

RIVER OF Life



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

Welcome!

Welcome to “River of Life,” ELCA World Hunger’s Vacation Bible School program for 2021!

This year, we are journeying down the river to learn about God’s gracious gift of water. From the waters of baptism to the waters that sustain farms and gardens, water is life. As a church, the ELCA is committed to accompanying communities that lack access to clean water and proper sanitation, both in the United States and internationally, through ministries supported by ELCA World Hunger. The simple reason for this is that all of creation relies on water to live. But water is much more than a resource. For people of faith, water is a powerful symbol, with significance as deep as the natural stores that cover the globe.

In “River of Life,” participants will learn about the importance of water and visit important “ports” during the week to hear Bible stories about water. They will also hear about communities working to restore watersheds, to protect rights to water and to ensure safe water for everyone.

And they’ll have some fun! The games and other activities included here help to celebrate water and remind us of our important calling to be good stewards of creation. These activities are designed to be adaptable to your context, so feel free to make adjustments as needed. Each day has a skit to introduce the theme and a small-group time to dive more deeply into the Bible story, plus games, crafts and more!

We hope that “River of Life” will foster a fun, meaningful experience for you and your community. We also extend our thanks to the leaders who used ELCA World Hunger’s previous VBS programs and shared their stories, photos and feedback. THANK YOU!










May God continue to bless your ministries and the ministries we share together.

Ryan P. Cumming

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Program Director, Hunger Education
ELCA World Hunger



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Daily Schedule and Overview

"River of Life" Vacation Bible School is made possible by generous gifts to ELCA World Hunger. The support of individuals and congregations helps our church accompany communities in nearly 60 countries around the world, including the United States. This work includes sustainable agriculture, access to health care, jobs programs, community feeding programs and much, much more!



Each of the stories included in "River of Life" describes a real project supported by ELCA World Hunger. To support this work, consider including an opportunity for giving within your VBS program. The ELCA Good Gifts catalog at <https://goodgifts.elca.org/water> has some great ideas. Here are just a few:



Portion of an irrigation project
\$100



Latrine
\$150



Simple water well
\$2,500



Share of a safe-water project
\$250



Where needed most
Any amount!

Daily Schedule and Overview



SAMPLE SCHEDULE

TIME	ACTIVITY
9 – 9:20	Large-group opening
9:20 – 9:35	Small-group 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
	Small-group time
	Rotation 1
	Rotation 2
	Rotation 3
	Rotation 4
	Rotation 5
	Large-group closing

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

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

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

DAY 1

Theme: God creates

Bible story:

Creation — Genesis 1:1-2:1

DAY 2

Theme: God provides

Bible story:

Water from a rock — Exodus 17:1-6

DAY 3

Theme: God claims

Bible story:

Baptism of Jesus — Matthew 3:13-17

DAY 4

Theme: God protects

Bible story:

Jesus calms the storm — Mark 4:35-41

DAY 5

Theme: God loves, we love

Bible story:

Jesus washes the disciples' feet — John 13:3-15, 33-35

LARGE-GROUP OPENING

- Welcome and prayer
- Theme song
- Opening skit
- Reiteration of daily theme, focus prayer
- More songs
- Sending

SMALL-GROUP TIME

ROTATIONS

- **Story Time** — This is a time for an adult to share with the children a story of a ministry supported by ELCA World Hunger. Included in Story Time 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 of fun activities you can plan, based on the size of your group and your available space.
- **Snacks** — Recipes are included for each day, related to the country highlighted in Story Time. Each day has an option for something to buy or something to make. Either 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 Story Time.
- **Simulation Station** — The Simulation Station offers a chance to learn more about the day's global goals and how our faith calls us to respond.

LARGE-GROUP CLOSING

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

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 from 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.)

DAY 1 - "God Creates"



FOCUS VERSE

"God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good"
(Genesis 1:31a).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to "River of Life," using the script below or something similar.

Hello everyone! Welcome aboard the riverboat Ezekiel! My name is [name], and I will be your captain for our journey down the "River of Life." [If there are other important members of your "crew," you can introduce them here.] You might recognize the name "Ezekiel" from the Bible or from our theme verse: "Everything will live where the river goes." Ezekiel was a prophet whose job was to share God's message with God's people and help God's people to live in good ways. This week, we will be traveling along the River of Life, stopping at various ports to learn about water and how God works through water, and through us, to make a difference in the world. While in port, we will also meet some of our neighbors around the world and learn how ELCA World Hunger is helping our neighbors with water projects.

Each day we will start on the boat together and introduce the day as we pull into our new port. We will then break into our small groups to head ashore and explore. We will return to the boat at the end of the day to share what we learned.

You can also use this time to introduce any information about the building, the grounds or safety, or other tips that visitors might need.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, from the waters of creation you formed the world and everything and everyone in it. As we learn about you this week, help us to see your presence in everyone we meet. Amen.

Theme Song



DAY 1 SKIT

Captain (C): It looks like we're about ready to head to our first port, but before we do that, let me introduce our pilot for this journey, Sage.

Sage (S): Ahoy there! Thank you for having me on the *Ezekiel*. This is a mighty fine boat you have here.

C: You're welcome. Before you lead us in, could you tell us what a riverboat pilot does? We mostly hear about airplane pilots, and this is not an airplane.

S: Good point! Riverboat pilots are responsible for guiding the boat through harbors or narrow passageways, places that need expert guidance. Your captain is responsible for the whole journey – I'll just be coming in the morning to guide this boat into your port for the day.

C: Shall we call you Pilot?

S: Sure. You can call me Pilot, or Sage, or Pilot Sage, or whatever you want. Just don't call me late to the galley.

C: The galley?

S: That's riverboat talk for where the food is served. I hear you have some solid snacks on this boat.

C: We are known for our snacks. Where are we headed today, Pilot Sage?

S: Since today is the very first day, we will begin at the headwaters, not just of the river but of everything.

C: What's a "headwaters"?

S: The headwaters is just a fancy name for the start of a river. Today in your small-group time you will be reading the story of creation. In it, you will hear how "in the beginning ... a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." Then God spoke, and from those waters came, well, everything.

C: I've read the creation story before, but I never thought about how God formed everything out of water. That's interesting.

S: It is! Every single thing in the world has water in it. Some places, like rain forests, have a LOT of water. Other places, like deserts, have very little. But no matter where you go on this planet, you will find water. Water is the source of life. [Holds up a gallon of water.] This is one gallon of water. There are about 14 of these in you.

C: Wow! That's a lot of water! That's why our theme verse is "Everything will live where the river goes." Because everything needs water to live.

S: Yep, that's right. And here's something else important to take from the creation story. After God created each thing from the water, God called each thing good. Everything God formed from the water is good, because God says it is.

C: Everything? Even mosquitoes and broccoli and my sister?

S: Yes, even mosquitoes and broccoli, and definitely your sister. God said that we humans are very good. And God gave us a special job to do. We are to take care of the creation that God made and take care of each other. This week, we'll be learning about how ELCA World Hunger helps us do that.

C: Thanks, Pilot Sage, you've given us a lot to think about.

S: You're welcome, Captain. It's my pleasure to assist you on this journey. And with that, I think you're safely into port, so I'm going to turn this vessel back over to you. Have a good day, and I'll see you later on when it's time to leave.

REVIEW OF DAY 1 THEME / CLOSING PRAYER

The theme for today is "God creates." We are learning about how God created everything out of water, and water is the source of all life. And everything God created God called not just good, but very good!

Closing Songs

Closing Prayer

Good and gracious God, thank you for bringing us together to have fun, pray, play and learn about how to make the world better for everyone. Help us this week to make new friends, learn from each other, and learn how you are at work in the world and in us. Amen.

Dismissal to Small-group Time

DAY 2 - "God Provides"



FOCUS VERSE

"I will be standing there in front of you"
(Exodus 17:6a).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to "River of Life," using the script below or something similar.

Hello everyone! Welcome back to the *Ezekiel*, our trusty boat for our trip down the "River of Life." My name is Captain [name]. [If there are other important members of your "crew," you can introduce them here.] Each day we're stopping in various ports along the river to learn about water and how God works through water. We'll also be meeting some great leaders around the world and learning how ELCA World Hunger is supporting their work to help their neighbors.

You can also use this time to introduce any information about the building, the grounds or safety, or other tips that visitors might need.

Opening Prayer

God, you formed this world from the waters of creation, and you give us everything we need. Help us today to see how you provide for all of us and how you make us your hands in helping others. Amen.

Theme Song



DAY 2 SKIT

Captain (C): I think I see today's port city coming into view. Time to welcome Pilot Sage back to guide us in.

Sage (S): Hi, everyone! Good to be back onboard with you. Before we pull into today's destination, who can tell me about yesterday's port?

Affirm all answers.

S: That's right! Yesterday we visited the headwaters themselves, the waters of creation. We also met some of our neighbors in Cambodia and learned about the work they are doing in growing fresh food in their schools.

C: There was a lot of water at creation, but the port we're pulling into today looks very dry.

S: It is dry! Today we're going to visit Moses and the Israelites in the desert.

C: The desert? But this is a VBS about water. How are we going to learn about water in the desert?

S: Well, do things live in the desert?

C: Of course things live in the desert! There are lizards, cacti, people – deserts can be full of life.

S: If there's life, then there's water. Remember the theme of this week: "Everything will live where the river goes." There is life in the desert, so there is water in the desert.

C: OK, sure, but there's not much water in the desert. Not enough to have a boat festival or a river that flows backward, as in Cambodia.

S: You're right – there isn't much water in the desert. That makes the water that is there really important. Today in our small-group time we're going to learn about how God gave water to the Israelites out of a rock.

C: Water from a rock? That's amazing!

S: It is! Then we're going to El Salvador to see a

project ELCA World Hunger supports that's working to restore a river basin. Even places that have a lot of rain can have a hard time if the water is dirty or unsafe. Deserts aren't the only places that may not have enough water to drink.

C: I hadn't thought about that. And things that live in deserts are used to not having much water. I bet it's hard for places that *are* used to water if they don't have *clean* water.

S: It can be. But what we're going to learn today is how God always finds new ways to provide for God's people. And one of the ways God helps people is through us. There are all sorts of things we can do to bring water to thirsty places.

C: Wow! Thanks, Pilot Sage! I'm excited to see what today's port has in store.

S: Have a great time exploring the desert today!

Sage leaves.

REVIEW OF DAY 2 THEME / CLOSING PRAYER

The theme for today is "God provides." As you're exploring today's port, be on the lookout for all the ways God is providing for God's people and who God is using to do God's work.

Closing Songs

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for all the ways you are with us. Help us today to see your work in the world and in each other. Amen.

Dismissal to Small-group Time

DAY 3 - "God Claims"



FOCUS VERSE

"This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased"
(Matthew 3:17b).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to "River of Life," using the script below or something similar.

Hello again! Welcome to our third day aboard the *Ezekiel*, our trusty boat for this journey down the "River of Life." My name is Captain [name]. [If there are other important members of your "crew," you can introduce them here.] Each day we're stopping in various ports along the river to learn about water and how God works through water. We'll also be meeting some of our neighbors around the world and learning how ELCA World Hunger is supporting their work to help their neighbors. Who remembers where we stopped on our first day? [Affirm all answers.] How about yesterday? [Affirm all answers.]

Today we're headed to another river, the Jordan River, where Jesus was baptized (we'll learn more about baptism in a little while!). We're going to learn about how God calls us together and makes community. Who knows what a community is? [Affirm all answers.] That's right, a community is a group of people who come together for a common purpose. There are communities of all different sizes. This VBS is a community, your small group is a community, our whole country is a community and the whole world is a community. Today we're going to learn about

the community of God's family. We're also going to learn about some of the people of God who live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the United States, and the work they're doing to share the love of God with their community. You can also use this time to introduce any information about the building, the grounds or safety, or other tips that visitors might need.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, thank you for bringing us together in this community of Vacation Bible School to travel together and to learn more about you. Help us today to learn how to share the love we experience with others. Amen.

Theme Song



DAY 3 SKIT

Captain (C): Ahoy there, Sage!

Sage (S): Ahoy! Good to be back with you this morning.

C: As we're pulling into this port today, Sage, I have to ask a question. I know there's water in Milwaukee. But why are we heading so close to home?

