

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

WHO IS *my neighbor?*



ELCA World Hunger
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

"Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor?... 'The one who showed him mercy.'
Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise'" (Luke 10:36-37).

Welcome!

Welcome to “Who Is My Neighbor?” ELCA World Hunger’s vacation Bible school program for 2019!

Responding to the needs of our neighbors has always been a key vocation of the church. Martin Luther believed that service of the neighbor should be a priority for every person of faith. He wrote, “Therefore, we should be guided in all our works by this one thought alone – that we may serve and benefit others in everything that is done, having nothing before our eyes except the need and advantage of the neighbor.”

In the parable of the good Samaritan that sets the theme for “Who Is My Neighbor?” Jesus makes clear that “neighbor” is not an abstract concept but rather a radically new relationship made possible by God’s reconciling grace. To be a neighbor is to be in relationship with the people God places in our midst, to both serve and be served by them. In “Who Is My Neighbor?” participants will explore what this means – for them and for their community – by learning about neighbors in six parts of the globe over the five days.

In this guide, you will find materials for five days, though we encourage you to adapt the schedule to what suits your needs. Each day has four main parts: a large group opening, small group time, rotations (including crafts, games, etc.), and a large group closing. The guide is organized by activity, rather than by day to make it easier to provide the materials to leaders in your vacation Bible school. You’ll find all the openings in one section, all the crafts in one section, etc. In the first pages are sample schedules you can customize and share with leaders. Each day is focused on a geographic region, with the stories, crafts and snacks drawn from that region.

Being a neighbor means more than being nearby – it means seeing each other as images of the living God in our midst. In faith, we are invited to walk with, work with and learn from one another in love, appreciating all the gifts our neighbors share with us and all the gifts we can share with them. We pray that the children in your vacation Bible school will see the ways God has blessed them and their neighbors – and the role they can play in God’s promise of a just world where all are fed.

Peace and blessings,

ELCA World Hunger

Look for supplemental materials like posters and certificates online at [ELCA.org/hunger/resources](https://elca.org/hunger/resources). Just click on the “Hunger Ed” tab.

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Daily schedule



Daily schedule

Feel free to adapt this schedule to fit your needs. Below are some customizable grids you can fill out and copy for leaders.

TIME	ACTIVITY
9 – 9:20	Large group opening
9:20 – 9:35	Family time
9:35 – 10:00	Rotation 1
10 – 10:25	Rotation 2
10:25 – 10:50	Rotation 3
10:50 – 11:15	Rotation 4
11:15 – 11:40	Rotation 5
11:40 – 12	Large group closing

TIME	ACTIVITY
	Large group opening
	Family time
	Rotation 1
	Rotation 2
	Rotation 3
	Rotation 4
	Rotation 5
	Large group closing

TIME	ACTIVITY
	Large group opening
	Family time
	Rotation 1
	Rotation 2
	Rotation 3
	Rotation 4
	Rotation 5
	Large group closing

TIME	ACTIVITY
	Large group opening
	Family time
	Rotation 1
	Rotation 2
	Rotation 3
	Rotation 4
	Rotation 5
	Large group closing

TIME	ACTIVITY
	Large group opening
	Family time
	Rotation 1
	Rotation 2
	Rotation 3
	Rotation 4
	Rotation 5
	Large group closing

Day 1

Theme: God loves us.

Theme verse:

"We love because God first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Day 2

Theme: Let your light shine.

Theme verse:

"Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon" (Isaiah 58:10 New Living Translation).

Day 3

Theme: No fear.

Theme verse:

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18a).

Day 4

Theme: God loves everyone.

Theme verse:

"I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God" (Acts 10:34b-35).

Day 5

Theme: Building God's neighborhood.

Theme verse:

"Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor" (Romans 15:2).

Overview of daily activities

LARGE GROUP OPENING

- **Welcome and prayer**
- **Theme song***
- **Opening**
- **Reiterate the daily theme and theme verse**
- **More songs***
- **Sending***

ROTATIONS – This is a time for an adult to share with the children a story of a ministry supported by ELCA World Hunger. Included in Storytime are photos to share, facts about the featured country and a script for the storyteller.

- **Games** – Every vacation Bible school needs time for play! We've included some ideas for fun activities you can plan based on the size of your group and your available space.
- **Snack** – Recipes are included for each day, related to the country highlighted in Storytime. Some are fairly simple, while others may require a bit more planning. All will give the children a “taste” of the country or region highlighted in the story.
- **Crafts** – Directions for each craft are included in the daily rotations. Like the other rotations, crafts are related to the country from Storytime.
- **Simulation station** – The simulation station is a chance to take a closer look at hunger and poverty and how our faith calls us to respond to both.

LARGE GROUP CLOSING

- **Theme song and music**
- **Talking together – a review of the day**
- **Return to memory verse**
- **Prayer and sending**

* Songs located in Closing + Songs tab

Including everyone

The games and activities for each day can be adapted for children with diverse ability levels. To help your vacation Bible school include children of all abilities, follow these general guidelines to adapt activities:

- 1) Talk with the child or the child's parents about strategies for helping the child feel comfortable.
- 2) Make adjustments only when necessary, and when you do, be sure to aim at increasing the child's participation, success and enjoyment. Help them feel like they have a say in making adjustments – or not making them.
- 3) Be fair in adapting activities. Certainly, try to make every child feel included, but be careful not to stigmatize or single out a child with a different ability level than others.
- 4) Plan ahead. Talk with parents about any special equipment that might be needed before the activity begins so that the child can participate from the beginning.
- 5) If a child has dietary restrictions, do your best to make adjustments that help the child feel included rather than singled out.

(Adapted from CIRA Ontario.)



OPENING + SKIT

Start the day off right by welcoming families and friends, introducing the verse of the day, and engaging participants in memorable skits around 'the good Samaritan' story!

DAY 1: God loves us

Welcome and prayer

Welcome the children (and adults!) to the first day of “Who Is My Neighbor?” You can use this time to introduce any information about the building or grounds, safety or other helpful tips that visitors might need.

During this time, introduce the theme of the program and give a brief overview of the day. For this first day, be sure to note the following things:

- 1) The theme of the week is “Who Is My Neighbor?” Together, we will learn about some of the people around the world who are our neighbors in the kingdom of God. We will also learn about ELCA World Hunger, an important ministry of our church. ELCA World Hunger works with people in the United States and in over 60 other countries to ensure that everyone has enough food to eat, a safe place to live, and the things they need for a healthy life.
- 2) The week is based on Jesus’ conversation with a lawyer in Luke 10:25-37. Each day, we will hear a new part of the story, meet a new character and see how they answered the question, “Who Is My Neighbor?”
- 3) Each day, we will also learn about a new country where ELCA World Hunger works. We will learn about our neighbors in that country and some of the projects ELCA World Hunger supports to help our neighbors.
- 4) The schedule: Each day, we will gather as a large group before going to our small groups. Most of the day, you will be with your small group, and we will come back together at the end.



OPENING PRAYER

Good and gracious God, thank you for bringing us together to learn more about you and about our neighbors around the world. Help us this week make new friends and become neighbors to each other as we learn about our neighbors around the world. Amen.



THEME SONG

There are some suggested songs in the Closing + Songs section of this curriculum, but you can feel free to use any songs in your repertoire here! Some groups will want to choose a single theme song for the week, while others may want to use different songs each day. Opening with music will get everyone energized to start the day.

(Write song title here)

DAY 1: God loves us



OPENING SKIT

A note about costumes and characters

To keep the characters relatable, consider dressing them in modern-day outfits. The modern setting also allows the characters to be played by any gender. In the first century, lawyers and priests would have been men, but today they can be men or women. So, too, with the characters in the skits.

The conflict in the story is between the insiders who do not help and the outsider Samaritan who does. In Day 4, that conflict will be demonstrated between cat people and dog people. To start to highlight that, you may want dress all of the characters in shirts with pictures of dogs on them. The cat people/dog people conflict is meant to be generic. If there is a different insider/outsider dynamic that works in your setting, feel free to insert it. For example, if you live in Michigan, you might picture Sage, the priest, and the Levite wearing University of Michigan apparel, while on Day 4, the Samaritan would be cloaked in gear from the Ohio State University.

Characters: Sage, Emcee

Emcee (E): Hello everyone! Welcome to the first day of “Who Is My Neighbor?” vacation Bible school. This week, we’re going to learn all about what it means to be a neighbor. Throughout this week, we will have a special guest with us. This man asked Jesus the same question we are asking, “Who is my neighbor?” But before we hear from our special guest, how about you? What do you think it means to be a neighbor?

(Invite responses. Affirm all ideas.)

E: Those are some great ideas! You all already know a lot about what it means to be a neighbor. Maybe you can help explain to my friend, Sage [gestures off stage]. Come on out here, Sage!

Sage (S): Hello there! Good to see you all. You look like a pretty smart crowd! Glad to see it. I like smart crowds!

E: They are a smart crowd. We were talking before you got here about what a neighbor is, and they came up with some great responses. Things like *[mention a few of the ideas]*.

S: Those are some good ideas! Of course, I knew all of those already.

E: You knew that already? But then, why are you here? Why did you ask Jesus who your neighbor is, if you already knew?

S: Ah, good question. Another good question, I love good questions. I was testing him, you see. To see if HE knew the answer.

E: You were testing Jesus by asking him to tell you who your neighbor is?

DAY 1: God loves us

S: Yep! *[looks proud]*

E: *[looks confused]* But what good does that do you?

S: That wasn't the first question I asked. The first question I asked was, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Now I, of course, being very smart, knew the answer. But it is a good question, don't you think?

E: It is. And what did Jesus say?

S: He asked me to tell him what is written in the law.

E: And?

S: We've already been over this; I'm super smart. So I totally knew the answer. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself." I know this was the right answer because Jesus told me, "You have given the right answer; do this and you will live."

E: Let me get this straight. You asked Jesus a question, Jesus answered with another question, and you answered? Sounds like Jesus was the smart one. He got you to answer your own question.

S: Wait, hey ... *[looks indignant]*

E: It is a good answer though, and a good starting point for our question of the week: Who is my neighbor? Because it reminds us that all love comes from God. Before we can love our neighbor, or even ourselves, we were loved by God. "We love because God first loved us."

S: Isn't that your theme verse for the day?

E: It is! On this first day of vacation Bible school, we are going to focus on all the ways that God loves us and how we can show our love to God. God's love is really the best place to start learning about how to love our neighbors. Martin Luther talked a lot about how once you know how much you are loved by God, you cannot help but share that love with others. The love of God just overflows out of you.

S: OK. But can we get back to how great it was that I got you to introduce the theme verse like that? It was like, the perfect lead-in. Wow, I'm just so smart.

E: *[annoyed]* Yes, yes you did. You are very smart. And humble ...

S: *[grins]*

E: Anyway, that's about all the time we have for opening this morning. I'd better let you go so we can get going.

S: OK. Maybe I can come back tomorrow and help you out again. I can tell you the second question I asked Jesus. That one was a real stumper!

E: *[with feigned enthusiasm]* Sure, more help, that would be great.

S: *[Very excited]* Great! See you tomorrow!
[Sage leaves]

DAY 2: *Let your light shine*

Welcome and prayer

Welcome the children (and adults!) to the second day of “Who Is My Neighbor?” You can use this time to remind folks of any information about the building or grounds, safety or other helpful tips that new visitors might need. You can also use this time to refer to Day 1, ask if children remember what they learned the day before and to briefly introduce the theme for Day 2.



OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, we thank you for another day of fun, laughter, joy and learning. We pray for all those who feel alone today. May they be reminded of your grace and love through the neighbors around them. And may we continue to learn how to be good neighbors to others. Amen.



THEME SONG

(Write song title here)



DAY 2 SKIT

Characters: Sage, Priest, Emcee

Emcee (E): Hello and welcome to our second day at “Who Is My Neighbor” vacation Bible school. I know you’ll be excited to hear that Sage is back and just as enthusiastic as ever. In fact, here she/he comes now.

Sage (S): Hi everyone. So good to see you again! You’re all looking quite smart this morning. Tell me, what did you learn about yesterday after I left you? You were learning about God’s love, right? Fill me in.

(Invite responses. Affirm all responses.)

S: Wow, you all were busy yesterday! Good learnings. Those were some of the same thoughts I had when I was pondering my response to Jesus’ question. But I wanted to challenge Jesus a little bit further. After all, *[glances at emcee]* as you so rudely pointed out yesterday, Jesus did get me to answer my own question.

E: Who, me? And yes, you mentioned that yesterday. What question did you ask Jesus?

S: Oh, it was a real stumper. It was such a good question that you even made a whole weeklong vacation Bible school about it! The question I asked Jesus was the same question you all are thinking about this week. I asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?”

E: And what did Jesus say?

S: He told me this really strange story. And I have to tell you, smart as I am, I’m still trying to figure it out.

E: Why don’t you tell it to us? Maybe we can help you.

S: Great idea! *[pulls out a Bible]* The first part’s pretty obvious: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who took all his things and beat him up.” They even took his clothes! Clearly, those guys were not neighbors.

E: Clearly.

DAY 2: *Let your light shine*

S: But here's where it got weird. "Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side." Why do you think he would have done that?

E: I don't know, why don't you ask him?

[Enter priest, in quite a hurry]

S: Hey, hey you, slow down, wait a minute!

Priest (P): I can't, I'm really in quite a rush today.

S: I see that. Like you were that day with the man on the side of the road.

P: How did you know about that?

S: We've been talking about what it means to be a neighbor. And walking by someone in need doesn't seem very neighborly.

P: No, probably not. But how could he be my neighbor? I didn't even know him.

S: He needed help!

P: And anyway, I was in a hurry. Certainly, someone helped him. It's not like he's still lying there.

S: But you didn't know someone else would come along.

P: But someone did. Why was it my problem? Like I said, I was in a hurry. As I am right now. I'm sorry, I'd love to stay and chat but I'm very busy and important and I really must be on my way. *[Priest leaves]*

E: Hey, you OK? You look upset.

S: Yeah, it's just – why wouldn't it be his problem that the man needed help? I know he said he was in a hurry and all, but

couldn't he make time for someone else? And another thing, he said the man couldn't be his neighbor because he didn't know him. Do you have to know the other person for them to be your neighbor? Couldn't someone be your neighbor because they were created by God just like you were?

E: You're asking some good questions. And I have to say, it sounds like you already know the answer. We don't have to know someone to be their neighbor. All it takes to be someone's neighbor is to care about them.

S: That makes sense. You know, that reminds me of something I read once in the book of Isaiah. It said: "Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon." Hey, I bet that would make a good theme verse for today!

E: In fact, that is the theme verse for today. Now that we know that we are loved by God, today we're going to learn about how to let our light shine. Maybe you can come back tomorrow and tell us more of your story.

S: I think I will. Thanks for your help today everyone. I can't wait to hear what you learned when I come back tomorrow.

DAY 2: *Let your light shine*

Review of the Day 2 theme and Bible verse

The theme for today is “Let your light shine.” Yesterday, we learned that we are loved by God. Today, our focus is how we show God’s love to others. The theme verse gives some ways we can shine the love of God. “Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon” (Isaiah 58:10). Today’s activities will be about sharing God’s love with others.



CLOSING SONGS

(Write song titles here)



Closing prayer:

Good and gracious God, thank you for loving us and for all the people you have given us to show us your love, like our family, friends, and all our new friends at vacation Bible school. Help us today as we learn more about our neighbors around the world and how we can show them your love. Amen.

