?
- What does it move you to do?

Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 6:1–9 to the group. Engage the group in conversation about their experiences with scripture using the following questions.

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.

- What parts of the scripture sounded like this picture?
- How did you learn about the Bible?
- Who taught you or shared scripture with you?
- What were some of your favorite Bible stories as a child?
- With whom are you called to share scripture in your lives?

Gather together in prayer, and then have the young adults take Bible storybooks to share with young children or large print Bibles to a care facility. Suggest that if they are reading with seniors, they could engage in conversation, asking the seniors which passages and parts of scripture have guided their lives or given them strength, comfort, or joy. With younger children they may want to ask the children what they know about the Bible, Jesus, or God. Have the young adults share their experiences at your next meeting together.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ Lectio Divina (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read about lectio divina so that you feel comfortable leading this spiritual practice. Scroll down to "Examples: Texts for Meditation" and choose one of the texts to lead your lectio divina, or use one of the Bible Focus Passages for this Exploration. Set up a table with a cloth, candles, an open Bible, and a cross, with chairs around the table.

Supplies:

- Bible
- "Lectio Divina," Attachment: Activity 4
- table with cloth
- candles with candle holders
- matches or lighter
- cross
- chair for each person

Invite the group to sit in the chairs around the table. Explain they will be participating in an ancient Christian practice or ritual for reading and praying with scripture called lectio divina. Give them an overview of the practice, and tell them that you have a copy for them to take home with them. Invite a person to light the candles. Lead the group through the lectio divina, inviting participants to read the scripture passage aloud to the group as needed. After a time of silence at the end of the practice, invite the young adults to share their word or phrase and other observations about the experience. Give each person a copy of the handout and invite them to try lectio divina on their own as a regular part of their prayer life.

⑤ Prayer Clouds

Leader preparation: Practice with building a word cloud for yourself following the instructions at www.wordle.net. Explore the various options for changing the font and layout of the cloud. You may wish to make a few samples prior your session. If have a limited number of computers available, you may want to invite participants to bring a laptop computer to this session. Try to have enough computers so that a pair may work at each one.



Supplies:

- Bibles
- computers with Internet access, ideally one for each pair of people
- color printer
- website: "Wordle," <http://www.wordle.net>

Often we recite prayers in unison or utter them out loud. This activity allows participants to make a visual picture of prayer. These can be saved in the public gallery of wordle as testimony or witness to the importance of prayer and printed out as a visual reminder for young adults. For their first word clouds, have them type in the text of Jesus' prayer in Luke 11:2-4. For a second word cloud, invite pairs to brainstorm words related to prayer and scripture and enter these words. Remind the group that they can determine the proportional size of the words in the word cloud by the number of times they enter a word. If they want particular words to jump out, they need to enter those words multiple times. Invite the participants to make a personal word cloud in which they enter words related to their own needs for prayer—both joys and concerns—along with the names of people or situations they pray for in their lives. Each participant can decide whether to share his or her work in the public galleries on website. If you have access to a color copier, invite them to print out their creations and keep them displayed at home or at work to remind them to pray.



Pretzel Prayers

Leader preparation: Think about what you do when someone says, "Let us pray." Do you reflexively bow your head and bring your hands together in an attitude of prayer? While this is a common way to pray, it is not the only prayer posture. In medieval times, Christians often prayed by crossing their arms over their chests while standing or sitting. In this activity you and the young adults will have a chance to practice this prayer posture. Legend has it that medieval monks made pretzels to teach this prayer posture. The pretzels were made from a simple recipe of flour, water, and salt and eaten during Lent because they contained no leaven. The simplicity of the dough and the prayer shape reminded people to pray and ask God's forgiveness in Lent. Similarly the three holes that are created in twisting the dough could be used to explain the Trinity, where God is at once Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You will need to gather ingredients ahead of time and arrange to meet in a kitchen to cook together for this activity. You may also wish to prepare a batch of pretzels ahead of time to practice or to make adjustments in the quantity depending on how many people are in your group. Enjoy learning to pray in a new "old" way and share in a simple snack. You may also wish to use this activity to share in conversation about Lent and its rituals in history and your faith community.

Supplies:

- a Bible
- "Lenten Pretzel," Attachment: Activity 6
- ingredients and supplies to make pretzels
- water or other beverages to drink
- (optional) mustard or melted cheese as toppings

Gather in the kitchen. Ask the young adults to name different postures for prayer. Suggestions may be kneeling, bowed heads, hand raised above head, hands open facing up, and folded hands. Explain that there is no right or wrong way to pray. Tell them that throughout Christian history and that of other faiths people have prayed in different ways. One such way to pray is with hands folded across one's chest. Practice this posture. Invite the group to stand, cross their arms over their chests, and allow their hands to rest flat near their shoulders. Explain that this



posture reminds us that God enfolds us and encircles us always. While in this posture, lead the young adults in praying Jesus' Prayer together.

Tell the group that, according to folklore, monks in the Middle Ages used pretzels as a teaching tool to remind people to pray and seek forgiveness during Lent using the prayer posture they have just practiced. Work together to make pretzels following the instructions on the handout. Enjoy eating the pretzels and talk about how pretzel making parties might become a ritual for the young adults and their families to mark the season of Lent. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving, again practicing the crossed arm posture. Give each person a copy of the pretzel recipe to take and use at home.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Free Will Offering (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity can take place in one session in which the young adults explore the practice of the offering, or it can be a two-part activity in which you do the study and some training in one session and follow up with the young adults collecting the offering on a following Sunday. In either case, find out about the offering in your worship service. When does it come in the order of worship? Are there prayers of dedication or blessing for the offering? Who collects it and what happens to money that is collected? Does your community also invite offerings of time and talent to the work of the church? If you are doing this in two parts, arrange with the necessary people to have the young adults collect the offering from the congregation and offer the blessing on the gifts.

Supplies:

- Bible
- offering plates

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Chronicles 29:1–9 to the group. Explain, if necessary, that King David initiates a very grand offering of precious goods for the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Ask the group to consider what other goods besides precious metals or money they might offer to God. Invite another volunteer to read 1 Chronicles 29:10–19 to the group. Have the participants look again at verse 11, in which David names all in the heavens and on earth as belonging to God. Ask the group how they might act differently if they understood everything they have to be a gift, including their jobs, homes, and families.

Share information based on your preparation about the offering in your community and its place in the worship service. Discuss the mechanics of the gathering and what happens to the collected offering. Assign duties to each of the young adults and practice gathering the offering and blessing it. Conclude with a prayer, gathering in a circle and holding hands. Invite the group to pray, making an offering of themselves, in ways other than monetary.



⑧ Sharing the Lord's Prayer

Leader preparation: Arrange for your young adults to visit with a group of younger elementary-age children. They will read Luke 11:1–13 with the children, teach them to pray this version of the Jesus Prayer, or Lord's Prayer, and make an artwork to remember the prayer.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- 8 ½" × 11" white paper
- crayons or markers

Gather the young adults and have them read Luke 11:1–13. Invite them to talk about what the words mean to them and how they would describe the meaning to young children. Explain that one way faith is transmitted is through the learning of prayers, and they will teach this prayer to children. Visit the younger elementary-age children. Pair each young adult with a child. Have them read Luke 11:1–13 to the child. Instruct the young adults to trace their partner's hands on a sheet of paper with a marker or crayon. Have them help the child write the Jesus Prayer on the palms of the traced hands. Invite the child and young adult to pray the prayer together. Conclude by inviting the children and young adults to name their prayer concerns. Lift up all the concerns and conclude the prayer time with the Jesus Prayer. Encourage the children to keep their artwork as a reminder of this prayer.

⑨ Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters

Leader preparation: Obtain a music recording of "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters" (tune: Beach Spring), or invite an accompanist to play it on the piano.

Supplies:

- song: "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters" (tune: Beach Spring); lyrics: <http://www.jusomelyrics.com/823745/Oleta-Adams-Wash,-O-God,-Our-Sons-%26-Daught-Lyrics>
- musical recording of "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters" and music player or accompanist and piano
- a basin and pitcher full of water
- towels

Give each person a copy of the lyrics for "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters." Invite them to consider the images it contains for elements of prayer and ritual. Talk about baptism and its significance as a dying to a life without God and being born into a life with Christ as a disciple. Pour water from the pitcher to basin and invite all participants to come forward and dip their hands into the basin and recall their baptism, or to ask for God's blessing on their faith journey as they consider baptism. Join together to learn and sing this hymn as a group. They may wish to sing it at a baptism in your community.

Reflect

Reflect on your own prayer life and experience of ritual. All prayer is heard by God, whether spoken aloud or in our hearts, and there are many ways to bow and pray. As you teach and learn about traditional methods, open yourself and your group to exploring new ways to give thanks and ask for God's aid. Look for how ritual can work to remind us to pray in all seasons of the year and in all aspects of our lives.

Attachment: Activity 4

Lectio Divina

In Latin, one of many ancient languages spoken by those who first followed Jesus, lectio divina literally means "divine reading." It can also be translated as "holy reading" or "reading with God."

Lectio divina is a way of praying meditatively with the Bible so that the Word of God can reach into our hearts and minds. It's a simple and natural way of meditation practiced by the early monastics—women and men who followed God's call to a radical vocation of silence, prayer, and love. Other great faith traditions—including Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism—independently developed similar methods for meditative reading of sacred texts.

Lectio divina can help us let go of our own agendas when we read the Bible. Like other forms of meditation, it silences the noise of the world around us, leading us in stages to an inner silence where God is waiting for us. But lectio divina is not an escape from the world. Instead, God's Word helps us see both our lives and the world around us through God's eyes—and to love what we see in the heart of God. It is both inner-directed (to the presence of God within) and outer-directed (to the world God created).

When we listen to God's Word in this way, meditation can be both a calming and a disturbing experience. Sometimes, God may want to quiet our fears and hold us gently. At other times, God may want to confront us with uncomfortable doubts or unanswered questions.

Four stages: In the twelfth century, a Carthusian monk named Guigo described four stages in the practice of lectio divina.

Lectio (reading)

Read the Word of God slowly and reflectively. Any text from the Bible can be used for this purpose, but the reading should not be too long.

Meditatio (reflection)

Think quietly about the text you read it. You can read the text many times to let the words sink into your mind and heart.

Oratio (response)

Leave your thinking aside and simply let your heart speak to God.



Attachment: Activity 4 (continued)

Contemplatio (rest)

Let go of your own ideas and plans. And you can go deeper: let go of your holy words and thoughts. Simply rest in the Word of God. Listen at the deepest level to God, who speaks within you with a still, small voice.

As you read, reflect, respond and rest, you can leave yourself open to be transformed from within by God's Word. Whether over time this transformation has an effect on the way you see and live in the world is one test of the authenticity of prayer. You take what you read in the Word of God into your daily life.

Okay, but how does it actually work? What do I do?

There is no "right" or "wrong" way to read the Bible as a source for meditation. As you experiment, you may find yourself adapting this old tradition in ways that are useful to you. Here's one method:

First, look for a quiet space where you can read and pray. This could be a chair that is comfortable—but not so comfortable that you fall asleep! You want to be relaxed and attentive at the same time. You could sit on the floor with a cushion for support. You might want to set apart in your home a "holy place" to use for daily prayer. A lighted candle, icon, cross or some other meaningful object can be used to center your attention.