S: First off, Wisconsin is exciting! It's the home of both the bratwurst capital of the world (Sheboygan) and the toilet paper capital of the world (Green Bay). It's the birthplace of the ice cream sundae, and 21 million gallons of ice cream are consumed there each year.

C: Don't get me wrong – I love bratwurst, ice cream and toilet paper. But with rivers and a great lake, it doesn't seem like Wisconsin would be a place where people can't get water, right?

S: That's exactly why we're going to Wisconsin. It's great to travel to faraway places and see the work God is doing with and among our neighbors and friends around the world. But seeing what our friends and neighbors in Milwaukee are doing reminds us that there's work for us in the communities where we live. God is at work all over the world, even in our own neighborhoods.

C: That's a good point. Yesterday, it was really neat learning about that river basin in El Salvador, but I can't exactly restore a whole river on my own.

S: But you *can* gather with your friends to clean up the rivers and streams in your neighborhood. Or, you can be like the people in Milwaukee who we're going to meet today, and work for clean water for those who need it.

C: OK, one more question. In today's Bible story, Jesus will be going to the Jordan River. What's

the connection? The Jordan River has plenty of water, but it's not in Wisconsin.

S: It's not in El Salvador either. We're going to the Jordan River today because that was where Jesus was baptized and where God claimed him as God's own Son. In baptism, we're all claimed as children of God. For Jesus, that happened at the Jordan. We're claimed in water from all different places. Like the theme verse for the week says, "Everything will live where the river goes." Wherever there's water, God is there too.

C: Thanks, Sage. You've given us a lot to think about. I can't wait to see what today will bring. Thanks for getting us into port safely.

S: You're welcome! Enjoy the Jordan and enjoy Milwaukee. Bring me back some ice cream!

Sage leaves.

REVIEW OF DAY 3 THEME / CLOSING PRAYER

The theme for today is God claims. Be on the lookout today for all the ways God claims us as God's children and connects us to our one another in Christ.

Closing Songs

Closing Prayer

Good and gracious God, thank you for another day to have fun and learn about you in this new community of VBS. Help us to grow in friendship today as we learn more about your world. Amen.

Dismissal to Small-group Time

DAY 4 - "God Protects"



FOCUS VERSE

"Peace! Be still!"
(Mark 4:39b).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to "River of Life," using the script below or something similar.

Hello again! Welcome back to the *Ezekiel* as we travel together along the "River of Life." My name is Captain [name]. [If there are other important members of your "crew," you can introduce them here.] What are some of the places we've been so far this week? [Affirm all answers.] Today we're going to learn about a time when Jesus and his disciples were on a boat as we are. We're also going to visit with the people of God who live in Papua New Guinea to learn about how they use water to care for their neighbors.

You can also use this time to introduce any information about the building, the grounds or safety, or other tips that visitors might need.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, thank you for being with us throughout the week. Help us today to see how you support us through our whole lives. Amen.

Theme Song



DAY 4 SKIT

Captain (C): Ahoy there, Sage. How are you today?

Sage (S): Ahoy! I'm great! So glad to be with you on another day of our fun journey.

C: I'm glad to be with you too. But Sage, I have a question.

S: Fire away.

C: Funny you should say "fire." That's sort of my question.

S: You have a question about fire? During a water VBS?

C: No, I mean, not exactly. Have you ever been in a big storm? Like with thunder and lightning and big, crashing waves?

S: Sure, I've been in storms. It's part of life on the river.

C: What did you do?

S: Well, there's all sorts of things we do on the boat when the weather gets rough. We tie down everything that might blow around; we close all the windows and fasten the doors. And we make sure we're all wearing life preservers.

C: What's a life preserver?

S: It's a vest you put on that helps you float. They're usually bright orange so you can be seen easily. Some even have lights on them.

C: OK, well, since you mentioned fire ...

S: You mentioned fire.

C: Whatever. What if there were a fire on the boat?

S: We always make sure we have fire extinguishers handy. We are also really careful in the kitchen, and we don't have open flames.

C: OK, but what if the boat sinks?

S: We have lifeboats. But hey, can I ask you a question? Why so many questions?

C: Today we're going to hear a story about when Jesus and his disciples were in a boat together. There was a big storm, and Jesus calmed it. And it got me thinking about storms and other things that could happen, and I got a little scared. I mean, I know Jesus is with us, but sometimes I still get scared.

S: It can be hard to feel Jesus' presence when things are hard or scary. And Jesus doesn't usually just show up and stop the scary thing, as he did for the disciples. At least, not for me.

C: Me neither.

S: But let me tell you some things I do when I'm feeling scared. First, I think about all the people who love me. Then I reach out to someone I trust, like a parent or grandparent, or a teacher or pastor or Sunday school teacher. You know how we say, "God's work. Our hands."?

C: Yeah.

S: Well, it's not just our hands but other people's hands too. Through the hands of all kinds of people, God protects us, loves us and keeps us safe. Remember yesterday, when we talked about people in Milwaukee making sure their neighbors had clean drinking water?

C: Yes.

S: Not having clean water would be scary, but they're acting as God's hands and helping their neighbors. Today we're going to learn about projects in Papua New Guinea that keep people and their plants safe. No matter where you are,

God is with you.

C: Thanks for sharing, Sage. This makes me feel a lot better. Sometimes when I'm scared, I pray. Talking to God always makes me feel better.

S: Prayer is a great idea. Because no matter what happens, we can always take our fears to God.

C: Thank you, Sage, for being a good friend and for reminding me of God's love and protection. I can't wait to learn about other places to see God today.

S: You're welcome! We're pulling into the dock now. Have a great time in port today! Bye.

C: Bye!

Sage leaves.

REVIEW OF DAY 4 THEME / CLOSING PRAYER

The theme for today is "God protects." Pay attention today to all the people and things God gives us to help us stay safe.

Closing Songs

Closing Prayer

Thank you, God, for all these people gathered together to learn about you. We thank you especially for our leaders, people preparing food, teachers, doctors and everyone else who helps us stay safe. Amen.

Dismissal to Small-group Time

DAY 5 - "God Loves, We Love"



FOCUS VERSE

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another"
(John 13:35).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to "River of Life," using the script below or something similar.

Ahoy! Welcome to our final day aboard the *Ezekiel*. I can't believe our trip passed so quickly. It's true about time passing quickly when you're having a blast. On behalf of all our crew, it's been great having you aboard on this journey with us. Who can remember some of the places we've journeyed? [Affirm all answers.] Today we will be focusing on how God is sending us to share all we've learned. We'll also pop in on some friends in the Central African Republic to learn about how they use water to care for their community.

You can also use this time to introduce any information about the building, the grounds or safety, or other tips that visitors might need.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, thank you for being with us throughout the week. Help us today to see how you support us through our whole lives. Amen.

Theme Song



DAY 5 SKIT

Captain (C): Ahoy there, Sage!

Sage (S): Ahoy! Hard to believe this is the last day of your voyage. Did you have fun?

C: I did. [To the audience.] How about you all, did you have fun? [Welcome responses.]

S: I'm so glad! Thank you for letting me be part of your journey.

C: Thank you for bringing us safely into so many great places. Where are we going today?

S: Today we're going to the mouth of the river.

C: The mouth? I didn't know rivers had mouths. What does it say?

S: Not that kind of a mouth. The mouth is the end of a river, where it enters a larger body of water like the ocean.

C: So then, why don't they call it "the end"?

S: Because it's not really the end; it's more like a new beginning. After completing its journey on one river, the water enters a new body of water and makes that one bigger.

C: That's like how our mouths work. We hear about God from other people, and we can use our mouths to share all the things we learned about God this week and how much God loves us!

S: Yep, and just like the river keeps flowing across the land, the words we say and the actions we do can change the world.

C: It reminds me of the Bible story we're going to read today. Jesus washed his disciples' feet and then told them to love one another. He said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

S: Jesus said that to the disciples at a time when it looked as if Jesus' life were almost over. But, of course, this turned out to be only the beginning of the story – and the beginning of the disciples

sharing God's love with the world.

C: You could say today is the *mouth* of VBS. We're reaching the end of our time together, but it's only the beginning of sharing God's love.

S: You're right. Have a great time in port today! It's been wonderful journeying with you.

C: Thanks, Sage. Bye!

Sage leaves.

REVIEW OF DAY 5 THEME / CLOSING PRAYER

The theme for today is "God loves, we love." Today we're looking at how God shows God's love to us and how we're called to share that love with the world.

Closing Songs

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for another day with our friends here at VBS. Be with us today as we learn to share your love and the love we've experienced here with everyone we meet. Amen.

Dismissal to Small-group Time

LESSON FOCUS

Everything God created is good.

SMALL-GROUP TIME:
DAY 1

Opener: Creation Name Game

Start with a simple name game to introduce everyone. Invite each child to introduce themselves with their name and something from nature that has the same letter as their first name. For example, “Molly Mountain” or “Sam Snail.” After each person is introduced, invite the group to respond: “God made [thing from nature] and God made [name]. (Example: “God made mountains, and God made Molly.”)

Encountering Scripture:
Genesis 1:1-2:1

This activity invites children to explore the story of creation, using all five senses. After each day’s reading, use the questions to reflect on the story. For preschool-aged children, there are simple questions.

Materials needed

- flashlight
- spray bottle
- fan
- small cactus or other arid plant
- tomato plant or other plant requiring watering
- photos of the sun and moon from nasa.gov

Activity

This activity is an immersive reading of the creation story. You can use the Bible verse below or another translation for younger children.

Turn off the lights, if your space allows it. Invite everyone to get comfortable and close their eyes, so you can tell them the story of creation.

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness [God] called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Turn the lights back on and invite everyone to open their eyes.

Questions for older children

- What could you see when your eyes were closed? Have you ever been in such deep darkness that you couldn’t see anything? What was that like? Have you ever been outside when it’s so bright, it’s hard to see?
- What if it was never dark and there was light all the time? What would that be like? (Example: It would be hard to sleep.)

Questions for younger children

- Where is it dark? (Examples: A cave, your bedroom at night, a closet.)
- Where is it light? (Examples: Outside, on a stage, in a window.)

Notice that God created both light and dark, and a time for both. We humans need light to see, but we also need night to rest. We need both light and dark, and God called both good. And that was the first day.

Turn on a fan and spray a water mist over the children with a spray bottle while you read the next section.

⁶And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

God separated the sky from the water, but even in the sky there is water. Clouds are made of water. When the air feels heavy and sticky, that’s water too. Some plants even get their water from the air.

⁹And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together [God] called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Show the group two plants, one that needs moist soil to survive, such as a spider plant, a ficus or a small tomato plant, and one that needs dry soil, such as an aloe or a small cactus. Invite the children to touch the soil of the different plants.

Questions for older children

- What do you notice?
- Why might the soil feel different? Both plants need water, but they need water in different ways. The text talked about the different things the plants do.
- Where do you think these plants might live? How might they be used? (Examples: A spider plant provides a safe place for insects to hide, a tomato plant makes food, a cactus stores water for desert animals.)

Questions for younger children

- What is your favorite fruit or vegetable?
- How many fruits or vegetables can you name?
- [Invite the children to feel the two plants.] How are the two plants different?

¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

Share pictures of the moon and the sun from space. (See www.nasa.gov for a great image gallery.)

Ask:

- How are the sun and moon similar?
- How are they different?

²⁰And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” ²¹So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw

- Can you think of a time when you needed help and someone was able to help you?
- Can you think of a time when someone needed help and you could help them?

**Engaging the Text:
Share What We Learned**

Go around the circle and ask each child to share one thing they learned during small group today that they think would be good to share with others. Affirm all suggestions and invite the group to make posters to share with the whole VBS. Turn to get paper for the project and “discover” that you have only one sheet of paper. Invite the group to consider a solution to this problem, so everyone can be represented. Solutions could be anything – maybe they will choose to tear the paper, so everyone gets a piece, or pass it around, or pick one idea to represent all of them. Affirm whatever they decide and help them carry the idea through.

Closing Prayer

Ask the children to think about someone they are thankful for. Tell them that there will be time in the prayer for them to give thanks aloud or silently.