Dismissal to small group time.

DAY 3: No fear

Welcome and prayer

Welcome the children (and adults!) to the third day of “Who Is My Neighbor?” You can use this time to remind folks of any information about the building or grounds, safety or other helpful tips that new visitors might need. You can also use this time to refresh people’s memories about the last two days and briefly introduce the theme for Day 3.



OPENING PRAYER

Compassionate God, thank you for bringing us together again in this special place. Open our hearts and our minds so that we may continue to grow in relationship with each other and with our community. Amen.



THEME SONG

(Write song title here)



DAY 3 SKIT

Characters: Sage, Priest’s Helper, Emcee

Emcee (E): Hey, welcome back to another great day at “Who Is My Neighbor” vacation Bible school. I think when we left off yesterday, Sage was in the middle of telling us a story that Jesus told her as an answer to our theme question for the week. And here she is now.

Sage (S): Hi everyone. So good to see you again. I can’t wait to tell you what happened next in the story. But

first, can anyone tell us what has already happened in the story?

[Invite responses, affirm all answers.]

That’s right, a man was traveling to Jerusalem, when some robbers came, beat him up, stole all his stuff and left him. One person passed by, but he was not very helpful. Why did he say he couldn’t help him?

[Invite responses, affirm all answers.]

Right again. The first passer-by thought the man wasn’t his neighbor because he didn’t know him. But we talked yesterday about how everyone is our neighbor, because everyone is created and loved by God. So you’ll never guess what happened next. *[Reads from Bible.]* Check this out: “So likewise a priest’s helper, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.” Can you believe it! Another person just walked on by the poor man. Why would he do that! Is everyone in so much of a hurry these days?

E: I don’t know, but isn’t that him right there? Why don’t you ask him?

S: I think I will, I ought to give him a piece of my mind. Hey! Hey, you there! Stop!

Helper (H): Who? Me?

S: Yes, you! Didn’t you see the poor guy lying by the side of the road? You practically stepped right over him. Why didn’t you stop and help him?

H: *[Uncomfortably]* Yes, I saw him. And I wanted to help him, really I did. But I was scared.

S: You were scared? What was there to be scared of?

H: I was scared of what to do, first of all. This man needed a lot of help, and I didn’t know how to begin. What if I messed it up? And I was scared that I might not be able to give him all the help he needed. I’m just one person after all. And I was scared for my safety. If someone hurt this guy, they could hurt me.

S: The safety part I understand. But couldn’t you have tried something? You could have gone and found someone to come with you. Like a friend or a teacher or a pastor, someone who knew what to do. If you

DAY 3: No fear

had someone else with you, maybe you wouldn't have been so scared.

H: I hadn't thought of that before. I guess it's true that I didn't have to do all of the helping on my own, I could have asked for help myself.

S: And even if you can't help, like you don't know first aid, or it really isn't safe for you to help, you can always pray for the person. You can pray that they would get the help they need, pray that God would send someone to help them, or that God would show you what to do. Prayer is always a great way to help a neighbor.

H: That's true too. We can always pray and ask God for help. Thanks for all your help! You've given me a lot to think about. And next time I see someone who needs help, I will be a lot less afraid. *[Helper leaves]*

E: Wow, you're getting really good at this being a neighbor thing.

S: What do you mean?

E: Look how you were just a neighbor to that person. He was scared because he didn't know what to do, and you helped him by giving him some really great advice.

S: I guess I did. I knew how he felt. As we've been learning this week about how many neighbors we have, I've been feeling kind of overwhelmed myself about how I could help them. I understood how he felt when he talked about how he felt small and like he didn't have very much to offer. But because I've been learning all this stuff with you all, I also know that I am not alone. There are all kinds of other people in the world who can help me help others. And I learned on the first day the biggest help we have is God. We never have to be afraid, because we have God by our side.

E: That reminds me of the theme verse for today. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear."

S: I like that! Because we are loved by God, we don't ever have to be afraid. Thanks for helping me with this next section of the story. I can't wait to come back tomorrow and tell you what happens next!

E: Us too. Good-bye. *[Sage leaves]*

Review of the Day 3 theme and Bible verse

The theme for today is "No fear." Learning about other people and their needs can raise a lot of fear, fear that we may not know how to help, fear that we may be powerless, fear that what is happening to others could also happen to us. Today is about helping children learn that they don't have to be afraid because they do not have to face their fears alone. There are others who can help them, and most importantly, God is always with them. Today's theme verse echoes the first day theme about how God loves us and shows what that love can do.

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18a).



CLOSING SONGS

(Write song titles here)



Closing prayer:

Dear God, thank you for loving us and never leaving us alone. When we are afraid, help us to know you are with us, and when others are afraid, help us to show them your love. Amen.

Dismissal to small group time.

DAY 4: God loves everyone

Welcome and prayer

Welcome the children (and adults!) to the fourth day of “Who Is My Neighbor?” Now is a good time for any announcements at the beginning of the day or to refresh any building and grounds information, safety or other tips that still need highlighting. This would also be a good time to invite the children to share highlights from the previous day and to briefly introduce the theme for Day 4.



OPENING PRAYER

God of peace, thank you for this new day of learning more about you and how you call us to serve. Be with us today in our play and in our work. Show us how to work together to live in your kingdom. Amen.



THEME SONG

(Write song title here)



DAY 4 SKIT

Characters: Sage, Emcee

Emcee (E): Hello again! Welcome to another great day of “Who Is My Neighbor” vacation Bible school. The past couple of days, Sage has been telling us about what happened to a man who got beaten up by robbers. Two

days ago, we heard how a priest passed him by. And then yesterday, Sage told us about the priest’s helper who also passed by. I wonder what will happen next in the story. Hey, there’s Sage now. How are you this morning?

Sage (S): I’m OK. A little nervous.

E: Nervous, about what?

S: I passed a Samaritan on my way here.

E: A Samaritan, what’s wrong with that?

S: Well, you know about Samaritans, how they are.

E: No, I don’t know what you mean.

S: You know, how they *[stage whispers]* like cats.

[Note: In order to be generic, the conflict written here is between cat people and dog people. If there is a different “insider/outsider” dynamic that works in your setting, feel free to insert it. For example, I live in Michigan, so in my context, the Samaritan might be an Ohio State fan, while we would be University of Michigan fans.]

E: *[in a regular voice]* Likes cats? And I take it you are a dog person?

S: Of course! Dogs are great, loyal and trustworthy. You know where you stand with a dog. But cat people ... aloof and sneaky. Cat people cannot be trusted.

E: Don’t you think you’re overreacting just a bit?

S: No.

E: Are you sure? Don’t you remember what

DAY 4: God loves everyone

happened next in the story you were telling us? Let me get out my Bible and read it to you *[Reads from Bible]*. “But a Samaritan, while traveling, came near the injured man; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

S: A Samaritan did all that!

E: You tell me; you’re the one Jesus told the story to.

S: That’s what Jesus said. But I thought it was a figure of speech. You know, like when you say it’s raining cats and dogs, it’s not really raining pets, it’s just raining hard. I figured he meant something like that.

E: I don’t think so. I think Jesus really meant it was a Samaritan who stopped and helped the injured man. What do you think about that?

S: But they’re so different from us. We don’t like the same food or listen to the same music or speak the same language. And come on now, they like cats!

E: Just because someone is different from us doesn’t mean they cannot be our neighbor. Remember what we talked about the first day, how God is love and we love because God loves us. And love is what the Samaritan showed the man. Let me read the rest of the story. “The next day the Samaritan took out two denarii – that’s like \$200 – gave the money to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” And then what question did Jesus

ask you?

S: He asked me “Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”

E: And you said?

S: *[as if it is just occurring to him]* “The one who showed him mercy.”

E: And Jesus said to you?

S: “Go and do likewise.” Oh, that’s what our theme verse for today means!

E: What does it mean?

S: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality.” When I first heard it, I thought, what does partiality mean? But when we say that God shows no partiality, it means God doesn’t play favorites. God loves everyone the same, cat people and dog people. When the Samaritan helped the man in need, he was living out God’s love for everyone. God loves you whether you are a cat person or a dog person, no matter what language you speak or what kind of food you like. All of us are created and loved by God so all of us are neighbors in God to each other.

E: I think you’ve got it. We are all neighbors because we all live in God’s neighborhood, the neighborhood of the people of God.

S: Thanks for the talk today. You’ve given me a lot to think about! I can’t wait to go out and meet all my new neighbors!

E: You’re welcome. Have fun. See you tomorrow!

DAY 4: God loves everyone

Review of the Day 4 theme and Bible verse

After learning we are loved, we can let our light shine, and we do not have to be afraid, today is the day we're putting it all together. The theme for today is "God loves everyone." The theme verse today says, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God" (Acts 10:34b-35). Another way of saying that is that God loves everyone. The answer to the question of "Who is my neighbor?" is everybody! Everybody lives in God's neighborhood.



CLOSING SONGS

(Write song titles here)



Closing prayer:

Dear God, thank you for all the new friends and neighbors we are getting to know this week. We thank you for the ones we get to know in person and the ones who live far away that we may never meet face to face. Amen.

Dismissal to small group time.

DAY 5: Building God's neighborhood

Welcome and prayer

Welcome the children (and adults!) to the final day of "Who Is My Neighbor?" If you have any special announcements related to the last day, you can introduce them now. Now is a good time for any announcements at the beginning of the day or to refresh any building and grounds information, safety or other tips that still need highlighting. This would also be a good time to invite the children to share highlights from the previous day and to briefly introduce the theme for Day 5.



OPENING PRAYER

Creator God, thank you for the incredible community you have made among us. Thank you for our families, our friends, and all our neighbors from near and far. Guide us as we come together once more to play and to learn in hopes that we can build loving relationships with those around us. Amen.



THEME SONG

(Write song title here)



DAY 5 SKIT

Characters: Sage, Innkeeper, Emcee

Emcee (E): Hello! And welcome back to "Who Is My Neighbor" vacation Bible school. Hard to believe this is our last day together. I wonder

what Sage will have to share with us today. Hey, here he comes now! And who's that with him?

[Enter Sage and innkeeper]

Sage (S): Hi everyone! Good to see you again. I've been thinking a lot about the story we've been hearing. How the man was beaten up and left in need. Two people walked by, but a Samaritan was a good neighbor to the man. And how neighbors can be different from us, even people we don't know, and still be our neighbors because we all come from God's neighborhood. So I brought someone with me who knows a lot about welcoming strangers. Remember how the Samaritan brought the man to an inn and asked the innkeeper to take care of him? I'd like to introduce you to the innkeeper.

Innkeeper (I): Hi there! It's so good to be with you. I heard you're learning this week about who your neighbors are. Can you tell me some of the things you've learned so far?

[Invite response. Affirm all answers.]

Wow, you have learned a lot! You really have a good understanding of what it means to be a neighbor!

E: Thanks Mr. Innkeeper! It's been a really fun week. We've learned a lot and made a lot of new friends. I bet you meet a lot of people at your job too. What's it like?

I: I love it. An inn is like a small hotel, but with a homier feel. Every day, new people come to my inn, and I get to welcome them and help them feel at home. I take care of them, hear their stories and try to meet their needs. I love making people feel comfortable in a new place.

DAY 5: Building God's neighborhood

S: What about the day when the Samaritan came in with the injured man? What did it feel like to help him? Were you scared you wouldn't be able to help the injured man? Or uncomfortable because the Samaritan was different from you?

I: Maybe at first. But when you talk to someone and hear their story, you learn that we aren't so different after all. And as for not being able to help the man, maybe I couldn't help him perfectly. But I knew I could do my part, and that is all God asks of us, to do the best we can, to listen, to love and to be a good friend.

E: That's a good point. What else can you tell us about being a neighbor?

I: There are lots of ways to be a neighbor. The Samaritan demonstrated one way, finding someone in need and helping them. In my job, I am a neighbor in a different way, I welcome people who are new. You can be a neighbor both ways yourself. Like at your school or church, if you see a friend who is sad you can cheer them up and that is being a neighbor like the Samaritan. Or if someone new moves to your class, you can welcome them and help them feel comfortable, like I do at my inn.

S: Have you met any interesting people?

I: All kinds! The guests at my inn tell me new stories, share new foods, sing new songs, and make me laugh at new jokes. Each person who comes helps me see another part of God's creation. I try to be as much of a blessing to my guests as they are to me. It is like your theme verse for today: "Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor." I try

to be a blessing to my guests, and they are a blessing in turn to me. And in that way, we build each other up and build up the neighborhood of God.

S: I'd never thought of it that way. When I help my neighbor, they are also helping me by teaching me new things and expanding the neighborhood of God. It's pretty cool how we all work together like that.

E: That is pretty cool. Thanks for coming today and sharing your stories with us. And [to Sage] thanks for bringing him.

I: You're welcome. Glad I could share my stories with you. Have fun today learning more about how to welcome.

S: Yes, you're welcome. And thank you for this whole week of helping me think about what Jesus taught me. I learned a lot with your help. Hey, look at that! By helping each other, neighbors became friends! Goodbye!

E: Bye!

DAY 5: Building God's neighborhood

Review of the Day 5 theme and Bible verse

The theme for today is "Building God's neighborhood." Today is all about bringing everything together and putting it into action. The key verse for today is from Romans 15:2, "Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor." Today's activities are about action, showing us how we can be part of the building up of God's neighborhood.



CLOSING SONGS

(Write song titles here)



Closing prayer:

Dear God, what an amazing and diverse neighborhood you have created for us, full of different people to meet and new things to learn. Help us today as we learn about the work you have for us in building this neighborhood and how we can help share your love with the world. Amen.

Dismissal to small group time.



FAMILY TIME

**Dive into scripture in small groups
and share in conversation about God's love
for us and our call to love the neighbor.**



FAMILY TIME

Lesson focus:

God loves us. All love comes from God. Because God loves us, we can love others.

Opener: My neighbor is ...

To help everyone get to know each other, open with a simple name game. Have the group sit in a circle, and then divide the group into pairs based on whom they are sitting next to. Have the pairs introduce themselves to each other, using one or more of the questions below. After a few minutes, have them end their conversations. Then each person introduces their partner to the group giving the person's name and one fact they learned about them, using the format, "My neighbor is [name]. His/her favorite color is ..." To practice the names, have the whole group respond, "Hi, neighbor [name]."

Question ideas for older children
(choose one or more):

- What is your favorite movie?
- What do you like most about summer?
- If you could be any animal, what would you be and why?

Question ideas for younger children
(choose one):

- What is your favorite color?
- What is your favorite animal?
- What is your favorite toy?

Engaging Scripture:

Luke 10:25-28 and 1 John 4:19

Opening question

- Today's theme is about love. What are some ways to show someone you love them?

Read together Luke 10:25-28.

- What two things does the law say we should love? *[God and our neighbor]*
- Of the two, which one comes first? *[God]*
- Why do you think God comes first? *[Because love comes from God, because God loves us, because God created us, etc. Affirm any answers.]*

Our theme verse for today is from 1 John 4:19, "We love because God first loved us." There are lots of ways that God shows us how much God loves us. God shows us love by this beautiful world that God made. God also shows us love by giving us places like "Who Is My Neighbor?" vacation Bible school so we can learn more about God's love and by giving us friends and family who care about us.

- What are some other ways you see God showing God's love?
- What are some ways you show your love of God? *[coming to church, praying, singing songs, etc.]*

One of the ways the Bible says we should show our love for God is by loving other people.

- What are some ways that other people show they love us?
- What are some ways that we show love to other people?