Second, ask God to become part of you, to enter through God's Word. Any "prayer of illumination," or your own spontaneous prayer, is suitable. Here's one example: Prepare my heart, O God, to accept your Word. Silence in me any voice but your own, that, hearing, I may also obey your will, through Jesus Christ my Savior. Amen.*

Third, use deep breathing to calm your body and mind. This is an ancient technique used for centuries in Christian and other faith traditions. Breathe in slowly and deliberately, then out in the same manner. Be conscious of your breathing: remember that all living things breathe and that "spirit" means "breath." Find a slow but natural and comfortable rhythm for your breathing. Continue until you feel relaxed and attentive.

Fourth, pick up the Bible and read through your chosen text. You can read the text quietly out loud or silently in your mind. Take your time. Read several times until one verse or a few words from a verse "speak to you."

Fifth, repeat the verse or words you have chosen. If it helps, divide the text into two parts: think the first part as you breathe in and the second part as you breathe out. Continue repeating the text until God moves you to silence.



Attachment: Activity 4 (continued)

Sixth, spend time in silence. Be aware that you are in God's holy presence. Continue looking at the object you have chosen as a focus of meditation: an icon, cross, or lighted candle. Be open to whatever may happen to you: you may feel an emotion, a sense of awareness, or simply a sense of God's presence.

Seventh, bring the time of meditation to a close. When you feel the time is right, reread the Bible text one more time. Then conclude with the Lord's Prayer, or any other prayer, or a personal prayer you feel moved to express in God's presence.

Experiment—find your own way!

Remember that there is no "right" or "wrong" way to pray! You may find these suggestions useful, or you may not. Feel free to experiment and develop a style of your own. The important thing is to remember that the Bible is not only a text for study but also the first and best prayer book of the Jewish synagogue and the Christian church. The Bible can be your resource for prayer as you seek a closer relationship with God.

Examples: Texts for Meditation

Some of these texts are short enough to serve as a simple focus of meditation, using the ancient breathing technique we've described in this resource. We've also provided examples of how brief phrases for meditation can be extracted from a longer text. Finally are two versions of the Jesus Prayer, an ancient mantra for meditation.

Psalm 62:1

For God alone my soul in silence waits;
from God comes my salvation.*

Psalm 62:2

God alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.*

Exodus 33:14

My presence is with you,
and I will give you rest.*

1 Kings 19:11-12

(The Word of God spoken to Elijah:) "Go out and stand on the mountain before God, for God is about to pass by." Now, there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before God, but God was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake.

Attachment: Activity 4 (continued)

And after the earthquake a fire, but God was not in the fire. And after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

After the fire,
a sound of silence.*

Matthew 11:28

(Jesus said,) "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Come to me,
I will give you rest.*

I am gentle,
You will find rest.*

My yoke is easy,
My burden is light.*

The Jesus Prayer (inclusive version)

Jesus Christ, Savior, Child of God,
have mercy on me.*

The Jesus Prayer (traditional version)

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
have mercy on me, a sinner.*

The Jesus Prayer (simpler version)

Jesus
Mercy*

* From the Book of Common Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA), adapted. Bible texts from The New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, adapted.

Written by Lynne Bujnak and Andy Lang, United Church of Christ, <http://www.ucc.org/feed-your-spirit/spiritual-practices/lectio-divina.html>.

Attachment: Activity 6

Lenten Pretzels

Ingredients (makes 12 pretzels)

Soda solution:

1/3 cup baking soda

5 cups water

Pretzel dough:

1½ cups all purpose flour

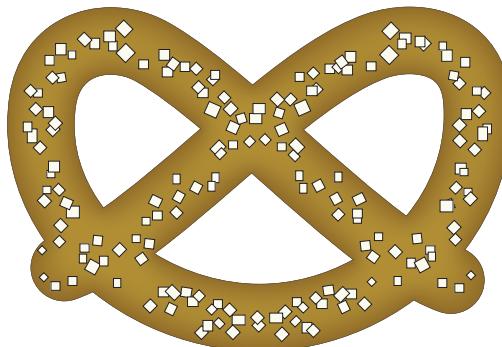
1½ cups wheat flour

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup buttermilk

¼ cup honey

2 tablespoons kosher salt



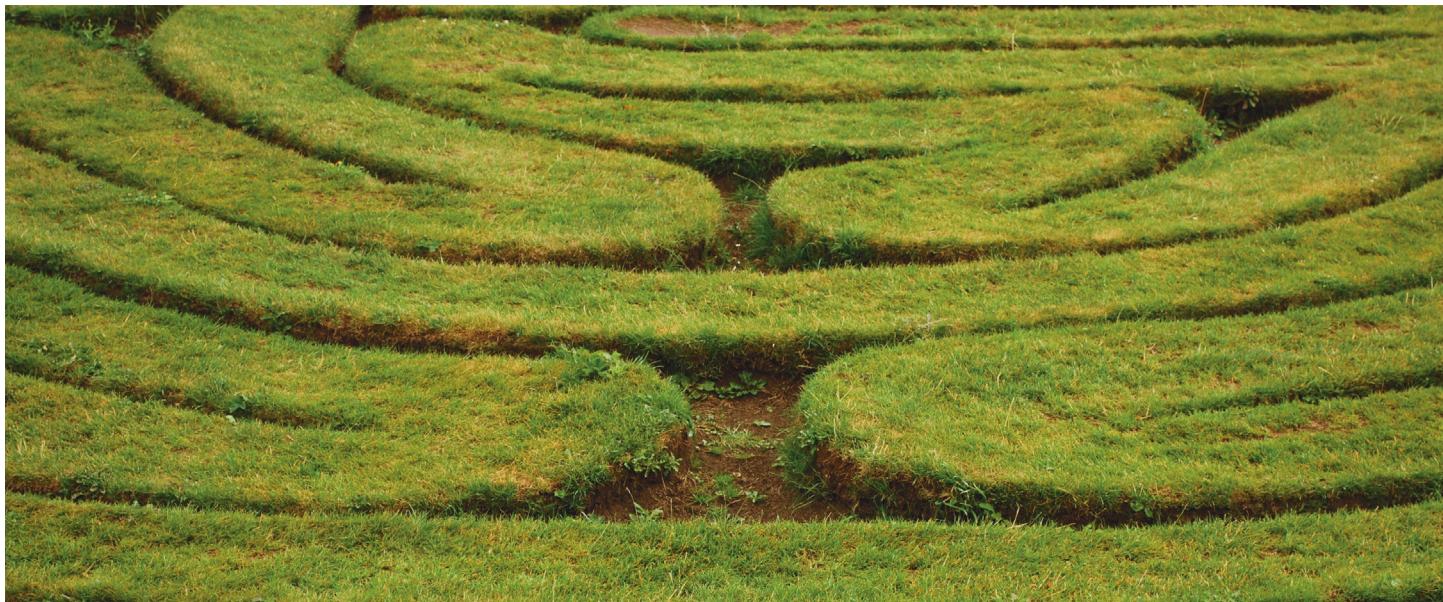
Instructions

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
- Dissolve the soda and water in a stock pot and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and set aside.
- Sift together the flour and soda and add the buttermilk and honey, stirring it all until the dough pulls together.
- Pour dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead until dough is firm.
- Divide the dough into 12 equal pieces. Roll dough out into a long snake-like shape and form the traditional pretzel twist shape.
- Pinch the ends to seal it and dip the pretzel in the soda water solution. Place on lightly greased baking sheet and sprinkle with kosher salt.
- Bake in the oven for 10 minutes or golden brown. Move to a cooling rack briefly.



YOUNG ADULTS

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Young adults ages eighteen to thirty-five relate to one another at work, home, and school through various social media perhaps unfamiliar to their parent's generation. Opportunities abound for this age group to connect with people, including fellow followers of Christ, all over the world. While young adults may recognize a need for God to make meaning of their lives, they may not be sure how to begin to make a connection. Prayer provides a path through change, and rituals provide a comforting shelter to a life of maturing discipleship.

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 they create new ritual in contemporary contexts.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Deuteronomy 26:1-11
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Leader Preparation

As disciples of Christ Jesus, faithful Christians have a long ancestry that can be traced in scripture back through the centuries. We follow Jesus and through him we are spiritual kindred to Moses and further back to Sarah and Abraham. Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11 as if you are the one who has made a harvest and brings the first fruits before God. How awesome to come before God in thanksgiving, recounting all of God's mighty and awe-inspiring works in your life and the lives of your community. Read to the end of Deuteronomy 26, for giving God the first fruits is but the first half of an amazing ritual act of gratitude. Notice that one must additionally provide to those in need from the bounty God has given. We are all connected in the family of God. Draw a tree and put your name high up the trunk. On the lower portion of the trunk and descending to the roots, name your faith family, whether tied to you by blood or baptism, who nurtured your faith when you were little. At the roots list Jesus and other figures from scripture or Christian history who have acted as teachers and guides to your discipleship. In the branches list the names of all the young adults whom you will guide in this Exploration. You may also list others whom you have nurtured.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28, paying particular attention to verses 16-24, in which Paul invites the faithful to a life of prayer at the end of his letter. In both

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Hands in Prayer (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Prayers of intercession are among the oldest forms of prayer. One asks God to aid and support others in their time of need, or to generally bless others with well-being. In this activity you will guide the young adults in a simple method of intercessory prayer for others and then for themselves. As disciples we are to build up one another in prayer. As the young adults practice, encourage them to name specific people and situations known to them either personally or that have touched them in some way.

Supplies: None

Gather with your young adults in a circle. Ask if anyone learned the five finger prayer as a child. Explain that while we are always encouraged to pray for our own needs, disciples have also always prayed to God on behalf of others who are in need or for the general well-being of others. If some have learned this prayer form, they can help demonstrate.

Tell the group that you will guide them in prayer and give them prompts about what to pray for. Invite the participants to speak prayers aloud after each prompt.

- Hold your left hand palm up and begin your prayer by acknowledging God and naming an attribute or action of God. For instance: Loving God, God our Provider, or Creator God.
 - Hold your right hand palm up and give thanks for something, someone, or a situation in which you felt God's presence. For example: Thank you for my job or my friends who listened when I was sad, or for the opportunity to learn new things.
 - Place your hands together in prayer, palms together. We will use the five fingers of each hand to help us remember to pray for others.
1. The thumb is closest to your chest, so pray for family members and those closest to you in need of God's comfort.
 2. The index finger comes next and reminds us to pray for members of one's faith community including prayers of support for pastors, teachers, elders, music director, musicians and fellow lay people.
 3. The tallest finger comes next and reminds us to pray for leaders in government both locally, nationally, and globally and for those who help keep peace and provide aide such as police, fire fighters, emergency responders, members of the military, and teachers.
 4. The ring finger, the weakest finger, follows, and we pray for those who are sick or hurt or living in poverty.
 5. Finally the pinkie, which is the smallest finger, reminds each of us to pray humbly for ourselves.

Close by saying, "And all God's people say, 'Amen.'"

Encourage the young adults to pray using this form daily either as they begin their day or before sleep at night. You might send reminders via Twitter, Facebook, texts, or e-mails to encourage this habit.



the Hebrew Scripture and this portion of Paul's letter we find testimony to a life in discipleship.

Conclude your preparation time with a prayer of your own, or this one:

*God of our ancestors,
I thank you for your care and
provision,
that when we have been in bondage
to others or in prisons or our own
making,
you have brought us out of turmoil.
I thank you for all that I have and all
that I have been given.
Grant me a joyful heart that I may
share with you and with those in
need
from the first fruits of my labors.
In following Christ, let my life be of aid
to others.
In all things doing glory to your name.
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.

