

Into the Wild:

A LENTEN LITURGY AND INTERGENERATIONAL STUDY ON HUNGER



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



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Dear Leader,

Welcome to “Into the Wild: a Lenten Liturgy and Intergenerational Study on Hunger.” As you know, the 40 days of Lent are a time of solemn reflection. During this season, we reflect on our communion with God and our alienation from God. We focus our awareness on the loneliness of Christ in Gethsemane, his death on the cross, and our dependence on God's infinite mercy, while resting in the hope of the Easter to come. The Scriptures for this season are abundant in images of the wilderness: Jesus' temptation, Moses' time on Mount Sinai and the wandering of the Hebrews after the Exodus. It is a time of confession, repentance and, for many, fasting.

For nearly 1 billion people in the world, going hungry is not a spiritual practice or reverent sacrifice. Hunger is a reality in which many of our brothers and sisters live every day. This Lent, ELCA World Hunger invites you and your congregation to go “Into the Wild,” to follow Jesus into the wilderness and to reflect on your own journey into the “wild places” of the world where we encounter human need, abuse of power, risk and God's grace. Many suffer in the wilderness of the world, yet we know that the Holy Spirit is there, calling us, accompanying us and empowering us to meet our own needs by serving the needs of our neighbors. We know that the call to share in God's good news is a call made to all Christians, of every age, in baptism.

This Lenten series consists of five liturgies and lessons, each building on themes found in Luke 4:1-21. During the course of the series, your congregation will reflect on baptism, hunger, power, faith and the good news Jesus proclaims to the poor, the oppressed and the captive (Luke 4:18). A key feature of this series is its accessibility for all generations. We encourage you to invite children, youth, young adults and older adults to join in each week. There are opportunities for all ages to participate and to lead. Throughout “Into the Wild,” you will see times set aside for both small and large groups to encourage rich conversations among participants. There are handouts for some of the lessons, as well as opportunities to view videos from the ELCA World Hunger video series. Each lesson is written as a script with particular questions for discussion and, when combined with the liturgy for the lesson, should take about one hour. Please feel free to adapt each lesson to best serve your congregation's needs.

In each lesson, you will find: an opening liturgy with readings, an overview and leader's script for the lesson, a series of reflection questions to end the lesson and a brief closing liturgy. There is also a discussion guide called “40 Days of Wonderings” which goes along with this program and is an opportunity for families to continue the conversation at home. Please pass this along to parents and families, even if they are unable to participate in the program.

We journey together “into the wild” of Lent, to a place where we encounter the living God in the midst of hunger and poverty. If you would like to continue learning about hunger and the ELCA's response, please visit www.ELCA.org/hunger for more resources.

Sincerely,

Ryan Cumming
Director of ELCA World Hunger Education

Leader's Guide

“Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness ...”



MATERIALS NEEDED

- Large pieces of paper on a long table *(if you can use one roll of paper, that would be great! Be sure to save this for Lesson #5)*
- Markers of different colors
- Baptismal font or clear glass bowl of water on table

PREPARATION AND SUMMARY OF LESSON

This lesson can best be led by someone familiar with the Lutheran understanding of the sacrament of Baptism, just in case there are questions about baptism from the group. Unbaptized individuals should be made welcome, though the leader should be careful to note that the ritual at the end of this lesson does not constitute Baptism for someone who has not yet received the sacrament themselves.

Arrange the paper on a long table so that all participants can draw on it at the same time. Write the following across the top of the paper: “In our wild places...” Place markers on the table. Be sure that everyone can reach the paper, especially children or people with disabilities. Arrange chairs near the table and place the bowl or baptismal font near the group. As with the other lessons, everyone should feel welcome to participate, especially children who may feel uncomfortable talking in front of adults.

In the Bible, “wilderness” is often associated with the trials of testing and the promise of God’s closeness to us in the midst of “wild places.” Many people note the parallel between Jesus’ time in the wilderness and Israel’s time in the wilderness as described in Deuteronomy. Jesus reenacts Israel’s time in the wilderness – a time during which the Israelites often failed the “tests” of their faith – by facing temptation and resisting it because of his faith in the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ baptism is presented here as the background for his time in the wilderness. After his baptism, Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Spirit, who remains with him. Likewise, we are marked in baptism with the Holy Spirit who leads us into the “wild places” of everyday life and refuses to abandon us. The use of art in this center creates time for playfulness and creativity, while the commemoration of baptism at the end introduces a time of solemn reflection.

LEADER'S SCRIPT

(Note: Instructions for the leader are in parentheses, questions to be read aloud are in bold.)

This Lent, we will travel through the wilderness together and along the way meet different things that we might encounter in the wilderness: hunger, loneliness, risk and faith. We will spend a lot of time talking about what it means to be hungry. Do you think Jesus was hungry in the wilderness? He was fasting, which means going without food for a long time on purpose, so he was probably hungry. And the Hebrew's in the wilderness were hungry, too, but God sent them bread from heaven. There are a lot of people in our own "wild places" who are hungry, too. They may be in your class at school, or in our church or neighborhood. Every county in the country has people who are hungry.

As Lutherans, we believe God calls us to go into these wild places to be with people who are hungry, lonely or hurt. People who are baptized actually promised God that they would do this. So, let's start this season of Lent by talking about what baptism means for our own time in the wilderness.

The Bible story we talk about and think about during Lent is a journey. It starts after Jesus' baptism, with his time in the wilderness and ends when he starts his ministry.

When you think of the word "wilderness," what comes to mind?

(Possible answers: strange, lonely, scary, wild animals, exciting, adventure, etc.)

Close your eyes for a moment and picture a wilderness, maybe the wilderness where Jesus was in today's reading. What sorts of things might be there? What wouldn't be there? How might Jesus have felt?

(Allow a moment for silent reflection.) On the top half of the paper, take a few moments to draw the picture of the wilderness that you had in mind. (Once finished, ask each participant to describe their picture.)

What did you draw? Why did you draw it?

Wildernesses, or "wild places," can be exciting, frightening, strange, unknown and sometimes scary. There are lots of stories about the wilderness in the Bible, and all of these things are true of the wilderness in the stories. In one of the earliest stories, God calls Moses back to Egypt to free the Hebrew people from slavery. Moses tells the people that God will lead them away from Egypt and to the Promised Land where God will take care of all their needs. What they don't know, though, is that they will have to travel through the wilderness for 40 years before they get there! Needless to say, the people got impatient and sometimes let their impatience get the best of them. They made idols, they doubted Moses and God and they sometimes even lost faith in God's promise. So why were they in the wilderness? We can get a clue from Deuteronomy 8:2-3:

Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

LEADER'S SCRIPT

Why were the people in the wilderness?

(Look for answers: testing and learning about God).

Just as Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted or tested, so too did the Hebrews go into the wilderness where they were tested and tempted. Of course, there is a major difference; Jesus passed the testing while the Hebrews did not.

“Wilderness” in the Bible often means a place where people are tested, where the things around them and their own feelings can make them forget about God. Close your eyes and think about these questions: What are some places where we can be tempted or distracted today? What are some places where we might feel lonely, weak, frustrated, or impatient, where it is hard to remember that God is with us? (Allow a moment for silent reflection.) Now, let's go back to our drawings. Under your first drawing, draw a picture of the modern-day “wild places” that you thought of. (Repeat questions from above. **What did you draw? Why did you draw it?**)

When we watch the news, the world can seem like a pretty big wilderness. We hear stories about temptation, violence and suffering that can make the world look pretty wild and sometimes scary. It can make us ask, where is God in all of this? And sometimes, it can seem easier to just escape it, to run to our home or our church to be with God and to live out our faith.