Closing prayer

Dear God, thank you for loving us. And thank you for all the ways you show your love for us. Help us today as we learn more about how you love us and how we can share your love with others. Amen.

DAY 2: *Let your light shine*



FAMILY TIME

Lesson focus:

Anyone can be a neighbor.

Opener: Neighbor Chase

This is a variation of Duck, Duck, Goose. The point of the game is to reinforce names from the day before. Before you begin, have everyone share their name again so the names are fresh in people's minds. If you have had any new people join your group, make sure to introduce them.

Have the group sit in a circle with one person on the outside of the circle who is "it." "It" goes around the circle, touching each person lightly on the head and saying their name. If they forget someone's name, encourage the person or group to help. At some point, rather than saying a name, the person who is "it" taps someone on the head and says "neighbor." "It" continues around the circle the way they were going, while the person who is the neighbor goes the opposite way. When the two players meet, they stop, shake hands, introduce themselves to each other, and then offer a compliment. They then race back around the circle to sit down in the open spot. Regardless of who got back first, the person who was "it" then takes the spot, while the person who was the neighbor becomes "it." "It" must now choose a new person to be the neighbor. Continue playing until everyone has had a chance to give and receive a compliment.

Variation for younger children:

Younger children may have a harder time remembering all the names, so they can use a simplified version of the game. Invite the children to sit in a circle, as above, and choose one child to be "it." The child who is "it" can go around the circle as before, tapping each child lightly as

they go. They can use "duck, duck, goose," as in the traditional game, or they can use "neighbor, neighbor, friend" as the pattern. When a child is tapped and called "friend," the child who is "it" runs one way around the circle, while the child who is tagged runs the other way. When they meet, they can shake hands and say, "God loves you!" The child who was "it" then takes the open spot in the circle, while the "friend" becomes "it." Continue until everyone has had a chance to be "it."

Engaging Scripture:

Luke 10:30-31 and Isaiah 58:10

Opening question: Yesterday, we started by playing a name game because we didn't know each other very well. Today, we played Neighbor Chase, and we all knew each other's names and had fun. What changed? [We got to know each other.]

Read together Luke 10:30-31.

- In the skit today, why did the priest say they didn't help the person in need? Why didn't they think they could be the person's neighbor?
- How did Sage feel when they heard the priest's response? How did you feel?
- Have you ever shown care for someone you didn't know or didn't know very well? Has someone who didn't know you or didn't know you very well shown you care?

Read together the theme verse, Isaiah 58:10.

- The theme for today is "Let your light shine." What do you think it means to let your light shine?
- What are some ways you could let your light shine?
- Have you seen any lights shining so far this week at vacation Bible school?

Closing prayer

Dear God, thank you for giving us so many new people to become our friends and neighbors this week. Help us today as we learn new ways to let our light shine to the world. Amen.



FAMILY TIME

Lesson focus:

There are lots of ways to help and lots of people who can help us help others.

Opener: Human Knot

Have the group stand in a circle, facing inward. Then invite everyone to reach into the circle and take the hands of someone at random. Make sure no one grabs both hands of the same person; each hand must be from a different person. Then, instruct the group to “untangle” themselves without letting go of their hands. For younger children, have adult leaders help in a more active role. For older groups, encourage the youth to take the lead, or even have them try to accomplish the task without speaking.

Note: At some points, participants may find themselves in uncomfortable or awkward positions. Try to watch for this and help when necessary.

Discussion question ideas:

For older children:

- How difficult was it to untangle yourselves?
- Would you have planned to take a different hand if you had known you would need to untangle yourselves?
- *(If the group was able to speak during the activity)* How did you decide as a group where to move to get untangled? Why was communicating together important? What would happen if everyone tried to do their own idea without checking with the group?
- *(If the group did the activity without speaking)* What made the knot harder to untangle when you couldn't speak to each other? What other problems might be harder to face if we can't talk

or communicate with each other?

For younger children:

- How difficult was it to untangle yourselves?
- What was the hardest part?
- Did having an adult help? What are some other ways that adults – or other people – can help us?

Engaging Scripture: Luke 10:32 and 1 John 4:18a

Opening question: When you first formed the human knot, could you see how to get out of it? How did you finally get untangled?

Read together Luke 10:32.

- In the skit today, why did the priest's helper say they didn't help the person in need?
- What were some of the reasons they felt afraid? Did you agree with the reasons? Why or why not?
- How did Sage feel when hearing the priest's helper's response? How did you feel?
- Having heard Sage's advice and talked about it with our small group, what do you think you might have done if you were in the priest's helper's place?

Read together the theme verse, 1 John 4:18a.

- When you are afraid, is there someone in your life who helps you be less afraid? Who is that person and what do they do?
- Have you ever prayed to God about something that scared you? How did that make you feel?

Closing prayer

Thank you, God, for loving us. Because of your love, we know we never have to be afraid because you are always with us. When we are afraid, help us feel the comfort of your love. Amen.

DAY 4: God loves everyone



FAMILY TIME

Lesson focus:

Everyone has things in common with other people and ways they are different from other people. Yet, all of us are part of God's neighborhood.

Opener: LOVE List

The Samaritan showed love to the man in need in a lot of different ways. Invite the group to brainstorm ways they can show love that start with the four letters of the word "love." You can also have the children use their bodies to make the letters as they call out the ways to show love. For example, one child might make an "L" with their body while saying "Let my little brother/sister borrow a toy." Another child might make an "O" while saying, "Make origami for my grandmother."

Engaging Scripture:

Luke 10:33-37 and Acts 10:34b-35

Read together Luke 10:33-37

- During the skit today, why was Sage unsure about the Samaritan? If you had been the Emcee, how might you have eased Sage's fears?
- Are you a cat person, a dog person, or both, or neither? Does anyone prefer a pet that is completely different, like a rat or a horse or a snake? Do our differences mean one person is better than another?
- How did the Samaritan respond to the man in need? How was that different from how the priest and the priest's helper responded? Why do you think the Samaritan did what he did?

Read together Acts 10:34b-35

- Vocab quiz! What does the word partiality mean? *[It means to like or prefer one thing more than*

another thing.]

- Is partiality always bad? *[No, many people prefer one thing over another. Perhaps one person prefers vanilla ice cream, while another person prefers chocolate ice cream. It's even OK to have people you are closer to, whom you prefer to spend time with more than other people, like family or good friends.]*
- When is partiality not OK? *[When it causes us to treat some people differently than other people or, especially, to be mean or hurtful to someone because they are different.]*
- What does the theme verse mean when it says, "God shows no partiality"? *[It means God loves everyone the same because everyone is God's child.]* How does it feel to know that God loves everyone the same amount and that amount is a whole lot!?

For younger children:

Read together Luke 10:33-35. (You may want to choose a translation with language more suited to younger children, like the Spark Story Bible from Augsburg Fortress.)

- What are some ways you are different from other people?
- Do you think God loves everyone, even people who are different from us?
- In the story, the Samaritan and the man he helped were different from each other. But did the Samaritan still help him?
- Why should we help people, even if they are different from us?

Closing prayer

Dear God, thank you for making every person in your neighborhood. We are all different, and you love us all the same. Help us follow in the example of our neighbor the Samaritan and show your love to everyone we meet. Amen.

DAY 5: Building God's neighborhood



FAMILY TIME

Lesson focus:

There are lots of ways to be a good neighbor. And when we work together, we can help build the neighborhood of God for everyone.

Opener: "And then ..."

Have the group sit in a circle. One person starts to tell the first sentence or two of a simple story. (Example: One day I was walking on the beach Jim and Nicolette were baking a cake "Look out!" shouted Miranda) For younger kids, it is probably best if an adult gets the game started. When the first person stops, the next person takes over the story, adding a sentence or two. The goal is to keep the story going to make it as long, and as strange, as possible.

Engaging Scripture:

Luke 10:33-37 and Romans 15:2

Opening questions: What were some surprising or funny parts of the story your group came up with? Did it go in a different direction than you thought it would when it started? How did it feel to say a sentence and have someone else decide what came next?

Read together Luke 10:33-37.

- During the skit today, what did the innkeeper say their job was? What were their favorite parts?
- How was the innkeeper a good neighbor to the man who needed help?
- Imagine you were an innkeeper. How would you welcome people and make them feel at home in your town?

Read together Romans 15:2.

- The theme verse says by pleasing and helping our neighbors we build up the neighborhood. What do you think it means to "build the neighborhood"? [We help share God's love with the world.]
- How did the Samaritan build God's neighborhood? The innkeeper? Sage?
- What are some ways you've learned to build God's neighborhood this week?
- How could you share what you've learned with others?

Closing prayer

Dear God, thank you for this great week of vacation Bible school and this last fun day together. Be with us today as we learn about how to put everything we've learned into action to build the neighborhood of God. Amen.



STORYTIME

Share real stories of our neighbors who have been accompanied through the work of ELCA World Hunger and learn about the beautiful countries in which they live!

DAY 1: God loves us



Where in the world is my neighbor?

A map of the world is on page 38. It can be used for a short opening activity at the start of each storytime rotation. This will help children see the many places in the world where God is at work and will tie together the stories from each day. If you will be seeing different groups in the rotation, you may want to make a copy for each group so that each can have their own map to follow with you during their storytime.

Open your storytime by telling the children that the ELCA works with neighbors all over the world. Holding up the map, ask them to find the country or region on the map. (Most may not be able to do this accurately.) Show them the correct location and then color it in and highlight it with a sticker or mark it in some other way. For older kids, you can share some of the facts about each country or region. If you do this each day, by the end of the week, you will have six countries or regions marked on the map.

Storytime



LOCATION: Malawi

FACTS ABOUT MALAWI

- Just over 18 million people live in Malawi.
- While Malawi is a landlocked country, roughly a fifth of it is water. Lake Malawi is the ninth largest lake in the world and home to more species of fish than any other lake.
- The most popular sport in Malawi is soccer.
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi has 102,000 members.

Have you ever cooked a meal? What did you make? Was it a lot of work?

Cooking can be fun, but it can also be a lot of work. It can also be a way to show people we love them, by making sure they have enough good food to eat.

These women (picture #1) are from a village in a country called Malawi, which is in Africa. Their names are Alpha, Kristina, Dorothy, Irene and Martha. Together, they work at a nursery school for kids who are about your age. The nursery school is run by the church in Malawi.

In Malawi, many children don't have enough food to eat, but the church helps make sure that whoever comes to the school can share in the

meals. Every day, Alpha, Kristina, Dorothy, Irene and Martha cook food for almost 70 children at the nursery school. That's a lot! How much food do you think you would need for 70 people? *(Allow time for humorous answers.)*

The food the women cook is all donated by the families of the children. The kids come from 10 villages around the school, to learn and to eat. It's a lot of work – and a lot of food – but the women know that each meal they cook helps make sure the children have the food they need to learn and to grow. Dorothy says this keeps them going every day. She says, "Each and every child here is everyone's child through the bond of love." Because God loves the children, Alpha, Kristina, Dorothy, Irene, Martha, the church in Malawi, and our church here work together to make sure the children feel loved. And one way to do that is by making sure they get enough to eat. (picture #2)

One of the ways that God shows God's love for us is by providing us with all that we need. We can give thanks to God for all that God gives us by sharing our gifts with others. Because our church works with other churches around the world, we can share our gifts with our neighbors next door or all the way around the world in Malawi. Through people like Alpha, Kristina, Dorothy, Irene and Martha, the children at the nursery school in Malawi can know that they are loved, too.

What are some ways we can show our neighbors that God loves them and that we love them?

DAY 1: God loves us

PICTURE #1



PICTURE #2



DAY 2: *Let your light shine*

Storytime



LOCATION: Colombia

FACTS ABOUT COLOMBIA

- More than 45 million people live in Colombia.
- Most people in Colombia speak Spanish, but there are many indigenous languages spoken, as well.
- Colombia has a lot of animals and plants. In fact, it is the second-most "biodiverse" country in the world. (The first is Brazil.) This means there are more species of animals and plants in Colombia than in almost any other country in the world.

This story is about a ministry in Colombia. If you are using the map activity for the Storytime station (see the note for the Day 1 story) help the children find and mark Colombia on the map. Be sure to teach the children the name of the country, as well as how to say it. You may want to give a review of the other countries they have learned about during the week.

Do you remember today's theme? (*Let your light shine.*) What do you think it means to "let your light shine"? (*Affirm all responses.*)

Is it ever hard to let your light shine? Do you ever feel like hiding your light?

In some communities, it can be hard to see the light — and to feel like you have a light to shine, or something special to offer others. But we know that God is everywhere, in every neighborhood and with every person.

One of the people God is with is Maria. Maria is a 14-year-old girl who lives in Colombia. She and her family live in a neighborhood called Caracolí (car-ah-co-LEE). Many of the people in Caracolí live there because they had to flee their homes in other parts of Colombia. Maria's grandmother was one of them. She left her hometown years ago to

seek a better life.

Caracolí is a crowded neighborhood. The streets are made of dirt and dusty, and the homes are pieced together with scraps of wood and metal. Many don't have water, electricity or protection from the weather. It's a hard place for a young girl like Maria to feel like she has a light to shine. But she does.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia has a program called Projecting My Future, which works with Maria and other young girls and women. The program is supported by ELCA World Hunger. In Projecting My Future, Maria and the other girls and women get a chance to develop their skills as leaders and explore their talents.

One of the skills Maria and her group learned was how to style hair. Have you ever been to someone who cuts and styles your hair? It's a pretty difficult job! But Maria got so good at it that she and the other young women in her group offer their services to their neighbors. This helps Maria earn money for her family and "let her light shine" as someone with an important skill to help her neighbors.

Sometimes, helping our neighbors is about letting our own light shine, but often, walking with our neighbors is even more important when we can help their light shine by helping them to see the talents and gifts God has given them. For Maria, being part of Projecting My Future is one way she is learning to let her light shine in Caracolí.

Ask:

What are some ways you may have helped someone else's light shine? What are some ways we can encourage other people to shine their light?

DAY 3: No fear

Storytime



LOCATION: Rwanda

FACTS ABOUT RWANDA

- Over 11 million people live in Rwanda.
- Rwanda is also known as the land of a thousand hills, because most of the country is rolling, grassy hills.
- Half of the world's mountain gorillas live in Rwanda.
- Soccer, volleyball, basketball, cricket and running are popular sports in Rwanda.

This story is about a ministry in Rwanda. If you are using the map activity for the Storytime station (see the note for the Day 1 story) help the children find and mark Rwanda on the map. You may want to give a review of the other countries they have learned about during the week.

Do you remember the theme verse for today?
"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18a).

And what is today's theme? (*No fear.*)

What kinds of things make you afraid? (*Affirm all responses.*)

What about your parents; do you think they are ever afraid? (*Allow time for some possibly humorous responses.*)

Everyone has something that scares them, even adults. For adults who take care of children — parents, grandparents and other caregivers — thinking about kids being hurt or not having the things they need can be pretty scary. But with God, "perfect love casts out fear." Our church works with other churches to make sure that parents don't have to be afraid about what might happen to their children.

One of these parents is Angelique, who lives with her son, Frank, in Rwanda. In Rwanda, a violent war not that long ago left lots of children — almost 750,000 — without parents to take care of them. Frank's father died when he was only 2 years old, and his mother, Angelique, was very sick. Angelique had a serious disease called HIV, and as he got older, Frank had to help take care of her. Without his father and with Angelique's illness, the family was very poor, and Angelique was worried about Frank.