② Down in the River to Pray

Leader preparation: Singing hymns is a central part of Christian discipleship. In our hymns we hear the story of our faith and ways in which we are called to respond as disciples of Christ. Obtain a music recording of "Down in the River to Pray." Preview the YouTube videos and decide which videos—perhaps all—you will show to the group. The video with images of rivers is a good one to use as accompaniment when singing the song.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- copy of "Down in the River to Pray" lyrics for each person, <http://www.cowboylyrics.com/lyrics/krauss-alison/down-to-the-river-to-pray-1412.html>
- videos: "Down in the River to Pray," <http://www.cowboylyrics.com/lyrics/krauss-alison/down-to-the-river-to-pray-1412.html>, with images of rivers; "Down in the River to Pray," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSi77IVQdY&feature=related>, with images of river baptisms; "Down in the River to Pray," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_exx2shFqM, sung by a women's choir

Watch the YouTube videos you have chosen. Invite the group to reflect on the videos and the images in the videos. Ask them to share the feelings evoked by these videos. Give each person a copy of the lyrics, and invite them to sing along with the YouTube video "Down in the River to Pray" with images of rivers. Sing the song again with the following instructions.

- Have the women sing the parts mentioning sisters and mothers.
- Have the men sing the parts mentioning brothers and fathers.
- Have everyone sing when sinners are invited down to the river to pray.

Sing the song another time, if you wish, with the men singing for sisters and mothers, the women singing for brothers and fathers, and everyone singing for sinners. Conclude the singing by standing in a circle and giving each person a chance to pray for whatever is on his or her heart.

③ Sharing Our Gifts—Ritual and Practice of Tithing

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the practice and theology of tithing and offering in your faith community. Read Deuteronomy 26 for a scriptural view of tithing and the ritual actions one performs in making a tithe to God. Be prepared to talk about the practice in your community and wonder aloud with your young adults about ways to deepen the practice of tithing.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Invite the group to read Deuteronomy 26 silently. When all are finished, invite them to name the ritual actions performed in making an offering to God as described in this chapter. In what ways do these practices compare to what happens in a typical worship service in your community regarding the collecting and presenting of the offering to God? On newsprint or a whiteboard list the similarities and differences in the two rituals. Engage the participants in conversation using the following questions and record their responses.

- What are the fruits of your labors?
- What else might you give?
- How might you share the first fruits of your labors if you are a student or if you work at a job far removed from agriculture or manufacturing?
- How might you give of your time or talents to God and to neighbors in need?
- What other ways or practices might you suggest to deepen the spiritual experience of tithing?

Invite the young adults to choose something that has been discussed and make a commitment to try it for a period of time.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ My Faith Family Tree (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity can be helpful both for seekers and for those who have grown up in a faith community. It helps in visualizing one's place in a long line of faithful disciples and the impact on future disciples by one's choices. If you made your faith family tree in the Leader Preparation for this Exploration, have it on hand to share with the group. If available, use watercolors instead of markers for this activity.

Supplies:

- Bible
- 11" x 17" paper
- markers

Gather around a table with art supplies and paper handy. Tell the group that as disciples of Christ Jesus, faithful Christians have a long ancestry that can be traced in scripture back down through the centuries. Explain that as we follow Jesus, we are spiritual kindred to Moses and further back to Sarah and Abraham. Invite the group to use markers to draw a tree that includes a trunk, roots, and branches. Make the tree large enough to fill the whole paper. Have the group set their papers aside while you read the Bible passages.

Invite someone to read Deuteronomy 26:1-11 to the group. Invite the group to imagine that they were the ones who had made a harvest and brought their first fruits before God. Invite the participants to describe what this may have felt like. Invite them to recount God's mighty and awesome works in their lives and the life of your community. Invite volunteers to read to the end of Deuteronomy 26 to the group. Point out that giving God the first fruits is only the first half of an amazing ritual act of gratitude. Note that one must additionally provide from the bounty God has given to those in need. Explain that our gifts of gratitude to God connect us with others, as at times we may be the givers and at times we may be the receivers of God's bounty.

Have the participants retrieve their paintings and give them the following instructions to create their Faith Family Tree.



- Write your name high up the trunk of your tree with black markers.
- On the lower portion of the trunk and descending to the roots, write the names your faith family, whether they are family of origin, church family, or friends. Think about the people who nurtured you in the faith as you have grown.
- At the roots write "Jesus" and other figures from scripture or Christian history who have acted as teachers and guides to your discipleship.
- In the branches write the names of people to whom you serve as living witnesses to Christ or whom you help in their faith journeys. These may be younger siblings, peers at school or at work, your own children, and so forth.

When everyone is finished, read 1 Thessalonians 5:12–28 to the group. Invite someone to read verses 16–24 again. Point out that in both passages from Deuteronomy and 1 Thessalonians, there is testimony to a life in discipleship. Invite the group to reflect on the central actions of discipleship found in these two passages.

⑤ Fruits of the Spirit Picnic

Leader preparation: In this activity you will share a snack of fruit or meal together as a picnic. If you choose to have a meal, invite participants to bring a dish to share. Gather the fruits listed below and bring them to the picnic site. You will slice the fruit as the conversation unfolds. Decide whether you will hold your picnic indoors or outdoors and what arrangements need to be made. Obtain a music recording of "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters."

Supplies:

- Bible
- recording "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHEvIRiqBYo>
- music player
- copy of "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters" lyrics
http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/oleta_adams/wash_o_god_our_sons_and_daughters_lyrics.html
- fruits: lime, pineapple (or pineapple slices), apples, grapes, grapefruit, strawberries, kiwi fruit, and peach or pear
- basket
- cutting board and knife
- salad bowl
- small plates and forks
- picnic blankets
- (optional) tablecloth
- (optional) dishes to share from the participants

Meet at the picnic site and spread out the blankets, or put a cloth on a table. Place a cutting board in the center along with a basket of fruit. Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 26:1–11 to the group. Invite the participants to reflect on the first fruits offered to God in the scripture. Invite someone to read Galatians 5:22–23 to the group. Explain that Paul talks about the attitudes and actions that the Holy Spirit produces in people as fruits. Invite the group to have conversation about each fruit of the Spirit as you cut up a fruit and add it to the bowl for a fruit salad. Ask them consider each fruit of the Spirit and its role in their lives. Use the list below to guide your conversation.



- a lime for love (squeeze the lime juice over the salad at the end)
- Jonathan apples for joy
- a pear or a peach for peace
- a pineapple for patience
- a kiwi for kindness
- grapes for goodness
- Fuji apples for faithfulness
- grapefruit for gentleness
- strawberries for self-control

Invite the group to consider how one might offer the fruits of the Spirit in addition to the fruits of one's labors to God. Have a picnic with fruit salad and the dishes brought by the participants if you chose to have a meal. Conclude the picnic by singing "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters."

⑥ What's in Your Backpack?

Leader preparation: Invite the young adults to bring their own backpack, tote bag, book bag, or brief case and a few photographs of family and friends to the activity. Obtain the first seven items for each person and place in separate piles on a table. Cover each pile so it can't be seen. The last three items will be used by the group in this activity. You may want to ask your congregation or pastor to assist with purchasing or supplying the young adults with a psalter or paperback Bible, or with purchasing all the items that you will give to the young adults to carry with them in their faith journey. Invite an accompanist.

Supplies:

- psalter or lightweight paperback Bible for each person
- composition book and a ballpoint pen for each person
- small photograph album for each person
- package seeds for each person
- worship bulletin for each person
- small tin or envelope with slips of paper for each person
- small flashlight for each person
- digital camera
- photo printer and paper
- accompanist and piano
- hymnals

Invite participants to show their backpacks, tote bags, book bags, or brief cases and describe the contents. Ask them if these items are essential to their everyday life and routines. Ask what they might carry in a "faith" backpack, bag, or briefcase. Tell the group that their faith community wishes to support their journeys as disciples. Uncover the supplies and invite them to choose one of each item. Once they have gathered their items, gather them in a circle and share the following information about each item.

- The psalter has something to say about every season of life and faith from joys to sorrows and thanksgiving to grieving. The Bible is small and portable to take with them on a daily basis.
- The journal may be a place for them to record their requests for God's help, as well as thanksgiving for all that God does and is in their lives.
- The small photo album, in which they may place the pictures of family and friends they brought with them, may remind them they are not alone



- on their journey.
- The package of seeds may remind them that they are growing as disciples of Jesus
 - The worship bulletin may remind them of their faith community, who love them and are connected with their journey, as well as the importance of corporate worship.
 - The slips of paper in the tin or envelope are for writing down their prayer requests or recording the names of people for whom they will pray.
 - The flashlight may remind them that Christ is a light in the darkness and that they may be lights to others.

When everyone has filled his or her bag, take a group picture and make a print for each person to put in their photo albums to remind them of their fellow sojourners at this time on their journey. Hand out hymnals and invite the participants to choose hymns of praise or thanksgiving and sing together praising God.

Sending & Serving Activities



⑦ Partners in Prayer (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Christians have partnered together to pray for one another for centuries. Being a prayer partner is a way to nurture Christian friendship. This activity may serve as the beginning of prayer partnerships of variable lengths. It is recommended that each partnership covenant to pray for one another at least weekly over the course of a month. Each partnership will determine the frequency and duration. You may either match people up as partners by having them draw names from a basket, or you may allow them to form naturally.

Supplies:

- index card for each person
- pens

Tell the group that they will be forming prayer partners. Have the group divide into pairs either by drawing names at random or by allowing them to choose their own partners. Give everyone an index card and pen and have the pairs take time to trade contact information and preferred methods of contact. Give them time to converse about current prayer concerns in their lives. Ask each partner to make note of the concerns of the other on the index card. Ask each team to write a short covenant stating how often they will pray for one another (daily, weekly) and how they will contact each other to share their prayer needs (in person, e-mail, Facebook, texting). In addition to frequency, ask each group to name the duration of the partnership. A month is a recommended beginning length, although they need to know that, if they mutually agree, frequency and duration can be expanded. Invite the pairs to find a quiet space and pray for each other. Suggest that they might like to keep a journal about the experience.

8 Prayers in Times of Crisis

Leader preparation: While we may be fine ourselves, every day we hear about crimes and disasters. We pass scenes of car wrecks or see ambulances rushing to hospitals, lights flashing and sirens blaring. We may feel helpless or overwhelmed by the amount of daily need for healing and help in the world. The prayer described below invites one to pray in times of crisis and enhances one's prayer life along the lines of Paul's encouragement in 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24.

Supplies:

- Bible

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24 to the group. Ask them if they can imagine praying without ceasing or giving thanks in all circumstances. Invite them to practice praying continually in their daily life by silently praying for peace for people they pass in their day by saying the word "peace" silently in their minds. In place of "peace," they might think "joy," "hope," "salvation," "love," or "rebirth." Alternatively, suggest that they may pray for healing for people as they walk by people by envisioning them surrounded by the light of Christ. This prayer form is particularly helpful when passing scenes of disaster such as a car accident or news reports. Suggest that they envision healing or the peace of Christ being with victims and with the aid workers and police on the scene. Invite participants to practice this prayer by having them walk about the room randomly. Invite them to think a word of prayer for each of their fellow participants or to envision Christ's healing light surrounding each one. Encourage them to try this way of praying and to share their reflections about it either in person or via Facebook, Twitter, blogs, or other social media.

9 Praying without Ceasing—24 Hour Vigil Meet-up

Leader preparation: This activity may take place within your faith community and be entirely low tech using the supplies listed, or your young adults may decide to expand the participant base to your local community or further out in the world. The activity below is set up for the low-tech, local version. This vigil may happen at any season but works particularly well in the twenty-four hours of Good Friday or Saturday leading the group into the joy of Easter. Arrange to use a chapel or sanctuary for this time of prayer. In the weeks leading up to the prayer vigil you will need to enlist the help of six prayer captains who will each take a four-hour shift and make sure that those who are praying are safe (this is especially necessary for the overnight hours) and that supplies are available.