What happens to Jesus just before he goes into the wilderness? (Answer: He is baptized.) Baptism is an amazing sacrament. Martin Luther even called it a “most precious treasure” (Large Catechism). In baptism, we are reborn into a life of grace, a life with God. We promise “to live ... among God's faithful people [and] to proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for

others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace” (ELW, p. 228).

Baptism doesn't stop when the water that was poured on the people's heads dries up. In baptism, people are brought into God's community, the church, but we are also sent out into the world, into the wild places to be tested, to learn about God and to live out our faith. But we aren't sent out alone. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. He wasn't alone; the Holy Spirit was with him, just as God was with the Hebrews in the wilderness. In baptism, we are led by the Spirit into our wild places (indicate drawings) and we are promised that we won't be alone. The Spirit goes with us to strengthen and support us.

So, how would you finish the sentence at the top of the page of drawings? (Lots of answers, but look for those that are along the lines of “In our wild places ... the Spirit supports/goes with/accompanies us.”) **Are there times when you have felt strengthened or supported in your wild places, by the Spirit within you or by the Holy Spirit in other people?**

Lutherans believe that we should remember our baptism often, to remind us of God's presence with us as we go through the wilderness. To remember our baptism now, we will each dip our fingers in the water and trace a cross on each other's forehead. As you are marked with water, think of the ways that you can remind yourself of God's presence with you each day. Think also of the ways that you can show the Spirit to other people whose needs or suffering keeps them in the wilderness. As you mark each other, try to think of ways that you might support the person you mark as a companion in the wilderness.

LEADER'S SCRIPT

(Choose a partner and demonstrate the ritual. First dip your finger in the water and trace the sign of the cross on his or her forehead, saying, “[NAME], child of God, know that the Holy Spirit goes with you into your wild places.” Then have your partner do the same to you. Direct the group to pair up and approach the font. As participants mark each other, they should say: “[NAME], child of God, know that the Holy Spirit goes with you into your wild places.” You may need to help them with the words, especially children. Once everyone has finished, the group may return to the gathering space with the large group for discussion and closing.)

Closing discussion questions:

- 1) How did this lesson change or reinforce your understanding of baptism?
- 2) What are some of the wild places where it is comforting to know the Spirit is with you?
- 3) How might being hungry or poor make the world seem like a “wild place”?

Liturgy

“Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness ...”



ORDER OF WORSHIP

GATHERING

The leader and the assembly greet one another with the Lenten dialogue:

Behold, now is the acceptable time;
now is the day of salvation.
Turn us again, O God of our salvation,
that the light of your face may shine on us.
May your justice shine like the sun;
and may the poor be lifted up.

.....

Psalm 77:11-20

The psalm may sung or read in unison, responsively by verse between the leader and the assembly or with half the assembly reading the odd numbered verses and the other half the even numbered verses.

¹¹I will remember the works | of the LORD,
and call to mind your won- | ders of old.
¹²I will meditate on | all your acts
and ponder your | mighty deeds.
¹³Your way, O | God, is holy;
who is so great a god | as our God?
¹⁴You are the God | who works wonders
and have declared your power a- | mong the peoples.
¹⁵By your strength you have re- | deemed your people,
the descendants of Ja- | cob and Joseph.
¹⁶The waters saw you, O God; the waters saw you | and trembled;
the very | depths were shaken.

Continued on next page ...

**Psalm
77:11-20**

*Continued from
previous page.*

¹⁷The clouds poured out water; | the skies thundered;
your lightning bolts flashed | to and fro;
¹⁸the sound of your thunder was in the whirlwind;
your lightnings lit | up the world;
the earth trem- | bled and shook.
¹⁹Your way was in the sea, and your paths in | the great waters,
yet your footsteps | were not seen.
²⁰You led your people | like a flock
by the hand of Mo- | ses and Aaron.

**Reading:
Luke
3:21-23,
4:1-21**

Silence for reflection follows the reading.

Prayer

*The leader gives the
general introduction
to each time of
prayer inviting the
assembly to name
petitions. The leader
can adapt the
petitions to match
the focus of each
week.*

With confidence in God's grace
and mercy, let us pray for the
church, the world and all those
in need.

Let us give thanks for God's
blessings to us especially today.
*Here blessings may be named
silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us bring before God needs and
concerns known to us.
*Here people and situations,
especially in the congregation,
may be named silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us bring before God our
own needs.
*Here specific needs may be
mentioned silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us ask for God's guidance and
blessing upon our time together.
*Here images or themes may be
mentioned silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

In the name of God, the Father,
Son and Holy Spirit, we pray.
Amen.

**Lesson and
activity time**

*The leader may give instructions or general guidelines for the lesson and
activity that will follow. Careful attention should be paid to the readings
and how the discussion will flow from the worship.*

Sending

Jesus said, "You will be my witnesses
to the ends of the earth.

I chose you and appointed you
to bear fruit that will last.

Remember, I will be with you always,
to the end of time."

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray.

.....

Prayer

God of the living, through baptism we pass from the shadow of death to the light of the resurrection. Remain with us and give us hope that, rejoicing in the gift of the Spirit who gives life to our mortal flesh, we may be clothed with the garment of immortality, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(Reprinted from Revised Common Lectionary Prayers © 2002 Consultation on Common Texts. Used with permission)

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Blessing

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Almighty God, the Father, + the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us.

Amen.

*The greeting of peace
may be shared by all.*

Leader's Guide

“One does not live by bread alone ...”



MATERIALS NEEDED

- 3x5 index cards (five per person – you may want to leave a whole pack at the table rather than count them out.)
- Pens or pencils
- Kids and Hunger sheet
- Pyramid of Needs sheet

Note: This lesson is designed so that a young person or persons in the group can participate as leaders. The lesson deals with serious subjects, so if the young person chosen as leader appears to be uncomfortable – or if you know they might have a difficult time with the subject matter – please choose someone else to lead the lesson.

PREPARATION

This lesson should be done with small groups of three or more. Ask the youngest member of the group (of reading age) to lead this lesson. Provide them with the guide below. Use the questions at the end of the script when the large group assembles after the lesson.

LEADER'S GUIDE

1) Read these three paragraphs to the group:

In this center, we will be talking about needs. Let's start with the story of Elie Wiesel (pronounced *ell-ee vy-zell*). Elie was a young Jewish boy when the Nazis came to power in the 1930s. When the Nazis took over the area where Elie lived with his family, they began arresting Jews there and taking them to camps where they would be forced to work and were often killed. When Elie's family was arrested, they were separated. His mother and sisters were taken to one camp, and Elie and his father were taken to another. At the camp where he and his dad were, the prisoners were fed very little and forced to work very hard with little sleep. Sometimes they were beaten by the guards, and many of them died. When the Nazis were defeated and the people in the camp were finally set free, Elie said that all they cared about was the bread that the soldiers brought for them. They were so hungry that they fought with other prisoners, even with their own friends and family, for any scraps of food they could find.

Elie wrote a lot about hunger in his book, "Night." He wrote that after the first few months in the concentration camp, "Bread, soup – these were my whole life. I was a body. Perhaps less than that, even; a starved stomach. The stomach alone was aware of the passage of time."