What do you think were some of the things that Angelique might have worried about?
(*Affirm all responses.*)

Angelique worried a lot about Frank's future. Frank was a good student. He worked hard and got good grades. But Angelique was scared that without money to pay for school, he wouldn't be able to get an education and a good job when he got older. They were members of the Lutheran Church in Rwanda, and the church knew that a lot of parents were worried about their kids, just like Angelique was worried about Frank. So the church started a scholarship program that would help them pay for school. Our church worked with them, providing support to get it started.

Frank's good grades earned him a scholarship, and he was able to go to school. Altogether, the church was able to help 136 children get the supplies and money they needed to go to school. When Angelique heard about the scholarship, her fears turned to joy. She said, "Indeed, God is great."

There were lots of things Frank, Angelique and their neighbors could be scared of — violence, sickness and the future. But because God works through our church and their church in Rwanda, Frank and Angelique don't have to be afraid. They can be hopeful about their future. And so can we.

DAY 4: God loves everyone

Storytime



LOCATION: United States

FACTS ABOUT UNITED STATES

- Over 325 million people live in the United States.
- At least 350 languages are spoken in homes in the United States.
- There are more than 2 million farms in the United States, and it exports more food than any other country.

This story is about a ministry in Washington state. If you are using the map activity for the Storytime station (see the note for the Day 1 story) help the children find and mark Washington on the map. You may want to give a review of the other places they have learned about during the week.

Do you remember our theme for today? (*We are all neighbors.*)

Jesus thought it was pretty important to be a good neighbor. In fact, when the man asked Jesus about what he should do to live a godly life, Jesus told him a story about being a good neighbor.

What makes someone a good neighbor? (*Affirm all responses.*)

Being a good neighbor means helping your neighbor get the things they need. One of the things many of our neighbors need is food. In the United States, a lot of families don't always know where their next meal will come from. If parents don't have enough food to eat, who else goes hungry? (*Children.*) Our country works with schools to help feed kids whose families can't afford food. Some of them can get breakfast or lunch for free at school. But what do they do on the weekend?

In Washington, the people at Hope Lutheran Church were concerned about the kids in their

neighborhood not having enough food. They wanted to do something, but they weren't sure what to do.

What would you do if you knew some of the children in your school didn't have enough food? (*Affirm all answers.*)

The people of Hope Lutheran heard about other congregations that had backpack buddy programs. In backpack programs, people pack backpacks or bags with food and give them to the school. The principal and teachers at the school make sure that the backpacks go to hungry kids every Friday, so they can take the food home to their families for the weekend. This helps make sure that they have enough to eat all week long.

The people of Hope Lutheran Church started their program by helping 15 children at a local school. Other people in the community heard about what they were doing and wanted to help. Now, working together, they give food to almost 100 children in their community!

What do you think it would be like to be at school if you were really hungry? Maybe it would be hard to pay attention? Or, maybe you would feel different from other students who had enough to eat? By helping children have enough to eat, Hope Lutheran's backpack program makes sure the children they serve have the food they need for energy to play and do well in school. They're being good neighbors by helping to take care of their neighbors — especially the young ones.

And did you know that YOU are part of this? The backpack program in Washington started because of a how-to guide that ELCA World Hunger, our church's ministry, put together after listening to congregations that were already doing backpack programs. When our congregation supports ELCA World Hunger, we're making things like this possible. By working together as church, we can make sure that all our neighbors know they are loved and that someone cares for them.

DAY 4: God loves everyone

PICTURE #1



PICTURE #2



DAY 5: Building God's neighborhood

Storytime



LOCATION: Central African Republic and Japan

FACTS ABOUT CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC AND JAPAN

- More than 126 million people live in Japan. More than 4.5 million people live in Central African Republic.
- The official language of Japan is Japanese, while in the Central African Republic, French and Sangho are the official languages.
- The Japanese word for Japan is Nihon or Nippon, which means "origin of the sun," and Japan is sometimes known as the land of the rising sun because it is to the east of Asia.
- Rice and noodles are staple foods in Japan. Noodles are often slurped to help cool them down. Loud slurping is said to indicate the food is delicious.
- More than 80 ethnic groups call the Central African Republic home.
- People have inhabited the area of Central African Republic for nearly 10,000 years.

This story is about a leader from the Central African Republic participating in a training program supported by ELCA World Hunger in Japan. If you are using the map activity for the Storytime station (see the note in the Day 1 story), help the children find and mark both Japan and the Central African Republic. You may want to give a review of the other countries they have learned about during the week.

Have you ever traveled far from your home? What was your experience like? Were you nervous about being far away?

Sometimes, when we travel or leave the places we are used to, we might worry about where we will stay or what will happen. But God gives us

neighbors who welcome us and help us. And God wants us to welcome the neighbors we meet — even when they are from very far away. By welcoming each other, we can learn from each other and work together to help our world.

One of the people our church has worked with is Paul, a student and leader in the Lutheran Evangelical Church in the Central African Republic. Paul's neighbors are farmers who work hard to grow their crops and raise animals. But one of the problems they have is that, with so many people growing the same things they grow, they can't sell their crops for enough money to buy the things they need. So, Paul went to a school in Japan to learn how to help them.

How far away is your school from your home? Well, Paul's school was all the way on the other side of the world from his home. And our church, through ELCA World Hunger, helped pay for him to go there.

Paul spent three months living in Japan, and he learned all kinds of things. He learned how to grow food that is healthy for people and that didn't hurt the soil or water. He also learned how to use greenhouses to grow vegetables like onions.

What's a greenhouse? (*Affirm answers.*) A greenhouse is a building that plants can be grown in. By using greenhouses, farmers can grow crops during different times of the year. For Paul and his neighbors in the Central African Republic, using greenhouses means they can grow their onions at times when other farmers can't, so they can sell them for more money. Paul also learned how to get milk from goats.

After spending time in Japan, Paul went back to the Central African Republic to share what he learned with the people in his community. The things he learned will help his neighbors improve their farming and feed themselves and their families. But do you know what was the most important thing Paul learned? He learned that he is an important person in his community and that he can help others by being a leader.

DAY 5: Building God's neighborhood

Paul might not have known it at first, but he had some pretty important neighbors in Japan, neighbors who would welcome him and share their wisdom with him. And because they welcomed him, Paul can welcome and help his neighbors in the Central African Republic. And that was possible in part because our church works with our neighbors around the world, knowing that we can learn from each other and serve God by loving each other. Like the Bible says, sometimes when we welcome neighbors, we entertain angels.

How were the people in Japan "angels" to Paul?
How might he have been an "angel" to them?

What are some ways we can help our neighbors feel welcome in our community?

STORYTIME MAP



STORYTIME KEY MAP





GAMES

Playing is one of the many ways we learn and give praise to God! Choose an activity that fits your group and schedule, and have fun with your neighbors!

DAY 1: God loves us



Circle of Neighbors

Age range: All

Materials needed:

- List of topics for partners to discuss
- Bell/horn/voice to indicate when to switch

Directions: Have the group form an inner circle and an outer circle with an equal number of children in each facing each other. Space them far enough apart to allow them to hear each other but not everyone else. Choose one of the questions below for them to discuss together. Allow for a brief conversation with both partners having a chance to share freely. After a minute or two, pause the game and ask a few children to share what they learned about their partner. After a few children have had a chance to share, have the inner circle move clockwise so they are lined up with the next person in the outer circle. (For younger children, you can keep the same question. For older children, choose a different question.) After each round, invite a few children to share what they learned. For older children, you can make this a bit more challenging by asking them at the end of the game to remember what they learned about all of their partners.

Question suggestions for younger children:

- Who lives in your house with you?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Who is your best friend?
- What is your favorite TV show?
- What is your favorite food?
- Do you like winter or summer better? Why?

Question suggestions for older children:

- What is your favorite sport? Do you like to watch it or play it?
- What is the best thing you like about church?
- What is your dream vacation?
- What is one thing you don't know how to do that you wish you did?
- When you think of God, how do you picture God?
- If you could get a present right now, anything in the whole world, what would it be?

Debrief: Invite the children to share something they learned from their partners. You can also invite them to point to someone they found something in common with.

Ask:

- What did you learn about someone that surprised you?
- How do we get to know our neighbors? (By listening to them.)
- Listening to our neighbors and getting to know them are ways we can show them we love them and care about them. How can we be good neighbors by listening?

DAY 1: God loves us

Blanket Game

In this game, children will try to remember each other's names. You can play Circle of Neighbors beforehand to help set this up, or another similar getting-to-know-you game.

Age range: All

Materials needed:

large opaque blanket (may get dirty)

Directions: Split the group into two teams, with each team sitting on one side of the blanket so that the blanket divides them. The leader and a volunteer hold the blanket, preventing groups from seeing each other. Each group sends up one person to be their representative. This person sits directly in front of the blanket so that when the blanket is dropped, they are squarely in front of a person from the opposing team. On the count of three, the leaders let go of the blanket so that the two representatives from each team can see each other. The first team representative to say the name of the opposing team's representative wins that player over to their team. Once the losing player joins the other team, play continues until all or most people are on one side of the blanket. For an extra challenge (or if you play it again another day), play using last names!

Debrief: You can use the questions below to discuss the game with the children.

- Do names come easily for you?
- Do you notice if people know your name?
- Do you like to be remembered?
- Is it easier to call someone a friend or neighbor if we know their name?

For older children, ask:

- When you don't know someone's name, how do you ask?
- Are you ever embarrassed to ask someone's name?

Parachute Games

Parachutes are colorful and inviting and bring people together. You can make connections with these games related to neighbors or simply to have fun. Below are some ideas, with brief notes about lessons to draw from each.

Age range: K-6th grade, however, a smaller chute would be wiser for kindergartners.

Materials needed:

A 14-foot or 20-foot play parachute (can be purchased online.)

Ideas for games:

- **Pinwheel:** Have children hold the parachute by the edge. Walk in one direction together, Lesson: God's love connects us all, with Christ as the center. Walking together is much easier if we are all working together.
- **Popcorn:** Have children hold the parachute by the edge. Place lightweight balls in the parachute and lift the parachute up and down to make them bounce. Toss the balls into the air with the parachute. Lesson: God's love is like the ball, "bouncing" everywhere (God's love "bounces" everywhere, sometimes in unexpected ways).
- **Mushroom:** Have children hold the parachute by the edge. Lift the parachute high and then have everyone move under it quickly, bringing the edges toward the ground so that the parachute "mushrooms" up above them. Lesson: We are covered by God's love.
- **Trading places:** Kids holding onto each color area, when named, run under to trade places with those on the other side of the parachute who are in the same color. Lesson: When we trade places with other people, we see things from a different point of view. Who are your new neighbors standing beside you?

DAY 2: *Let your light shine*



Light Tag

Age range: All

Materials needed:

- Large lighted glow stick bracelets, one for every four players.

Three or four small glow sticks can be pieced together with connectors to make a large bracelet.

Leaders note: Consider playing this game indoors (or if you have a large shady area outdoors) as the glow-sticks may not be noticeable in direct sunlight.

Directions: Designate a playing area and have one person be “it” (more if you have a larger group). When the game begins, the person who is “it” chases the others and tries to tag them. A person is safe from being tagged if they are holding a “light” – a large lighted glow stick bracelet that can be easily passed from person to person. Use one glow stick for every four runners. When a person is tagged without holding the glowstick, they become “it.” Demonstrate this game in slow motion, showing the importance of passing the light to help your neighbors stay safe.

Debrief questions:

- Was it hard or easy to share your light to help keep others safe?
- How is our faith like sharing your light?
- Can sharing your light give your neighbor hope?
- How can sharing our light make other people feel safe or feel cared for?

For younger children, it may be possible to play a couple games in your time frame. The “Biffer” game below will most likely take the entire time.

Band-Aid Tag

Age range: All

Materials needed: none

Directions: This is a freeze tag game with an emphasis on needing help from others to heal our wounds. Designate a playing area and select one volunteer to be “it.” Whenever someone is tagged by “it,” they must hold a “Band-Aid” (use their hand as a Band-Aid) on the spot where they were tagged. Then the game continues. When someone runs out of Band-Aids, (two wounds are covered with two hands and the person is tagged a third time with no extra hand to cover the wound), they are frozen until two other people come over to help them by “operating.” The two other people need to tag the frozen person at the same time and count to five, then all three can run again. Let the game continue for as long as it remains exciting and fun. Switch the person who is “it” often.

Debrief questions:

- What did it feel like to be wounded? Was it just as easy to run?
- Why did you choose to risk getting tagged to help someone else?
- Did you rescue your friends or rescue anyone who needed it?

For older children:

- All of us are “wounded” at some time. Maybe we feel sad or lonely, or maybe we have been hurt by other people. How can we help other people know they aren’t alone and that God cares about their “wounds”?
- Did you spend more time in the game trying to keep yourself safe from “it” or trying to help other people who were wounded? God wants us to do both – care for ourselves and care for our neighbors.

DAY 3: No fear



Yurt Circle

Age range: second grade and older

Materials needed:

- open space with enough room for the group and softer ground, such as grass, carpet or mats
- 8 feet of webbing or rope made into a loop with a strong knot

Directions: Form a loop of webbing or rope with a strong knot. Everyone in the group (15 or fewer) holds onto the webbing with both hands. The adult leader gives the commands when the group is ready and focused. Everyone leans back at the same time with straight backs, arms and legs. Come back to center on the command. If there were any challenges (for example, people falling or losing their grip), try again, making adjustments or talking about how to adjust. After a successful attempt at working together to evenly lean back with everyone balanced, try phase two: First lean back, then lower down to a squatting position all at the same time, return to standing, return to center. If time allows, have the group pick a new leader to give the commands.

Debrief questions:

- Why was it important for everyone to play their part to stay stiff and lean back at the same time? What would happen if someone got distracted and didn't?
- Did you ever feel afraid that we wouldn't be able to do this? What encouraged you?
- Imagine that this piece of webbing/rope is God's love. We cling to it and hold on tight, knowing

that if we all trust in this love, we can do anything! We don't need to be afraid!

Protect Your Neighbor

Age range: second grade and older

Materials needed:

- many light, soft objects to serve as obstacles (such as large paper cups, empty plastic bottles, cones, soft foam balls, bean bags, etc.).
- a starting line and ending line marked by cones, tape or string
- blindfolds

Directions: This is a team-building activity involving trust and careful listening. Begin by dividing the children into pairs. Very young children may need an adult helper. In each pair, one person will be blindfolded. The goal of the game is for the child who can see to guide their blindfolded partner through the "hazard field" without stepping on any hazards. There are two variations you can use with this game. First, you can pre-set the hazards in a large area, like a side yard or parking lot cordoned off from cars. In this case, up to three pairs can go through the hazard field at the same time. Or, you can use a smaller area (about 10 feet by 6 feet) and invite one pair to go at a time. In this second version, because the area is smaller, the partner without the blindfold can toss the "hazards" into the field before guiding their partner through it.

Begin by explaining the game to the children. Let them know that the partner without the blindfold cannot touch the other person or enter the hazard field. They can only use verbal instructions (for example: "Take one step to the left." or "Take two steps toward 3 o'clock.") If the blindfolded partner touches a hazard, they must start over or wait for another turn.

After a pair successfully reaches the other side of the hazard field, swap roles and repeat the process.

DAY 3: No fear

If more than one pair is going at a time, be careful that blindfolded people don't crash into each other. The facilitator should ensure collisions don't occur by walking around and keeping people separated.