Dear God, thank you for giving us everything we need. We thank you today especially for these people who help us. *[Invite the children to add their own prayers.]* Be with us today as we learn about how you provide for all people, especially the people of El Salvador. Amen.

NOTES

LESSON FOCUS

God claims us and calls us beloved.

**SMALL-GROUP TIME:
DAY 3**

Opener: My Name Is ...

By this point in the week, the group should know each other’s names. This icebreaker is an opportunity to think more deeply about what their names mean.

Have the group sit in a circle and take turns sharing something about their name. For older kids, they can share the background of their name, who gave it to them, what culture it is from, what it means to them. Younger kids can share what they like about their name.

**Encountering Scripture:
Matthew 3:13-17**

Before you begin, show the children a map of Israel. Point out Galilee in the north and the Jordan River running from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. Point out the wilderness of Judah and how far Jesus traveled to reach where John was preaching.

Read Matthew 3:13-15. Use a translation that will be accessible for children.

Questions for conversation

- Why didn’t John want to baptize Jesus?
- What was Jesus’ response?

Read Matthew 3:16-17.

Questions for conversation

- What happened at Jesus’ baptism?
- God calls Jesus “beloved.” What do you think “beloved” means?
- Who is “beloved” of you? Who might call you their “beloved”?

In baptism, God claimed Jesus as God’s son and called him beloved. We are also God’s children and beloved of God. Baptism helps remind us of this. Even if we aren’t baptized, God still loves us. Earlier we talked about our names and what they mean. Another “name” we have is “child of God.” Just as our name was given to us by someone else, the name “child of God” was given to us by God. We cannot change it or lose it; it is God’s name for us for always.

**Engaging the Text:
Named and Claimed**

Materials needed

- name badges, preferably ones reading “Hello, My Name Is”
- markers

Give each child a name badge, help them write “Child of God” on it and stick the name badge to their shirt. Invite them to think about someone in the room or nearby whom they can remind that they are also a child of God. Help them write a second name badge to give to that person.

Closing Prayer

Ask the children to think about someone they love. Tell them that there will be time in the prayer for them to give thanks to God for that person, aloud or silently.

Dear God, thank you for claiming us as your children and calling us beloved. Today we thank you for the people we love. Especially the people we are naming now. *[Invite the children to add their own prayers.]* Be with us today as we learn about your children near and far. Amen.

NOTES

Lined area for taking notes.

LESSON FOCUS

Even when we are scared, God is always with us.

SMALL-GROUP TIME: DAY 4

Materials needed

- masking tape
lots of pieces of crumpled-up paper, small foam balls or beanbags
index cards
markers

Opener: Bail Out the Boat

Make the outline of a boat on the ground with masking tape. Depending on the size of your group, choose two or three children to be the disciples and be in the boat. The rest of the group is the storm. The storm tries to throw the paper balls into the boat, while the disciples try to "bail" the water out of the boat. After a few minutes, switch players until everyone has had a chance to be a disciple.

Questions

- How did it feel to be in the boat?
Was it hard or easy to keep the boat bailed out?
How did you work with the other disciples?

Encountering Scripture: Mark 4:35-41

Today during the opening, our captain shared some things that scare them. How did Pilot Sage help them feel better?

Today we're going to read a story about when the disciples were scared.

Read Mark 4:35-41. Use a translation that will be accessible for children.

Questions for conversation

- Why were the disciples afraid? (Example: There was a big storm.)
What was Jesus doing while the disciples were afraid? (He was sleeping.)
How did that make the disciples feel? (Scared, because they thought Jesus didn't know that they were in danger.)
How did Jesus calm the storm?
How would you feel if you were on the boat with the disciples and Jesus calmed the storm? (Happy, because the storm had ended; scared, because you were in a boat with someone who can control the weather.)

When the disciples were scared, Jesus spoke to the storm and it calmed down. When we are scared, Jesus often calms our fears through other people.

- Who helps you feel safe when you are scared?
If you had a friend who was scared, how would you help them be less afraid?

Engaging the Text: Remembering God Is With Us

The disciples were afraid because Jesus was asleep and they thought he didn't care about them. Sometimes when we feel alone, it helps to remember that Jesus is always with us.

Give each child two index cards and invite them to write or draw something that reminds them of God. It could be a word such as "peace" or a cross or whatever makes sense to them. Have them decorate the card, then have them fold it up to keep in their pocket or bag. Tell them they can pull it out whenever they need to remember God is with them. Have them decorate a second card to give to



Location:

Cambodia

On page 49, you will find a map of the world. This can be used for a quick opening activity at the start of each Story Time 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 during their Story Time.

Open your Story Time 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, then color it in, highlight it with a sticker or mark it in some other way. For older kids, you can share some facts about each country or region. If you do this each day, by the end of the week you will have five countries or regions marked on the map.

Make the Connection

Today's theme is "God creates." When we remember God as the creator of all that exists, we can see God at work in the world around us. Farming and gardening remind us how wonderfully connected all the pieces of God's creation are – and how much we depend on God's gifts, especially the gift of water. In today's story, we will hear about an organization in Cambodia that helps farming communities learn new ways to thrive.



Facts About Cambodia

- There are many young people in Cambodia. Half the population is under age 15.
- Cambodia is the only country to have a building on its flag. That building is the Angkor Wat, a beautiful temple built over 800 years ago.
- The Tonlé Sap River flows in two directions. During the dry season (November to May) the river flows into the Mekong River. During the rainy season (June to October) it flows into Tonlé Sap Lake.
- Cambodians celebrate the November reversal of the river with a festival called Bon Om Touk (Water and Moon Festival). The festival takes place in the capital city of Phnom Penh and features boat races, boat parades, concerts and fireworks.

In the very first book of the Bible, we read about how God created the whole world and everything in it: day and night, plants and animals – *everything!* God created the first humans too. Does anyone remember where God placed them? (The Garden of Eden.)

That's right, in a garden. Gardens are pretty cool places. When we work in a garden, we get to see how God is still creating new things through dirt, seeds, sunlight and the hard work of people taking care of the garden. What else do we need to make sure plants can grow in a garden? (Water.)

Water is really important for plants to grow, especially plants that will provide us with food. If we don't have enough water for our garden, our plants might not grow and produce enough fruits and vegetables to eat. Helping farmers and their families use less water can ensure they can still grow food to eat and sell. This can make a big difference.

In Cambodia, ELCA World Hunger helps support an organization called Life With Dignity that works with farming families. Toa Phoeurn (*Ta-OW Poohern*) is one of the people working with and learning from Life With Dignity. She and her husband used to grow rice and corn to sell at a market. The money helped pay for food and some of their needs, but there wasn't enough money to pay for their children's schooling or to save for the future.

Phoeurn and her husband were invited to join a group learning more about vegetable growing. Life With Dignity helped them learn more about new ways to water their crops and how to grow other vegetables. Life With Dignity gave Phoeurn and her husband the things they needed to start raising cucumbers on their land. One of the things they learned about was how to use less water and still make sure there was enough for their plants to grow. Life With Dignity gave them the tools they would need and seeds to get started.

Selling the cucumbers helped them earn almost four times as much money as they did from selling rice and corn. That's a lot of cucumbers! Phoeurn and her husband use the money to help pay for their children's schooling, and they even bought

a bicycle for their daughter to ride to school. The money will help them afford the things they need and save for their children's future. Phoeurn says, "I feel happier than before because I have [money] to support my family."

Life With Dignity also works with people in a village called Phnum Ta Sam. There, Khath Saradey (*Kat Sah-RAH-dee*) is the director of a school. Saradey and the teachers wanted to start a school garden so that the children and the adults could learn about growing vegetables. Life With Dignity helped them get started.

Like Phoeurn and her husband, the students at the school learned about using less water and growing more vegetables. Because of the hard work of the teachers and students, the garden provides so many vegetables to sell that the money can pay for the electricity at the school. Saradey says that the garden has done even more than that: It gives the students and teachers food and provides a place for them to learn from each other. He is planning to share their experiences with other schools to help them start gardens too.

Because of Life With Dignity, more than 300 households learned new ways to improve their farms, and more than 1,200 households in Cambodia are making better use of water. That's a lot of people!

The climate around the world is changing, and that makes it harder for many farmers to grow enough food to eat and to sell. But learning to adapt to the changes in climate can help families feed themselves and their neighbors – now and in the future.



 **Location:**

El Salvador

If you are using the map activity for Story Time: Day 2, help the children find and mark El Salvador on the map. Be sure to teach the children the name of the country and share some of the facts below.

Make the Connection

Today's theme is "God provides." In the Bible story today, we heard how God provided water for the people after they left slavery in Egypt. We know that God provides for our every need. We also know that we have a responsibility to care for the good things God has provided and to make sure that everyone can share them. In today's story, we will hear about a community in El Salvador that is working to restore and protect the waters that provide life and livelihoods for the families that live there.

Facts About El Salvador

- Seven million people live in El Salvador.
- El Salvador has many earthquakes and active volcanoes and is known as the "Land of Volcanoes."
- Three million people of El Salvadoran descent now live in the United States.
- Rice, beans and tortillas are some of the main foods of El Salvador. Pupusas (handmade corn tortillas stuffed with cheese, beans and other fillings) are the most famous national food.

Look at these photographs (page 38). Can you tell me what each of these bodies of water is called? Water is pretty important, right? What do we need water for? *[Allow time for answers.]*

We need water for lots of things, so it's good that there is so much of it on the earth. But can we use all the water on the earth? Can we drink water from the ocean? What if the water isn't clean? Can we use it for washing things or for cooking?

For some of our neighbors, getting clean, safe water can be difficult. And even if the water is safe, they might not be able to use it. Someone else might tell them they can't, or there might be governments or companies that stop them from taking and using the water. Being surrounded by water is one thing; being able to access and use the water is something else.

In the country of El Salvador, families from eight communities are working to restore the quality of the water they depend on from the San Antonio River, the Nejapa (*nay-HA-pa*) Aquifer and the Jiboa (*HEE-bo-ah*) River. With the Lutheran church in El Salvador, they are working to make sure that the water from each of these is safe for drinking, cooking and washing.

Miguel is one of the leaders of the project in his community. He and his neighbors have worked hard to make sure everyone understands how to care for the waters. This is a big job, and to make it work, a lot of people need to be involved. So, the church has helped businesses, the government and even other countries near El Salvador get involved. Together, they are working to stop pollution of the waters, to clean up the rivers and aquifer, and to help protect the right of people to use the water.

NOTES

Miguel is happy that they have been able to do so much. He says that the project has helped "change the course" of the community, and he hopes it will be a "path of success" for all the people.

Let's look at the picture of the river again (page 38). How far do you think a river goes? Does it just stay in one town? (No.) Rivers go all over! And along the way, other rivers and streams flow into them. One community can't take care of the river on its own. It takes help from people all along the river to keep it clean and to make sure that everyone can use it. So, Miguel and his neighbors have worked with other people in other communities to restore the waters together. Along the way, Miguel has helped other people learn about how to care for the waters and about their rights to use the water, to make sure that everyone can enjoy it. And he has learned from other people too! They have worked together, learned from each other and become partners in caring for the waters. Now, Miguel is proud that he has been a leader in his community. And he is proud of what the people have accomplished together.

Doing our part to care for God's creation is important work. It takes a lot of people working together and learning from each other to keep the water clean and safe so people can enjoy it for years to come. But it also means working together to make sure that everyone has the right to use the water. As a church, we believe that water is a gift from God. And it is a pretty special gift. We are part of God's creation, and God calls us to care for other parts of creation, including water. By caring for the water and making sure everyone can use it, we can be part of God's work in the world, keeping the rivers healthy and flowing, as Miguel and his neighbors are doing in El Salvador.



 Location:

Milwaukee, Wis., United States of America

If you are using the map activity for Story Time: Day 3, help the children find and mark Wisconsin on the map. Show the children where Wisconsin is and where you are, and share some of the facts below.

Make the Connection

Today's theme is "God claims." In the Bible story for today, we heard about Jesus' baptism. In baptism, God claims us as God's own children. The waters of baptism seal the promise of new life. But what happens when water, which is so important for life, is dangerous? In the story today, we will learn about a church in Milwaukee that is working to ensure that the water in its community is life-giving and safe for everyone.

