



Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Intergenerational

About this Setting

A strength of worshipping communities is that they are usually intergenerational. Babies through grandmas and grandpas praise God, serve together, and read the Bible. This is a gift to all generations that is desperately needed in our fragmented culture. The church is one of the few places that remains intergenerational. Additional gifts are the various ways we tell faith stories to one another and help one another discern our current and evolving gifts of ministry. Faith communities benefit when everyone's gift is empowered and acknowledged. What a blessing to share and praise God together.

About this Faith Practice

Ministry is exciting, life-giving, participation in what God is doing in the world. We are people created in the image of God and each uniquely gifted and called to carry out our Creator's ongoing work. As we uncover and discover our gifts of ministry, we discern God's mission for our lives as individuals and in community with one another. Discernment is a life-long process as our gifts of ministry may emerge and evolve or shift and change over time. Our gifts bring both joy and challenges to our lives. The opportunity to minister with God in this world is a gift God gives to us.

Intergenerational Options

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

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

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

Explorations



Discovery: In this Exploration we encounter the practice and look at how it intersects with human needs in community and personal life.



Scripture: Christian faith practices grow out of the biblical story of the people of faith. For each faith practice, twelve Bible stories (two for each Exploration) inform and give direction to practicing our faith.



Discipleship: Discipleship is about following. In this Exploration we consider what prompts people of faith to become disciples and probe how the Spirit leads us in the communal life of the Christian community and in our personal lives in the world.



Christian Tradition: Practices of faith have been shaped by those who have preceded us in the history of the Christian church. The future will be shaped by the way we practice our faith today. Just as a map provides the landmarks we need to follow when we navigate in the world, this rich history of the Christian tradition guides us as we practice our faith today.



Context and Mission: In order to claim a role in the mission God gives to the church, you have to know where you are, your local context. In the Context and Mission Exploration, we consider ways to practice faith in our community and world.



Future and Vision: Practicing our faith leads us into the future. We seek to move into the future with a vision of where we are headed. In the Future and Vision Exploration, we consider what impels us into the future. We know that we are still practicing our faith—we won’t do it perfectly. We are empowered to keep practicing.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Whether we are new to a particular faith practice or an old hand with much experience, all of us benefit from new opportunities to explore the shape of the faith practice and to engage the issues of faith that the practice offers. Sometimes this is a matter of learning new ideas about the practice. Sometimes this is more about reflecting on what we have done in our practice. The activities in Exploring & Engaging help us figure out how a faith practice intersects with our life and the life of the community of faith (activities 1, 5, 8, and 10).

Discerning & Deciding Activities

Practicing our faith always involves discernment: naming the realities of our community and world and seeking the will of God for our lives and for the world. We then decide how we will act, what we will do, what values move us forward, what faith has called us to do. These activities give us opportunity to practice by discerning and deciding (activities 2, 4, 6, and 7).

Sending & Serving Activities

Practicing our faith involves serving others and being sent out as empowered disciples of Jesus Christ. We need time in our exploration to plan how we will serve. We need moments that send us forth blessed by the community from which we venture out. These activities offer opportunities to practice our faith through sending and serving (activities 3, 9, 11, and 12).

Intergenerational Leader Preparation

Review the twelve activities and select those that best fit your group and timeframe. The activities are suggestions that you may adapt. For example, if you prefer to use a “Sending & Serving” activity for “Discerning & Deciding,” please do that. Mostly, enjoy planning the intergenerational gatherings. Your joy and enthusiasm will set the tone:

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

1 Kings 3:3–15

Isaiah 49:1–7

Nehemiah 2:11–20

Mark 1:14–20

Luke 10:38–42

1 Corinthians 1:1–19

2 Corinthians 3:1–6

Philippians 4:1–13

Prayer: Sustainer of All, as I plan these activities help me create options that encourage and empower people of all ages. May our gathering together deepen our faith and deepen our connections to one another. May I recognize your hand in my ministry and in my life. Amen.



Exploration: Discovery



1 Art: Flowers in the Garden (Exploring & Engaging)

Leader preparation: Prepare a background for a group mural of a flower garden. Use green mural or craft paper, or tape together several sheets of green construction paper. Give a bit of dimension to the green paper by sponging or dabbing several shades of green paint all over the background paper, allowing it to dry prior to the group time.