When Elie's dad became very sick, other prisoners even

encouraged him to stop giving his dad the little bit of bread that he had. Trying not to starve became the most important thing to many of them, even more important than helping their loved ones.

2) Pass out five cards to each person.

Ask the people in your group to think of their five most important needs and write one on each card. Then, have them put the cards in order from their most important need to their least.

What made you arrange your cards that way? Was it hard to put them in order? How have our needs changed over time? Are our needs different if we are different ages? Who helps us meet our needs?

Show the group the “Pyramid of Needs.” In the 1950s, a scientist named Abraham Maslow ranked all the needs that people have. He said that before we meet other needs, we have to meet the needs of our bodies, like food and sleep. If we don’t meet the needs on the bottom of the pyramid first, it might be harder to meet the needs at the top of the pyramid. Look at the needs and how he ranked them.

How might being hungry affect meeting your higher needs? How did being hungry affect Elie’s other needs in the story we heard?

3) Read the next three paragraphs to the group, pausing after each one to read and talk about the questions.

In the Bible story of Jesus in the wilderness, the devil tries to get Jesus to turn stones into bread. Jesus won’t, and he tells the devil, “Man does not live by bread alone.” Another writer once wrote, “True, we cannot live by bread alone. Neither can we live without bread.”

How would your life change if you did not know where your next “bread” would come from?

Kids face a lot of struggles if they grow up hungry. Look at the “How

Hunger affects Kids” sheet.

What facts stand out to you? Why might being hungry make it harder for kids to do well in school? Why might they face more health problems?

With all that you know about how hunger relates to other needs for people, imagine that our congregation started to feed the people in our community.

What other needs might this help serve? Is it enough to just feed people? What other needs might our congregation help meet? How might feeding other people meet our own needs?

Now we can join the rest of the people together for the closing. (Return to the large group.)

Closing discussion questions

- 1) What stood out to you in your conversations?
- 2) Was it difficult to talk about the Holocaust and Elie Wiesel’s experiences?
- 3) The Holocaust raises powerful emotions for many of us, and most people agree that we should do whatever we can to prevent something similar from happening again. Six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust, which is a staggering figure. It has led to international agreements to prevent genocide; it is taught in schools around the world so that children will grow up inspired to prevent genocide, and there are monuments and museums dedicated to the lives that were lost. Each year, more than one million people die from hunger. What would it take to inspire this kind of global movement against hunger?
- 4) What did you learn about how hunger affects other needs, especially for kids?
- 5) What needs do we have in our congregation? How might an anti-hunger ministry help meet our own needs?

HOW Hunger *affects* KIDS

Nearly **49 million** people in the United States are not sure where their next meal will come from. More than **16 million** of these people are children.¹

Children living in poverty are more likely to experience all of the following things:
Depression, anxiety, violence, asthma, anemia, pneumonia²

Children who experience hunger or food insecurity are **more likely to have frequent colds, stomachaches and headaches than other children.**³

Children who live in hunger – even “mild” hunger – are more likely to **repeat a grade in school and to score lower on tests and assignments** than other children.⁴

Kindergartners who live with hunger score **lower on math tests** than non-hungry kindergartners and **learn less during a school year** than other students.⁵

Children who live in hunger are more likely to experience **traumatic life events, behavior problems, and low birthweight**, even when other factors are taken out of the equation.⁶

Children who have experienced hunger even just once in their lives are **250 percent more likely to have poor health** even 10 or 15 years later in their lives.⁷

¹ Feeding America, “Map the Meal Gap: Child Food Insecurity 2012” (Chicago, Ill., 2012), 2. Available at http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap/~/_media/Files/a-map-2010/2010-MMG-Child-Executive-Summary-FINAL.ashx. See also American Psychological Association, “Effects of Poverty, Hunger, and Homelessness on Children and Youth” (2012), Available at www.apa.org/pi/families/poverty.aspx#.

² “Effects of Poverty, Hunger, and Homelessness on Children and Youth.”

³ K. Alaimo, C.M. Olson, and E.A. Frongillo Jr., “Food Insufficiency and American School-aged Children’s Cognitive, Academic, and Psychosocial Development.” *Pediatrics* 108(1) (July 2001), 44-53. Abstract available at: <http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/abstract/108/1/44>.

⁴ Center on Hunger and Poverty, Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University “The Consequences of Hunger and Food Insecurity for Children: Evidence from Recent Scientific Studies.” (Waltham, Mass., June 2002), 7-8.

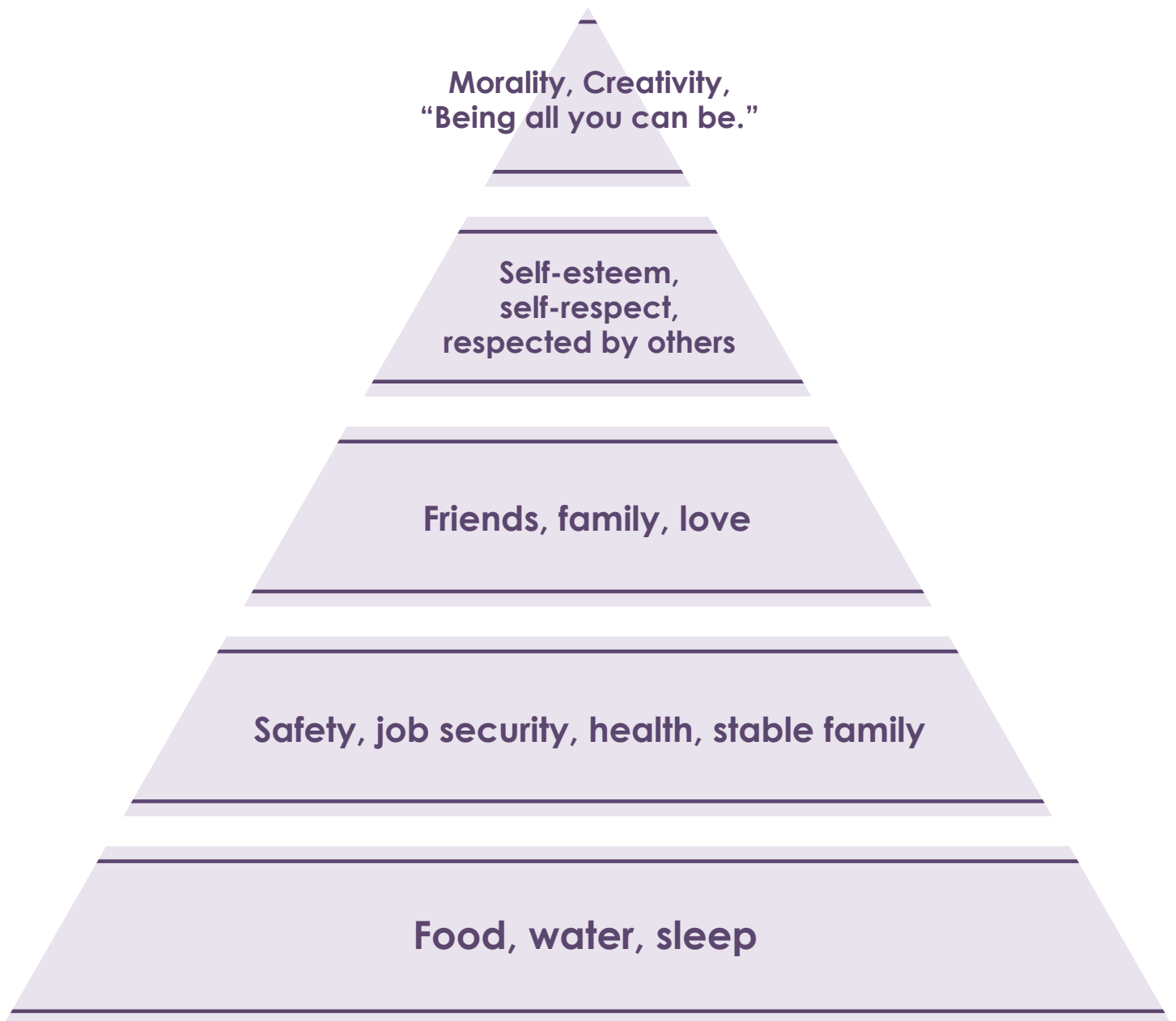
⁵ J. Winicki and K. Jemison “Food Insecurity and Hunger in the Kindergarten Classroom: Its Effect on Learning and Growth.” Mimeograph. (Washington, D.C.: Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2001). See also “Consequences of Hunger and Food Insecurity for Children,” 8.