Other versions of the vigil: The vigil could be conducted in Second Life or via Facebook, with each person signing in to a page created for the group at their appointed hour. They would pray from home, entering traditional Christian prayers or prayers from scripture onto the page. Another alternative is to create a Meet-up on the Web and work with other young adult groups in other churches to meet up at a common site such as a park for a mass prayer service where a large group of people would gather to pray their prayers together.

Create a sign-up sheet with twenty-four one hour slots. Before the activity begins, the young adults will gather to prepare the space.



Supplies:

- sign-up sheet with twenty-four spaces marked hourly
- chapel or sanctuary
- table with table covering
- several chairs—comfortable chairs, if possible
- (optional) reading lamp
- Bibles, in various translations
- cross or other Christian symbols
- tissues
- paper and pens
- devotional materials such as books of prayers, devotionals, books of religious art, or photographs of nature
- candles and matches
- small clock
- water, coffee, tea
- cups
- six prayer captains
- meditative or spiritual music recordings
- music player

Invite the young adults to sign up to participate in a twenty-four hour prayer vigil. Explain that the group will gather together to set up the space, and then the twenty-four hours will begin. Tell the group that, as they come for the vigil, they may use the hour in prayer however they wish, explaining that there will be Bibles, devotional materials, paper and pens, and music available for their use. They may also choose to sit quietly or try different ways to pray. Point out what entrance to use and let them know who the prayer captains will be throughout the vigil.

Invite the group to gather together to set up the chapel or sanctuary for the prayer vigil about a half hour before the vigil is set to begin. Set up a table with several Bibles in various translations, paper and pens, devotional materials, candles and matches, a cross or other Christian symbols, and a box of tissues. On one sheet of paper, write the heading "Prayer Requests" and begin a list with several prayer concerns the group may have. Place a small clock where it is visible, but not distracting. Set up a reading lamp, if necessary. Provide one or two chairs—comfortable chairs, if possible. Set up a place for coffee, tea, or water. Gather the group together in a circle and offer a prayer for the vigil, the participants, and the volunteers who have given their time to be present throughout the vigil. Tell the group that as they come for their designated time, they should greet each other with these words: "The peace of Christ be with you."

Reflect

What are the fruits of your labors? Many of us make our living far from an agriculture or manufacturing environment. What then can we offer to God? Is money the only fruit we can offer? How might we live a faithful tithing life at work as well as in our church communities? How can we enact the practice of sharing with those in need in our workplaces and schools? How do we live so God can use us? How do we thank God for all that we have been given? Everything we have is a gift from God.



YOUNG ADULTS

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Young adults ages eighteen to thirty-five face a complex world of rapidly changing technology and changing rules and expectations as various institutions in education, government, finance, and health care struggle. Even religious institutions are grappling to speak a faithful relevant word to young adults in the midst of this change. Prayer practices and rituals, such as the Eucharist, communicate a sense of faith and hope. Participating in both prayer and ritual provides a solid foundation on which to stand in uncertain times.

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

Leader Preparation

"O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem; come and behold him, born the King of angels, O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord" may be a familiar traditional Christmas hymn. Christian traditions invite us, call us, herald us down the centuries to behold and adore Jesus. In so doing we take strength knowing that God became one of us and that Jesus empowers us to act with kindness, justice, and mercy, loving God and neighbor as ourselves. We know this in part because faithful disciples passed this knowledge down through generations. Listen to some hymns of Advent and Christmas as you prepare to guide young adults in experiencing and deepening their engagement with Christian traditions. Catch the joy expressed in the hymns of the birth of salvation so that you may transmit that joy to the young adults. While listening to the music, take time to read the Bible Focus Passages for this Exploration. Contemplate how we might be more just in our practices of communion and be even more daring in our work to feed the least and lost in our communities and around the globe.

You may wish to study the resources for Praying with a Rosary and the U2charist, as these may be the least familiar of the traditions lifted up in this Exploration.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



① The Jesus Prayer (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: In this activity, the young adults will hear the Jesus Prayer (the Lord's Prayer) in Matthew 6:9–13 read aloud from various versions, translations, and paraphrases of the Bible. Be prepared to have a conversation about the differences and similarities found in these different versions. Young adults will be invited to think about what words Jesus might use if he were sitting with them and teaching them to pray today.

Supplies:

- "The Lord's Prayer in Different Versions," Attachment: Activity 1
- paper
- pencils and pens

Give everyone a copy of the handout. Invite participant to take turns reading the different versions of the Jesus Prayer on the handout. Invite them to jot down particular words or phrases from the different versions that strike them as they listen to the readings. After all the readings, ask the participants to reflect on similarities and differences in versions. Ask the group to consider what, if anything, they would add to make the meaning more clear to people living in their context today. To put it another way, ask them how Jesus might instruct them to pray today. Invite the group to break into small groups of three or four people and write a contemporary version of the prayer. Conclude the activity by asking the groups to share their versions with everyone.

② Prayer in Hard Times

Leader preparation: Knowing stories of young people who are faithful to God in the face of injustice provides a reference point for young adults as they make decisions in their own lives. Read Daniel 6:1–28 and the "Story of Ruby Bridges." Note similarities in the character and action of both Daniel and Ruby. As you lead your group in reflecting on the similarities, they will be naming traditional faith practices that sustain one in times of injustice or hardship.

Supplies:

- Bibles, Contemporary English Version or New Revised Standard Version
- Internet access
- copy of "Story of Ruby Bridges," <http://www.rubybridges.com/story.htm>

Invite one or several participants to read the "Story of Ruby Bridges" and be ready to summarize the story for the group. Distribute Bibles and have the young adults read Daniel 6:1–28. When everyone has finished reading, invite the group to note similarities in the character and faith of each young person. Talk together about the injustices Daniel and Ruby faced and how their faith helped them. Ask the participants to name injustices they see in their own lives. Conclude with a group prayer created by the young adults in which they use their own words to call on God and name an injustice in their own context. Ask God to work with everyone involved and for God's strength to guide them, and then thank God for insisting on justice.



Conclude your time of reflection and study with a prayer of your own or this one:

*Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus,
the light of the world and rock of our
salvation.*

We know we have but to ask and he will

show us how to pray,

and we have but to seek and he will

show us

*how to live in a way that gives all glory
and honor to you,*

*while caring for the least and the lost in
creation.*

Send the Holy Spirit into our midst as I

and [name the young adults]

*pray and participate in traditional
rituals of Christian faith,*

that from such experiences we shall

move into the world

*able, ready, and joyfully willing to serve
the neighbors we have from you.*

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.

③ Praying the Rosary

Leader preparation: This activity will involve working with an Anglican Rosary and making a set of beads for the practice. The rosary is an old prayer tradition that engages the practitioner intimately with the life of Jesus. It is a Catholic practice, yet Protestants may also use beads in their prayer life. The Anglican Rosary may give the participants a sense of a connection with the divine and with faithful Christians down through the centuries. As you purchase the beads and cording, make sure the beads have holes large enough to thread the cording. Note that steps 2, 3, and 6 require the two strands of cording need to go through an Invitatory bead and two of the Cruciform beads.

Supplies:

- Internet access
- copy of Anglican Rosary for each person, <http://www.giftsoffaith.com/Files/ChristianPrayerBeads.pdf>
- twenty-nine beads of one color for each person
- four larger beads, with a cross on them, if possible, for each person
- one large bead, a different color than all other beads, for each person
- small cross charm with ring for each person
- cording for each person

Invite participants to make an Anglican Rosary using the following directions.

1. String the cording through the ring on the cross charm.
2. Bring both ends of the cording together evenly to go through the single large bead. This bead is called the Invitatory bead.
3. Thread the cording through one of the four beads. These are called Cruciform beads, as they will form a cross between the other beads.
4. Divide the cording and string seven of the beads on the right hand cord and seven of the beads on the left hand cord. These are called the Week beads.
5. After the seven Week beads on each side, place another Cruciform bead on each side, and then another seven Week beads.
6. Join both strands of cording together and thread them through the final Cruciform bead, knotting the cording together to tie off the prayer beads.

Invite participants to use the Anglican Rosary handout and practice with one of the traditional prayers listed.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ Psalm Write Now! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Calling on God for help and giving God thanksgiving are long-standing faith traditions. The Book of Psalms is a collection of prayers and songs. Prayer is a regular practice for people working for justice. You may want to share the story of Ruby Bridges from "Story of Ruby Bridges" (<http://www.rubybridges.com/story.htm>). When Ruby was only a child she prayed—in an extraordinary act of compassion—that God would help the people who were prejudiced against her, and her prayers helped her survive. The young adults will have an opportunity to compose their own psalm of lament asking for help, or psalm of thanksgiving in gratitude to God. Write the following elements of a lament psalm on a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard.



1. An address to God, calling on God by name, such as "My Rock!" "Creator," "Mighty One," and so forth
2. A description of suffering or the problem facing the psalm writer or her/his community
3. Cursing of the person, community, or institution responsible for suffering
4. Naming one's innocence, or admitting one's part in the problem
5. A plea for God to help
6. A statement of faith that God will listen to the plea
7. A statement about how one anticipates a response; for example, "I will wait faithfully for your answer, God!"
8. An exclamation of thanksgiving

Write the following the elements of a thanksgiving psalm on another sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard.

1. Introduction
2. State your intention to praise God.
3. Briefly name a time or situation where you asked God for help or felt God's presence.
4. Briefly describe how God helped or what that presence felt or looked like to you.
5. Tell the story more fully. Fill in the answer to these statements: "I cried/shouted/ prayed for help [name the situation]"; "God heard [me, my family, my community]", "God saved/helped/delivered [me/ us/ them]."
6. State how God helped.
7. Write a renewed promise to continue praising and thanking God.
8. Conclude with an exclamation of praise, such as "Hallelujah!" "Hosanna!" or "God is great!"

Supplies:

- Bibles, Contemporary English or New Revised Standard Version
- newsprint or whiteboard with elements of a lament psalm
- newsprint or whiteboard with elements of a thanksgiving psalm
- paper
- pens and pencils

Invite volunteers to read Psalm 34 and Psalm 111 to the group. Invite them to reflect on each psalm. Explain that psalms are part of a tradition of asking God for help or giving God praise. Among all the kinds of psalms, there are two common ones: a psalm of lament and a psalm of thanksgiving. Invite the participants to a time of writing their own psalm or in working in pairs to write one. Ask them to choose either a lament or a thanksgiving. Display the newsprint sheets or whiteboard with the elements of the lament psalm and the elements of a thanksgiving psalm to guide their writing. When all have finished, invite them to share the psalms with the group. Conclude the time by praying Psalm 34:1–10 together. You may want to ask the participants for permission to print their psalms in your community's bulletin or newsletter or on the website.



⑤ Paying Attention

Leader preparation: In this activity, you will invite the group to consider the abstract artwork “No Traveller’s Borne” by Jess. It is important as you facilitate this time to be open and intentional and not to rush. There are no right or wrong answers. This activity is about noticing and making meaning for one’s self. All the answers contribute to a greater understanding of the artwork. The link to Christian tradition is in the contemplative nature of the activity. God calls us to pay attention and do justice, and Jesus calls us to notice and care for the most vulnerable among us. Slowing down and taking time to observe emotions, people, objects, and events in our lives helps strengthen our ability to observe and take action with compassion when injustice occurs and to encourage one another to live faithful lives.