Have you ever heard of the Great Lakes? Where are they? (Surrounding Michigan and bordering eight U.S. states.) Can you name any? (Michigan, Huron, Ontario, Erie and Superior.)

The state we are going to visit in our story today touches two Great Lakes – Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. Lake Superior is one of the biggest lakes in the world. But being surrounded by water doesn't always mean that people have enough safe water to drink. In the United States, making sure that everyone has safe water is still a lot of work, even if there are big lakes or rivers nearby.

Milwaukee, a city in Wisconsin, is on the coast of Lake Michigan. But the water that many children in Milwaukee can drink isn't safe. This isn't because of the lake but because of something in the pipes that bring the water to their homes and schools. This "something" is called lead. Lead is a metal, but it is a pretty soft metal. It can be shaped in a lot of different ways, so it used to be used for pipes to bring water into people's houses and other buildings. Lead also used to be put into paint to give paint different colors and to help it dry faster.

In the United States, we haven't used lead in pipes or paint for many years. But it's still in homes and other buildings with older pipes and paint. This is a big problem because lead is really dangerous. If it gets into our bodies, lead can slow down the growth of our brains, and it can hurt other organs, like our hearts or kidneys. Children who have lead poisoning can get sick and have health problems their whole lives.

Facts About Milwaukee

The name "Wisconsin" comes from what the Algonquin people called the Wisconsin River. The name means "it lies red" and refers to the red sandstone cliffs the river travels through. Milwaukee also comes from the Algonquin people and means "pleasant land."

- Known as "America's Dairyland," Wisconsin is the nation's largest producer of milk and its second-largest producer of cheese.
- Milwaukee is known as the "City of Festivals" because of all the summer celebrations it holds. One of these is "Summerfest," the world's largest music festival.
- Milwaukee is also home to the world's largest dinosaur skull (a *Tyrannosaurus rex*) and America's oldest bowling alley (the Holler House).

One of the ways that some people get lead poisoning is through their water. If the water from lead pipes isn't filtered, or if the lead pipes aren't sealed, lead can travel in the water, and when people drink it, the lead can get in their bodies. For young children, chips or dust from lead paint can also be dangerous. That's why we have to be very careful about getting rid of lead paint when we can and why we should avoid putting things like toys in our mouths.

In Milwaukee, a church called Hephatha Lutheran Church is helping people protect children from lead in their homes. The people who live near Hephatha are hardworking, and they care a lot about keeping their children safe. So the church gives out lead-free kits that include tape, mops and water filters. The filters help stop lead from getting into the water they will drink. The tape can be put on lead paint that is chipping, and the mops help make sure that dust from lead paint doesn't get into the air, where children might breathe it in. The church also helps adults learn about the dangers of lead, so they can protect their children.

But the church doesn't stop there. It needs governments and leaders to help. So, the people in the neighborhood started a group to talk to people who make laws for the community, to get them to help. They hope that leaders in government will do what they can to make sure that no one in Milwaukee has to worry about lead poisoning.

The pastor of Hephatha, Mary Martha, says that the people in the community are hopeful for the future. But she also says that they aren't safe from lead yet. They have to keep working so that, one day, lead won't be a danger to them.

In church, we use water to baptize people. It's a sign that God loves us and that we are God's children. It's also a sign of God's promise of life. Pastor Mary Martha says that making sure water in Milwaukee is a sign of life and hope for people means working to stop lead poisoning. She says that the work they do, giving people water filters, helping them learn about lead and helping work for laws to protect them are really important for the church. She says that this work "leads us back to

[baptism], where we stand with people at the holy water that makes us God's children and sends us out to serve God's justice."

Working for safe water to protect our neighbors is part of what we are called to do as the church. It's one way of helping make sure that no one has to be scared of God's gift of water and that everyone can enjoy the water they need for a healthy, safe life.



Location:

Papua New Guinea

If you are using the map activity for Story Time: Day 4, help the children find and mark Papua New Guinea on the map. Be sure to teach the children the name of the country and share some of the facts below.

Make the Connection

Today's theme is "God protects." Water is important for life, but when it comes to storms or droughts, water can also be a threat to life and livelihoods. In the story today, we will hear how God is working through the ELCA's companions in Papua New Guinea to protect their crops from storms and droughts while strengthening the community.

Facts About Papua New Guinea

- Papua New Guinea is part of an island in the Southern Hemisphere. Because it is close to the equator, it doesn't get too cold there, even in winter.
- Many plants and animals call Papua New Guinea home, including the beautiful birds of paradise and the tree kangaroo.
- More than 800 different languages are spoken in Papua New Guinea.
- The most popular sport in Papua New Guinea is rugby.

This week, we've been learning a lot about water and how much we need it. We need it to drink, to cook, to wash and to grow things. But having enough water doesn't just mean having lots and lots of it. It means having the right amount. What do you think might happen if there's too much water? *[Allow a variety of responses.]* What about if there isn't enough water? *[Allow a variety of responses.]*

Elsie Foyang is a farmer in Papua New Guinea, and she knows what it's like if there is too much water or not enough water for her vegetables. Elsie lives in her parents' home and takes care of her parents and her three children. Taking care of them is a big responsibility for her.

To help make money to care for her family, Elsie built a nursery and raised carrots and lettuce to sell at the market. Carrots and lettuce are pretty delicate, which means they can be damaged easily. Elsie worked hard, but sometimes, there just weren't enough vegetables for her to make the money her family needed. Sometimes, the plants didn't produce enough. Other times, pests ruined the plants. And sometimes, rain that would leak through the roof of the nursery would wash away the seeds even before the plants could sprout. More than half of the plants in the nursery didn't produce lettuce or carrots for Elsie to sell.

Elsie wasn't alone. Other women in her community were facing difficulties raising enough vegetables to sell. Elsie and the other women talked with a group called





Location:

Central African Republic

If you are using the map activity for Story Time: Day 5, help the children find and mark the Central African Republic on the map. Be sure to teach the children the name of the country and share some of the facts below.

Make the Connection

Today's theme is "God loves, we love." When we say that God loves us, we are witnessing to our faith that God wants what is best for us. God's love is also an invitation for us to love one another. The love God invites us to show is an active love that walks with and works with neighbors near and far to help make sure that everyone is able to be healthy, happy and safe.

Facts About the Central African Republic

- The Central African Republic is a landlocked country (meaning it is completely surrounded by other countries) in the middle of Africa.
- The climate of the Central African Republic is tropical, with hot, wet summers and hot, dry winters.
- The southern part of the Central African Republic is home to the Dzanga-Sangha Special Reserve, part of the second largest rain forest in the world. This lush tropical area is home to lots of animals such as elephants, gorillas, monkeys, leopards, otters and aardvarks.
- The Central African Republic is a great place to see the stars. In 2008, *National Geographic* magazine deemed it the country least affected by light pollution.

The theme for today is "God loves, we love." What do you think it means to love someone? [Allow a variety of responses.] What does it mean for God to love us? What are some ways that God shows us love? [Allow a variety of responses.]

To love someone is to want what is good for them. So, if I love my pet, I will feed it, give it water and maybe play with it. If I love a friend, I might be happy when they are happy, or if they are hurt, I might get them help or stay with them so they don't feel alone. Loving someone means wanting what is best for them.

This week, we've been learning about how God gives us the gift of water. But God's love isn't just about getting gifts from God. When we say God loves us, we are saying that God wants what is best for us. Whom does God love? (Everyone!) God wants what is best for everyone, for everyone to be happy, healthy and safe.

God wants us to love each other too. That means that God wants us to treat other people with kindness. But the kind of love God invites us to show is not just about being nice. It also means working together to make sure everyone, our neighbors near and far, has the things they need to be happy, healthy and safe.

Huguette Yagbok (*Hyoo-get Yah-gbok*) is one of our neighbors. She and her husband live in a village called Kpokorta (*PO-kor-ta*) in the Central African Republic. They have four children. There is a river near their village that Huguette and her family use for water. To get water to drink, they would go to the river, and

sometimes Huguette would even go to the river after dark to get water for her family.

But the water wasn't safe. Huguette and her children would sometimes get sick from drinking it. In fact, almost every week, one of Huguette's children would get sick. She and her husband had to spend almost all of their money on hospital visits to help the children get better.

If Huguette spent all of her money on hospital visits, what might be some things she couldn't spend money on? (Examples: food, clothing, school, household items.) One of the best ways to make sure people have enough food is to help them be healthy. That way, they can learn and work, and they can have the money they need to buy food.

In Kpokorta, ELCA World Hunger helps support a group called PASE, which is part of the church in the Central African Republic that works with our neighbors to get safe water. When people from PASE came to Kpokorta, they shared with Huguette and her husband some ways their family could make sure they had safe water. PASE, Huguette, her husband and other neighbors in the village knew that with safe water their children could be healthier. So they started to work together.

The first thing they did was build latrines. Does anyone know what a latrine is? It's a place to go to the bathroom. One of the ways that water can be kept safe and healthy is by making sure that the waste from a toilet doesn't get into the water we drink. The latrines would help keep the people in Kpokorta healthy.

But their work didn't stop there. PASE helped the people in the village develop a spring that would provide safe water nearby. This took a lot of work. The men in the village worked for free to build it, and the women carried sand on their heads to the place where the spring was. Everyone worked together. Huguette and her husband even gave a worker from PASE a place to live so that he could be nearby while he built his own house.

Now, with the new latrines and the spring, Huguette's family and her neighbors' families

are a lot healthier. Huguette and her husband no longer have to pay for expensive hospital visits. They were able to pay for a new tin-roofed house. And travelers passing through the village are able to stop and get water from a fountain in the village. When the travelers stop, Huguette and her husband can sell them the vegetables they have grown on their farm to make more money.

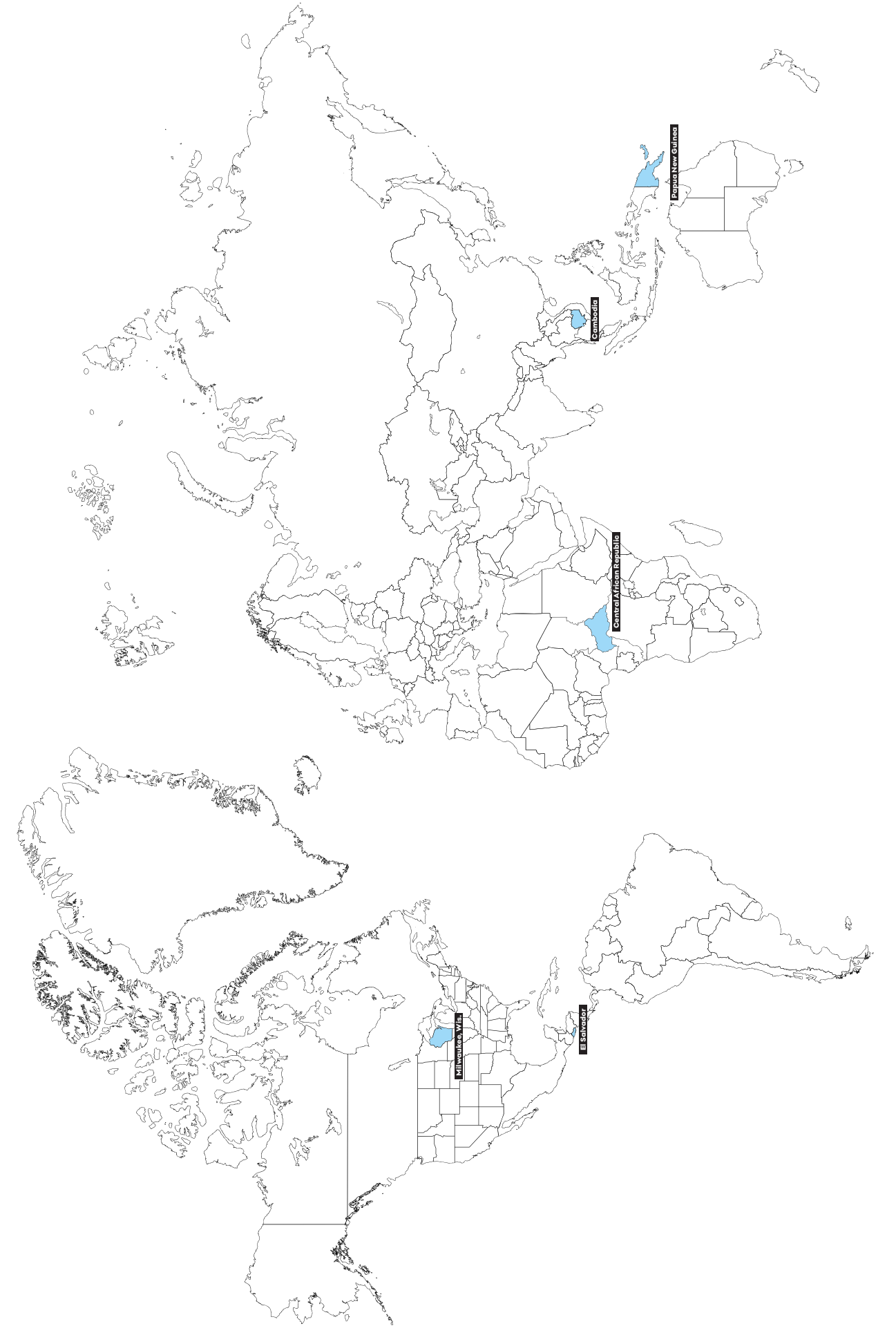
Huguette hopes that with PASE's help, one day the villagers will be able to build a school in their village.