⁶ L. Weinreb et al. “Hunger: Its Impact on Children’s Health and Mental Health,” *Pediatrics* 110(4), Oct 2002 (e41). Available at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12359814.

⁷ Sharon I. Kirkpatrick, Lynn McIntyre and Melissa L. Potestio “Child Hunger and Long-term Adverse Consequences for Health,” *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 164, 8 (August 2010): 754-762.

Maslow's

Pyramid of Needs



Liturgy

“One does not live by bread alone ...”



ORDER OF WORSHIP

GATHERING

The leader and the assembly greet one another with the Lenten dialogue:

Behold, now is the acceptable time;
now is the day of salvation.
Turn us again, O God of our salvation,
that the light of your face may shine on us.
May your justice shine like the sun;
and may the poor be lifted up.

.....

Psalm 146

The psalm may sung or read in unison, responsively by verse between the leader and the assembly or with half the assembly reading the odd numbered verses and the other half the even numbered verses.

¹Praise the LORD, | O my soul!
²I will praise the LORD as long | as I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I | have my being.
³Put not your | trust in rulers,
in mortals in whom there is no help.
⁴When they breathe their last, they re- | turn to earth,
and in that day | their thoughts perish.
⁵Happy are they who have the God of Jacob | for their help,
whose hope is in the | LORD their God;
⁶who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that | is in them;
who keeps promis- | es forever;
who gives justice to those who are oppressed,

Continued on next page ...

**Psalm
146**

*Continued from
previous page.*

and food to | those who hunger.
 The LORD sets the cap- | tive free.
⁸The LORD opens the eyes of the blind;
 the LORD lifts up those who | are bowed down;
 the LORD | loves the righteous.
⁹The LORD cares | for the stranger;
 the LORD sustains the orphan and widow,
 but frustrates the way | of the wicked.
¹⁰The LORD shall | reign f orever,
 your God, O Zion, throughout all | generations.

**Reading:
1 Kings
17:8-16**

Silence for reflection follows the reading.

Prayer

*The leader gives
the general
introduction to
each time of prayer
inviting the assembly
to name petitions.
The leader can adapt
the petitions to
match the focus
of each week.*

With confidence in God's grace
and mercy, let us pray for the
church, the world and all those in
need.

Let us give thanks for God's
blessings to us especially today.
*Here blessings may be named
silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us bring before God needs and
concerns known to us.
*Here people and situations,
especially in the congregation,
may be named silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us bring before God our
own needs.
*Here specific needs may be
mentioned silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us ask for God's guidance and
blessing upon our time together.
*Here images or themes may be
mentioned silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

In the name of God, the Father,
Son and Holy Spirit, we pray.
Amen.

Lesson and activity time

The leader may give instructions or general guidelines for the lesson and activity that will follow. Careful attention should be paid to the readings and how the discussion will flow from the worship.

.....

Sending

Jesus said, "You will be my witnesses
to the ends of the earth.

I chose you and appointed you
to bear fruit that will last.

Remember, I will be with you always,
to the end of time."

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray.

.....

Prayer

Almighty and most merciful God, we call to mind before you all whom it is easy to forget: those who are homeless, destitute, sick, isolated, and all who have no one to care for them. May we bring help and healing to those who are broken in body or spirit, that they may have comfort in sorrow, company in loneliness, and a place of safety and warmth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

.....

Blessing

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The greeting of peace may be shared by all.

Almighty God, the Father, + the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us.

Amen.

Leader's Guide

“Worship the Lord your God ...”



MATERIALS NEEDED

- Four chairs
- Copies of the skit for each person

PREPARATION

This lesson can be done with the whole group, rather than in small groups. Arrange four chairs in the center of the room so that the group can see the people sitting in them and the people in the chairs can see each other. Ask five people – two adults and three children or youth – to participate as actors in the skit. (They don't need to practice beforehand; in fact, some of the best performances happen the first time!)

SKIT

“What is power?”

Characters:

Woman (adult)

Man (adult)

Young person #1

Young person #2

Young person #3

Scene: A bus station. Young person #1 and Young person #2 sit in chairs, waiting for their buses.

Woman: (yelling at someone offstage): What do you mean, no refund! Fine, but I'll be talking to your boss! (sits down across from Young person in a huff).

Man: (enters the scene): Do you believe this?! I was only two minutes late, and they wouldn't let me get on the bus! I even offered to pay double the ticket price!

SKIT

- Young person #1:** You can wait with us. (Man sits down.)
- Woman:** I don't know who runs this place, but they ought to be fired! I tried to get a refund for a ticket, and you would have thought I'd asked for the moon! So now I have two tickets for just me!
- Young person #1:** Where are you all heading?
- Woman:** I'm heading to a big conference to learn about some new technology for our company.
- Young person #2:** So will you know anyone there?
- Woman:** No. My assistant was supposed to go with me, but that's not happening.
- Man:** If I were you, I would have just paid him extra to go for you. Maybe give him a nice bonus.
- Woman:** Somehow I don't think that would have worked.
- Man:** Ha! People will do anything for the right price.
- Young person #2:** Where are you going?
- Man:** I'm heading to a sales meeting. The things we do for money, right?
- Young person #2:** I'm going home for vacation to see my family. I definitely need a break from school. And a break from everything.
- Woman:** What's wrong, kid? Stress getting to you? Can't handle the homework?
- Young person #2:** No, it's not that. See, I was elected Student Council president at my college.
- Man:** Congratulations! That's great. Tell me, is it a paid position?
- Young person #2:** (laughs): Hardly. It's been a nightmare.
- Young person #1:** What's wrong?
- Young person #2:** I had all these great ideas. I was going to organize volunteer days, a fundraising dance, and study groups for students.
- Woman:** Wow, I wish all I had to worry about was dances and volunteering. I deal with bigger problems than that before breakfast!