Supplies:

- prepared green mural or craft paper, or several sheets of green construction paper taped together
- variety of colors of construction paper
- pencils
- scissors
- glue sticks
- embellishments, such as wallpaper scraps, foil, cupcake liners, glitter glue, ribbon, rick rack, and so forth
- artwork: “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” by Gustav Klimt, <http://www.art.com/products/p15177883-sa-i3715775/gustav-klimt-farm-garden-with-sunflowers-c1912.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=55eedd136d4049bcaab8f63c70afd3e3&searchstring=klimt+farm+garden+with+sunflowers>

Invite everyone to close their eyes and imagine themselves as a flower or plant. Ask participants to describe how they look, demonstrate how they move in the wind, and share what makes them special. Gather as an large group and with only arms and upper torso demonstrate how they, as a flower or plant, move in the wind.

Have the group open their eyes and gather at tables to create their flowers or plants. As they finish, have the participants add their flowers to the prepared background. After a quick clean up, invite the group to look at the artwork “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” (c.1912) by Gustav Klimt. Give the group at least two minutes to visually explore the image. Then, place the artwork next to the group mural. Invite them to consider the variety of colors, shapes, textures, different sizes, and beauty in both gardens. Tell the participants that the background and the flowers—all parts—are needed to form a beautiful picture. Tell them that they are like a flower or plant in God’s garden. They are important and they have a special gift. Tell them that God’s garden needs each of them!



2 Faith Word: Call (Easy Preparation) (Deciding & Discerning)

Leader preparation: People will probably know the word “call” as in a phone call or being called when recess is over or mealtime begins. The concept of a biblical call may be new, so be prepared to answer questions. Think of how God has called you throughout your life. Be prepared to share one or two examples with the group.

The activity focuses on 1 Corinthians 1:1–9, but you may also use Ezekiel 2:1–5. The Ezekiel passage is frequently subtitled the “call of Ezekiel.” When discussing the concept of call, some may ask, “How do you know when God is calling you?”

In faith communities we identify that sense of call, often individually, and then we pray and dialogue with other Christians. We discern the wisdom of the group and seek their support as we say “yes” to God.

Supplies:

- Bible
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Explain that people of faith often say they feel “called” to perform a certain task or to begin a ministry. The word “call” can be a noun or a verb. Many dictionaries have numerous definitions of the verb. Invite the group to list all the meanings of “call” they can think of. Some possibilities may be phone call, umpire or referee’s call, calling a witness, bird calls, calling instructions in square dancing, and calling a name. Ask the participants what they think it means to be called by God. Read 1 Corinthians 1:1–2 aloud to the group or ask someone to read it aloud. Point out that Paul is called, specifically, to be an apostle, but that the entire congregation is also called. Explain that “call” in a faith community means inspired or guided by God. When you are called by God, God asks you to do something that makes God’s community stronger or uncovers an injustice or helps someone or protects nature. Every person is called in some way, often in different ways throughout their life. God doesn’t forget anyone. Divide into groups of no more than four people and ask people to discuss how they have been called by God. Give them a couple minutes to think before sharing their answers with prayer.



Exploration: Scripture

③ Humility: Giving God Credit (Sending & Serving)

Leader preparation: In today’s culture, parts of the two selected passages are challenging. Nehemiah states, “The God of heaven is the one who will give us success.” Paul states that “Our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant.” Both are examples of humility, giving God credit for their actions and successes. Read Nehemiah 2:11–20 and 2 Corinthians 3:1–6. Preview the video of J. S. Bach’s “Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor” and reflect on when you give God credit for your actions. The piece is eight minutes long and is a lovely example of God in every note, every breath. You may play the music and enjoy the visuals. If people want solely to listen, allow them to find a comfortable place.

Supplies:

- Bible
- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- video: J. S. Bach’s “Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipzR9bhei_o

Ask the participants the following questions.

- When you do something well how do you feel?
- What do you say or think?
- Do you share a high five or special handshake?
- Who celebrates with you?

Ask one person to read Nehemiah 2:20 aloud. Ask another person to read 2 Corinthians 3:4–5 aloud. Ask the group who is responsible for success in both passages. Ask them why they think Nehemiah or Paul give God credit. Explain that realizing that our gifts come from God and remembering to thank God is an example of humility. Tell the group that you will be playing an organ piece for them that was written by Johann Sebastian Bach. Every piece of music Bach wrote was signed “SDG.” Explain that it stands for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God alone be glory.” Bach never sought fame or money and he is one of the most famous organists and composers who has ever lived. He wanted to honor God with every note he wrote and every note he played. He was very humble about his music ministry.