Supplies:

- Bible, Contemporary English or New Revised Standard Version
- artwork: “No Traveller’s Born” by Jess, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401
- talking stick—a stick decorated with ribbons tied to the end

Gather the group and invite them to stand in a circle and take time to breathe deeply. Tell the group that they are going to look at a picture and have a chance to talk about what they see. To give everyone a chance to be heard, introduce the talking stick. Explain that only the person holding the stick may speak. The stick is passed around until all have had a turn to speak. Invite the group to sit anywhere they like as long as they can see the picture. Ask them to put all their senses to work silently. After a moment of silence, engage the participants in conversation using the following questions.

- What do you think the image is about, or what is the story?
- Name two details from the picture. What colors, shapes, objects, or people do you see in the picture?
- What feelings does the picture evoke in you? How do you relate to the picture? Do you see yourself in the picture? Where? How?
- What is the meaning of this picture for you?

Finish the conversation by inviting all to reflect on what this work of art calls them to do as Christians even though it is not a work of art based on or created as a religious picture. Use the following questions, if necessary.

- Despite the secular origins of the picture, are you moved to prayer or a ritual by the picture?
- What does the picture inspire you to pray for?
- What kind of ritual might it call you to perform? Baptism? Eucharist?
- Does it remind you of a story in scripture?

Thank everyone for their attention and tell them that paying attention is a traditional practice. It opens their eyes to joys, concerns, and places to take action as well as opening their eyes to God’s presence among us. Conclude by praying Psalm 148 and giving thanks for a time to pay attention together.

**⑥ Hymn Sing**

Leader preparation: Singing our faith is as old as the psalms from the Jewish tradition. It has been an important part of Christian tradition beginning in scripture with Paul singing his faith while in prison in Acts. Three songs are suggested, but you may also include hymns from your community's hymnal and invite young adults to bring Christian songs they know.

Find musical accompaniment. There may be musicians in your group, your choir or music team may be available, or you may need to invite an accompanist.

Supplies:

- Bible, Contemporary English or New Revised Standard Version
- copies of the lyrics of these hymns: "Standing in the Need of Prayer" lyrics, http://www.scriptureandmusic.com/Music/Text_Files/Standing_In_The_Need_Of_Prayer.html; "Wash, O God, our Sons and Daughters" lyrics, <http://www.jusomelyrics.com/823745/Oleta-Adams-Wash,-O-God,-Our-Sons-%26-Daught-Lyrics>; "Down in the River to Pray" <http://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/obrotherwhereartthou/downtotheriverstopray.htm>
- hymnals
- musical accompaniment—from your own group, choir or music team, or an accompanist and piano

Gather in the sanctuary or choir practice room and explain the tradition of singing as an essential faith practice. Invite a volunteer to read Acts 16:20–31 to the group. Hand out the lyrics to the three suggested songs, and invite group to read the lyrics of each song and reflect on their meaning. Invite the group to share songs they like or choose songs from the hymnal. As they suggest a song, ask them to share what it means to them. You may want to take time to see if the young adults know how to use a hymnal to find songs using the index at the back of the book. Give God thanks in a prayer for the gift of music and singing as a source of strength for our journey as faithful Christian people.

Sending & Serving Activities**⑦ Taste and See That the Lord Is Good (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Christians eat together when they take communion. In Christian tradition and history, the faithful eat together and prepare community meals to feed those without food. Here young adults will celebrate God's gift of food by planning to prepare a simple meal to share with hungry people in the community. You can arrange either for the group to work at a local soup kitchen or another locale where a free community meal is served, or you can prepare a meal to serve. If you prepare a meal, young adults will then be involved in distributing or serving the food to people on the street or in a homeless shelter. You will need to make arrangements for a location ahead of time. Consider providing both durable and nonperishable foods. If you have access to a kitchen, you may consider making a hot meal with a hearty stew, bread, and fresh salad or vegetables instead of a sack lunch.

Supplies:

- Bible, Contemporary English or New Revised Standard Version



Read Psalm 34, where the psalmist calls us to taste and see the Lord is good, and Acts 2:43–47, where followers of Jesus eat together and share what they have with those in need. Invite the group to brainstorm ways that they might offer the gift of food somewhere in the community. They may suggest a homeless shelter, a veterans' facility, a local food pantry, or soup kitchen. Challenge the group to make a plan that includes a date, a place, a time, what food to take, what other supplies will be needed, how to prepare the food, and any other details that their plan might require. Establish a timeline and assign responsibilities. Who will make the site contacts? How will the project be funded?

Conclude with prayer, thanking God for the food and asking God to be with those in need.

⑧ Feed My Sheep

Leader preparation: Jesus calls all faithful people to feed his sheep—the least, lost, and those in need—both with real food and spiritual food. In this activity, young adults will have fun improving their own vocabularies and use technology to feed hungry people around the globe. The problems of poverty and hunger are real and serious. Yet Christ calls us to live joyfully because of our faith and to tackle problems out of that joy. Familiarize yourself with website Freerice.com. Note that you can change subjects and levels of challenge to make it more interesting for the young adults. You may want to invite participants to bring a laptop computer so that participants may form teams and play the games challenging one another.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- computer with Internet access, or several computer laptops
- digital projector
- website: Freerice, <http://freerice.com/>

Describe Jesus' command to feed people by having someone read John 21:15–17 to the group. Jesus also fed people in one of the few stories that is found in all four gospel stories. Invite the participants to read about Jesus feeding people in one of these gospel accounts: Matthew 14:13–21, Mark 6:31–44, Luke 9:10–17, or John 6:5–15. Explain that the tradition of feeding people began with God in Genesis and is carried out by Christ. As faithful people, we are called to do likewise. Invite the group to a fun easy way to follow Christ's example.

Show the group the website Freerice, or have participants form small groups at individual laptop computers and go to the web site www.freerice.com. If you are playing as a large group, choose a subject and challenge level and start gathering rice. If you have several teams, invite each group to form a team on the website and challenge one another to help hungry people.

Tell the group that for every correct answer, ten grains of rice are donated to hungry people. There are about forty-eight grains of rice in a gram and it takes about four hundred grams to make enough rice to feed one person two meals that include other ingredients for one day. This equals 19,200 grains. Play as long as time allows, but encourage everyone to see if they can make it to 19,200. Note how long it takes to give four hundred correct answers. Take breaks periodically to study the resources on the website from the United Nations that will help increase everyone's awareness about the issue of hunger and its victims.

The group may wish to brainstorm additional mission, prayers, and rituals that can be performed to end hunger both in their communities, nationally, and glob-



ally. Encourage the young adults to address the root causes of hunger and poverty and to think about ways to change the roots of the problem in addition to responding to the immediate need for food. Encourage the group in their planning and both to play the free rice game and to encourage others to do so as well using their access to Facebook, Twitter, instant messaging and texting, 2nd Life, and other social media. This activity helps young adults in using their digital media for good and shows how little time or effort are actually needed to think of others and to assist them with their needs.

⑨ U2Charist

Leader preparation: Print U2Charist article and familiarize yourself with this celebration of the Lord's Supper using the music of U2 in place of hymns and prayers. Make a copy for each person. Print "Yahweh" lyrics by U2. Make a copy for each person. Meet with the young adults to learn about the U2Charist and the ONE campaign to invite people to a life of justice work. Involve young adults in all aspects of this planning. Make sure they are leaders in the actual service leading prayers and being celebrants and or servers of the communion.

Supplies:

- worship bulletin for each person that includes a celebration of the Lord's Supper
- copy of U2Charist—Wikipedia for each person
<http://www.e4gr.org/u2charists/service.html>
- copy of The U2Charist for each person
<http://www.e4gr.org/u2charists/service.html>
- copy of The One Campaign for each person
http://act.one.org/sign/end_of_aids/source=%22splash%22
- copy of "Yahweh" lyrics for each person
<http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Yahweh-lyrics-U2/87C1BB5463F0EB8248256F20000624DA>

Distribute worship bulletins that include a celebration of the Lord's Supper and invite the participants to look at what takes place during this service of worship. Divide the group into three small groups, Give one small group copies of U2Charist—Wikipedia, give another small group copies of The U2Charist, and give the third small group copies of The ONE Campaign. Invite the groups to read their material and gather back together to share what they have learned. Explain that 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 adults 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 young adults, or the whole congregation. Distribute copies of "Yahweh" lyrics, a song by U2, and invite the youth to read the words aloud as a closing prayer.

Attachment: Activity 1

The Lord's Prayer in Different Versions

New Revised Standard Version

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

Contemporary English Version

Our Father in heaven, help us to honor your name. Come and set up your kingdom, so that everyone on earth will obey you, as you are obeyed in heaven. Give us our food for today. Forgive us for doing wrong, as we forgive others. Keep us from being tempted and protect us from evil.

King James Version

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

New International Version

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.

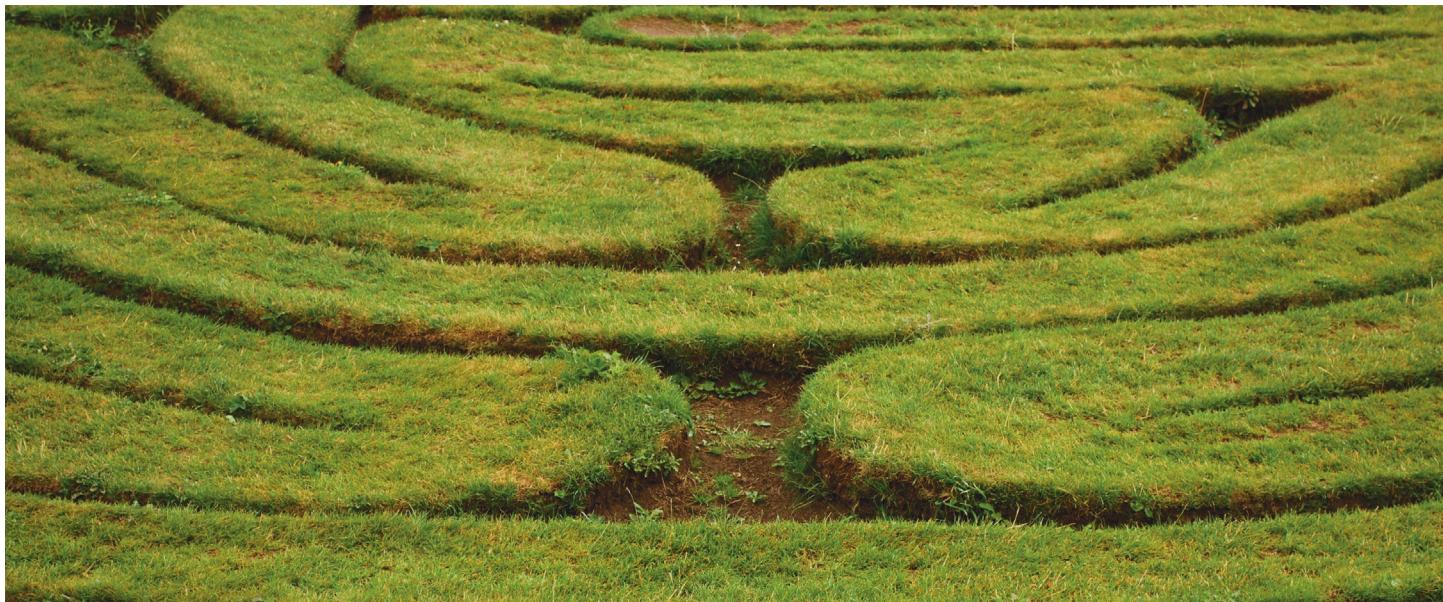
The Message

Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are. Set the world right; Do what's best—as above, so below. Keep us alive with three square meals. Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others. Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil. You're in charge! You can do anything you want! You're ablaze in beauty! Yes. Yes. Yes.