For older children, suggest that a pair develop a unique communication system. When participants swap roles, give participants some review and planning time to refine their communication method.

Debrief questions:

- How did it feel to be blindfolded? Were you afraid at any point?
- Did you trust your partner to direct you safely?
- If there were multiple pairs going at one time, how could you distinguish the call of your partner from others?
- How does God tell us how to get through scary times in our lives? How does God speak to us? (Through family, friends, and neighbors)

Options for K-second grade:

- Use a guide line: Children are blindfolded and hold onto a rope. An adult leader guides them through the hazard field or merely to another destination.
- Guiding by touch: If children are too young to know directions, you can allow their partners to guide them by touching their shoulders. Both hands on someone's shoulders can mean stop; a hand on the right or left shoulder can mean turn in that direction.

Hot Chocolate River

Age range: third grade and older

Materials needed:

- two equal lengths of rope or small cones to designate the edges of the chocolate river
- carpet squares or paper plates to represent marshmallows

Directions: Lay two ropes on the ground parallel to each other, about 20 feet apart. Have the children line up on one side of the rope, and tell them that they are looking at a giant hot-chocolate river. They must get their entire team across the hot-chocolate river, but it is too hot to swim across and too deep to walk across. (Obviously, they cannot walk around the river, since it does not end just because the ropes do.) The only way to get across is by using the large, fluffy "marshmallows" that you provide (the carpet squares, poly spots or paper plates). Give the campers about eight or nine "marshmallows" so that they have enough to get across with one or two left over.

Advise the group that this challenge isn't about physical abilities; it is about communication. Unfortunately, the current in the river is so strong that it actually sweeps the marshmallows away if someone is not holding them down with a hand, foot or other safe appendage. Also, the marshmallows swell up once they are placed in the river, and they become too heavy to move again, so they must remain where they are placed. This means that if no one is pressing down on a "marshmallow" after it is placed in the river, the leader will have to pick it up and remove it from the river as it has washed away. And since the river is so hot, the "marshmallows" cannot be picked up or moved once they are placed in a particular spot. Play the game until everyone has made it across the river. The group may need to try a few times until they get everyone across, so continue to encourage them to communicate with each other!

Debrief questions:

- How did you plan out how you would use the marshmallows?
- Was it hard to remember to make sure that everyone made it across?
- Did people use different strategies to make it across? How did your differences help you work together or learn from each other?
- Eventually, everyone was able to work together to make it across the river. The river is like a neighborhood, where different people work

DAY 3: No fear

together in different ways to overcome obstacles. When have you worked with other people to accomplish or fix something?

Options for K-second grade:

You can use the same scenario of a chocolate river for younger kids, and they would love the challenge to cross the river but have less capacity to work together as a group. For younger children, have them travel across the river individually with just enough marshmallows to get across. Then try having kids travel across in pairs, giving them two extra marshmallows and making sure they understand that the marshmallows wash down stream if they are not held down. Or, you can set the marshmallows out and allow them to remain in place rather than washing downstream.

Debrief questions for younger children:

- After crossing individually ask: What if every marshmallow were a person in your life helping you get to safety? Who are the people you trust to help you?
- Was it easier to travel across by yourself or with others? Sometimes life is like that; we may need help from our neighbor to get across, and there is a cost to that. It takes more time and effort, but that's how a strong neighborhood is built!
- How did you decide on a plan to get across with a partner?
- Did you need to listen to each other? Help each other?
- Who was afraid of falling into the chocolate river? God's perfect love casts out fear. What if this wasn't a chocolate river but rather a problem in your life? Who is always with you when you have a problem?

DAY 4: God loves everyone



Do You Love Your Neighbor?

Age range: all

Materials needed:

- Chairs, one less than the number of people participating. You can substitute poly spots or paper plates, as needed, if you are playing outside.

Directions: Everyone is sitting in a circle of chairs except for the person in the middle. The people sitting in the circle call out: “Do you love your neighbor?” The person in the center says “Yes, especially those who...” and then offers a description of a quality or activity (e.g. brushed their teeth this morning). All those who fit that description must get up and switch seats. However, they cannot switch seats with the person sitting next to them. The object is for the person in the middle to quickly take a seat from those that are switching seats before they become occupied again. The leader is encouraged to start in the middle to give some good examples when first explaining the game and then to do a practice round. This is a great way to learn about people and get to know our neighbors. Everyone in the circle is our neighbor and we feel more connected when we know each other better. You might say at the close of the game: “Raise your hand if you know your neighbors better! Remember, God loves everyone! Do you love your neighbor?”

Most kids will identify with external similarities, like, “those wearing a hat” which is fun and fine, however, with older kids, challenge them to really get to know their neighbors by discovering the way they act or

think. Give one example of something external and one internal. It might go like this: “Do you love your neighbor? Yes, especially those who play soccer!” (or like chocolate, ate pizza for dinner last night, like to read, etc.).

Islands

Age range: second grade and up

Materials needed:

- a large outdoor or indoor space
- 5 hula hoops
- cones to mark the play area (optional)
- music to play that can be started and stopped easily (This could be on your mobile phone or you could use a tambourine or other instrument to give a rhythm during the movement.)

Directions: This is a game of diminishing resources, played like musical chairs but using hula hoops instead. Begin by reminding the children of the theme for the day: We are all neighbors. God loves us and our neighbors – and calls us to love one another. While God provides abundantly for everyone, the good things we need to meet our needs are not always available to everyone. As a global “neighborhood,” we need to listen to our neighbor’s needs and work together to ensure everyone has enough. In stage one of this game, you will remove hoops per the instructions below. In stage two, you will add hoops back to the game.

Explain to the children that they are the entire world’s population, and each hoop represents one “island” in the world that they can live on. They must move around to find a safe place to live in the “world” as the game advances. Begin by having everyone spread out in the different hoops. When the music starts, they must travel the globe. When the music stops, they need to be in an “island.” To make the game competitive for older children, those who are not in hoops when the music stops can be out of the game and wait

DAY 4: God loves everyone

to the side. To make the game more cooperative than competitive, when the music stops, all the children must fit themselves into the remaining hoops. Continue until the children are packed on the remaining islands trying to balance inside. One toe has to be inside the hula hoop in order to survive! Remove a hoop each round while the music plays with the following explanations:

1. Ice caps are melting because of climate change. The water level is gradually rising all over the world, but it has risen enough to cover an entire island! One of the islands is gone! I hope everyone was able to find a new island to live on!
2. An earthquake has left one island in shambles, and no one can live there anymore!
3. Fighting between groups on one island has made it unsafe to live on. All the people there had to leave to find a safe place to live.
4. A drought has ruined all the crops on another island! There is no water and very little food, so the people there had to move to another island.

Stage two:

Once all the children are on a single island, gradually add hoops back to the game, using the following prompts:

1. A group of churches have started working together to provide one of the islands with clean water for drinking and for watering their farms. Working together, they have helped the island respond to the drought.
2. Leaders on an island that was unsafe have been working for peace by bringing groups together to talk about the conflict. It has been hard work, but they have been able to reduce the conflict by working for peace. Some of the people can move back to the island.
3. Churches have worked together to clean up after the earthquake and start rebuilding homes. They also gave the people who were

hurt by the earthquake medical treatment and food. Now, people can move back to the island.

4. A group of islands have worked together to create more space for people whose island was flooded. They also helped build houses and give the people clothes, blankets and food to help them get started.

Debrief questions:

- What were some of the reasons people couldn't live on some of the islands anymore? Things like natural disasters, violence and drought are real reasons people often must leave their homes. Some people must travel very far to find new homes. This is called "migration." Migration happens when people must move out of a need for safety, freedom, or opportunity.
- How did you make sure more people could live on your island while you were playing?
- How did a problem on one island affect everyone?
- What were some of the reasons the islands were added back to the game? How did the islands become livable again?
- By working together, how can we make sure people can stay safe and live on their islands? What do you think this says about how we can help each other? Our church works with partners and other churches to learn about our neighbors' needs and address them together.
- God provides for our every need. How can we make sure that everyone is able to have enough, no matter which island they are on?

DAY 4: God loves everyone



All You Need

Age range: all

Materials needed:

- large space
- regular items available to participants (art supplies, writing utensils, sticky notes, etc.) These can be placed in several baskets around which the participants sit.

Overview: This activity shows us the amazing things we can create when we put our gifts, or assets, together. Each participant will contribute items to their group before knowing what task they will be given. The groups will then be asked to create a variety of “things” using only the assembled items. Then, the groups will get a chance to explain how they used what they had available to solve the problem.

Directions: Bring the children together in a space that is large enough to split into equal teams (keep teams no more than four to eight people, depending on the size of the whole group). Before explaining the rules, have each participant gather up five items that can be used in the activity. If you have baskets or buckets of items, direct them to choose from these. Once everyone has their items, have the teams put all their items in a pile in the middle of their group.

Tell the children that you are going to call out some silly things for everyone to create. Their job is to work creatively together with their team to make that thing using only the items in their pile. They can also use their bodies, if they need them! The item you call out could

be a “pizza” or maybe a “donkey,” or maybe “Jesus with a Superman cape!” Whatever it is, the groups have all they need to complete each task as long as they work together.

Call out the first item, giving the teams one to two minutes to create it. Once time is up, invite a member from each team to present to the rest of the whole group what they have created. The people presenting should rotate each round so that everyone gets a chance to speak. Continue in this fashion for as many rounds as necessary to give a variety of challenges to the teams.

Leader tips

- It is best to have a prepared list of items to keep an upbeat pace to the activity. As you make the list, start out with less elaborate things and build to more intricate challenges as participants understand the game more and get into it!
- Have a wide variety of challenges. This could range from a slice of pizza to reenacting the story of Jonah and the whale! The more participants can move around, the more engaging it will be.

List suggestions:

- slice of pizza
- sandwich
- teddy bear or stuffed animal
- robot
- smiley face
- nativity scene
- car
- animal you find at a zoo
- musical instrument
- birthday cake

Once you have gone through your list of challenges, ask the groups to return their items to where they found them and gather as a large group.

DAY 4: God loves everyone

Debrief questions for all ages:

- What was the hardest thing to make? What was the easiest?
- What item was the most useful? Was there an item that you didn't use?
- Why was it important to work together?

Debrief questions for older children:

- What gifts did you bring to your team? Were you the builder? Did you help others communicate their ideas? Did you listen carefully to someone else's ideas?
- What gifts do you bring with you wherever you go? Is being kind a gift? Being creative? Being willing to share?
- How do people in our congregation use their gifts to help our community?
- How can we help each other using the gifts God gave us?

Conclusion: God provides us with all that we need to meet our needs. By working together and sharing our gifts with one another, we can make sure everyone has "all you need!"

YOUR LIST OF ITEMS

DAY 5: Building God's neighborhood



Never Have I Ever

Age range: all

Materials needed:

- A handful of tokens for each person. Use what is in your area. They could be as simple as pinecones, marbles, pennies, (wrapped candies not encouraged). Five per person is enough, and the leader can hand out a few extras if people run out.

Directions: Everyone gathers or receives a handful of tokens to start. The group stands in a circle. Take turns going around the circle with each person calling out something they have always wanted to do. For example, "I have always dreamed of going to Disneyland," or "I have always wanted to sail on a boat," or "I have always wanted to play my instrument to an audience." If someone in the circle has done what another person has always wanted to do, they can give them a token. Also, if someone in the circle has the same dream as someone else, they can also give them one of their tokens. The object is to not only get to know about others' desires and experiences but also to get something from those who have experienced what you value. Allow space for impossible dreams, too! If someone shares an impossible dream, other children can give them a token if the dream is something they would like, too.

Debrief questions:

- How did sharing your dreams make you feel?
- How did it feel to get a token from someone?
- Sometimes we feel silly for having a certain dream or we may feel like we'll never get to do that one thing we've always wanted to, but maybe now you can see that there are people around

you who share your dreams. You can help each other move closer to your dreams by supporting one another. Did anyone discover this?

- How do we build up God's neighborhood by encouraging and supporting each other in our hopes and dreams?

Gauntlet

Age range: all

Materials needed: none

Directions: Have two lines facing each other with space in between for someone to walk through. Send one person down the gauntlet at a time, starting with the person at the front of the line and alternating sides as you go down. The goal of each person is to walk the gauntlet, looking people in the eyes and trying not to smile. For the first round, have everyone who is standing in the line look down at the floor. This way, it will be easy to move through the line without smiling. Once everyone has gone through, allow the people in the lines to act really silly in order to get the person to smile. Be clear that appropriate language should be used and no one is allowed to touch the people in the gauntlet. Can anyone make it without smiling?

Debrief questions:

- Was anyone able to make it through? How hard was it?
- Was it easier to keep a straight face during the first round or the second round? Why?
- Have you ever smiled or waved at someone in your neighborhood? What do they usually do?
- How does Jesus want us to treat our neighbors, even neighbors we don't know that well?
- How can the simple act of smiling or waving build up our neighbors? How can it build us up too?

Life can get so busy, it can be easy to walk right past a neighbor without even noticing them. But have you ever noticed that if you make eye contact or wave to a neighbor, most of the time they smile and wave right back! At that point,

DAY 5: Building God's neighborhood

both of you are smiling and showing that you are happy to see each other and in that way, you build each other up!

Circle of Praise

Age range: all

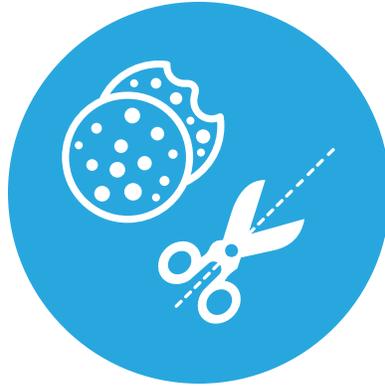
Materials needed: stickers (optional)

Directions: This activity can follow the Gauntlet to show how to lift people up and help them feel God's love. Everyone stands in a circle with a person in the center. Positive and specific compliments are given to the person, with everyone saying at least one thing, in no particular order. The person in the center should look the speaker in the eye and accept the praise but is not able to respond with more than a thank you.

For younger kids it may be challenging to come up with ideas, so one option is to give everyone a sticker sheet to start with. They can give a sticker to the person in the center. If they can add a compliment as they give the sticker, all the better! You can also suggest to them that they say, "God loves you and so do we," as they give them the sticker.

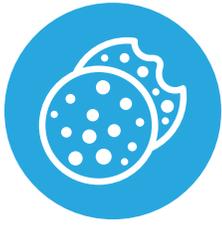
Debrief:

- How does it feel to have the support of everyone here?
- I saw you all being very good neighbors to each other! Thank you for building up God's neighborhood!
- God is using each one of you to build each other up, so now you can go out with boldness to serve and love others!



SNACKS + CRAFTS

Engage participants in these deliciously creative activities while sharing and learning about your neighbors from all over the world!



Each of the days this week features a story from a region of the world. To celebrate what each community has to offer, the snacks come from the same regions featured in the stories. Each day's snacks include something to make and something to buy. Choose from the suggestions below the option that best suits your needs and time!

SOMETHING TO MAKE

Mgaiwa phala (corn porridge)

Corn is a staple in Malawian cooking. This corn porridge is usually served sweetened and eaten for breakfast.