Darken the room so the participants watching the video can see easily or so the folks preferring to listen can rest comfortably. Show the video of J. S. Bach’s “Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor.” Allow a period of silence after the piece. Ask the participants to pay attention this week to whom they give credit for their accomplishments. Ask them to remember to thank God and to be humble.

4 Drama: Mary, Martha, and Jesus (Easy Preparation) (Discerning & Deciding)

Leader preparation: The Luke passage is a beautiful story that folks grasp quickly. They also understand the timeless rivalry between Mary and Martha. Know Luke 10:38–42 well enough that you don’t need to refer to the Bible as you help the various groups in the activity. It is helpful to have a larger space so the groups can be easily accessible for you, but the participants are not distracted by the other groups.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Divide the participants into groups of three, making sure younger children are with those who read well. Then read Luke 10:38–42 to the group using different tones of voice so they understand Martha and Jesus’ words and they realize what Mary is doing. Do not discuss the passage with them. Make sure each person has a Bible, and ask them to act out the story in their trio. Let them divide the parts and determine how they want to act the story. The acting is not for presentation; it’s for learning. Wander between the groups helping as needed. If there is time, ask each group to rotate parts so they interpret the Luke passage three times, with each person playing Jesus, Martha, and Mary once. Bring everyone together and ask the following questions.

- Which gift did Jesus use in ministry with Mary and Martha?
- Which gift did Mary use?
- Which gift did Martha use?



Exploration: Discipleship

5 Christian “To Do” List (Easy Preparation) (Exploring & Engaging)

Leader preparation: Philippians 4:1–13 is a list of behaviors associated with people of faith. The list is a great reminder for adults, but these verses tend to be overwhelming for children, youth, and new Christians. Note that children and youth, especially, are very attentive to the ways worshipping congregations behave differently from the values detailed in Philippians. They hear and observe a lot.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Lead this activity with a sense of humor as you record the “to do” list for Christians. Ask for thirteen readers, one per verse. Ask the readers to pause after each verse and add the Christian instruction to the list. Ask the group to help you with what to record. For example:

- *Verse 1:* Add greeting with affirmations, being loving, knowing yourself and others are beloved.
- *Verse 2:* Stop arguing and come together to be on the Lord’s team.

As the verses continue, explain such difficult words as “supplication” and “commendable,” as needed. Exaggerate the length of this list and how tired you are of writing. By the thirteenth verse, be exhausted in a tasteful and humorous way. Ask for a bold reading of verse 13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Ask the group to say that verse aloud together. Divide into groups of four people. Give each group one or two verses and, in that context, ask them to discuss how they might live like this.

Come together as a larger group and allow each group time to share. Ask the following questions.

- How will living like Paul instructs help us in our ministries?
- How will it help us as a congregation?
- How can we support each other in these behaviors?

End with an affirmation that while the “to do” list is long, it is completely possible. As Christians it is Christ who strengthens us, and it is a privilege and joy to support and affirm one another in ministry.

6 First Things First (Discerning & Deciding)

Leader preparation: It is difficult to discover your ministry if you are distracted. This has been a challenge since ancient days, as evident in the story of Mary and Martha. Practice the activity. Reflect on what distracts you. Reflect on what helps you focus on Jesus.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- small jar with lid, such as a small plastic container, baby-food jar, or half-pint jelly jar

- sand or rice
- three rocks or marbles like those used in floral arrangements per child
- one small bowl per child

Give each child a small container with a lid. Ask each child to place three rocks or marbles in the container, fill the container with sand or rice, and then put on the lid. Hurrah! Everything fits. Now, have each child empty everything in the container into the extra bowl. Then, have the children fill the container with everything from the bowl, but this time each child should put the sand or rice in first and then the three objects before putting on the lid. Surprise! The lid does not fit. Have children empty the objects and sand or rice into the empty bowl and start over, putting the three objects in first. The lid will fit on again.