YOUNG ADULTS

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Born into a world of instant news and social media, young adults, ages eighteen to thirty-five, have more access to global affairs and may have traveled more widely in the world than older adults. In spite of access and travel opportunities, young adults in the West may need guidance to understand their ability to change lives through sharing from their resources and making lifestyle changes in step with their faith in Christ. Fueled by faith and its resources of prayer and ritual, young adults can do amazing things for God, neighbors, and all creation.

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, 12-27

Philippians 1:3-4

Leader Preparation

Spend time with the Bible passages. Context is a complex concept. We all exist in and are affected by multiple contexts, such as where we work, live, play, and worship, or where we were born, or our family configuration. Context shapes our experiences and attitudes. Context is so much a part of our everyday life that we do not always realize its implications. Context is often easier to see as existing for other people, and we assume our own context is normal or typical. For instance, in Christianity, the Western European understanding of church and Christ are assumed as normative by many in the United States. Yet Christianity in India predates Rome and Western Europe by centuries. Until recently people in the West assumed the Western views and faith traditions are correct and the Indian or Southeast Asian Christian practices were somehow "less than" the western norm. This view prohibits dynamic sharing among all God's people. It prevents Western Christians from having an expanded view of Christ and enriching faith. Such misunderstandings of context also make it possible to miss justice issues and to conduct charity projects for those who are "less fortunate" rather than working, praying, and worshiping alongside our brothers and sisters. When we are asleep to context, we are also prevented from receiving help and God's good news from distant shores. It assumes that we who have more possessions can only be givers and have no

Exploring & Engaging Activities



① Where in the World Is God? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Joel 2:1-2, 12-27. God is clearly in the midst of a land torn apart by war and is concerned for people, land, and animals caught up in the battle. Be aware of current events, including sites of great poverty, conflicts, wars, and natural disasters. Think about how the young adults in your group may move from asking for God to work only in their own lives to an active prayer life for all of God's creation.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) globe or world map
- map of your local community (often available in the local phone book)
- small self-adhesive note paper
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Invite volunteers to take turns reading Joel 2:1-2, 12-27 to the group. Ask the following questions.

- Where is God in the passage?
- If God is with people in times of conflict and has concern for all creatures, where is God active today?

Have someone locate your community on a globe or world map. Place sheets of self-adhesive note paper or dots or stick pins on places young adults can name where people or creation are facing conflicts such as war, poverty, or loss of habitat and resources either through natural or human created disasters. Write the location and the issue on the newsprint or whiteboard. If you don't have a map or globe, simply invite participants to name such locations.

Look also at a map of your local community and invite the participants to do the same thing with the self-adhesive note paper, identifying places that are troubled areas or places where people or creation are in need. Write these places and issues on the newsprint or whiteboard as well.

Invite the group into a time of prayer for peace, justice, and healing to come to all the places that have been named. Encourage the participants to take at least one of the note papers from your local community and one from the world with them to keep these places and issues in prayer.



② Tibetan Yellow Monks Using Prayer Wheels

Leader preparation: Look at the artwork "Yellow Monks Using Prayer Wheels" by Landor. When you facilitate time with the group as they look at the picture, be open, intentional, and try not to rush. This painting invites viewers to consider the prayer lives of people of another faith and context as well as contemplating one's own prayer practices. There are no right or wrong answers. Your group may have questions about the Yellow Monks and their prayer wheels upon viewing the picture. You may wish to visit the website "Prayer Wheels" for background information. If you have access to a Buddhist community, you may ask to borrow a prayer wheel to show to your group or arrange a visit to a Buddhist center or monastery to learn about this tradition and to view prayer wheels.



need ourselves of justice, healing, and wholeness.

Reflect on your context. Make a list of concrete details that describe you and your roles. Consider how you know what you know about the world. Who told you, or what authority guides your thinking? Consider the young adults with whom you will work in these activities. What are their contexts? How are they similar to or different from yours? Who in your town or neighborhood is poor or in need of aid? Who are the neighbors that Jesus calls you to love? What are their contexts? From whom can you receive gifts of faith? How can you all work together to address the root causes of need? What are your own needs for healing and justice? As you reflect, you may ask with the prophet Joel (Joel 2:1–2, 12–27) why people should wonder where God is located. In this Exploration you and your young adults will have opportunities to move beyond your own context to mission with people outside your community. Pray continuously and with joy as you go, as Paul describes in Philippians 1:3–4. Conclude your preparations with a prayer of your own or with this one:

*God of all creation,
you made yourself visible to us in
the life, death, and resurrection of
Christ Jesus.
Help me and [name each young adult
in your group]
to keep your love visible in the world
as we engage in mission with our broth-
ers and sisters of all faiths,
here at home and around the world,
to help all creatures in need
by sharing out of the abundance you
provide.
Amen.*

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: "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>
- talking stick—a stick decorated with ribbons tied to the end
- (optional) *Wheel of Great Compassion: The Practice of the Prayer Wheel in Tibetan Buddhism* (ed. Lorne Ladner, Wisdom Publications, © 2001, ISBN-13: 978-0861711741)
- (optional) computer with Internet access
- (optional) digital projector
- (optional) website: "Prayer Wheels"
<http://www.dharma-haven.org/tibetan/prayer-wheel.htm>
- (optional) prayer wheel or visit to Buddhist center

Gather the group and have them stand in a circle. Pause and invite them to breathe deeply. Allow time for several deep breaths. Tell the group that they are going to look at a picture and have a chance to talk about what they see. To give everyone a chance to be heard, introduce the talking stick. Explain that only the person holding the stick may speak. The stick is passed around until all have had a turn to speak. Invite everyone to sit anywhere they like as long as they can see the picture. Ask them to put all their senses to work silently. After a moment of silence, engage the participants in conversation using the following questions.

- What is the image about, or what is the story?
- Name two details from the picture. What colors, shapes, objects or people do you see in the picture?
- What feelings does the picture evoke in you? What feelings are displayed by the people in the picture?
- How do you relate to the picture? Where do you see yourself in the picture?

Explain how the prayer wheel works. The prayer wheel, called a "mani" in Tibet, is inscribed with a mantra or prayer and will have the same prayer written on a slip of paper that fits in the interior of the wheel. By rotating the wheel clockwise and saying the mantra aloud or reading it, one increases the call for the blessings of an entity called Chenrezig, who is the embodiment of compassion. The traditional Tibetan mantra is transcribed into the English alphabet as "Om Mani Padme Hum." It is not possible to provide a word-for-word translation of these sounds. It is said that all the teachings of the Buddha are contained in these six syllables. In a like manner, Jesus tells his disciple that the whole of God's commandments can be summed up in the commandment to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself. Invite the group to reflect about what this work of art calls them to do as Christians. Ask them how praying with a wheel might enhance one's practice of prayer. Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 22:34–40 to the group. Consider what scripture, in addition to this one, might make a fitting prayer to inscribe on a Christian prayer wheel. Invite the group into a time of prayer using some of the suggested scriptures and giving thanks for this time to learn about spiritual practices from a tradition outside of one's own.



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.

③ Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with your faith community's understanding and practice of baptism. You may wish to use this activity with Activities 6 and 9 in this Exploration to explore the call of Christ from baptism to mission. Obtain a music recording of "Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters" (tune: Beach Spring), or invite an accompanist. Consider singing this song at a baptism in your community.

Supplies:

- copy of "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters" (tune: Beach Spring), lyrics: <http://www.jusomelyrics.com/823745/Oleta-Adams-Wash,-O-God,-Our-Sons-%26-Daught-Lyrics>
- music recording of "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters"
- music player
- basin and pitcher of water
- towels

Give each person a copy of song lyrics (check to see if this hymn is in your congregation's hymnal), and invite them to read the words of this song. Invite them to consider the images it contains for elements of prayer and ritual. Invite them to talk about baptism and its significance as a dying to a life without God and being born into a life with Christ as a disciple. Pour water from the pitcher into basin, and invite all participants to come forward, dip their hands in the basin, and recall a baptism (either theirs or someone else's), or ask for God's blessing on their faith journey as they consider baptism. Sing this hymn as a group.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ Interfaith and Ecumenical Field Trips (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The word "ecumenical" implies a committed relationship among various Christian faith communities. The term "interfaith" is used to describe relations among Christians and people of other faiths. In this activity you will plan visits to worship with another faith tradition and another Christian denomination.

If it's possible to carry out your plan, contact the leader of these places of worship in advance and ask when it might be a good time to visit and worship with their faith community. Ask if it might be possible to have a tour of the place of worship and hear about some of their important rituals and symbols of their faith tradition. Gather information about the sites you will visit. Plan to have coffee or lunch together following each visit so you can debrief with the group. Follow up with thank-you notes to the various people who welcome you to their place of worship.

Supplies:

- local phone book yellow pages
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- (optional) *How to Be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook* (Fifth Edition by Stuart M. Matlins and Arthur Magida, © 2010, Skylight Paths Publication, ISBN-13: 978-1594732942)



Look in the phone book yellow pages under Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, and Religious Organizations to identify places of worship in your community. On the newsprint or whiteboard invite the group to list questions they might have about worship settings other than their own. This is an opportunity to affirm some of the rituals and traditions of your own setting as participants think about what rituals and traditions might be different in other settings.

Have the group decide together on three places of worship where they might visit. Ask for volunteers to make contacts with these places on behalf of the group. Choose a time that would be convenient for most of the group to go for a visit. Remember that the Jewish Sabbath (shabbat) is from sundown on Friday to sundown Saturday. Jewish people go to synagogue (sometimes called temple) for worship services during that time. On Friday, Muslims are expected to pray at mosque; all other days of the week Muslims may pray in private. People who are not Muslim are often not allowed in a mosque.

If you plan to visit one of the sites, you will need to do research on what is appropriate attire. Those who make the contact will need to find out this information.

Provide any background information you have gathered about the places you will be visiting. If you obtained the book *How To Be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook*, share insights from the book as well.

After you have visited and participated in worship, meet with the young adults for coffee or lunch and debrief your experience together. Invite them to comment on the similarities and differences with their own prayer and ritual worship experience they notice. What did they see or do that excited them? What questions did the experience raise that they would like to pursue? Conclude with a prayer for peace among faiths and thanksgiving for this worship experience.

5 What's in Your Wallet/Purse?

Leader preparation: In this activity, you and your young adults will consider how spare change often taken for granted in our lives can actually change the lives of those in need. Explore the websites listed below and familiarize yourself with the needs they address and their programs for investing.

Supplies:

- copy of Global Village: State of the Village—100 people (http://www.geography-site.co.uk/pages/citizenship/global_village.html) or State of the Village—1000 people (http://www.sustainer.org/dhm_archive/index.php?display_article=vn338villageed) for each person
- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- website: Heifer International
<https://secure1.heifer.org/gift-catalog>
- website: Habitat for Humanity
<http://www.habitat.org/default.aspx?tgs=NC8zLzIwMTIgMTE6Mzg6MTUgUE0%3d>
- website: MicroPlace (micro loan investment)
<https://www.microplace.com/>
- website: MyC4 (micro loan investment), <http://myc4.com/>
- website: Kiva (micro loan investment), <http://www.kiva.org/>

Ask the young adults to take the change out of their pockets, wallets, or purses and put it on the table in front of them. If they have spare change in their pocket,



they are among the top 8 percent of the wealthiest people in the world. (Source: Global Village: State of the Village—100 people based on an original report about population, environment, and sustainability created by the American environmental scientist Donella Meadows in 1990 State of the Village—1000 people.) Give participants a copy of the handout and invite them to read it. Explain that these figures provide an understandable way to think about global issues of economics, environment, and population. Have the group add up all the change on the table and imagine what it might buy at a store in the United States. Go to one, or all, of the following websites: Heifer International, Habitat for Humanity, MicroPlace (micro loan investment), MyC4 (micro loan investment), and Kiva (micro loan investment) and explore the opportunities to do a lot with a little. Determine how the spare change might be used to support one of these projects or a mission project of your community. If the group agrees, donate the spare change.