Loving our neighbors means caring for our neighbors. It also means walking with them, working together and celebrating together the amazing things God is doing in their community. For Huguette and her neighbors, this means getting safe water for their families. It can also mean learning from each other about why some communities have easy access to safe water and others don't. Walking with Huguette and learning from her story are ways we can show love for our neighbors in the Central African Republic.

What are some ways we can show love to people in our community? [Allow a variety of responses.]



STORY TIME KEY





“Follow the River” Tag

Age range: All ages

Materials needed

- blue chalk (if outdoors) or blue painters’ tape (if indoors)
- large open space

Setup

First decide if this game will be played inside or outside. Then, designate and clear an area large enough for a game of tag with the number of participants. Next, using chalk for outdoor play and painters’ tape for indoor play, create a border around the play area. Inside the play area, create a good amount of curved intersecting lines to represent many different rivers. Make sure that lines connect and there are no abrupt ends, so that the players can keep moving through the course.

Instructions

Select one or two children, depending on the group and area size, to be the “Taggers.” The object of the game is to avoid being tagged, walking/running only along the lines or rivers on the ground. Taggers and players can move only along the rivers. Children may not jump from line to line.

If a child is tagged, they sit down on the line where they were tagged and become an obstacle in the “river.” No one except a tagger can pass someone who is sitting down. The game continues until there are only one or two players left or until everyone has been tagged.

Variations

To add an additional challenge to the game, try the variations below:

- Modify how the children can move along the lines, such as tiptoeing or skipping.
- Allow the children sitting to be additional sitting taggers and to switch places with a running player if they tag that player while sitting.
- Have tagged people become taggers, and play until everyone has been “it.”

Debrief

Today we are learning about the gift of creation and focusing on the gift of water. To debrief this activity, invite the children into a discussion about all the different bodies of water around them and how they bring us joy and support life.

- Invite children to think about the bodies of water near them, such as lakes, rivers and oceans, and invite them to name a few. What memories do you have of bodies of water? (Examples: Swimming, playing games, family trips, etc.)
- Can you name any bodies of water? (Examples: Pacific Ocean, Mississippi River, etc.)
- What are some things or creatures that depend on these many different bodies of water to live?
- To conclude, invite the children to say a prayer of thanksgiving with you for the gift of these water sources, the joy they give us and the life they support.

Creation Bingo

Age range: All ages

Materials needed

- one Creation Bingo card for each child (page 61)
- one marker per child
- one Creation Bingo card cut up into its individual images
- a basket
- optional: non-food-related prizes, such as stickers
- optional: lamination sheets

Setup

Decide how many rounds of bingo you would like to play. Print one Creation Bingo card for each child per round. Alternatively, you can print one bingo card per child, then laminate the cards and clean them after each round. Cut up one bingo card into its individual images. Place the images in a basket or hat.

Instructions

Hand out one bingo card and marker to each child. If you would like, you can ask the children about the images on their cards. Some sample questions: What do you see? What images do you like? Do you remember on what day God created [*image name*]?

Explain and/or review how to play bingo. Tell the children that you will draw something from creation from the basket. After you show what part of creation you have pulled from your basket, remind them to cross it off their sheet. Next, tell the children what patterns you will accept as a winning bingo (lines, diagonals, stamp and so on). For older kids, consider using more complex patterns and changing the winning pattern every round.

Next, review with the children what God said after God created everything (“It is very good!”). Tell the children that instead of shouting bingo to alert everyone that they have a winning card, they will shout, “It is very good!” Invite the children to practice with you.

Debrief

This is a great game to review the days of creation with the children and to share how central water is to creation. Before you debrief Creation Bingo, consider showing the children images of the different days of creation and reviewing the days of creation with them. Then invite them into the discussion below:

- Which day of creation do you like best?
- Which day is most important?
- Can you point out the days of creation that included water? There are a lot of them!
- How do you think the days of creation and our world would look without water?

Water From the Rock Relay

Age range: 6 and up

Materials needed

- one bucket for each team
- one 16-32-ounce jar or cup for each team
- one car-wash sponge per team
- one nylon per team
- one tennis ball per team
- five water bottles per team
- one ball per team
- painters' tape or chalk
- one empty tissue box per team
- yarn
- ping-pong balls

Setup and instructions

This game is a series of mini-games. It can be set up as a relay or as a rotation of games. You are invited to play as many of the mini-games as time and space allow. Depending on the size of your group and whether you are setting up the mini-games as a relay, you may want to divide the children into teams, or you can have all the children work together. Below are the setup and play instructions for each mini-game.

Mini-game 1: "Water From the Rock" Race

This mini-game uses the bucket, a cup or jar, and a car-wash sponge. To set up this mini-game, fill one bucket with water and place it at the start. Set the empty jar a good distance away from the bucket. Place the sponge next to the bucket of water. Repeat this setup for each team. You can also purchase sponges that are gray or earth-toned in color to look like rocks.

The goal of this mini-game is to use the sponge to fill the empty jar. Place one to four children at this station. To start, have the first member of each team fill the sponge with water, run toward a jar at the other end of the playing area, squeeze the water into the jar and run back. Continue with the rest of the players or the same child, depending on the size of your group. The first team to fill the jar wins and gets to go on to the next station.

Mini-game 2: "Water From the Rock" Bowling

This mini-game uses the nylons, tennis balls and water bottles. For this mini-game you can use thigh-high nylons or cut a pair of nylons into individual legs. Each child at this station will need one nylon leg and one tennis ball. To set up, place a tennis ball in the toe of each leg and create a line of five tightly sealed water bottles per child.

This game works best with one to three children. Right before you are ready to start the game, have the child or children doing this part of the relay place the elastic end of their nylon on their head, as if they are wearing a long Santa hat. If a nylon is slipping off a child's head, use an elastic headband to hold it in place. The goal of this mini-game is to use the tennis ball at the end of the nylon to knock over the water bottles. The children may not use their hands or feet to guide the tennis ball or knock over the bottles. They must swing the tennis ball by moving their heads. Once the children have knocked over all their team's water bottles, they can go to the next mini-game.

Mini-game 3: "Water From the Rock" and Roll

This mini-game uses the ball and painters' tape or chalk. For this game, draw or tape a path on the ground. The children will roll a ball, the "rock," along the path you create. Make sure the path matches the skill and age of your group. This station works best with one to two children.

Have younger children roll the ball along the path with their hands or feet. Have older children get on all fours and use their heads to roll the "rock" to the end of the path. Repeat the path if playing

this mini-game with multiple children. Once all children have completed rolling the "rock" along the path, they can go to the next mini-game.

Mini-game 4: Shake the "Water From the Rock"

This mini-game uses the empty tissue box, yarn and ping-pong balls. For each child you will need one empty tissue box (with plastic liner removed) and eight to 10 ping-pong balls. To set up this game, you will need to make a tissue-box belt for each child. To make the belt, empty the tissue boxes and cut two small holes in the back of each box. Thread the yarn through the holes and leave enough extra yarn to tie it around the child's waist, with the tissue box sitting at the small of the child's back. Lastly, fill each empty tissue box with eight to 10 ping-pong balls. For extra effect, paint the tissue boxes to look like rocks and use blue ping-pong balls to represent water.

To play this mini-game, have each child put on a tissue box full of ping-pong balls. The goal of the game is to get all the ping-pong balls out of the box as fast as you can by jumping around. Children may not use their hands to get the ping-pong balls out of the box. The first team to empty its tissue box or boxes wins.

Debrief

Use the questions below to discuss the games with the children. The goal of the mini-games was for them to work together and encourage each other to overcome obstacles. God may not provide us with water from a rock, but God does provide us with help and support through our neighbors.

- Which mini-game was your favorite, and why?
- Which mini-game was the easiest, and why?
- Which mini-game was the hardest, and why?
- How did you work together to complete all the mini-games?
- How did you encourage and support others when it was not your turn?

Tic-tac-toe Race

Age range: 6 and up

Materials needed

- three images of rocks
- three images of water
- painters' tape or chalk
- optional: lamination sheets

Setup

To set up this game, print out three images of water and three images of rocks. Each image should fill one 8-1/2-by-11-inch sheet of paper. Next, draw a large tic-tac-toe board on the ground with chalk or painters' tape. There should be one tic-tac-toe square and set of cards for every three to five children.

Instructions

Divide the children into groups of three to five players. Assign the team rocks or water. Then give each team its three corresponding images. On "go," the first child from each team will run down to the tic-tac-toe board and place their marker in one of the open tic-tac-toe squares. After they place the marker, they will race back to their line to high-five the next child. That child will then place their marker in another open square. The goal is to have your team get three in a row (horizontally, vertically or diagonally).

If all three markers have been played and there is no winner, the next child in line will run down and move one of their own team markers into an open square. Depending on the size of your group, you may want to set up multiple boards or make teams larger. Continue playing until everyone has had a chance to play.

Debrief

While God may not provide us with water from a rock, God does provide us with many skills and neighbors to support us when we are facing a challenge, even a fun one such as a giant tic-tac-toe game. You can use the question below to discuss the game and how God provides:

- What was easy and what was difficult for this game?
- How did you work together as a team?
- What skills did you need to get a tic-tac-toe? (Speed, listening and so on.)
- Were there skills you had that your team needed? What were they, and how did they help your team?
- What skills did your teammates have that your team needed? How did those skills help the team?

NOTES

Day 3 games come with an option to play a series of water-based games or non-water-based field day games. If you choose to play the water games, make sure to let parents and guardians know ahead of time and ask them to send their child with a swimsuit and a change of clothes. You might also consider shifting the games rotation to the end of the day and shifting your closing to outside to reduce or eliminate the time needed to change clothes between activities.

If you are in a place that needs to conserve water, does not have an abundance of safe water or does not have access to a safe place to play water games, consider having a dry field day instead. This would be a great day to invite parents and caregivers to join in on the fun of VBS! If you wish to invite parents and caregivers, consider shifting the games rotation to the end of the day, just before large-group closing, and have everyone join in on a rotation of field day games at one time. If you do not have a large, safe area at your church to host field day games, consider reserving space at a local park and doing your large-group closing there.

Water Balloon Games

Age range: 6 and up

Materials needed

- water balloons (latex-free if needed)
- waterproof speaker
- buckets
- chairs

Instructions

Below is a series of water balloon games. You are invited to play as many of these games as time and space allow.

Game 1: Hot Potato

This water balloon version of “Hot Potato” is a great twist on the original. Invite the children to sit in a circle and pass around a water balloon. Play some music and then, at random intervals, turn it off. Whoever is left holding the water balloon or whoever pops it is “out.” The last child left in the game is the winner.

Game 2: Water Balloon Relay Race

Fill a bucket with ten water balloons per team. Set out one chair for each team and place a water balloon in its seat. Then have the children take turns running to the chair and sitting on the balloon until it pops. After they pop the balloon, they run and tag the next player. Leaders will need to put a new balloon in the seat after the preceding one is popped. The first team to pop all the balloons in its bucket and cross the finish line wins.