Invite someone to read Luke 10:38–42 to the group. Explain that Martha was distracted by preparing the house and meal for Jesus. Ask the children how they might get distracted from listening to Jesus. Answers may include school, chores, video games, and television. Note that it's hard to discover our gifts of ministry if we're so busy that Jesus does not fit into our lives. Hold up the jar with the three objects. Tell the children that the sand or rice represents what distracts us. Explain that the three objects represent God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Ask the children to put Jesus first or "first things first" this week, like Mary did. Tell the children to take home the container, explain the activity to their family, and put it on the table where they usually eat. During meals, they can look at the container and discuss their day and explain how they intend to put Jesus first.



Exploration: Christian Tradition



7 Being a Light (Deciding & Discerning)

Leader preparation: The Wingclips video "Deepest Fear" (Lions Gate Films, 2006) is from the movie *Akeelah and the Bee*, about a girl challenged by the National Spelling Bee. Akeelah's teacher, Dr. Larabee, has the following quotation on his wall from Marianne Williamson's book *Return to Love*: "Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure." She asserts that by manifesting the glory of God within us we conquer that fear, allowing God's light to shine through us and on to others.

Supplies:

- Bible
- video: Wingclips video "Deepest Fear" (Lions Gate Films, 2006), <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/akeelah-and-the-bee/deepest-fear>
- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- "Discussion Questions," Attachment: Activity 7

Ask one person to read Isaiah 49: 6–7 aloud to the group, where God is speaking to the prophet, Isaiah. Ask the following questions.

- What is God saying to Isaiah?
- What is Isaiah's "job"?
- Isaiah is not popular. How do we know that?
- How might Isaiah feel about being chosen by God?

Show the Wingclips video “Deepest Fear” from *Akeelah and the Bee*. Have the group divide in to small groups of four or five people, making sure there are a variety of ages in each group. Tell the groups to take turns answering questions within the group so that all people have an chance to contribute. Have the group discuss the questions on the attachment.



8 Wisdom: Honi and the Carob Tree (Easy Preparation) (Exploring & Engaging)

Leader preparation: Read and learn the story “Honi and the Carob Tree,” a treasured Jewish tale about wisdom, environmental stewardship, and generational care.

Supplies:

- “Honi and the Carob Tree,” Attachment: Activity 8

Explain that wisdom tales are stories told by grandmas and grandpas, moms and dads, aunts and uncles, to children so they learn what’s important in their family, their faith, and their culture. Introduce the story of “Honi and the Carob Tree” and tell or perform it. Ask the group the following questions.

- Who is the teacher in this story?
- What lessons did the old man learn from previous generations? What lessons did Honi learn?
- What have you learned from this story?

Take a walk around your church. Ask to participants to notice anything that has been gifted to them from previous generations. It may be a tree, a piano, library books, windows, sheet music, vestments, and so on. Notice which gifts are handmade or planted and which gifts were purchased. Celebrate the sharing of artistic gifts, care for creation, and financial resources. Note that your gift of teaching is a generational gift and a to tell the Christian story, like Honi. Churches need a wide variety of gifts from people of all ages.



Exploration: Context and Mission

9 Music: The Summons (Sending & Serving)

Leader preparation: This is a simple tune that a child could play. Consider asking one of your young instrumentalist or singers to learn this prior to your gathering time. It will probably be too difficult for them to play while the group is singing, but everyone could learn the tune and sing a cappella, or without accompaniment. Writing the words on newsprint will make this activity easier. Write the first verse of “The Summons” lyrics on a sheet of newsprint. Obtain a music recording of “The Summons” (tune: Kelvingrove).

Supplies:

- song: “The Summons” by John Bell (tune: Kelvingrove); video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0aAkOe87mo&feature=related>
- prepared newsprint with the first verse of “The Summons”
- music player

Play the music recording of “The Summons,” inviting the children to sway gently with the tune. Invite the group to sing the first verse of the song. Discuss the five

questions from the first verse using the following questions.

- “Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?” What kind of relationship is needed for you to follow someone? The composer has Jesus speaking this verse. Pretend that Jesus is asking this question. How would you respond?
- “Will you go where you don’t know and never be the same?” For children, everything is new. They lack the perspective which comes with experience. What new experiences have you had and what has that been like?
- “Will you let my love be shown?” How do you show Jesus’ love?
- “Will you let my name be known?” How do you share Jesus with others?
- “Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?” Honor that all of us, all ages, are on faith journeys. Honor that as we grow in Christ’s love, Christ grows in our love. The relationship works both directions. This may be a new concept for the children. How can you continue to grow in Christ’s love?