⑥ The Baptism of Christ

Leader preparation: Only recently is artwork being created that challenges Caucasian Western images of Christ as a white man with blond or brown hair and blue eyes. This image, long considered normal or correct, is not the only way to literally or metaphorically imagine Christ. The art under consideration in this activity shows Jesus at his baptism from one African American artist's context. You and the participants in your group may relate directly to this context, or this may be an entirely fresh view of Jesus. Consider how this picture calls you to new ways of thinking and being, as baptism asks you to die to your life and old ways and to take up a new life in Christ.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: "Baptism of Christ" by Pheoris West,
https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401
- a computer with Internet access
- a digital projector

Gather with your young adults to consider baptism and how this ritual calls us from our old life to a new life in Christ. Invite them to consider what we are to leave behind in the water and what attitudes and actions we are to cultivate after we come out of the water. Draw the group's attention to the artwork "Baptism of Christ" by Pheoris West and take time to study the picture. Ask them to put all their senses to work silently. After a few moments, engage the young adults in a conversation using the following questions.

- What is the image about or what is the story?
- Name two details from the picture—what colors, shapes, objects do you notice?
- What feeling does this picture evoke? Name the feelings and/or describe the feelings of the persons in the picture.
- How do you relate to the picture? Where do you see yourself in the picture? How?

Invite a volunteer to read the story of Jesus' baptism from Matthew 3:13–17 to the group. What elements of scripture do you see in West's work, and what is different? If seeing Jesus portrayed as an African person is new for your group, invite them to consider cultural and racial context as intrinsic to one's worldview, but also as something that can be a barrier to really seeing Christ in another person or culture.



Sending & Serving Activities



7 Water for All (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Water is an important symbol and element in Christian life. Jesus refers to himself as living water and as Christians we participate in the ritual bath of baptism to symbolize our movement from life without Christ to a life lived with and as a disciple of Christ. For much of the world access to clean or living water is literally nonexistent or available only at great cost of time, labor, and money. This activity invites young adults to be educated about this issue and to work in mission to ensure actual water is available for all who are thirsty in the name of Christ our living water. Familiarize yourself with the resources at Water for All if you plan to use that part of this activity.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) computer with Internet access with DVD
- (optional) digital projector
- (optional) website: Water for All, <http://globalministries.org/water/>
- (optional) *Troubled Waters* DVD documentary, available at United Church of Christ video store, <http://www.ucc.org/classifieds/ucc-video-store.html>
- sharing of time, talent, and treasure

Invite volunteers to read aloud the three scripture passages: John 4:1–15, John 7:37–39, and Matthew 25:31–46. Consider the water images and images of thirst in these passages. Ask the group what they think we are called to do by Christ about water based on these texts. Invite them to discuss what actions they could take and what actions they should refrain from in order to ensure all have access to good clean water to sustain life.

If available, invite the group to explore the resources at the website Water for All. Depending on the group's interest, you could plan activities to educate your faith community, plan worship to reflect on this issue, or choose a particular activity to do to raise awareness and to partner with a group in need.

8 Micro Loan Mission

Leader preparation: Explore the website Kiva so that you will be able to guide the young adults through the activity. Create an account for the group. You will need to start your account with least \$25.00 to fund the loan. This can come from church funds or by asking each young adult to make a donation.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- account at Kiva funded with at least \$25.00, <http://www.kiva.org/>
- printer and paper

Tell the group that many countries do not have the financial blessings that we experience every day. Explain that it is difficult for people to make a living, and getting a loan to start or expand a business is rare. Some organizations are trying to help people in less developed countries get the resources they need to make their dreams come true. Kiva is an organization that loans money, but charges no interest. Actually, they loan other people's money. When you give a loan with Kiva, you help people who need lots of help, and when they repay their loan, you get to loan it again to someone else. Tell the group that you have begun an ac-



count with Kiva for the group and they will get to make a loan. They will choose a recipient for their loan.

Go to Kiva and invite the young adults to explore the different profiles. Explore what criteria will they use to choose a recipient of their loan. Once they have chosen a recipient, print that person's profile and post it in your gathering space so that the group can keep that person in prayer. Have the group write a prayer for their recipient to post under the picture. This activity can be repeated as the loan is repaid.

⑨ Stations of the Cross Walk

Leader preparation: Taking a pilgrimage to holy sites is an ancient tradition in many faiths. One classic pilgrimage for Christians is to go to Jerusalem and walk the path of Jesus as he was sent to death on the cross. This local variation invites participants to walk with Jesus and to see Jesus in their own context. This activity may occur at any time, but is particularly suited for Lent or Good Friday and may become a new ritual for your community. To find out about Stations of the Cross, read information on the website The Voice. Use the eight stations mentioned on the website under "Protestant Devotion and the Stations of the Cross." Consider the stations of the cross and your local community. Identity eight places where significant and/or ordinary events have taken place in the neighborhood surrounding your church. Use the "A Service of Stations of the Cross" for the scripture passages and any of the other elements of worship you would like to use. Write a brief description of the event or meaning of the place in the community as a site of healing, gathering, or as a source of pain or injustice. Pair each of eight places with a station of the cross. If possible, design the route to begin and end at your church. Invite young adults from all churches in the area and/or participants of any age to join your group on the cross walk.

Reflect

How do we move from a one-way mission attitude in which whoever has more money or power is the giver of all things, helping the poor, to a mission attitude that respects both those in need and those who have resources to help? Christ raised up people and empowered them to use their faith to heal themselves and their communities. He did not provide the bread and fish in the feeding stories; rather, he aided the disciples and the hungry to work together to feed one another. In this way both sides kept their dignity and could become one community. This is not a reason to be stingy or withhold resources if we have them. Rather than come with all the answers, it is about learning about context and listening to needs and solutions offered by the persons in need. This is followed by working together to improve immediate needs and to remove or change systems that created the need in the first place. Where are you on the spectrum of understanding about mission? Where is your faith community or the young adults whom you are leading on this issue?

Supplies:

- Bibles or copies of "A Service of Stations of the Cross," <http://www.crvoice.org/stations.html>
- eight "stations" for your cross walk and brief descriptions of each place

On the appointed day, gather with young adults and others who wish to participate to walk the stations of cross. At each place pause for a time to read about the place, to meditate on the meaning of the place or the events that transpired there, and to hear the scripture pertaining to the station. Move on until all the stations are completed. Invite everyone to conclude with silent meditation and/or prayers for healing and justice in the area and to leave in silence.



YOUNG ADULTS

Praying and Making Ritual



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group or Setting

Young adults ages eighteen to thirty-five look at both their present and future and wish to distinguish themselves and their lives from the personhood and lives of their parents. They are conditioned to expect, if not to embrace, a rapid changing environment at work and in social settings. However, without wisdom from their parents and other faithful people in their lives, the faith life of a young adult may founder on all the choices available to them. Grounding in present practices of prayer and ritual can prepare young adults to build new practices to address current realities and to grow into a future in which God's justice reigns supremely.

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

Find a quiet place in which to read the Bible Focus Passages for this Exploration. Read all of 2 Samuel 7 to put King David's prayer in 2 Samuel 7:18–29 into context. What bubbles up for you from the words and actions described in each passage as it might relate to the idea of future and vision? Do you hear in David's story, in addition to praise to God, the passing of the torch of responsibility from a father to a son? Do you hear that God understands that for everything and everyone there is a season? Some things and people must pass away in order for new life and new ways to be born and grow. How might this relate to you and your young adults? What wisdom about faith can you share with them? When is it time to let them demonstrate what they have learned and show you new ways to pray and make rituals that mark a relationship between humans and God? Consider ways to share leadership in all the activities for this Exploration. Invite the young adults to teach you new ways and to share their ideas.

Next read Philemon 1:1–9, in which Paul writes of the power of sharing the gospel and of love. Read further to see that Paul is asking Philemon to accept back into his household a slave named Onesimus, still a slave but now also a Christian. Slavery was a fact of life in Paul's world, and yet to leave Onesimus in chains seems antithetical to

Exploring & Engaging Activities



① Wilderness Transformation (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: It can be helpful for your group to know that before Jesus began his public ministry, he was a young adult. He was in a wilderness and faced temptations. The group will have the opportunity to think creatively about Jesus' thoughts and feelings at this time in his life. As young adults assume more responsibility in church and begin to catch fire for God's vision of shalom and a future of peace and justice, this activity may help them remember that Jesus has been in their place.

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper
- pens

Gather at tables with paper, pen, and Bible set at each place. Invite everyone turn to Matthew 4:1–11 and listen as the passage is read aloud. Ask the participants to consider what words in this passage give us a clue to Jesus' thoughts or feelings in this time. Tell your group that Jesus is a young adult at this time in his life. He is facing a great task. He will be a teacher, healer, and savior. He will give his life for his friends and for all of us. He had to start somewhere on his amazing journey from young person to Messiah. Read the wilderness account in Mark 1:12–13; then read it again in Luke 4:1–13. Engage the group in conversation using the following questions.

- What were Jesus' responses to temptations?
- What are the tasks and journeys you face?
- What might temptation look like to you?

Invite everyone to draw a simple scene of a wilderness on their papers. The picture does not have to be elaborate. At the top of the scene, have them write "Jesus" in bold letters and the phrase "into the wilderness." Under their pictures, have them write "out of the wilderness" and then the word "Christ" in bold letters. Now have them listen to Matthew 4:1–11 again. Tell them that Jesus spent forty days alone in the wilderness to prepare for his work. In the center of their picture invite them to write at least two things Jesus did in the wilderness, at least two things he might have been thinking at the time, and at least two things he might have felt. When the participants have finished, explain that they have written a poem that begins with "Jesus, into the wilderness . . ." and ends with "out of the wilderness, Christ." Invite all to share their poems.

② What Time Is It?

Leader preparation: In order to imagine the future, it can be useful to know what time it is in the present. Christians live and work with a secular calendar in most areas of their lives, but we are really guided by the liturgical calendar. Familiarize yourself with The Liturgical Calendar. Cut an 8" circle out of poster board for each person.

Paul's teaching that we are all one in Christ.

Consider the young adults in your group. Choose a scripture verse or passage for each one that will provide encouragement or inspiration for each one's faith journey. Plan to distribute the verses at the end of this Exploration as a sharing in the love of Christ from one generation to another or from peer to peer.

Conclude your preparation time with a prayer of your own or this one:

*Come, Lord Jesus,
Come and bring your holy realm near.
Lead me and [name the young adults]
in paths of justice and peace.
Bless us with wisdom
and compassion.
Help us make your love visible in the
here and now.
We ask this in your holy name,
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 & Engaging," at least one from "Discerning & Deciding," and at least one from "Sending & 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.