Yield: 8 half-cup servings

Ingredients:

- 3 cups water
- 1 cup polenta
- Dash of salt

Optional toppings:

- Sugar, honey or other sweetener
- Milk
- Peanut butter (Be aware of anyone with peanut allergies.)
- Fresh or dried fruit (While not all native, bananas, pineapples, mangos, coconuts, papayas and various citrus fruits do well in Malawi's tropical climate.)

Directions:

- 1) Bring water to boil.
- 2) Pour in polenta, while stirring constantly.
- 3) Reduce heat and cook slowly for about five minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 4) Remove from heat, cover, and let stand for a couple of minutes before serving.
- 5) Top with sweetener and optional toppings, if desired



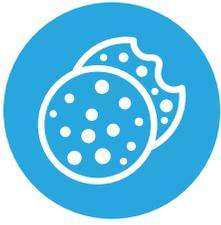
SOMETHING TO BUY

Mandasi (fried dough)

Fried dough made from flour, eggs, sugar and milk are often sold by women in the marketplace. A plain doughnut hole is not the same thing, but it is close.



DAY 2: *Snack*



SOMETHING TO MAKE

Baked plantains



Plantains are a staple food throughout much of the world. In Colombia, they are often served fried, though baking them is a healthy and tasty alternative. Note: This recipe serves about 20 people. You can adjust the ingredients as needed, but try to aim for one plantain for every two people.

Serves: 20

Ingredients:

- 10 overripe plantains (yellow with a bit of brown)
- 5 tablespoons vegetable oil
- cinnamon for dusting

Directions:

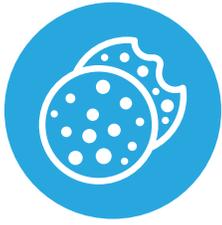
- 1) Preheat oven to 400.
- 2) Peel the plantains. Slice off the ends, then cut the peel lengthwise before unwrapping them.
- 3) Slice the plantains crosswise, into coins about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick.
- 4) In a bowl or plastic bag, toss the cut plantains with the oil. Work in batches to ensure even coating.
- 5) Place plantains in single layer on a baking sheet covered with foil.
- 6) Bake for 12-15 minutes on each side, turning once, until the plantains are caramelized.
- 7) Remove to a serving platter and dust with cinnamon.
- 8) Serve warm.

SOMETHING TO BUY

Fruit

Colombia produces a wide variety of fruit, and fruit stands are common in many Colombian cities. Among the most popular fruits in Colombia are papaya, mango, watermelon and bananas. For an easy, healthy snack, prepare a small fruit salad for children.





SOMETHING TO MAKE

Ubugali

A staple in the African Great Lakes region, ubugali, as it is called in Rwanda, is eaten by rolling a lump of the thick, dough-like starch into a ball and dipping it in a sauce or stew. You can also make a depression in the ball and use it as a scoop or to wrap around a piece of meat.

Serves: 12

Ingredients:

- 3½ cups corn flour or maize flour (you can also use cornmeal, but the consistency will be different)
- 4 cups water
- ½ teaspoon salt

Directions:

- 1) Boil water in a saucepan.
- 2) Stir in cornmeal and salt, stirring constantly until water is absorbed and the ubugali is very thick, almost dough-like, and pulls away from the side of the pot.
- 3) Remove from heat and place on a serving plate.
- 4) Roll pieces of ubugali into small balls, the size of a golf ball or smaller.
- 5) Ubugali can be eaten like this, with lightly cooked or steamed vegetables, dipped in buttermilk, or with a simple stew like the one below.

Kawunga (cornmeal with beans)

Ingredients:

- 16 oz can of beans
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 tomato, chopped

Directions:

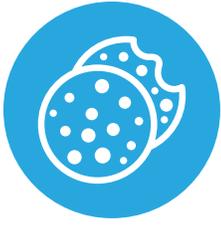
- 1) Saute onion and tomato.
- 2) Add beans and cook until heated thoroughly, including some of the bean liquid or water.

SOMETHING TO BUY

Tropical fruit, popcorn, hard-boiled eggs

Street vendors in Rwanda sell tropical fruits like avocados, bananas, mangos, papayas and pineapple. Bags of popcorn are also popular or hardboiled eggs with salt and/or hot sauce.

DAY 4: *Snack*



SOMETHING TO MAKE

Baked apples

Washington state produces 70 percent of the apples in the United States. Try this easy recipe to give children a taste from this northwest state.

Serves: 5

Ingredients:

- 5-6 apples (Honeycrisp, Granny Smith, Braeburn, or Jonagold)
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 1/4 cup apple juice or water

Directions:

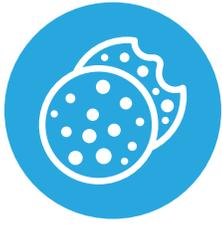
- 1) Preheat oven to 350.
- 2) Peel, core and slice apples into thin wedges.
- 3) Place the apple wedges in a 9-by-13 oven-safe dish and add the remaining ingredients. Toss to coat.
- 4) Cover with foil and bake for 45 minutes.
- 5) Remove foil and continue baking until apples can be easily pierced with a fork.
- 6) Allow to cool slightly and serve.

SOMETHING TO BUY

Rainier cherries

Rainier cherries are sweet cherries that were first developed in Washington state. Summer is the perfect season to share this treat with your group, with the season running from June through August. With small children, be careful about pits and stems.





SOMETHING TO MAKE

Easy – onigiri

Rice is a staple of Japanese culture. Onigiri is a popular on-the-go meal as a way to make rice portable and easy to eat.

Serves: 8

Ingredients:

- 2 cups rice (short-grained or sushi)
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- oil for cooking

Directions:

- 1) Place rice in a sieve and rinse until water runs clear.
- 2) Put rice and 3½ cups water in a saucepan, cover and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce heat to a low heat and simmer, covered, until water is absorbed, about 12 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand 10 minutes.
- 3) Fluff rice with a fork. Form ¾ cup scoops of rice into triangle-shaped wedges.
- 4) Heat an electric griddle to high heat. Cook for about 90 seconds, until browned. Flip and brush browned side with soy sauce.
- 5) Cook another 90 seconds until second side is browned. Flip, brush with soy sauce and cook for another 10 seconds.
- 6) Remove from heat and serve.



More involved – dorayaki

A classic Japanese dessert of anko (sweet red bean paste common in many East Asian desserts) sandwiched between sweet pancakes.

Anko (sweet red-bean paste)

Ingredients:

- 1 cup dried azuki beans
- 1 cup sugar
- water

Continued on next page...



DAY 5: Snack

Anko (sweet red-bean paste) continued...

- 1) Cover azuki beans with water and soak in the refrigerator 8-12 hours.
- 2) Place beans and water in a saucepan, bring to a boil, then remove from heat and let sit 5 minutes
- 3) Drain and rinse beans, return to saucepan and refill with fresh water until beans are just covered with water.
- 4) Cover saucepan. Bring to boil again, lower to simmer and cook about an hour until beans are soft. Check beans often throughout the hour and keep adding water as necessary to keep beans just covered.
- 5) When beans are easily smushed, uncover, turn heat to high, and add sugar, stirring constantly until water is evaporated enough that you can draw the spoon along the bottom of the pot.
- 6) Remove from heat, pour into a separate container, and let cool.

Dorayaki

Ingredients:

- 2 large eggs
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 tablespoons water or milk
- 1 cup flour
- oil for frying



Directions:

- 1) In a medium sized bowl, whisk together eggs and sugar.
- 2) Dissolve baking soda in water, add to eggs.
- 3) Add flour gradually and mix gently until combined.
- 4) Heat a skillet or griddle to medium high heat and lightly oil
- 5) Pour batter in scoops to make a small pancake.
They are quite filling, so silver dollar size is about right for a snack.
- 6) When bubbles start to appear on the surface, flip and cook until other side is golden.
Then remove from heat and set aside
- 7) Repeat until all the batter is finished.
- 8) Place a scoop of the anko on a pancake and another pancake on top to make a sandwich.

SOMETHING TO BUY

Edamame

Edamame are green soybeans still in their pods. Boiled or steamed, they are a popular side dish in Japan. They can be found in the frozen vegetable section in many grocery stores.

Popular snacks

Check the international section of your grocery store for popular Japanese snack brands like Pocky, Hello Panda or Yan Yan.



CRAFT

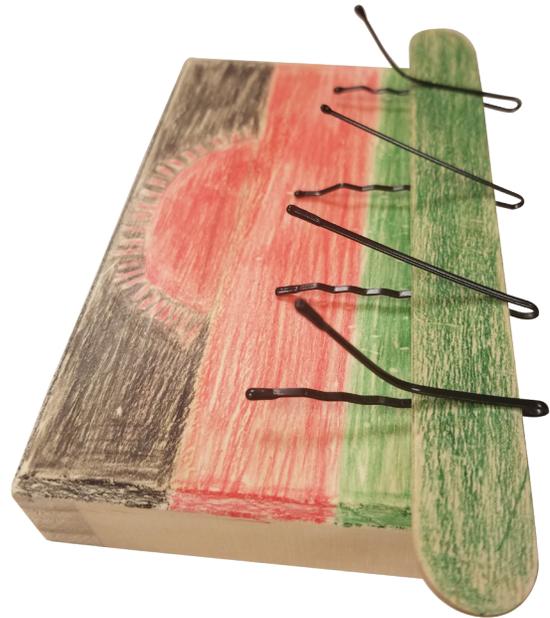
Mbira – thumb piano

Supplies:

- small pieces of wood (roughly 4 inches by 4 inches)
- markers or paint (optional)
- bobby pins
- craft sticks
- craft glue or hot glue

Directions:

- 1) Decorate the wood with paint or markers. (Note: Painting will require drying time.)
- 2) Hook four to five bobby pins along the craft stick, equally spaced.
- 3) Glue the craft stick to the decorated wood. (Note: Craft glue will require drying time. Hot glue dries much quicker but will require adult supervision.)
- 4) Bend the top half of the bobby pin up at a 45-degree angle.
- 5) Children can play the mbira by plucking the bobby pins.



CRAFT CONNECTION -----

The mbira is an ancient instrument that comes from the continent of Africa and has been around for nearly 3,000 years! This instrument was often played at weddings and other special ceremonies and events. It is often called a "thumb piano" because you hold it with two hands and pluck the pins, or tongues, with your thumbs. Even though this instrument has an ancient history, the mbira thumb piano has become popular with many musicians today and can be heard in modern music. Today, we are going to make our own mbiras so that we can play some of that music, too!

For younger children, adults or older youth can make the thumb pianos ahead of time and then invite the younger ones to decorate them. This can be a great youth group project for the week before vacation Bible school!



CRAFT

Colombian flag friendship bracelet

Supplies:

- pipe cleaners (or string for older participants)
- yellow, blue and red straws or beads
- scissors
- picture of the Colombian flag

Directions:

- 1) Each participant should have one pipe cleaner, one yellow straw, one blue and one red as well as their own scissors.
- 2) The children should first cut each straw into small, relatively even pieces or “beads,” while keeping the colors separate.
- 3) Once the straws are cut, bend one end of the pipe cleaner so that the straw pieces can slide down without falling through.
- 4) Place the pieces in the order of the Colombian flag (yellow, blue, red) until the pipe cleaner is covered.
- 5) Bend the pipe cleaner around the participants’ wrist and tie the two ends together.



CRAFT CONNECTION -----

(Have pictures of the Colombian flag at each table.) Today, we are learning about the beautiful country of Colombia. Every country has a flag, and each flag carries a special meaning. Colombia’s flag has three colors and each color means something. The yellow represents all the riches of the country like good soil, farmland, gold and also the sun. The blue symbolizes the oceans on Colombia’s beaches, the rivers and the sky. The red represents Colombia’s independence and the people’s determination to be a free and thriving people.





Rwandan woven bowl

Supplies:

- foam bowls
- thick yarn
- tape
- markers (optional)
- scissors

Directions:

- 1) Before the session, make 7 cuts, evenly spaced, from the rim of the bowl to the base for each bowl.
- 2) Tape one end of the yarn to the bottom of the base and run the yarn through each strip until the yarn is to the top of the bowl.
 - a. Make sure that participants pull the string all the way down while they are pulling the yarn through each strip.
- 3) To change yarn color, tie two ends together. You can also purchase multi-colored yarn to make this easier.
- 4) Tuck the end under one of the wrapped sections of the bowl to disguise it.
- 5) If children are finished early, they can color in the base of the bowl and any edges that are not covered.



CRAFT CONNECTION -----

Rwandan basketry is an ancient tradition that is still practiced today. Rwandan baskets are popular all over the world for their unique designs and incredible detail. The baskets are stitched by hand with sweet grass, banana leaves and string from palm trees and can take over 30,000 stitches to complete! Weaving baskets is traditionally something that is done in groups, as not only a time to craft something beautiful but also as a time for community, conversation and even music. Today, we are going to have a similar experience while we create our own baskets out of string and paper bowls.

LEADER TIPS

For younger children or participants who are differently-abled, you can make five or even three cuts in the bowl to reduce the amount of times needed to pull the string through the strips. Just make sure it is an odd number so that the string ends up on both sides of the bowl.



Back-to-school duct tape pencil pouch

Make these pencil pouches to take memories of vacation Bible school to school with you.

Supplies:

- quart-sized plastic storage bags with sliders
- duct tape in various styles and colors cut in strips just a little longer than the width of the bags. Each pouch will need 5 strips of tape.
- scissors
- felt markers
- stickers (optional)

Directions:

- 1) Measure about 2 inches from the bottom of the bag, draw a line across the bag, and cut off the bottom. (This can be done in advance for younger children.)
- 2) Starting at the top of the bag, cover the bag with a strip of tape a little longer than the width of the bag, tuck the extra around the back of the bag.
- 3) Repeat with a second piece of tape, overlapping the first piece about 1/8 of an inch.
- 4) Repeat with a third piece of tape, folding the edge over the bottom of the bag to seal the cut side.
- 5) Flip bag over and repeat with two strips of tape up the back until bag is covered.
- 6) Decorate pouches with felt markers and/or stickers.

CRAFT CONNECTION -----

Does anyone have a special place where they keep their pencils, markers or crayons? It's important to have something to hold our art supplies and writing utensils so that we don't waste time looking for them and can get started on our crafts, projects and assignments right away. Well, today we are going to use these plastic bags and colorful rolls of duct tape to make our own pencil pouches. It's easy, fun, and once you get the hang of it, you could be a good neighbor and make one for someone at school who may need a good place to store their writing utensils.



Sensu – Japanese folding fan

Supplies:

- 8.5x11 sheets of white paper
(12x18 would work well for older students who are motivated to decorate!)
- Crayons, markers and/or colored pencils
- Popsicle sticks
- staples
- craft glue

Directions:

- 1) Lay down the sheets of paper horizontally.
- 2) Decorate the fan. Nature images like flowers, leaves, waves, or birds are often a common theme on traditional fans, but simple designs like the sun and the moon were also used to communicate various messages and signals.
- 3) Starting along the short side, fold paper back and forth, an inch or so at a time, creasing along each fold.
- 4) Once the fan is folded, place a staple about an inch up from the base of the flat end.
- 5) Glue Popsicle sticks on either end of the staple to form a handle.
- 6) When the glue is dry, open the fan to display the art and enjoy!

CRAFT CONNECTION -----

On a hot summer day, fans can be a great way to cool off. Japanese folding fans have been used for hundreds of years as a way for people to create their own breeze with just few flicks of their wrists. But did you know that Japanese folding fans were not created to help people cool off on a hot day? These fans were originally made for writing messages, teaching and even in the military as signals during battle. Japan became known for the quality and beauty of their fans and started sending them to other countries to purchase. Today, these fans are recognized as a convenient item to carry and an easy way to cool off in the summer heat!