SKIT

- Young person #2:** Well, I think they're important decisions. It doesn't matter, though. I couldn't get anything done. No one would listen to me.
- Woman:** Let me tell you, you have to get in there and make people listen to you! You have to take power in your hand and command – that's what real leaders do. Though some people won't listen at all. Like my assistant, he just up and quit today! Left me with his bus ticket!
- Young person #2:** I tried to tell them how good these things would be for them, but they just didn't care.
- Young person #1:** What did they want to do?
- Young person #2:** Oh, I don't know. I wasn't really listening. Their ideas were boring. And it doesn't matter anyway. We can't get anything done if people won't listen to me!
- Man:** I don't know about this business of taking power in your hand and commanding people. I never do that, but people still do what I tell them to.
- Young person #2:** Why's that?
- Man:** You have to offer them something they want, and it has to be something they want so much that they will do things they don't want to do just to get it. Maybe they want tickets to a ball game or dinner at a fancy restaurant. But most of the time, all they need is a little cash, and they'll do anything.
- Young person #2:** You mean I should pay students to support me?! That's so wrong!
- Man:** That's how the world works. Bunch of broke college kids? They'll do anything for a few dollars to buy a pizza or see a movie. It's the same everywhere – everybody has something they want.
- Young person #2:** I guess that makes sense. But if you have money and power, why are you here?
- Man:** Talk about a nightmare. I lost almost everything in the recession. But don't worry; I'll get it back soon. And then I'll hold my head up high and really make my mark on the world! (Man turns to Young person #1) Where are you heading?
- Young person #1:** A pastor invited me to work with his congregation.
- Man:** Ah, going out for a paycheck, huh? Probably paid for your ticket, too, eh?
- Young person #1:** Well, no. (Looks at the ground.) Actually, I don't have much money. I had to sell my guitar to buy my ticket.
- Woman:** Oh, I get it. "God" said you had to go, right?

SKIT

- Young person #1:** Well, no, not quite. I'm going to help them start a community garden.
- Man:** I used to go to a church. Not anymore. I gave them a huge donation to them to start shipping puppies to Honduras and they wouldn't take it!
- Young person #1:** Do people in Honduras really need puppies?
Who cares? It would be great publicity. Really drum up the fundraising.
- Young person #2:** Well, I think a community garden is a great idea. And it's wonderful that you're going out there to tell those people that they should start one and tell them how to run it.
- Young person #1:** It really wasn't my idea; the people there want one.
- Young person #2:** How did you get involved?
- Young person #1:** Like I said, I don't have a lot of money. In fact, last year, I didn't even have a home or food. I started getting food at a church that had a pantry with fresh vegetables from their garden. At first, it was hard going in there, having to ask for food. After a while, I started talking to some of the gardeners, though, and told them about working on a farm when I was a kid. Then, I started working in their garden. Last week, a pastor visited our garden and pantry and asked if I would help them start a garden for their food pantry.
- Woman:** That's great. You must feel on top of the world, finally taking control and having some power to tell people how to change things.
- Man:** Yeah, it had to be an awfully powerful pastor or somebody to make you sell your guitar and head out on a bus.
- Young person #1:** Well, I do feel pretty powerful, but it's not because I can tell people what to do or because someone else told me what to do. Power for me isn't controlling people but working together with people who love each other and love God.
- Young person #2:** Sure, but not everyone is going to agree, so you just have to put your head down and keep trying to convince them.
- Young person #1:** Well, that's not —
- Woman:** That's exactly it! The kind of people you want on this project are the kind of people who know how to follow directions. My first boss, the one who trained me, always said, "You have to be a god to your employees. They have to follow your orders without question."
- Man:** Or promise them rewards, like heaven.
- Young person #2:** And even Jesus couldn't convince everyone that he was right!
- Young person #1:** Well, that's true, but it kind of misses the point of the garden.

SKIT

- Man:** Well, what is the point? Isn't it just to make food?
- Young person #1:** I thought that was what it was, too. Maybe a question would help. What does it mean to be powerful?
- Man:** The person with power can buy other people and make them do things.
- Young person #1:** Where do you find power now that your money is running out?
- Man:** Well, it's hard now. I don't really have much power left. But I will soon!
- Woman:** A person with power is feared, so other people do what she tells them to do.
- Young person #1:** Does that always work?
- Woman:** Of course!
- Young person #2:** A person with power stands alone, above everyone else.
- Young person #1:** Sometimes that seems true. But what were you able to do with your power as Student Council president? You see, for me, power isn't something I have, it's something God has. And God's power helps me to know that I have important things to add to a community. So now, I'm going to another church to help them see that they have something important to contribute, too. And with our gifts and God's power, we can feed people and be part of a community together.
- Woman:** Good luck with that, kid. Maybe you'll learn when you grow up. There's some folks with power and some folks without it.
- Man:** Yeah. Get yourself a good job and make some money, then you'll see. The world will be yours for the taking.
- Young person #1:** I don't think so. I might be young, but I've seen enough to know that power like that doesn't last long, and if it does, it can pull people apart. God's power works through people, not over them.
- Young person #2:** Well, that's my bus.
- Man:** Mine, too. It's been an interesting chat. Good luck with your garden.
(Man and Young person #2 walk away).
- Woman:** I should head out, too. Maybe you're right. Maybe there are different kinds of power in the world, but I think I'll stick with my kind of power.
(Starts to leave).
- Young person #1:** Oh, I didn't say that. There is only one kind of power that can really motivate people to change their lives. The other kinds of power are just pretending.
- Woman:** Right, kid.
- Young person #3:** (to Woman) Hey, did I hear you say you had an extra ticket?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Each character had a problem or a decision to make. How did they try to solve them?
2. There are lots of ways that we can use power to change things in our lives. How did each character try to use their power to reach their goals?
3. When the student council president told the others about his/her problems, how did the adults react? (to youth) Have you ever felt like adults have not taken your problems seriously? How might you compare the problems the student council president had to the problems the adults in the skit had?
4. When the man responds to the student council president, he tells her/him that people will do anything for money. When she complains, he says that “this is how the world works.” Is he right? Are there things you would or wouldn’t do for any amount of money? Why?
5. How do the other characters react when the second young person tells them he/she wants to start a community garden? What did you think about their reactions?
6. How did their reactions differ from the young person’s explanation of the garden?
7. What does it mean to have power?
8. When Jesus is in the wilderness, the devil tempts him by offering him power over all the kingdoms on earth. Why did Jesus refuse the temptation? How did Jesus use power to change people?
9. Are there good ways and bad ways to use power? What does this skit and the scripture verse tell us about the right ways and the wrong ways to use power?
10. How might the young person heading to the church help the congregation there understand what power is? What might he/she say to them?

Liturgy

“Worship the Lord Your God ...”



ORDER OF WORSHIP

GATHERING

The leader and the assembly greet one another with the Lenten dialogue:

Behold, now is the acceptable time;
now is the day of salvation.
Turn us again, O God of our salvation,
that the light of your face may shine on us.
May your justice shine like the sun;
and may the poor be lifted up.

.....

Psalm 46

The psalm may sung or read in unison, responsively by verse between the leader and the assembly or with half the assembly reading the odd numbered verses and the other half the even numbered verses.

¹God is our ref- | uge and strength,
a very present | help in trouble.
²Therefore we will not fear, though the | earth be moved,
and though the mountains shake in the depths | of the sea;
³though its waters | rage and foam,
and though the mountains tremble | with its tumult.
⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the cit- | y of God,
the holy habitation of | the Most High.
⁵God is in the midst of the city; it shall | not be shaken;
God shall help it at the | break of day.

Continued on next page ...