Supplies:

- copy of The Liturgical Calendar for each person, <http://www.acr-nh.org/churchyear.html>
- 8" poster board circle for each person
- green, red, and purple (yellow or gold, optional) markers for each person
- black permanent marker for each person

Give each person a copy of The Liturgical Calendar and explain the liturgical calendar to the participants. Give them the 8" circles and markers and invite them to create their own liturgical calendar wheel. On their calendar wheels have them indicate their personal significant milestones, such as birth, graduation, marriage, birth of children, and so forth, so that they can see when in the liturgical year these events occurred. Invite the participants to share their wheels with one another. Have them reflect on the significance of rhythms of the church year.

③ Down in the River to Pray—Liturgical Dance

Leader preparation: Liturgical dance is a wonderful Christian practice that uses one's whole body to express prayers or passages from scripture with movement and grace. The fantastic thing about this form of praise and prayer is that one need not have a "perfect" body or years of training. What is important is an attitude of prayer and praise to God. Watch the YouTube videos "Down in the River to Pray"—images of river baptisms; and "Down in the River to Pray"—images of rivers.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- YouTube video: "Down in the River to Pray"—images of river baptisms <http://www.acr-nh.org/churchyear.html>
- YouTube video: "Down in the River to Pray"—images of rivers <http://www.acr-nh.org/churchyear.html>

Tell the group that they are going to see two videos, both of the song "Down in the River to Pray." One video has images of rivers and nature, and the other video shows communities coming together to pray, study the ways of God, and go into the river to receive baptism and blessing. Show the videos. After watching the videos, brainstorm ways to reenact the words and feelings of this song through dance. First, invite the participants to either stand or sit with space between them. Have them close their eyes. As they listen to the music, encourage them to let their bodies sway, flow, or respond like a river. They are welcome to move as the song moves them. After hearing the music and moving, invite them to open their eyes. Have those who are willing describe this experience.

Then have the young adults create a group choreography. Play the videos again as accompaniment as they practice the dance. Encourage everyone to participate in this activity and do so with wonder and joy. If possible, share the dance in worship on a baptism Sunday, All Saints Day, or in ordinary time.

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

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ Scripture Talk Back—Set Onesimus Free (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Philemon 1:1–9, in which Paul writes of the power of sharing the gospel and of love. Read further to see that Paul is asking Philemon to accept back into his household a slave named Onesimus, still a slave but now also a Christian. Slavery was a fact of life in Paul’s world and yet to leave Onesimus in chains seems antithetical to Paul’s teaching that we are all one in Christ. In this activity, young adults will have the chance to question scripture and to name places or practices that they find challenging or that feels out of step with the present.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite the participants to take turns reading the entire letter of Paul to Philemon. Explain that though there is an indication that Onesimus has converted to Christianity by choice, he is still a slave. It may feel wrong that Paul does not address the role of Onesimus as a slave. However, hold that in tension with what Paul wrote to the church in Galatia (Galatians 3:26–28). Initiate conversation about the nature of Onesimus’ relationship to Philemon. Ask the participants what other passages they can think of that do not seem relevant to this time and place. Ask them who they think are the “Onesimus” of their generation. Have them consider what it would take to champion these people and to help them find freedom. Conclude the activity with a reading of Luke 4:16–19. Discuss this vision of Jesus’ ministry and the kind of future we might have today if we work to make the vision a reality.

⑤ Making Time for God

Leader preparation: Read Deuteronomy 6:1–9, Psalm 1, and Luke 4:16–19. Download and make a copy for each participant of the weekly calendar found at [http://www.samplewords.com/weekly-calendar/Weekly Calendar](http://www.samplewords.com/weekly-calendar/Weekly%20Calendar).

Supplies:

- Bible
- two copies of a weekly calendar template for each person
- blank paper
- colored pens

Give everyone a weekly calendar template and invite each to write his or her typical daily schedule. While the periods may remind them of high school, note that a period could be part of the day such as 9:00–12:00 pm or 2:00–4:00 pm. Explain that it does not have to be too precise, but it should list common activities such as time at school or work, meals, leisure activities, time on the computer or television or with other social media that is not work- or school-related, and the like. Have them set aside their calendars. Invite volunteers to read Deuteronomy 6:1–9, Psalm 1, and Luke 4:16–19.

Have them return to their weekly calendars and consider the following questions.



- When in your schedules are you making time for God? If there is none, when do you think you could make time for this?
- When do you have time in prayer, time spent in contemplation of scripture, or time in fellowship with other Christians? If there is none, when do you think you could make time for this?
- When do you have time set aside in which you engage in work described by Jesus in Luke 4:16–19? If there is none, when do you think you could make room for this?
- What activities can be purposely let go to make more room for God?
- When can you change the activities you are doing, or the way you are doing them, to engage in activities that bring God's realm to fruition on earth?

Give the participants another weekly calendar template and invite them to rewrite their weekly schedules. Suggest that they use different colors to indicate work, home, or school activities, as well as a separate color to mark time spent with God in worship, prayer, or other activities related to developing discipleship. Gather the new calendars and ask God's blessing on the intentions written on the calendars, seeking strength to follow through with these commitments. Return the calendars to each person and ask people to pair up to help keep everyone accountable and to promote Christian friendship.

Guatemala: Processions

Leader preparation: Study the picture "Guatemala: Processions" and reflect on the questions listed in the activity description. It is important as you facilitate this time to be open and intentional and not to rush. There are no right or wrong answers for participants to give. This exercise is about noticing and making meaning for one's self. All the answers contribute to a greater understanding of the work. After studying the picture, there will be an opportunity to create a procession and to participate in it. Give young adults the lead in the design of this holy parade.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: "Guatemala: Processions" by Betty LaDuke, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401
- maracas, gourd rattles, rain sticks, or other rhythm instruments
- long taper candles
- matches or a lighter
- fabric or scarves of various colors
- hymnals

Invite the group to sit anywhere they like as long as they can see the artwork "Guatemala: Processions" by Betty LaDuke. Ask them to put all their senses to work silently. After a few moments, engage them in conversation about the picture using these or similar questions.

- What is the image about or what is the story?
- Name two details from the picture. What colors, shapes, or objects do you see in the picture?
- What feelings does the picture evoke in you?
- How do you relate to the picture? Do you see yourself in the picture? Where? How?



- What meaning do you think the picture has?
- What do you think this work of art calls us to do? Are you moved to justice, compassion, to make a ritual, to say a prayer?

Tell the group that the title of the work gives no indication about the specific nature of this procession. What elements in the picture remind them of a scripture passage or a life of faith, or might indicate religious content? Invite volunteers to take turns reading Luke 2:1–21 and Luke 19:28–40 to the group. Afterward, ask them if there were parts of either passage that reminded them of the picture. Invite them to create a procession using either Mary's travel to Bethlehem or Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem as the setting. Give them the musical instruments, scarves or fabric, candles, and hymnals to use as they choose. After some time creating the procession, have the group actually process.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 An Encouraging Word (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Paul writes letters to individuals and to whole congregations. He always makes sure to give an encouraging word to the faithful even when he has to correct some of their ways. In this activity each young adult will receive a letter of encouragement for his or her development as a disciple. Write the following on a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard:

- [the current date]
- To [blank], a beloved [sister/brother] in Christ. Grace to you and peace from God and Christ Jesus. When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank God because:

Supplies:

- Bible
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard
- lined paper or church letterhead paper for each person
- selection of colored pens
- envelopes
- stamps

Invite someone to read Philemon 1:1–7 to the group. Talk about how Paul gives praise for the action of Philemon with regard to his practice of faith. Give each person a piece of paper or stationery. Draw the group's attention to the newsprint or whiteboard and invite them to write a letter format on their paper using the template as a guide. Have them write the current date at the top of their papers and insert a name in the blank, and then "sister" or "brother," as appropriate.

Once the stationery is ready, have each person pass the letter to the person on his or her right. Instruct everyone to write one action or attribute of the person named in the salutation that would celebrate or encourage that person as a person of faith. Continue passing the stationery and writing until everyone has had a chance to write on all the papers. Give thanks at the end of the time for their work encouraging one another. Give the participants envelopes and have them place their letters in envelopes without looking at the content of the letters. Instruct them to address the envelopes to themselves and tell them that you will mail them in a few weeks to provide encouraging words. Be sure and mail the letters!

⑧ New Traditions—Young Adult Sunday

Leader preparation: Although sometimes it can seem like rituals and prayers are set in stone, in reality the church is ever changing and responding to the needs of faithful people in new times and places around the world. Youth Sunday is a long-time fixture in many churches. Now it is time for your young adults to claim a Sunday of their own. Work with your pastor and worship team and the group to find a Sunday in which young adults will plan and serve in worship. If a Sunday morning worship service is not possible, choose another time or reason to have a worship service. This may be a time different from the regularly scheduled worship services, or it might be a liturgical occasion for a worship service.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- hymnals
- worship planning resources
- copy of the worship bulletin for each person

Upon determining a service for which the young adults may plan and lead worship, invite the group to plan the worship service. Have them figure out what tasks need to be accomplished in planning and leading a worship service. If necessary, remind them that they need to plan the order of worship (looking at a copy of a worship bulletin may help), prayers, music, scripture, and preaching. As they consider prayers and other elements, ask them to examine language and practices to see if they wish to bring a new perspective to rituals of worship. Carry out the plan and celebrate together in worship.

⑨ Taizé Worship

Leader preparation: Taizé [tie-zay] is a special form of worship that originated with the Taizé Community in France. It is led by an ecumenical community of Catholic and Protestant monks. Brother Roger, the founder of Taizé, believed in the power of young people and in helping them to follow Christ in their whole lives. He made a place for youth from all countries to come and worship together. These gatherings are true examples of the global household of God. The worship style is very simple and involves using easy-to-learn repetitive chants and songs to enter into a meditative state of worship. You may read more about Taizé at the website Taize. Brother Roger's prayers are available in book form, and recordings of Taizé music are readily available for purchase and download.

This activity will take at least two sessions. In the first session you will introduce the group to the Taize worship and explore the website Taize, particularly "Prayer and Song" and "Preparing a Time of Prayer" to plan a worship service. You will work with the young adults to design a simple Taizé service of singing, silence, and prayer. You may need planning sessions in between this first session and the Taizé worship to design the service, including the setup of the worship space and practicing the chants. The final session will be the Taizé service. Working together in worship is what sustains those who work to bring God's realm of justice near now and in the future.



Supplies:

- Bibles
- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- website: Taize, <http://www.taize.fr/en>
- website: "Prayer and Song," http://www.taize.fr/en_rubrique12.html
- website: "Preparing a Time of Prayer"
http://www.taize.fr/en_article337.html
- music recordings of Taizé songs and chants
- music player
- candles
- matches or lighter
- communion table, cross, or other Christian symbols

Tell the young adults about Brother Roger and his mission and the work of Taizé. Invite someone to read Ephesians 2:11–22 to the group. Explain, if necessary, that this passage suggests that we are called to be united in Christ with all other believers from around the world. Brother Roger believed this with all his heart and started youth worship services to foster this attitude of unity and dedication to peace and justice.

Invite the group to explore the website Taize to learn more about this type of worship experience. Look particularly at "Prayer and Song" and "Preparing a Time of Prayer" when you are ready to play your Taizé worship. Have the young adults plan and publicize the Taizé worship either within your congregation or to the wider community. Have the group set up and lead the Taizé worship.

Reflect

How did sharing leadership change your experience of this resource? What did it feel like to relinquish power and live in a place of shared authority and decision making? How is this like the experience of the first Christians at Pentecost and the call of the prophets to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God? How do you imagine God's vision of shalom and the promise of God's realm come near and yet not fully realized until a future time? Give thanks for the young adults with whom you have traveled in this Exploration and ask God to be with them as they live into a future you may not be able to imagine.