LEADER TIPS

- Have at least two examples available with different styles. One could be floral or include animals, with the other example being much simpler, such as creating the sun and the moon on opposite sides.
- Be sure to model the folding process as you are going through the steps. Have helpers ready to assist the younger participants!



SIMULATION STATION

Grow in faith together as you learn about our neighbors living with hunger and poverty in the world and how we can create communities of peace and justice through loving the neighbor.

DAY 1: God loves us



NEIGHBORS WITHOUT HOMES

Lesson: Everyone in our community is our neighbor. Some of our neighbors face challenges that may be unfamiliar to us, but God wants us to respond to them in love.

Station overview: In this station, children will construct a shelter out of materials you provide. In the process, they will learn some important facts about homelessness and the challenges our neighbors without secure, stable housing face. There are two options for this station, depending on the age of the children.

OPTION A: YOUNGER CHILDREN

Age range: Preschool to 2nd grade

Materials needed:

- Large pieces of cardboard
(a mixture of flattened boxes and scraps)
- Wide masking tape (optional)

Directions: Divide the children into several small groups of two or three members. If you have enough adults, assign an adult to be an assistant to each small group. Use the questions and script below to introduce the activity to the children. Affirm all responses to the questions.

Open the activity by asking the children to describe their homes. How many rooms are there? What does your home look like?

Ask: What would you do if your family could no longer live in your home? (Affirm all responses.)

Tell: In the United States, many of our neighbors don't have places to stay every night. In fact, on any night, more than 500,000 people in our country

don't have safe, permanent homes to live in. Many of them are children your age.

Ask: What might be a reason why someone doesn't have a home to live in?

Tell: There are lots of reasons our neighbors don't have homes. Some are unable to work and cannot afford houses or apartments. Some lost their homes to disasters like hurricanes or fires. For some of them, their homes weren't safe, so they had to leave them. In some places, there aren't enough shelters for people who are homeless, so they sleep in their cars if they have them, or they have to find parks or other places to spend the night outside.

Ask: How would you feel if you had to spend the night sleeping on the sidewalk of your town? How would you feel if you had to spend every night sleeping there? Would you feel safe? Would you feel comfortable? Where would you go to take a shower? Where would you go to cook your food? Where would you keep your things (toys, clothes, etc.)?

Tell: Many people who experience homelessness are part of families that include children that are your age. Being homeless makes it hard for them to stay healthy, to go to school or to feel safe. Their families often have to use any thing they can find to make a shelter, especially in rainy or cold weather.

Tell: You and your partner are members of a family that does not have a home, and you have to make a shelter for yourselves out of cardboard.

Give the children about 15 minutes to make their shelter. When they are finished, invite them to describe their shelter to the group.

Ask: How would it feel to spend the night in your shelter? Would you stay warm? Would you stay dry if it rained?

DAY 1: God loves us

To conclude: There are many reasons why people – even children – don’t have safe places to stay. But no matter where they are, each person is our neighbor, and God wants us to love and care for them. (If you are doing the simulation station for Day 2 tomorrow, now is a great time to let the children know that tomorrow they will be putting together care packages for people who may be experiencing homelessness or in need.) Sometimes, loving our neighbors can mean helping them find safe places to live. But loving our neighbors also means realizing the challenges that many of them face every day and remembering that God loves everyone.

OPTION B: OLDER CHILDREN

Age Range: 3rd grade and up

Materials needed:

- Large pieces of cardboard (a mixture of flattened boxes and scraps)
- Tarps
- 2 laundry baskets or 2 chairs or 1 camping tent (your choice; see below)
- Wide masking tape

Directions: Divide the children into three groups. Tell the children to imagine that they and their partners are a family, and they have recently lost their home. (For older children, you can make the story more specific – maybe they lost their home in a natural disaster, for instance.)

Open the activity by asking the children to describe their homes. How many rooms are there? What does it look like?

Ask: What would you do if your family could no longer live in your home? (Affirm all responses.)

Tell: In the United States, many of our neighbors don’t have a place to stay every night. In fact, on any night, more than 500,000 people in our country don’t have safe, stable homes to live in. Many of them are children

your age.

Ask: What might be a reason why someone doesn’t have a home to live in?

Tell: There are lots of reasons our neighbors don’t have homes. Some are unable to work and cannot afford houses or apartments. Some lost their homes to disasters like hurricanes or fires. For some of them, their homes weren’t safe so they had to leave them. In some places, there aren’t enough shelters for people who are homeless so they sleep in their cars if they have them, or they have to find parks or other places to spend the night outside.

Ask: How would you feel if you had to spend the night sleeping on the sidewalk of your town? How would you feel if you had to spend every night sleeping there? Would you feel safe? Would you feel comfortable? Where would you go to take a shower or bath? Where would you go to cook your food? Where would you keep your things (toys, clothes, etc.)?

Tell: Many people who experience homelessness are part of families that include children that are your age. Not having a home makes it hard for them to stay healthy, to go to school or to feel safe. Their families often have to use anything they can find to make shelter, especially in rainy or cold weather.

Tell: Homelessness occurs everywhere. With your groups, we’re going to imagine what it would be like to make a shelter out of the things you can find. Each group lives in a different area and has different materials to make their shelter.

Activity instructions:

Assign groups to a location:

(You can assign the location of each group or draw out of a hat.)

Group 1: Small, rural farming community.

Group 2: The downtown of a very large city with mostly apartments and businesses.

DAY 1: God loves us

Group 3: A medium suburb with lots of big houses and parks. Each group gets different materials to make their shelter.

Group 1: Cardboard and tarps

Group 2: Cardboard only

Group 3: Cardboard, tape and laundry baskets or chairs. This group could also be given a tent to set up.

Allow 15 minutes for the groups to construct their shelter.

At the end of the time, have each group describe their shelter to the other groups. Ask questions about the stability or security of their shelters (Would it hold up in the rain? Would it be warm in the cold?)

Tell: Finding a safe place to stay can be different for people in different communities. Some communities have more shelters or temporary housing. Other communities may have social workers to help people who experience homelessness. Some communities have laws about where people without homes can sleep, which can make it hard for them to find places to go. Finding shelter for one night is often not the end of the journey.

(Optional): You can read these “outcomes” to the groups as possible scenarios for each of them to highlight some of the challenges people in different communities may face.

Group 1: You live in a small, rural area. There aren't a lot of shelters nearby, which can make it hard for people in small towns or rural areas to find safe places to stay. After a few nights sleeping in your shelter, your group was able to find friends to stay with as the weather got colder. You will need to find a more permanent home sometime soon.

Group 2: Most of the people who experience homelessness in the United States live in large cities, like your group. Because of this, there are more services nearby, even though

they still don't meet everyone's needs in the community. You were able to find a shelter for your group, with beds, showers and meals. A volunteer at the shelter is helping you find more permanent housing.

Group 3: One of the challenges many people who are without homes face are laws that make it illegal to sleep in your car or outside in places like parks. After spending so much time building your shelter, you were arrested one night, and your shelter was thrown away. Now you must not only find a place to live, but you have to pay a fine.

Ask: How can communities better care for our neighbors who experience homelessness? (If you are doing the simulation station for Day 2 tomorrow, now is a great time to let the children know that tomorrow they will be putting together care packages for people who are homeless or in need.)

Sometimes we think that our neighbors are just the people who live next to us. How is every person in our community – even someone who doesn't have a place to live – our neighbor? How can we show love for them?

DAY 2: *Let your light shine*



GRACE BAGS

Lesson: How can we love our neighbors? As Lutherans, we are called to see Christ in everyone we meet, and, in Martin Luther's words, to act as "little Christs" to our neighbors, meeting their needs whenever we can.

Station overview: In this activity, participants will help meet the needs of their neighbors by preparing bags of supplies that can be shared with folks they meet. These kits will contain some necessities that can be a small but important help for our neighbors.

Providing a kit of basic supplies can be an important way to help someone in need, and putting kits together can help the people preparing them remain mindful of their neighbors in need. Kits like these can be important reminders that in God's world, we are all neighbors.

In this station, children will sort supplies and then stock gallon-size resealable plastic bags with the items, including in them a note of hope that they can personalize.

Supplies: Below is a list of possible items to include in kits. These are suggestions and are adaptable to location and season. Choose about a dozen items and consider size, not wanting more than what can fit in a gallon-size resealable plastic bag. For example, hand warmers might be helpful in colder months. Planning supplies can also be a great way to learn more about how hunger and poverty affect your neighbors. For example, a youth group might take some time to think about the many things that their neighbors in poverty have a hard time accessing: toiletry supplies, protection from cold weather or rain if they

lack shelter, and healthy, nutritional foods. Or, if you live in an area with public transportation, learning about the importance of transportation for people facing economic challenges might help children, youth, and adults see the benefit of including rail or bus passes.

Supplies:

- gallon-size resealable plastic bags
- markers
- blank cards or printed sample cards (see below)
- markers, stickers, etc. for the children to decorate the cards

Supplies for the kits can be donated or purchased prior to the start of your vacation Bible school program. You can ask members of the congregation to bring supplies on Sunday the week before, or you can invite children to bring supplies on Day 1. If you would like to purchase supplies ahead of time, consider forming a Thrivent Action Team and applying for a grant to support your efforts. More information can be found at thrivent.com. You can also think about community partners who may have access to some of the supplies. For example, a dentist's office may be able to help donate toothbrushes. A store may be willing to donate some of the smaller food items.

If you would like these kits to be part of an ongoing ministry, you can make the project self-sustaining through donations. Have the kits on hand in your church office or narthex, and invite congregation members to donate \$5 to take a bag with them to have on hand when they meet someone in need in the community. The money collected can be used to purchase the next round of supplies.

DAY 2: *Let your light shine*

Suggested supplies for the bags

- brochure of local shelters and hot meals (if available in your community)
- dried fruit
- meal bars
- milk
- peanut-butter crackers
- hand sanitizer
- toothbrush and toothpaste sample
- water bottle
- pair of socks
- lip balm
- hand warmers
- preloaded rail or bus pass
- adhesive bandages

Ask: Do you remember the parable of the good Samaritan? Jesus tells this story so we have a really good idea what Jesus wants us to do! What did the Samaritan do to help the injured person?

Remember our theme verse today: “Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon” (Isaiah 58:10).

Ask: Yesterday, we saw how sometimes our neighbors can find themselves without a house or other shelter. Things can get really challenging! They may not have shelter, enough food or enough supplies to keep them safe and healthy.

- Think back to yesterday’s activity. What made it hard to build a shelter?
- How can we be good neighbors to people who must deal with challenges like this all the time?
- What are some things you use every day? (Look for answers: toothbrush, toothpaste, food, water, etc.)
- What if you didn’t have these things or couldn’t buy them at a store?

Say: We are not powerless; we can work with our neighbors to make sure everyone has enough! Let’s get ready, so the next time you meet someone who is asking for help, you will be ready to help.

Directions: Younger children should be paired with an adult to help them. Older children may be able to do this on their own with supervision. Set up a table with the items so that the children can walk along and grab the items they need. Give each child a gallon-size resealable plastic bag to hold the items. Once they are done gathering the supplies in their bags, have them make the bag special by including a blessing. You can have blank cards available for older children to write on, or you can use the sample blessings cards below.

Say: Now that everyone has a bag ready, let’s talk about how we might give it out. Your family can keep the bags in your car or take them with you when volunteering or working in your community. Make sure you are with an adult when you give out your bag. Here are a couple things to keep in mind when you’re giving your bag:

1. Never give out a bag without asking your parent or another adult first.
2. Have a grace bag ready in your car or backpack so if you happen to see someone in need, you have it handy to give out. Sometimes, it is difficult to know if someone is in need just by looking at them. It is a good idea to wait until you are asked for your help before assuming someone is in need.
3. For parents and caregivers: Use the bags as a teaching tool with children to help them remember people in need in their community.

To conclude:

For younger children:

Tell: Helping a neighbor in need is one way we can “let our light shine” and show others that God loves them. Your bags are a great start and might be helpful to someone in need. Some of the people you meet might be very grateful and say, “Thank you.” Others might not need all the things in your bag, or they may not be comfortable taking it. That’s OK! With your parent or another adult, you can think about other things that might be helpful to include in the bag instead. Or, you can keep your eyes open for other people who may need what you have.

DAY 2: *Let your light shine*

Ask: What are some other ways we can show God's love to everyone we meet?

Tell: Everyone in our community is important. Jesus tells his followers that every time they help someone in need, they are helping him. Our bags can help us remember to keep our eyes out for our neighbors and to remember that even if someone does not have all the things they need, they are still loved by God, and we are called to be good neighbors to them.

For older children:

Tell: Need takes a lot of shapes. Some people need homes, some people need food. Some people need to feel like other people care about them.

Ask: What are some of the things you need every day? Who helps you get them?

Ask: Do you think our bags will meet every need of our neighbors? Probably not. But the bags can be a way to show our neighbors that we care about them, and that might be more important than the things inside them.

Ask: How can we learn about what our neighbors need? (Look for answers: by listening to them, by volunteering at a local pantry or shelter, etc.)

Tell: Our bags can help our neighbors – but they can also help us, by reminding us to keep our eyes open for other people in need. In the story of the good Samaritan, the Samaritan kept his eyes open and was ready to help when he found the man who was hurt. This is a bit like God's care for us. God saw people hurting and sent Jesus to save them. God always remembers us, and we are called to remember our neighbors, especially those who could use our help.

Blessing of the bags: God, you call us to be servants of each other. Bless these bags and our work today that they might be a blessing to our neighbors and that they might remind us to be good neighbors. Help us to remember that we depend on each other, and teach us to love everyone as you love us. Help us to see you in the people who receive our bags, and help them to see your light in us. Amen.

DAY 2: *Let your light shine*

This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of our community.

Have a hopeful day!

This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of our community.

Have a hopeful day!

This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of our community.

Have a hopeful day!

This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of our community.

Have a hopeful day!

This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of our community.

Have a hopeful day!

This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of our community.

Have a hopeful day!

DAY 3: No fear



BUILDING COMMUNITY, BLOCK BY BLOCK

Lesson: In a community, we help each other. Neighbors help when we are struggling and have needs. When a whole community needs help, other communities reach out to support. Through ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response, the ELCA helps when disasters strike, partnering with others to overcome the challenges created by events like a hurricane.

Station overview: Children will build a tower on an electric grid, contributing wooden blocks as they name things that use electricity. They will see how much we depend on electricity to store food and power our homes and devices. They will also learn some of the ways our church accompanies communities faced with challenges like lack of access to electricity.

Supplies:

- one stacking pieces game (e.g., Jenga), or a set of large, cardboard play blocks (For older children or larger groups, you may want to have multiple stacking games to use in small groups.)
- a tray or board to build the tower on
- baskets or costumes with the following labels: ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, and ACT Alliance

Instructions:

In the first step of this activity, children will use the blocks to build a tower, with each block representing one thing that they use that requires electricity. The large tray or board on which the tower is built will be the electrical grid that powers the things in the tower. In the second step of the activity, a storm will disable the electrical grid,

causing the tower to fall. In the third step, the children will imagine themselves as workers who accompany the community that experienced the storm.