ORDER OF WORSHIP

**Psalm
46**

*Continued from
previous page.*

⁶The nations rage, and the | kingdoms shake;

God speaks, and the earth | melts away.

⁷The LORD of | hosts is with us;

the God of Jacob | is our stronghold.

⁸Come now, regard the works | of the LORD,

what desolations God has brought up- | on the earth;

⁹behold the one who makes war to cease in | all the world;

who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear,

and burns the | shields with fire.

¹⁰Be still, then, and know that | I am God;

I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted | in the earth.”

¹¹The LORD of | hosts is with us;

the God of Jacob | is our stronghold.

**Reading:
John 13:3-5,12-15
or John 15:9-17**

Silence for reflection follows the reading.

Prayer

The leader gives the general introduction to each time of prayer inviting the assembly to name petitions. The leader can adapt the petitions to match the focus of each week.

With confidence in God’s grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world and all those in need.

Let us give thanks for God’s blessings to us especially today. *Here blessings may be named silently or aloud.* God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Let us bring before God needs and concerns known to us. *Here people and situations, especially in the congregation, may be named silently or aloud.* God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Let us bring before God our own needs. *Here specific needs may be mentioned silently or aloud.* God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Let us ask for God’s guidance and blessing upon our time together. *Here images or themes may be mentioned silently or aloud.* God of love, **hear our prayer.**

In the name of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we pray. **Amen.**

.....

Lesson and activity time

The leader may give instructions or general guidelines for the lesson and activity that will follow. Careful attention should be paid to the readings and how the discussion will flow from the worship.

.....

Sending

Jesus said, “You will be my witnesses **to the ends of the earth.**

I chose you and appointed you **to bear fruit that will last.**

Remember, I will be with you always, **to the end of time.”**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Prayer

Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the gospel and eager to do your will, so that we may share with all your church in the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

.....

Blessing

*The greeting of
peace may be
shared by all.*

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Almighty God, the Father, + the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us.

Amen.

Leader's Guide

“It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”



MATERIALS NEEDED

- “Trust Tiles” handout, with tiles cut out
- Two blank pieces of paper
- Blank pieces of paper cut in the same size as the trust activities
- Markers or pens

PREPARATION

Ideally this activity can take place with four to six people. If there are more, split into groups and make sure that each group has the proper materials

Take two blank pieces of paper. On one, write “Low Trust” and on the other, write “High Trust.”

Spread out the “trust tiles” so the participants can see all of them. Place the two pieces of paper marked “Low Trust” and “High Trust” a few feet apart in front of the participants.

Also cut out 10 blank pieces of paper roughly the same size as the pieces that display trust activities and keep these off to the side.

LEADER'S SCRIPT

(Instructions for the leader are in parentheses. Questions for discussion are in **bold**.)

Imagine a line going from “Low Trust” to “High Trust.” We’re going to place each of these activities somewhere on the line. Do they require a little bit of trust (point to “Low Trust”) or a lot of trust (“High Trust”)?

Taking turns, each person can place at least one activity on the line and may not move anyone else’s. Try to avoid talking about where to put the activities. Each person can just place the activity where he or she thinks it should go.

LEADER'S SCRIPT

Is there anything that would have made your decision about where to place each activity easier? (Listen for answers: more information, wishing I could move other pieces). How much trust each activity requires depends a lot on the circumstances. A lot of times it all depends on who is involved, where it is happening or other information.

Now, try the activity again but with more information this time, and you can talk with one another about your choices (read the extra information to the group.)

Sharing a secret...with a stranger

Walking blindfolded...in your house

Driving a car...on a race track during a race

Eating leftovers...from a friend's house

Eating leftovers...from a stranger

Walking barefoot...on the beach

Loaning money...to a close friend

Going on a camping trip...
by yourself for a week

Going for a walk...at night, in a
neighborhood you've never been to

Getting pushed on a swing...by a giant

A little information makes a big difference.
What difference did it make that you were able to ask others for their opinion?

In this activity hopefully we've started to see how we develop trust. **What can we say about trust so far?** (Look for answers: context is important, social feedback is important, information is important, relationships are important).

As we can see from this exercise, trust depends on a lot of things. We don't place our trust blindly in an idea. Instead, relationships with people, where things happen, and what really is involved are important factors in helping us figure out how trustworthy something is or – in other words, where to place our faith.

In the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, the devil tempts Jesus by saying that if he throws himself off the cliff then God will send angels to catch him, because that is what the Scriptures say. But Jesus doesn't believe in putting God to the test.

Instead of seeing God as one who reacts to every whim, or as a magical genie who saves us from certain death, Jesus responds in a way that honors God. Instead of coming up with tests to prove that God can be trusted, Jesus shows us what it means to have a relationship with God. Through relationships, trust develops and matures.

How do we show our trust in God in the world around us? How does our congregation help us learn to trust God? (Look for answers: Through a faith community we learn who God is. A community helps us shape our ideas of what trust looks like. We aren't left to figure it out on our own. A community can help us see if our trust is misplaced.)

Jesus invites us to discover what God is up to in the world and to trust that God will take care of us.

We'll do the activity again, but this time take the blank pieces of paper and write on them the different activities you do in your congregation and the things that your congregation does in the community. Now, place them on the line according to the amount of trust each activity requires.

LEADER'S SCRIPT

Who do you trust the most in your life? Why?

The first people we learn to trust are the people who take care of us, who make sure we have enough to eat, and who make sure that we are safe. Because we trust them to take care of us, we learn how to help other people trust us.

How do we help other people to trust us? Have you ever trusted someone so much that you would follow them anywhere? Why would you follow them anywhere? What if they were going someplace that looked scary or threatening?

Faith is a lot like this kind of trust. Faith means trusting God so much that we follow God wherever God leads us. During Lent, we think a lot about the times when we didn't trust God to lead us. But we also try to look for where God is leading us now. One thing we know as Lutherans is that God is always calling us into the world and the community. For many congregations, this means following God into the world by starting food pantries or community gardens. For other congregations, this means teaching and learning about justice and speaking up for and with people who are living with poverty or hunger.

When we think about this, the first thing that comes to mind is how we can trust others and trust God to help us do this. But we can turn the question around, too: **How does our community learn to trust the congregation? How do we become trustworthy?**

Remember what we said about how we learn to trust other people? (they take care of our needs; they stand by us). If that's how we learn to trust others, how do other people learn to trust a congregation?

Following Jesus means trusting God, but it also means being the kind of people that our neighbors can trust. During Lent, when we think about the ways we have fallen short, that we haven't trusted God, we can also think about ways that the church hasn't always been trustworthy. When we think about serving people who are poor and hungry, like Jesus did, we often think about whether we can trust other people to come into our church. But serving the poor isn't "us" trusting "them"; it really is about being the kind of people that other people can count on to help them, to take care of them, to love them and to welcome them.

**Walking
blindfolded**

**Sharing a
secret**

**Driving a
car**

**Being a
passenger**

Hitchhiking

**Going to a
new restaurant**

**Eating
leftovers**

**Walking
barefoot**

**Getting pushed
on a swing**

**Lending
money**

**Inviting someone
you just met at church
to your house for a meal**

**Going on a
camping trip**

**Playing
hide and seek**

**Getting a
haircut**

**Letting a friend
take care of your pet**

**Going for a
walk**

Liturgy

“It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”



ORDER OF WORSHIP

GATHERING

The leader and the assembly greet one another with the Lenten dialogue:

Behold, now is the acceptable time;
now is the day of salvation.
Turn us again, O God of our salvation,
that the light of your face may shine on us.
May your justice shine like the sun;
and may the poor be lifted up.