Invite the children to sing the first verse again.



10 Follow Me (Easy Preparation) (Exploring & Engaging)

Leader preparation: This activity is based on Mark 1:14–20 and 1 Kings 3:3–15. This activity could also be divided into two activities with each one focusing on one Bible passage.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Divide the group into four small groups. Two groups will work with the 1 Kings 3:3–15 text, and the other two groups will work with Mark 1:14–20. Make sure various generations are in each smaller group. Ask each group to read the passage at least twice. Discuss the main points of the passage so all ages understand it. A simple question such as “What happened in this passage?” will initiate a conversation.

Invite the groups to create a short skit about their passage. Find roles in the skit for everyone. Folks can be temple pillars, incense, Solomon’s pillow, fish, a boat, other fishermen observing Jesus, and so on. Bring the groups together and present the four skits. Applaud and celebrate every effort.

Conclude by asking the following questions.

- What promises were made and by whom? At some point note that Solomon in verse 8 references God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5–6 and 17:3–8. Solomon knew that God kept God’s promises, Jesus knew God kept promises, and the disciples knew God and also trusted and believed Jesus.
- How important is trust when being in ministry?

If the answer has not already been discussed, ask:

- How does this congregation act like it trusts God and Jesus?
- How do we trust each other so everyone’s ministry is empowered and valued?



Exploration: Future and Vision

11 Exercise: Strength Training (Easy Preparation) (Sending & Serving)

Leader preparation: You will need a space with room for movement. Adapt the exercises so everyone can participate.

Supplies: None

Ask folks how they get stronger. Tell them that they are going to do some exercises that will strengthen their bodies. Begin with simple stretching exercises. Add a couple more options like running in place or jumping jacks.

Invite the group to sit in a circle and read Philippians 4:13 aloud. Ask the following questions.

- What do you think this verse means?
- How do you think God strengthens us?
- What kind of faith muscles do we need for ministry? (Relationship with God, prayer, worship, service)
- How can you tell if a person is strengthened with the muscles of faith? (Confidence of God's love in crisis, regularly prays, gives God credit, reads the Bible, service to others)

Remind the participants that whenever they exercise, even getting out of bed in the morning, that God strengthens them. Their job is grow their spiritual muscle a little bit every day. Everyone needs strong faith muscles to serve God in ministry.

12 Music: I'm Gonna Live to God Can Use Me (Sending & Serving)

Leader preparation: Enjoy leading this song which has a nice beat, great message, and you can sway to it easily. Read the activity and prepare your own options.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- hymn: "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me," African American spiritual (tune: I'm Gonna Live), http://www.hymnary.org/text/im_gonna_live_so_god_can_use_me?tab=about
- music player

Ask: *When do you think God can use your gifts?* (Anytime) Ask them to say a one-syllable noun describing when they can serve God, such as play, jump, write, sleep, ride. Teach the group the African American spiritual "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" and add verses from the list they made.

Reflect

Our Benedictine brothers and sisters have a discipline or rule that instructs them to "incline the ear of your heart." They are instructed to listen to God by listening to their heart in a constant discernment of call. How does your congregation need to listen and act to support people's gifts of ministry? How can you help? In these activities how did you deepen your faith journey? Which activities would you like to revisit? What practices help you incline the ear of your heart?

Attachment: Activity 7

Discussion Questions

What is Akeelah's challenge?

What does she realize?

How does her teacher, Dr. Larabee, help her?

How might Akeelah's spelling be used as a ministry?

How are Akeelah and Isaiah similar?

How is Akeelah or Isaiah like you?

As a congregation how are you a light to the nations?

Attachment: Activity 8

Honi and the Carob Tree

One day Honi was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked him, "How long does it take to bear fruit?"

The man replied, "Seventy years."

Honi further asked him, "Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?"

The man replied, "I found this world provided with carob trees, and as my forebears planted these for me, so I too plant them for my children."

Honi then sat down to have a meal, and sleep overcame him. As he slept, a small cave formed around him, which hid him from sight, and he continued to sleep for seventy years. When he awoke, he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree and Honi asked him, "Are you the man who planted this tree?"

The man replied, "I am his grandson."

SOURCE: BABYLONIAN TALMUD, TA'ANIT 23A