To get started, divide the blocks up so that each child has four. Ask them to think about the things that require electricity in their homes, at school or in church. Explain to them that the tray or board represents their community's electrical grid, which provides the electricity to power the things they need. It may be helpful for an adult leader to start the tower by naming a few things that require electricity. With each thing that you name, place one block on the tray or board, building a fairly stable tower by alternating the direction blocks are placed on each level. Once the adult leader has given some examples, have each of the children place their blocks on the tower. For each item powered by electricity that they name, they can place one block on the tower. Once the tower is complete, talk with the children about the importance of electricity in their daily lives.

Ask: What would you do if you didn't have electricity for a week? How would you keep your food cold? How would your parents or caregivers cook? How would you see at night?

For the next step, children will remove some of the blocks until the tower crashes down.

You can use the following script to introduce the "storm" step of the activity:

Electricity is just one of the many things we need for our daily lives, but it is an important thing. Electricity helps us stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer. It helps us store and cook our food, see in the dark, listen to music or watch television, and even flush our toilets! But not all our neighbors have electricity all the time. Sometimes, our neighbors can't afford to pay for electricity, so their electricity might get shut off. Or they may have to pay for electricity instead of paying for other things, like food or medicine. Other times, powerful storms like tornadoes or hurricanes can make a community lose electricity. If the storm is really bad, it may take a while before the power comes back on.

DAY 3: No fear

After you have finished, have the children imagine that their community has been hit by a severe hurricane that damaged the electrical grid. Have them – one at a time – remove four blocks. Play until the tower comes crashing down.

In the next step of the activity, the children will help rebuild the tower.

To introduce this step, use the following script or a variation:

Not having electricity can be a challenging experience. If a disaster like a hurricane has struck, people will need electricity to clear roads or to help people who are hurt. Even without a disaster, people need electricity for lots of other needs. Our church helps people who don't have electricity in a lot of ways. If a disaster has happened, Lutheran Disaster Response and its partners help the people. When hurricanes made the people of Puerto Rico lose electricity, Lutheran Disaster Response gave them solar-powered lanterns and generators. Generators make electricity, so the people could run their refrigerators and the tools they needed to clean up after the hurricanes. If people can't afford electricity, other churches help them by giving them money to pay their electrical bills – or by asking the government to help them through special programs that help families pay their electrical bills. (Note: The program referred to here is called The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP. More information can be found at acf.hhs.gov/ocs/programs/liheap.) This work is supported by our church through ELCA World Hunger.

After you have finished, have the children imagine that they are workers at a congregation that is going to help the community. If you have costume vests or hats, have the children take turns wearing them as they work. Have each child add up to four blocks to the new tower, until it is complete.

Ask: What were some of the things we need electricity for?

What would you do if you didn't have electricity for a long time?

Why should we care about people who don't have electricity?

How can we help someone who has lost electricity or can't afford electricity?

How can we ensure that the tower doesn't fall again? (Allow for creative responses.)

Conclusion:

We and our neighbors have lots of needs. Some are small, and some are pretty large, like electricity. These help us work, go to school and enjoy our homes. God cares about our needs and calls us to help our neighbors meet theirs. Sometimes, this means helping them when a storm comes. Other times, this might mean helping people who don't have enough money to meet all their needs. Our church does this in some pretty amazing ways. And when we do, we try to work with our neighbors to make sure that they are safer than they were before, so we try to make sure that their electricity is rebuilt so that they don't have to be afraid of another storm. Each of us is part of this work together as a church. God em-“powers” us to do this work with our neighbors!

DAY 4: God loves everyone



BANANA SURGERY

Lesson: Relationships are easy to break but more difficult to put back together. Using bananas, the children will learn about the damage unkindness can do to people – and how God works to restore our relationships to God and to each other.

Supplies:

For every two to three people you will need:

- tray or cutting board
- whole banana, fairly firm with peel on (Be sure not to use overripe bananas.)
- plastic knife with serrated edges or a safety knife for kids (An alternative is to have a sharp knife used by an adult and have the kids indicate where to cut.)
- surgery kits: adhesive bandages, string, tape, toothpicks, rubber bands, etc. (Older children may be able to use T-pins or a large needle and thread, with adult help.)
- extra volunteers may be needed for younger children

Directions: Divide your group into smaller groups of two to three people, giving each group a banana on a tray with a safety knife. Younger children should have an adult with each pair or trio.

Say: Sometimes we cut our neighbors down with our words and even our actions. When we hurt each other, it can be hard to build trust or repair our relationships with one another. We're going to think more about this with the help of our bananas.

Ask each group to cut the banana into four pieces. Younger children can tell their adult helper where to cut. Don't tell them what the next steps are at this point! Then, hand out "banana surgery kits" and explain that the goal for these neighborly surgeons is to reassemble the banana. The challenge is to get the banana to look whole again!

When everyone has finished, bring the large group together again. Have each small group share what they did in surgery and show their banana. This should be very entertaining, as the bananas will be in a variety of states of chaos!

Ask: How hard was it to put your banana back together?

What would you have done differently if you knew at the start that you would need to re-assemble your banana?

Imagine that your banana is like a neighbor that has been hurt by mean words or actions. How hard is it to heal their "cuts"?

How can we build up someone who has been hurt by mean words or actions?

Say: When we have been hurt, it can be hard to feel whole again. But God knows where we hurt, and God promises to help us be whole again. We may not be completely the same, but we can be healed.

Ask: How does God help heal our hurts?

How can we help heal each other when we've been hurt?

What are some ways we can build God's neighborhood by helping to heal our neighbors?



Closing prayer:

Let's pray that God will open our hearts to love everyone!

Dear God, help us to love our neighbors, to be kind to all people, to lift them up and not put them down. Help us to keep each other whole. Amen.

DAY 5: Building God's neighborhood



WELCOME INN

Lesson: We can make our neighbors feel welcome in our “inns” everyday!

Supplies:

- 10-foot loop of string for every pair of children in the group
- 6-8 toothpick flags or markers for every pair of children in the group
- healthy snacks for each pair of children to share (This could be a small bowl of fruit like grapes or cherries, sunflower seeds, or wrapped treats; perhaps a different fruit for each pair would give a unique hospitality to each inn.)
- bell or device to make bell sound

Overview: In this activity, pairs of children create a mini hotel or inn, using their imaginations and a 10-foot loop of string to designate an outside area (over an interesting rock and moss, tree stump, etc.), marking special areas with toothpick flags. Once created, one partner goes to tour other inns while the other partner gives tours to guests of what they have created, changing places at the sound of a hotel bell.

Indoor alternative: Make the inns on a slightly larger scale with blankets and towels and pillows or parachutes. These could be constructed over tables that have been laid on their sides, playground or gym equipment, or other objects at your disposal.

Directions: Create your own “inn” ahead of time to show the children as an example. Assume the role of the greeter at your inn as you show your creation before excusing kids in pairs to create their own. To make the activity more entertaining, dress for the role with a special hat or uniform. Ring the hotel bell to begin.

Give the children about 10 minutes to “build” their

inns and decide what features they will describe to visitors. Younger children may need an adult helper. Tell the children to find a special space to build their inn and provide each inn with a snack or treat to give to guests. Then, ask each pair to decide who will travel to other inns and who will stay and give tours of their inn. Once they are set, ring the bell and have them start their tours. After a minute or two at each inn, ring the bell again, signaling them to move on.

Sample script: Today, we heard about the innkeeper who gave the man who was hurt a place to stay. Welcoming people to our “inns” can be an important way to show them we care about them.

You are never going to believe where we are! Look around; we have just stumbled into the middle of Cherub Resorts! Right here, all around us is the site for many new mini-inns to be opened! Now these are not just your regular grand hotels with huge fountains and ballrooms. What’s different is that instead of being places with huge attractions, these inns have features that are so small, the average tourist might miss them. In fact, if you aren’t looking carefully, you might even step on some of the most fascinating attractions! I just opened my inn today; come sit down right here, and I’ll give you a tour.

You can see the entire property is within this string that marks the inn’s borders. I have marked some special features of my inn with these flags, let me give you a tour! Oh! Where are my manners? You must be starving from your long journey. Here, have some grapes while I show you around! (Offer children grapes or another suitable treat.)

As you enter the property you are greeted by butterflies that speak seven languages and fan you with their wings! (Be imaginative!) They lead you up the path, past the pond of prayer where the fish pray for you to have sweet dreams. On your left here, you see a doorway to an underground spider’s den. She is hard at work making sure no mosquitos bite you by catching them in her web!

Once inside this cave, you will be cooled in the shade, and I know you will love our comfy leaf seats where you can share all about where your

DAY 5: Building God's neighborhood

travels are taking you! Guests sleep on these lovely hammocks of moss. On your pillow each night are flecks of scent from the world's smallest perfume shop that is over here by this flower. Make sure you get a chance to put your nose up here and shut your eyes and take a big whiff! Every night by moonlight, the guests dance up on this rock to the cricket band.

If you have time to explore the grounds, be sure to check out the canyon made by the Bark River. Here in this pinecone nursery is a seed, the site of a future forest, sure to amaze our guests!

Well that was fun! Now it's your turn! With a partner, find a special place (in a designated area) to make your inn. Spread your string around an interesting area and mark your special features. You'll have 10 minutes to create your inn, and then I'll ring this bell to let you know that it's time for an Open House! One of you will stay at your inn to give tours, while the other can go out to visit other inns. When I ring the bell again, switch places.

When someone visits your inn, be sure to show great hospitality, giving a treat to all who visit and giving a tour. Be sure to highlight comfy places to sit, show off beautiful lighting, or explain where people sleep and where they can go on walks or be entertained.

Note: As the kids create their inns, leaders can go around and check in, asking questions or helping them establish an area. This is a good time to hand out the snacks they will share with their guests. Leaders are encouraged to take tours as well once they have begun.

Debrief: Hospitality is a way of giving back to others and a way of getting to know our neighbors. We can find out what makes them special and unique when we know them. We learn not to be afraid of people who seem different from us when we know them better.

Ask: What does it mean to welcome someone? How can we show people that they are welcome to play with us, or to hang out?

Where have you felt welcome?

How did you make people feel welcome in

your inn?

If you visited someone else's inn, how did you show them you appreciated the tour they gave you? Did you compliment them on their inn?

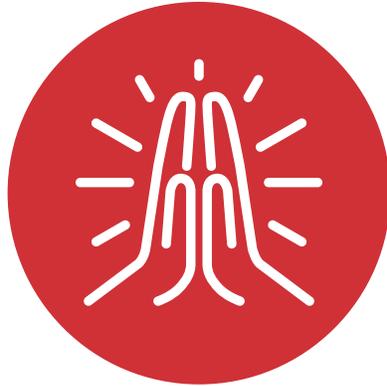
Remember today's Bible verse, Romans 15:2: "Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purposes of building up the neighbor." When you show other people that they are welcome, how are you helping to build up your neighbor?

Say: You did a wonderful job showing lots of creativity with your inns today! I think we even got to see a bit more of God's amazing creation! Thanks for sharing all your hospitality! And thanks for being great guests! Remember that you don't need a big house or fancy inn to show hospitality – a smile, a hello, looking someone in the eyes and sincerely asking how they are or what they need is wonderful way to make them feel welcome.



Closing prayer:

Dear Jesus, give us hearts full of joy and hospitality. Help us share your love with others so that we can welcome neighbors into our homes and into our hearts. Amen.



CLOSING + SONGS

Go in peace each day by recalling the memory verse and singing a song from our suggested list, or choose your own!

LARGE GROUP CLOSING

Welcome and music

Welcome the children (and adults!) to the closing time for “Who Is My Neighbor.”
Sing the theme song and other songs as people are gathering.

“Talking Together” — a review of the day

Invite people to share with the group what happened during the day. Questions to ask:

- What was your favorite part of today?
- What was one new thing you learned today?
- Did you meet a new neighbor (or friend!) today?
- What will you share with others when you get home?

Return to theme verse

Ask the group if anyone can remember all or part of the theme verse for the day.

Day 1 – “We love because God first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Day 2 – “Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon” (Isaiah 58:10).

Day 3 – “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18a).

Day 4 – “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34b-35).

Day 5 – “Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor” (Romans 15:2).

Questions to ask:

- What did you learn about God’s love today?
- Where did you see God’s love in action today? Where did you show God’s love today? (This is a great place to refer to the story they heard in the storytime rotation today!)



Prayer and sending

Loving God, thank you for all of the ways you show us you love us. Thank you for this world, for our friends and family, for churches and schools, and for all the new friends we have met today and we will meet this week. As we go home, help us share all the new things we learned about ELCA World Hunger. And bring us back safely tomorrow for more fun and learning about you. Amen.

Close with any final announcements or reminders.

Songs for "Who Is My Neighbor?"

Great songbooks for children

Augsburg Fortress has published several songbooks containing kid-friendly songs. If you are not familiar with them, we recommend checking them out! Our vacation Bible school song recommendations come from these resources.

- Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Augsburg: Minneapolis. 2006. AugsburgFortress.org
- LifeSongs Songbook (LS). "LifeTogether: Revised Common Lectionary Resources for Christian Living." Augsburg: Minneapolis. 1999. AugsburgFortress.org
- Worship & Praise Songbook (WP). Augsburg: Minneapolis. 1999. AugsburgFortress.org

THEME SONG:

Jesu, Jesu Fill Us with Your Love (ELW 708)^{1, 2, 3}

MORE SONGS

Songs about love

He Came Down (ELW 253)
I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me (ELW 860)
Jesus Loves Me! (LS 160 or ELW 595)
Love God and Your Neighbor (LS 142)
This is My Commandment (LS 152)*

Songs about light

Shine, Jesus, Shine (WP 123)
This Little Light of Mine (LS 32 or ELW 677)*
We are Marching in the Light / Siyahamba (WP 148 or ELW 866)

Songs about not being afraid

Be Bold (WP 14)
Have No Fear, Little Flock (ELW 764)
When Our Song Says Peace (ELW 709)
Goodness Is Stronger than Evil (ELW 721)
What a Fellowship, What a Joy Divine (ELW 774)

Songs about building God's kingdom

Build Us Up, Lord (ELW 670)
Go in Peace and Serve the Lord (WP 46)^{2, 3}
Lead Me, Guide Me (WP 84 or ELW 768)
Send Me, Jesus (ELW 549)
Send Me, Lord (ELW 809)
Take My Life, That I May Be (ELW 583)
We Are an Offering (WP 146 or ELW 692)

More songs

Hallelujah! We Sing Your Praises (ELW 535)
Lord, Be Glorified (WP 89 or ELW 744)
Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying (WP 92 or ELW 752)
Praise, Praise, Praise the Lord! (ELW 875)
Come, All You People / Uyaimose (ELW 819)^{1, 3}
We Have Seen the Lord (ELW 869)

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³ Licensed under LicenSing: LicenSingonline.org

⁴ Licensed under Augsburg Fortress Hymns and Songs: AugsburgFortress.org (Please note: An Augsburg Liturgies License DOES NOT cover this use.)

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Share your story!

**Share the story of your vacation Bible school with
ELCA World Hunger and other congregations!**

If your congregation uses this resource, we'd love to know! Share stories, pictures and feedback to celebrate your event with the whole church — and to encourage others to explore the question "Who Is My Neighbor?" with their congregation.

Share:

-  Email: Hunger@ELCA.org
-  Facebook: [@ELCAWorldHunger](https://www.facebook.com/ELCAWorldHunger)
-  Instagram: [@elcaworldhunger](https://www.instagram.com/elcaworldhunger)
-  Twitter: [@ELCAWorldHunger](https://twitter.com/ELCAWorldHunger)



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God's work. Our hands.