.....

Psalm 116:9-19

The psalm may sung or read in unison, responsively by verse between the leader and the assembly or with half the assembly reading the odd numbered verses and the other half the even numbered verses.

⁹I will walk in the presence | of the LORD
in the land | of the living.
¹⁰I believed, even | when I said,
“I am great- | ly afflicted.”
¹¹In my dis- | tress I said,
“No one | can be trusted.”
¹²How shall I re- | pay the LORD
for all the good things God has | done for me?
¹³I will lift the cup | of salvation
and call on the name | of the LORD.
¹⁴I will fulfill my vows | to the LORD
in the presence of | all God’s people.
¹⁵Precious in your | sight, O LORD,
is the death | of your servants.

Continued on next page ...

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Psalm 116:9-19

*Continued from
previous page.*

¹⁶O LORD, truly I | am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your handmaid;
you have freed me | from my bonds.
¹⁷I will offer you the sacrifice | of thanksgiving
and call upon the name | of the LORD.
¹⁸I will fulfill my vows | to the LORD
in the presence of | all God's people,
¹⁹in the courts of | the LORD's house,
in the midst of you, O | Jerusalem.

Reading: Matthew 6:25-34

Silence for reflection follows the reading.

Prayer

*The leader gives
the general
introduction to
each time of prayer
inviting the assembly
to name petitions.
The leader can adapt
the petitions to
match the focus
of each week.*

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world and all those in need.

Let us give thanks for God's blessings to us especially today.
Here blessings may be named silently or aloud.
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us bring before God needs and concerns known to us.
*Here people and situations, especially in the congregation, may be named
silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us bring before God our own needs.
Here specific needs may be mentioned silently or aloud.
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us ask for God's guidance and blessing upon our time together.
Here images or themes may be mentioned silently or aloud.
God of love,
hear our prayer.

In the name of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we pray.
Amen.

Lesson and activity time

The leader may give instructions or general guidelines for the lesson and activity that will follow. Careful attention should be paid to the readings and how the discussion will flow from the worship.

.....

Sending

Jesus said, "You will be my witnesses
to the ends of the earth.

I chose you and appointed you
to bear fruit that will last.

Remember, I will be with you always,
to the end of time."

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray.

.....

Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, but always to your glory and the welfare of your people, through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

.....

Blessing

The greeting of peace may be shared by all.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Almighty God, the Father, + the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us.

Amen.

Leader's Guide

“... to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor”



MATERIALS NEEDED

- A variety of local news sources: newspapers, church newsletters, school newsletters, etc.
- Multiple pairs of scissors
- Glue sticks
- The paper with drawings from Lesson #1
- “Good News” Handout
- “Bad News” Handout

PREPARATION

This lesson works best with small groups working at tables together.

Arrange the news sources at each table, along with scissors and glue sticks for each table. Did you save the large paper with the drawings of “wild places” from Lesson #1? Great! The participants will make clippings from the news sources and glue them around the drawings on the paper. This might work best if there is a station with some helpers to do the gluing.

There will be two sets of clippings. The first set will illustrate challenges we face in our communities, church and world. These clippings will go near the top of the paper by the phrase “In our wild places ...” The second set will illustrate hope, togetherness, joy and active faith. These will go near the bottom of the paper, near the phrase “... the Spirit is with us.” When the whole lesson is done, the paper will have drawings of “wild places” surrounded by pictures of the challenges we face in the “wilderness” of our world at the top. At the bottom of the paper, there will be clippings that show evidence of the Spirit at work in the world, bringing people together and anointing our church “to bring good news to the poor” and suffering (Luke 4:18-19).

LEADER'S SCRIPT

(Instructions for the leader are in parentheses. **Questions for discussion are in bold.**)

In today's reading from the Gospel of Luke, Jesus has returned from the wilderness to Galilee to start his ministry. When he makes the announcement, Jesus quotes from the prophet Isaiah 61:1-2: "1The spirit of the LORD GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; 2to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God ..."

Do you remember our first lesson this Lent? Jesus had been baptized and led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Here, after he comes back from the wilderness, Jesus says he "is sent" by God back into the world, this time not to be tempted, but to proclaim a message. He is sent to give good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind and freedom for people who are oppressed. That's a pretty important message!

But why do people need to hear this from him? We can get a few clues by looking at the prophecy Jesus quoted, and at what was happening when Isaiah first wrote these words. The people in Isaiah's time had been taken as prisoners to live in Babylon for many years. Finally, they had returned to their homeland, but it wasn't easy to start their lives again. There wasn't much money in the country, a lot of folks were poor and the people were divided. Into all of this came Isaiah, proclaiming God's "good news" to those who suffer. What would it be like to hear someone saying that God had "good news" in the midst of all this?

In our first lesson this Lent, we talked about our "wild places" – our schools, our communities, our workplaces and our world. This week, we're going to think about that more deeply. At the tables, you can see a lot of news sources that have stories about our community. For the first part of this activity, get together with a few other people and look through the news sources for two or three stories or pictures of people who might be the poor, the captives and the oppressed today. Look especially for stories or pictures about hunger and poverty. Once your group has found its stories or pictures, cut them out and then glue them around the drawings of our "wild places" from the first week. (Allow enough time for each group to choose its stories or pictures.)

Why did you choose the story or picture? What is happening in the picture? What do all of these say about our community? Who are the poor, the captives and the oppressed today?

(Read together the "Bad News" handout.)

Let's go back to the news sources for the second part of our activity. This time, find two or three stories or pictures that show "good news": hope, joy, people working together and helping each other. Look for these especially in church newsletters or bulletins! In what ways is God proclaiming "good news" today?

(Allow enough time for each person to choose a story or picture.)

Why did you choose the story or picture? What is happening in the story or picture? What do these pictures say about our community?

(Read together the "Good News" handout.)

LEADER'S SCRIPT

How does our congregation participate in God's "good news" in our community? In what ways might we share in God's "good news" in school? In our workplaces? What makes it hard to share in God's good news in your school?

This Lent, we talked a lot about wilderness and our wild places. **And we learned about some of the things that we find in the wilderness. Do you remember what they were?** (Lesson #2: we encounter need and hunger; Lesson #3: we encounter different forms of power and powerlessness; Lesson #4: we find risks and chances to trust).

But do you remember the promise from the first week? (In our wild places ... the Spirit is with us.) Not only is the Spirit with us, though. Remember from the story in Luke – the Holy Spirit "led" Jesus into the wilderness, and Jesus was "sent" by God into the world to proclaim good news. After his resurrection, Jesus sends his disciples into the world to keep proclaiming this good news to all who will hear.

In Lent, we don't talk too much about "good news." Lent is a time when we reflect on the ways that we haven't shared in the good news God sends to the poor. One of the ways we do this reflecting is by fasting. **What does fasting mean?**

Isaiah wrote about fasting in a different way:

Isaiah 58:6-8

[God said]: Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread
with the hungry,

and bring the homeless
poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself
from your own kin?
Then your light shall break
forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall
be your rearguard.

What does fasting mean for Isaiah? How might this kind of fast help us see the "bad news" and still be part of the "good news"? In what ways can or do we fast like Isaiah?