Game 3: Water Balloon Toss

Invite the children to pair up and form two lines, each child standing across from their partner. Then have the children take turns tossing the balloon to their partner. After each toss the child will take one step back from their partner. The last pair to pop their balloon wins! For a fun twist, have the children hold a bowl, bucket or strainer on top of their heads to catch the water balloon.

Hose and Sprinkler Games

Age range: all ages

Materials needed

- a hose
- small buckets for each child
- a sprinkler that attaches to a hose
- a waterproof speaker

Instructions

Below is a series of games that can be played with a hose and a sprinkler. You are invited to play as many of these games as time and space allow.

Game 1: Liquid Limbo

Take a hose and turn the water on full blast. Use the stream of water as the limbo stick. See who can limbo the lowest without getting wet.

Game 2: Freeze Dance

Have the children run and dance around the turned-off sprinkler while a leader stands near the tap. Turn the water on. Players must freeze in the spray until you turn the sprinkler back off again.

Game 3: Rainbow(l) Fill

Provide each child with a bowl, bucket or cup. Have them place the bowl, bucket or cup on their head while they stand under or near the sprinkler. When they think their bowl is full, have the child walk or run to a large bucket or bin and see how long it takes for them to fill it up. Younger children could work together to fill one container whereas older ones could have a race to see who fills their own fastest.

Debrief

The water games focus on the baptismal themes of joy and service. In baptism we are freed and renewed in Christ so that we might freely and joyfully serve our neighbors. You can use the

discussion below to help explore this theme with the children.

- Have you ever done something that you regretted later? How did that feel?
- Has anyone ever forgiven you for a mistake or something you did wrong? How did that feel?
- Being forgiven can make us feel light and joyful. We no longer feel scared or sad. We are reminded that we are loved even when we make mistakes. This is what baptism is about. What do you like to do when you feel happy or full of joy?
- Did you feel joyful playing any of the water games today? Which game made you feel joyful?
- One thing we can do when we feel joyful is share that joy with our neighbors in words and service. This is one way we can show gratitude to God for all God's gifts, including the gift of baptism. In fact, when people get baptized, parents, guardians or the person being baptized promises to serve all people, following the example of Jesus. What are some ways you can share joy and be of service to others?

Field-day Games

Age range: 6 and up

Materials needed

- sponges
- permanent markers
- scissors
- cones
- large whiteboard and whiteboard markers
- pizza boxes or shoeboxes
- folding table
- volleyball net
- blankets
- beach ball
- one extra-large T-shirt per team

Instructions

Below is a series of field-day games. You are invited to play as many of these games as time and space allow.

Game 1: "Saved by Grace" Scrabble Hunt

To set up this game, make a list of words related to baptism that you would like the children to learn and spell. Some examples you might use are "water," "grace," "Holy Spirit," "font" and so on. Next, cut up sponges and write the letters of the words on the sponges. Be sure to make enough letter tiles so that multiple teams can spell the words. Mark out a playing area with cones and scatter your sponge Scrabble pieces around the area.

To begin the game, divide the children, parents and guardians into teams and have them stand on the edges of the play area. Then write your first word on your whiteboard and show it to the teams. When you say "go," one player from each team can run out into the play area and look for a Scrabble tile to help spell out the word on the whiteboard. Once the first player returns with a letter, the next team member may go into the play area to look for another letter. Once all the letters have been found and placed in the correct order, have the team yell, "Saved by grace!"

Have a leader check to make sure the team has the correct letters in the correct order. Reset the game by placing the Scrabble tiles back in the field and writing a new word on the whiteboard.

Game 2: Pizza or Shoebox Relay

Divide the group into two to four teams. Set up a folding table at one end of the play area and make a starting line 6 to 9 feet away from the table. Have teams line up single file and place one box per person on the table across from the team.

On the "go" signal the first child or adult in each line will run down to get a pizza box or shoebox, then run back and hand off the box to the next player. The second person in line will carry the pizza box or shoebox down, pick up another box, then run or walk fast and hand the boxes to the

next person. If a person drops the boxes, they pick them up and keep heading back to their team's line. This will continue until everyone has had a chance and all boxes are gone from the table.

Game 3: Blanket Volleyball

Set up a volleyball or badminton net and inflate a beach ball. Split the group into two to four teams. Give each group a blanket. You can have one to two groups of people on each side of the net.

One team will start the game by working together to throw the ball up into the air, trying to get it over the net with the blanket. The other team will attempt to receive the ball by catching it with their blanket. After they catch it, they can try to send it over the net or pass it to the group next to them. The first team to score 15 points wins.

Game 4: Shirt-Off-My-Back Relay

Divide the group into even-numbered teams. All teams must have the same number of players (or have some players put on the shirt twice).

Next, invite the teams to line up in single file. Give a T-shirt to the first person in each line. On the "go" signal, the first person puts on the shirt, turns to face the next person in line and holds hands with them.

Next, everyone else works together to get the T-shirt from one player to the next. The new shirt-wearer then turns and holds hands with the next player, and so on. This continues until the T-shirt reaches the end of the line. The first team to complete the relay wins.

To add an extra challenge, dip the T-shirts in water, ball them up and put them in the freezer the night before. Keep shirts frozen until it is time to play. When it is time to play, the teams must first work together to thaw and unfold their T-shirt.

"Peace, Be Still" Tag

Age range: all ages

Materials needed

- cones
- large open space

Instructions

Establish the boundaries of the playing area. Next, designate one child as the tagger. The tagger chases the other children and tries to tag them. When the tagger successfully tags another player, they must say, "Peace, be still," and that player must freeze and remain frozen until another player, who has not been tagged, tags them to unfreeze them. The game continues until all runners have been frozen, and then a new person becomes the tagger.

Debrief

This is a simple game to reinforce the key phrase of today's Bible story and the idea that God provides what we need through those around us. Review today's Bible story. Then explain that, even though God may not step in to calm the storms in our lives, God does provide us with a community to support us through difficult times, much as they helped each other when a player had been tagged.

Parachute Games

Age range: K-sixth grade

Materials needed

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

Game options

Thunderstorm: Start off on the floor with all children sitting calmly and grasping the parachute. Invite the children to create a storm with you. Start by telling the children that there is a gentle breeze and invite them to make gentle waves with the parachute. Next, pretend that it starts raining. As it "rains," have the children stand and add some balls to the parachute. Next, pretend the thunder and lightning have arrived. Invite all the children to start shaking the chute as hard as they can to simulate the storm. You can invite the children to stomp their feet to simulate thunder. If you are inside and none of your children is sensitive to light change or afraid of the dark, you can flicker the lights to simulate lightning. Continue until a leader says, "Peace, be still" and have all the children freeze and fall silent. Lesson: God is with you through every storm.

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. Challenge the children to work together to keep the balls on the parachute. Lesson: Sometimes when we feel worried, our brains and our bodies can feel like the balls bouncing all around the parachute. But when we feel worried, as the disciples did, God provides us with a community to support us.

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. Have the children sit on the edges of the parachute so that everyone is inside the dome. Lesson: God surrounds us with love and protection. When have you felt safe or close to God?

Trading Places: Invite the children to each hold on to an individual color area. Next, have a leader call out a color. When a color is named, the children in that color will run under the parachute and trade places with other children in that color. Lesson: When we trade places with other people, we see things from a different point of view. Things that may not seem scary or like a storm to us might feel like a big storm to someone else. God calls us to be good listeners so we can support those in need.

Fancy Feet

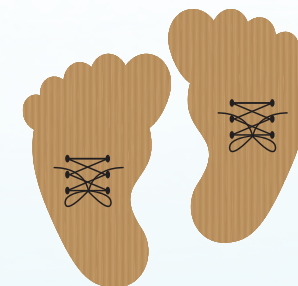
Age range: 6 and older

Materials needed

- cardboard
- yarn
- scissors
- double-sided tape
- balloons (latex-free if necessary)
- cones
- soap bars or bottles of soap
- bucket
- markers
- index cards
- large sheets of paper
- chair
- timer

Instructions

To set up this game, you will need to make two to four sets of giant cardboard feet. On the cardboard draw cartoon feet 24 to 36 inches long. Smaller feet are better for younger children. In the middle of each cardboard foot, cut two lines of three holes a little wider than a child's foot. Loop the yarn through the holes so it looks like laces. This is how the cardboard feet will be attached to the children's feet.



Below is a series of games with the cardboard feet. You are invited to play as many of these games as time and space allow.

Fancy Feet Relay: Use cones to mark a starting and finish line. Next, divide the children into two teams or as many teams as you have cardboard feet. Invite the children to line up single file in their teams and have the child at the front of the line put on the cardboard feet. Hand the child at the front of the line a bar or bottle of soap. The soap will be passed from person to person for the relay. Next, count down from three and have the first child run down to one end of the space and back. When the first child returns, have the next child put on the cardboard feet and take the soap. Continue until all children have gone. The first team to get all players through the relay wins. For older children you can add in some obstacles, such as low bars to step over or cones to weave around, to make it more challenging.

Fancy Feet Tag: This is a version of medic tag. First, mark out a play area with cones. Next, choose one to two children to be "it" and choose one to three children to be "foot washers." Invite the foot washers to put on the cardboard feet. To play this version of tag, the "it" players will run around and tag the other players. When the children are tagged, they must sit down where they are. Children can rejoin the game when they are tagged by a foot washer.

Fancy Feet Pickup: For this game you will need to blow up quite a few balloons (about ten per player) and add sticky tape to the toes of the cardboard feet. First, mark out a play area with cones and fill the play area with balloons. Divide the children into as many teams as you have cardboard feet. Invite the children to line up, and have the first child in line put on the cardboard feet. Tell the children that the goal is to get one balloon on every toe. Once they have one balloon on every toe, have the children return to their team, take the balloons off the toes, place the balloons in a bucket and have the next child put on the feet. Continue until all balloons are gone from the play space. The team with the most balloons wins.

Fancy Feet Pictionary: This game requires a modification to the cardboard feet. To modify the feet to play this game, cut a hole the size of a marker in between the big toe and second toe of each cardboard foot. Insert a marker into the hole and tape it in place. Next, write words related to the past week of VBS (water, well, boat, storm, baptism and so on) on index cards and place them in a hat or something the children can draw from. Next, divide the children into two teams. Set up a chair in front of a large sheet of paper. (You may need to set up a new sheet of paper for every round.) Invite one team to choose a player to draw first. Have the player who is drawing sit in the chair, put on the modified cardboard foot and pick a word out of the hat. Set your timer for one to two minutes (more time is recommended for younger children so that they do not get frustrated). When the timer starts, invite the child to begin drawing and invite their team to begin guessing. If the team members guess the word before the timer is up, their team gets a point. Switch teams and play until all words are gone. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Debrief


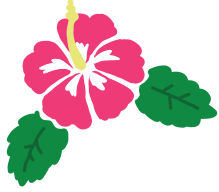







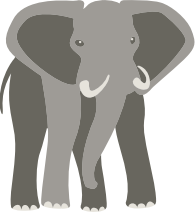

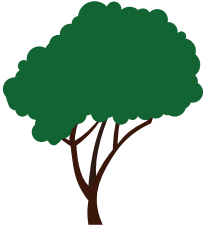
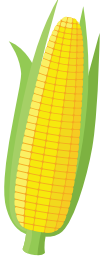






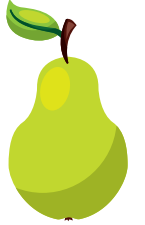


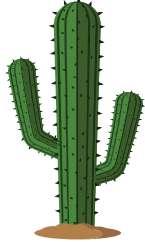

Day 5 is about the ways God sends us into the world to serve. We can use our bodies, including our feet, to look for places God is already at work and lend our support.

- Where have you seen God this week?
- As we learned this week at VBS, God is at work all around us and works through us to create a just world where all are fed. God even uses our feet!
- Which game did you like best? How did you use your feet to help your team?
- Feet, and all of our bodies, can be used to help or harm others. Feet can be used to kick or stomp, but feet can also be used to help, as in our games. God calls us to use our bodies to help others. How can we use our bodies to help others? (Examples: Hands for high fives, arms for hugs, feet for protest marches, minds for




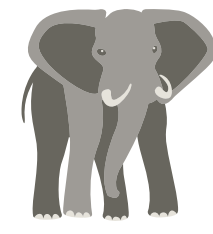


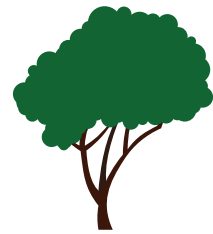

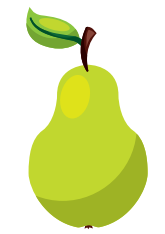


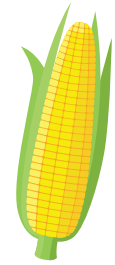




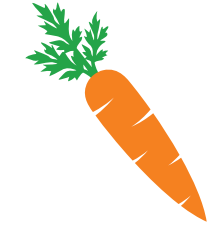

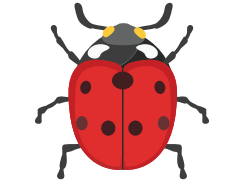
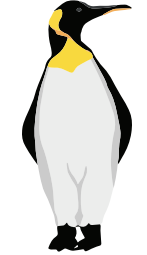



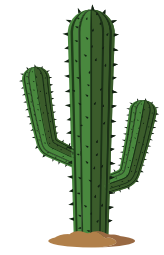
creative problem-solving and mouths to share news of God's love.)

NOTES


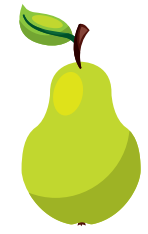
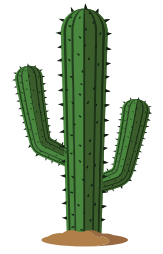


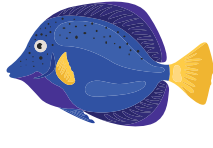


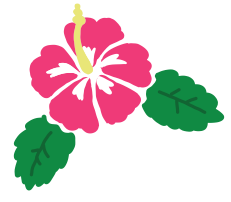


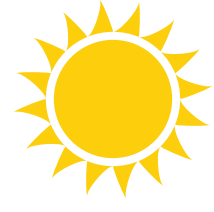

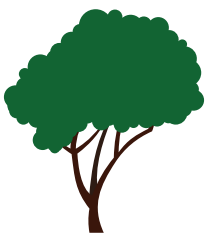
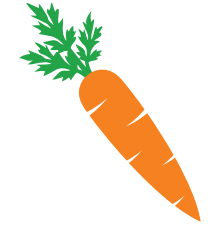



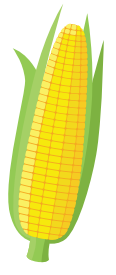



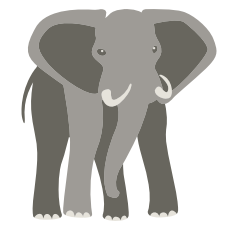

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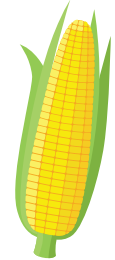

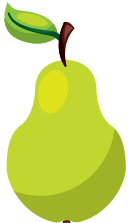
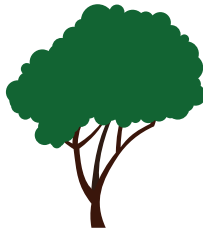

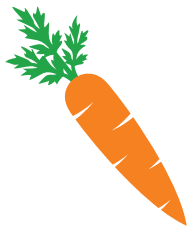



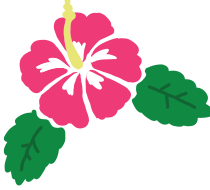



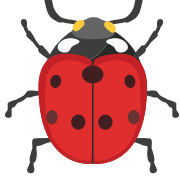


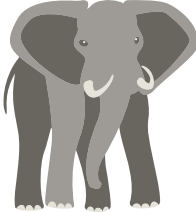




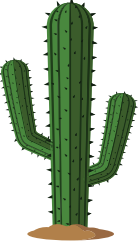
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Cambodia

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

CHEK K'TISS (TAPIOCA BANANA PUDDING)

Serves

24 (1/3 cup servings)

Ingredients

2/3 cup sugar

1/3 cup minute tapioca

5 cups milk

1 can coconut milk

2 eggs, well beaten

2 teaspoons vanilla

2 sliced bananas

Directions

1. Mix milk, sugar, tapioca and eggs in medium saucepan. Let stand five minutes.
2. Add bananas. Cook on medium heat until mixture comes to full boil, stirring constantly.
3. Remove from heat. Stir in vanilla and coconut milk. Cool 20 minutes; stir.
4. Serve warm or chilled. (pudding thickens as it cools. For creamier pudding, place plastic wrap on surface of pudding while it's cooling. Stir before serving.) Store leftovers in refrigerator.



CHEK K'TISS

SOMETHING TO BUY:

TAPIOCA PUDDING AND TROPICAL FRUIT

Premade tapioca or banana pudding is an easy substitute for making your own. Tropical fruits such as bananas, pineapples, coconuts, watermelons and mangos are also a great choice.

El Salvador

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

MINUTAS (MEE-NOO-TAS)

El Salvador's tropical climate makes minutos, or shaved ice, a popular cool treat, often sold by street vendors.

Serves

12-16

Ingredients

3 cups fruit – mango, coconut and banana are favorites of El Salvador, but you can also use strawberries, pineapple or any other fruits. Note: If the fruit has high water content, such as watermelon, reduce the amount of water. You can also reduce the amount of sugar if your fruit is extra sweet.

1/4 cup lemon or lime juice

1 1/2 cup water

1 1/2 cup sugar

Ice

Directions

1. Place fruit in a blender or food processor and blend until pureed.
2. Pour the mixture into a saucepan and add the lemon/lime juice, water and sugar. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally until boiling. Turn heat down slightly and continue to simmer for five minutes before removing from heat.
3. Let syrup cool completely and then strain with a fine mesh strainer to remove all seeds and pulp. You can use the syrup immediately or store in the refrigerator.

To make the *minutas*: Place ice in a blender to crush (or use a shaved-ice machine if you have one). Pour syrup over ice until well-coated, and enjoy.



MINUTAS

SOMETHING TO BUY:

VANILLA PUDDING

In El Salvador, this popular dessert is often served dusted with cinnamon.

Wisconsin

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

BRATWURST

Bratwurst, or brats, as they are frequently called, are a classic Wisconsin tradition. These can be served either whole on buns or sliced into discs for smaller portions. There are also many tasty vegan sausage options.

Ingredients

Packaged bratwurst sausage

Directions

1. Place brats in a large pot and cover with water. Bring to a boil and cook until done (about 20 minutes). You can flavor the water by adding onion, garlic or other spices.
2. Remove from water and pat dry.
3. Brown on a grill over medium heat, three to four minutes per side.
4. Serve with mustard, barbecue sauce, ketchup or whatever condiment you prefer.



BRATWURST

SOMETHING TO BUY:

CHEESE

“America’s Dairyland” is known for its cheese production. Cheese cubes, cheese curds or string cheese are also good options. Pairing the cheese with fruit such as apples or cherries creates a healthy, high-protein snack. Make sure to provide an alternative for those with dairy allergies. There are quite a few good dairy-free cheeses available at many grocery stores.

ALTERNATIVE:

ICE CREAM SUNDAE

“America’s Dairyland” produces more milk than any other state, and much of that milk is turned into ice cream. The ice cream sundae was invented in Two Rivers, Wis., in 1881, when George Hallauer ordered a dish of ice cream from Ed Berner’s Ice Cream Parlor and, seeing the bottle of chocolate syrup used to flavor ice cream sodas, asked for some over his ice cream.

Papua New Guinea

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

KAUKAU (KOW-KOW)

Kaukau (sweet potato) is the primary staple of the Papuan diet. Four hundred different types of *kaukau* are grown in Papua New Guinea.

Ingredients

Sweet potatoes, washed and dried
Butter
Cinnamon-sugar

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Wrap sweet potatoes in foil and bake for 30 minutes or until soft. Flip potatoes halfway through for an even bake.
2. Remove sweet potatoes from foil.
3. Let cool slightly.
4. Slice in half or in thirds, depending on the size of the sweet potatoes. Serve topped with butter and cinnamon-sugar.



KAUKAU

SOMETHING TO BUY:

BANANAS

Bananas are second only to sweet potatoes in their importance to Papuan diets. Over 300 different wild and cultivated types of bananas grow in Papua New Guinea.

Central African Republic

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

POTOPOTO TI LOSO (POH-TOE-POH-TOE TEA LOH-SOH)

This simple porridge of rice and ground nuts is a popular sweet treat. If peanut allergies are a concern, replace the peanut butter with an equal amount of very ripe, mashed bananas.

Serves

8

Ingredients

- 1 cup white rice
- 3 cups water
- 1/2 cup peanut butter (preferably natural)
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup water, plus more as needed

Directions

1. Boil water. Add rice, cover and simmer for 15 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, combine peanut butter (or mashed bananas), sugar and 1/4 cup water. Mix well to form a paste.
3. When the rice is almost done cooking, pour peanut butter mixture over rice and stir in. Continue simmering until rice is perfectly tender.
4. Add water as necessary to keep the consistency loose, like rice pudding. Enjoy warm or cold.



POTOPOTO TI LOSO

SOMETHING TO BUY:

GINGER ALE

In some communities in CAR, people use ginger to make homemade ginger juice. A substitute that may be easier to find in the US is ginger ale. The sweet taste of the ginger is similar in both drinks.

PLANTAINS

Plantains grow in the Central African Republic and are used in a variety of recipes. These starchy, bananalike fruits are best when cooked. They can be sliced thin and either baked or fried. Baked plantain chips with dip can offer a quick taste of this versatile crop.



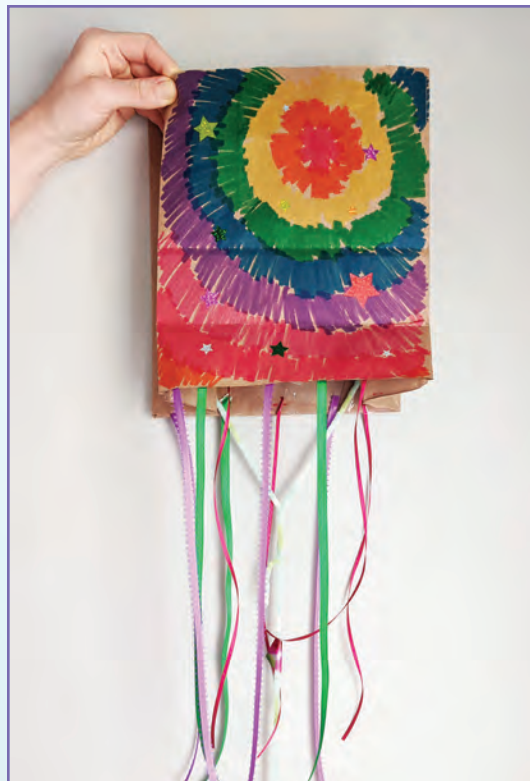
Paper Bag Kite

Craft Connection – Cambodia

Kites, seen as symbols of peace and freedom, have been part of Cambodian culture for thousands of years. The Khmer Kite Flying Festival every December is a popular event paying homage to the ancient tradition. The traditional Khmer style of kite is called a Kleng Ek. This large kite with a bamboo bow across the front is known as a “singing kite” because of the humming sound it makes when it flies.

Materials needed

- paper lunch bags
- tape
- hole punch
- drinking straws
- paint, markers, stickers for decoration
- streamers
- yarn



Directions

1. Open the base of the bag by cutting around three sides of the bottom edge. Leave one of the longer edges intact so the base forms a flap.
2. Tape the drinking straw along the fold that still connects the base to the sides.
3. Fold the base of the bag over the straw and tape the base to the inside of the bag.

Note: For younger children, steps one through three can be done in advance.