Fasting often makes us think about things like sacrifice and repentance. Fasting during Lent is sometimes done to help remind us of our sin and what Jesus did for us on the cross. Because of this, it is sometimes a somber activity. **How might fasting, though, be a way or an occasion to share "good news"? If real fasting means – for Isaiah – sharing with others, setting people free and healing ourselves, then how might fasting be a time for joy and togetherness as well as self-reflection and somberness?**

“Bad News” for the Hungry

Over **49 million Americans** do not have access to enough food to meet their basic needs.⁸

Every county in the United States has people who are food insecure, which means they do not have consistent, dependable access to the food they need for a healthy life.⁹

A family of three that receives help from the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP; formerly known as “food stamps”) received an average of \$397 in 2011. That’s only **\$4.41 for each person per day**, or about \$1.47 per meal.¹⁰

After November 2013, this same family of three will only receive \$319 per month, or about \$3.54 per day. That’s only **\$1.18 per meal**.¹¹

In 2013, federal funding that helps poor families heat their homes fell by \$600 million. That means “more families facing that choice: **heat or eat**.”¹²

As of 2007, nearly 18,000 children worldwide die from hunger each day. **A child dies from hunger every 4 seconds**.¹³

⁸ Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Mark Nord, and Anita Singh. “Household food security in the United States in 2012.” (USDA ERS, 2013), p. 6.

⁹ Feeding America, “Hunger & poverty statistics,” <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-facts/hunger-and-poverty-statistics.aspx>.

¹⁰ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Policy basics: Introduction to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)” (March 28, 2013), <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=2226>.

¹¹ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “SNAP benefits will be cut for all participants in November 2013,” (August 2, 2013), <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3899>.

¹² Quoted in Scott Stafford, “Federal heating assistance funding cut for state: \$3.5B to \$2.9B,” The Berkshire Eagle (Pittsfield, Mass.), Nov. 5, 2013. Available at http://www.berkshireeagle.com/news/ci_24454695/federal-heating-assistance-funding-cut-state-3-5b.

¹³ “18,000 children die every day from hunger, U.N. says,” USA Today (Feb. 17, 2007), http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-02-17-un-hunger_x.htm.

“Good News” for the Hungry

In 2012, **ELCA World Hunger received over \$18 million** in gifts from individuals, congregations and synods.

Through the ELCA World Hunger domestic grant program, we have supported **350 different congregations and nonprofit organizations** working to respond to hunger and poverty in the United States.

My Friend's House, an ELCA ministry in Los Angeles, Calif., **provided food to over 10,000 people** from January to July 2011.

Through gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran Social Services in New York has been able to **help families who lost their homes to Hurricane Sandy**.

The first year that it was opened (2011), the Community Resource Center at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Mahtomedi, Minn., **helped over 750 families, provided over 5,312 shelter beds, served over 10,200 meals, and gave over 26,466 pounds of food** to families in poverty.

Our ELCA advocacy network in 11 states, in Washington, D.C., and in New York at the United Nations encourages people to **“speak out [and] defend the rights of the poor and needy”** (Proverbs 31:8-9) on school breakfasts for children, care for creation, health care for low-income people and numerous other issues.

Liturgy

“... to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”



ORDER OF WORSHIP

GATHERING

The leader and the assembly greet one another with the Lenten dialogue:

Behold, now is the acceptable time;
now is the day of salvation.
Turn us again, O God of our salvation,
that the light of your face may shine on us.
May your justice shine like the sun;
and may the poor be lifted up.

.....

Psalm 19

The psalm may sung or read in unison, responsively by verse between the leader and the assembly or with half the assembly reading the odd numbered verses and the other half the even numbered verses.

¹The heavens declare the glo- | ry of God,
and the sky proclaims its | maker’s handiwork.
²One day tells its tale | to another,
and one night imparts knowledge | to another.
³Although they have no | words or language,
and their voices | are not heard,
⁴their sound has gone out into all lands,
and their message to the ends | of the world,
where God has pitched a tent | for the sun.
⁵It comes forth like a bridegroom out | of his chamber;
it rejoices like a champion to | run its course.

Continued on next page ...

**Psalm
19**

*Continued from
previous page.*

⁶It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens
and runs about to the end of | it again;

nothing is hidden from its | burning heat.

⁷The teaching of the LORD is perfect and re- | vives the soul;

the testimony of the LORD is sure and gives wisdom to | the simple.

⁸The statutes of the LORD are just and re- | joice the heart;

the commandment of the LORD is clear and gives light | to the eyes.

⁹The fear of the LORD is clean and en- | dures forever;

the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous | altogether.

¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, more than | much fine gold,
sweeter far than honey, than honey | in the comb.

¹¹By them also is your ser- | vant enlightened,

and in keeping them there is | great reward.

¹²Who can detect one's | own offenses?

Cleanse me from my | secret faults.

¹³Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins;

let them not get dominion | over me;

then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a | great offense.

¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable | in your sight,

O LORD, my strength and | my redeemer.

**Reading:
Luke
4:14-21**

Silence for reflection follows the reading.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Prayer

The leader gives the general introduction to each time of prayer inviting the assembly to name petitions. The leader can adapt the petitions to match the focus of each week.

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world and all those in need.

Let us give thanks for God's blessings to us especially today. *Here blessings may be named silently or aloud.* God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Let us bring before God needs and concerns known to us. *Here people and situations, especially in the congregation, may be named silently or aloud.* God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Let us bring before God our own needs. *Here specific needs may be mentioned silently or aloud.* God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Let us ask for God's guidance and blessing upon our time together. *Here images or themes may be mentioned silently or aloud.* God of love, **hear our prayer.**

In the name of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we pray. **Amen.**

Lesson and activity time

The leader may give instructions or general guidelines for the lesson and activity that will follow. Careful attention should be paid to the readings and how the discussion will flow from the worship.

Sending

Jesus said, You will be my witnesses **to the ends of the earth.**

I chose you and appointed you **to bear fruit that will last.**

Remember, I will be with you always, **to the end of time.**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Prayer

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With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world and all those in need.

Let us give thanks for God's blessings to us especially today. *Here blessings may be named silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us bring before God needs and concerns known to us. *Here people and situations, especially in the congregation, may be named silently or aloud.*
God of love,
hear our prayer.

Let us bring before God our own needs.
Here specific needs may be mentioned silently or aloud.

Almighty God, grant that your holy word which has been proclaimed this day may enter into our hearts through your grace, that it may produce in us the fruit of the Spirit for witness and service in the world and to the praise and honor of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Affirmation of Christian Vocation

Within the sending rite of the service, this affirmation may be made by individuals or groups, and may be introduced by a description of the area of service to be affirmed. Or, the affirmation may be made by the whole assembly.

The presiding minister addresses those affirming Christian vocation. [Sisters and brothers]/[name/s], both your work and your rest are in God. Will you endeavor to pattern your life on the Lord Jesus Christ, in gratitude to God and in service to others, at morning and evening, at work and at play, all the days of your life?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

The presiding minister continues. Almighty God, by the power of the Spirit you have knit these your servants into the one body of your Son, Jesus Christ. Look with favor upon them in their commitment to serve in Christ's name. Give them courage, patience, and vision; and strengthen us all in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. The service concludes with the blessing and dismissal

Blessing

The greeting of peace may be shared by all.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Almighty God, the Father, + the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us.
Amen.



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

www.ELCA.org/hunger