4. Decorate the kite with paint, markers and/or stickers.
5. Cut four streamers as long as or longer than the paper bag. Attach these to the base of the kite (the end with the straw).
6. Pierce two holes in the kite just above each end of the hidden straw (about 1/2 inch in from the edges of the kite).
7. Cut a piece of yarn about 12 inches long. Tie one end through one of the holes that you have just made. Now tie the other end through the other hole.
8. Tie an overhand knot in the middle of the yarn to create a loop.
9. Securely attach the free end of the ball of yarn to the loop you have just made. This will be the string for flying the kite. If you wish, you can cut the string to 10-12 feet and wrap it around a popsicle stick to make the kite easier for small children to handle.
10. Fly your kite!

Toy Hammock

Craft Connection – El Salvador

Hammocks are a major part of Salvadoran culture and can be found everywhere from the most rural homes to high-end hotels. Indigenous communities have used hammocks for centuries; the Spanish called the valley where San Salvador is located “the Valley of the Hammocks” because of the constant rocking of earthquakes. The town of Concepcion Quezaltepeque celebrates the annual Festival of the Hammocks every second week of November.

Materials needed

- rectangle of fabric (preferably bright colors) for each child, about 1 foot long by 6 inches wide
- fabric glue
- scissors
- string or yarn – 2 yards per child
- optional – fringe or trim, about 2 feet per child

Directions

1. If using fringe or trim, cut it in half and glue it along the long edge of the fabric rectangle.
2. Cut string in half.
3. Gather the short edge of the fabric rectangle and use the end of the piece of string to tie up the ends. Wrap string around the fabric several times, leaving a tail of string. Secure with glue.
4. Repeat for other short edge.
5. Use the tails to secure the hammock wherever you want to hang it. The hammock is a perfect resting place for a small stuffed friend or toy car.



Bowling

Craft Connection – Wisconsin

Milwaukee, Wis., is home to the Holler House, America's oldest bowling alley. Opened in 1908, this classic alley still resets bowling pins by hand, just as your pins will be in this fun home-made bowling set.

Materials needed

- empty toilet-paper tubes (sets can have three, six or 10, depending on the number of tubes you have)
- markers, paint, stickers and washi tape for decorating the tubes
- ball

Directions

1. Decorate tubes using markers, stickers, washi tape, etc.
2. Show children how to set up pins in a pyramid.
3. Roll ball at pins to knock them down.



Bilums

Craft Connection – Papua New Guinea

Bilums are woven string bags. Popular across Papua New Guinea, they come in a variety of sizes and are used to carry everything from groceries to cell phones to a baby. Traditional bilums are woven out of reeds, but today they are often made from yarn or string.

Materials needed

- 11-by-17-inch construction paper
- sheets of 8-1/2-by-11-inch construction paper, cut longways into 1-inch strips (1 by 11 inches)
- tape or stapler

Directions

1. In advance, fold the 11-by-17-inch paper in half horizontally (11-inch side to 11-inch side). Using a ruler, draw lines about 1 inch apart, stopping 1 inch from the edge of the unfolded side. Cut along the lines. Unfold. Each child will need one of these sheets.
2. Weave the 1-by-11-inch strips through the fringe. Use a variety of colors to make fun patterns. Try to keep the weave tight by keeping the strips close together.
3. Secure each woven strip with tape or a staple at each end.
4. Fold the now-woven 11-by-17-inch paper in half. You can also fold over the top unwoven edge for a clean finish.
5. Secure the edges with tape or staples to make a pocket.
6. Attach loops of strips to the edge with tape or staples to make a handle.



Balafon

Craft Connection – Central African Republic

Music and dancing are large parts of the culture of the Central African Republic. One instrument popular across much of West and Central Africa is the balafon (*bala-Fōn*), a xylophone made of wood and gourds.

Materials needed

- cardboard tubes of various sizes (empty rolls from wrapping paper, paper towels or toilet paper work well)
- rubber bands
- yarn, ribbon or embroidery floss



Directions

1. In advance: Cut tubes so each child has three to five tubes of varying lengths; about an inch difference between each tube works well.
2. Starting with the two smallest tubes, loop a rubber band around one tube, then twist the rubber band and wrap the loop around the next tube. Use one rubber band at each end of the tubes.
3. Using two more rubber bands, connect the next smallest tube. Continue until all the tubes are connected.
4. Weave the yarn, ribbon or embroidery floss to decorate your instrument. You can also weave a long ribbon through the largest tube so the child can wear the instrument around their neck.
5. Play the instrument by hitting it with a popsicle stick or other small stick.



PLANTING SEEDS

From today's Bible story the children learned that everyone is called to care for creation and that creation starts with water. This simulation is a physical representation of those ideas. When the children provide water and care to the seeds, they will sprout and become plants that can feed their family or others.

Materials needed

- dried beans or other seeds
- paper towels
- plastic bag or mason jar
- tape
- spray bottles
- permanent markers

Instructions

Before starting this simulation, soak the dried beans overnight in water. This will get the beans ready to germinate and will also give you faster results. Make sure your beans are no more than a year old. Older beans may not sprout or may take a very long time to sprout.

Plastic bag option: Before you start, strain the presoaked beans. Give each child four to six beans or seeds, a plastic bag and one or two sheets of paper towel. Next, invite the children to spray their paper towels until damp. It might also be good to remind the children that the spray bottles are to be used only on the paper towels and not on other people or objects. Then invite the children to fold their paper towels so that they fit in their plastic bags. Place the damp paper towels into the bag. Then place the seed on one side of the paper towel. Have a leader label the bags with the children's names and tape the open bags in a window so everyone can watch the beans sprout throughout the week.

Mason jar option: Before you start, strain the presoaked beans. Give each child four to six beans

or seeds, a mason jar and three or four sheets of paper towel. Invite the children to crumple up the sheets of paper towel and place them in the bottom of their jar. Next, invite the children to spray their paper towels until they are damp. It might also be good to remind the children that the spray bottles are to be used only on the paper towels and not on other people or objects. Once the paper towels are damp, invite the children to place their beans around the edge of their jar so that they can see them through the glass. Then invite the children to crumple up three or four more paper towels to place on top of the beans and dampen the paper towels with the spray bottle. Have a leader check to see that the beans are still visible, label the jars with the children's names and place the open seed jars in a window or sunny place where everyone can watch the beans sprout throughout the week.

Debrief

- What are the things that help seeds become plants? (Examples: water, soil, air, sun and care.) What are some things that could stop the plants from growing? (Examples: no water or sun, bad air quality, bad soil.)
- God wants us to care for all of creation, not just the plants. Creation is not just plants but all the things that God created, like us! Care for creation can look like a lot of different things. It can be simple, like saying a kind word to someone, watering plants or picking up trash. Care for creation can also be bigger, like speaking to a trusted adult when we see someone being bullied or talking to people in government about laws that are unfair or that hurt the environment.
- What are some things that help humans grow? (Examples: food, water, love, kind words, friends, family, shelter.)
- What are some things our church is doing to help our community and care for creation?
- What is something you could do today to show care for creation?

RIVER CLEANUP

Topics such as pollution and climate change can be dispiriting or even frightening for both children and adults. However, God calls us to be courageous and creative and to work together to solve these problems, just like the people in today's Story Time. This simulation helps children practice all those skills in a fun, team-building challenge.

Materials needed

- wire wastebaskets, about one foot tall
- yarn
- a push broom
- 5-gallon bucket
- 15-20 tennis balls
- painters' tape, cones or chalk
- tongs or gloves

Setup

First create your cleanup bucket. Depending on the size of your group, attach four to 10 lengths of yarn around the top edge of your wire wastebasket so that they hang down on the outside. The yarn attached to the basket should be about 1.5 feet longer than the radius of your cleanup zone in the next step. The basket should look like a spider when you are done.

Next, mark your cleanup zones by making two circles, each with a diameter of 3-5 feet, that are 10-15 feet apart. Designate one circle as the river that needs cleanup and the other as the waste management center or water treatment plant. In the river circle, scatter the tennis balls and place the cleanup receptacle with the strings stretched out over the edge of the cleanup zone. Next to the river circle place the push broom. Lastly, place the 5-gallon bucket in the center of the waste management center or water treatment plant circle. This bucket will be the anti-stink bucket.

Instructions

The goal of this simulation is for the children to work together to transport the stinky trash from the river to the waste management center or water treatment plant, where the anti-stink pool is, without touching the trash or stepping inside the stink zones.

To begin this simulation, tell the children that, as in our Story Time today, we have a river that needs cleaning up. Show the children the river circle and the tennis ball "trash." Explain to the children that this river has some stinky trash in it. The trash is so stinky we need to keep our distance from it so we do not get sick from it. That is why there is a circle around the trash. If the children step inside the circle during the simulation, they will become unable to help and will have to do a small challenge, such as performing a dance, singing a song or saying a prayer, to get back into the game.

Next, tell the children the way to clean the river and eliminate the stink is to use the special cleanup tools (the cleanup bucket and broom) to transport the trash to the management center or water treatment plant circle, where the smell can be neutralized and the water made safe to drink. Their goal is to work together to get the trash into the cleanup bucket without stepping inside the stink zone, using the strings to move the cleanup bucket and using the broom to get the trash into it. Using the strings on the cleanup bucket, the children need to work together to tip the cleanup bucket on its side. Next, the children will need to use the push broom to get the tennis balls into the cleanup bucket. The children may try to get all the balls in at once or place just a few in the bucket.

After they have some or all of the balls in the cleanup bucket, they need to transport the trash to the waste management center or water treatment plant circle by using the strings, and to dump the trash into the anti-stink bucket. The children can make as many trips between the circles as they want, but they may not touch the cleanup bucket or step inside either circle. This simulation can be played in teams; you can have teams race each other or have all the children work together.

"WATER AND THE WORD" TIE-DYE

Today's simulation centers on baptism and how God unites us into one community and calls us beloved children of God through water and the Holy Spirit. This is a great gift and joy we get to share with the children on this day. However, remember that there may be children in your VBS that are not baptized. So, it will be important to stress that God's love and forgiveness is available to all, even if a child has not been baptized. You may also want to make an open invitation to all the children, whether they have been baptized or not, to talk to their group leader, Sunday school teacher, parent or pastor about baptism.

If you would like to do some additional education on baptism, consider using Godly Play's baptism lesson or another interactive, child-friendly baptism lesson as part of this simulation station (or on a Sunday following VBS, during the children's sermon or Sunday school). You might also consider having a member of the congregation, the pastor or another leader show them the things your congregation uses for baptism, such as candles or the baptismal font. If your congregation is OK with it, consider letting the children touch the water in the baptismal font. This would also be a good time to share with the children any traditions your church may have around baptism, such as giving out candles or prayer blankets, decorating the church a certain way or baptizing people during the Easter Vigil. If anyone in your congregation was baptized later in life, consider inviting them to share their story with the children on this day.

Setup

Tie-dye can be fun but messy! Make sure to set up this simulation station where dye can be spilled. Ways to minimize mess include tie-dyeing outside, laying down tablecloths or tarps, and tie-dyeing in shallow plastic storage bins. To help children and leaders stay as stain-free as possible, have them wear aprons that the church does not mind getting messy, create ponchos out of plastic trash bags and use gloves.

There are two variations on tie-dye here. The first uses clothing, and the second uses coffee filters. Both can be fun activities for all ages, but the second might be easier for younger children. Both activities can be introduced with the script below.

If you choose this simulation, make sure to send out a note early in the week to let parents and guardians know that the children will need to bring something to tie-dye on Day 3 of VBS. Some children may forget or not be able to buy something, so have some extra items on hand. You might also consider making white VBS shirts and handing them out on this day to tie-dye, and/or tie-dyeing white socks that can be added to peace bags as part of the Day 4 simulation.

You may start this simulation station in your crafts area or at your church's baptismal font. Gather the children in a circle in the simulation station space or around the baptismal font. You can use or adapt the script below.

Opening script

Welcome to Day 3's simulation station! Today we've been learning about baptism. What have you learned so far today? [Affirm answers.]

In the church, we use baptism to welcome new people as children of God. Sometimes churches will sprinkle water on the person's head. Or, the people being baptized will walk into a pool to be covered in water. Often the water is used to trace a small

cross on the baptized person's forehead. This cross is a reminder that God loves them and they are children of God.

If I draw a cross on your forehead with water, do you think other people can see it? What about after it dries? Can you still see it?

You might not be able to see the mark of water on someone after it dries, but does that mean God stops loving them? [No!] Even if we can't see the water on their head, we know that God is still with them and still loves them. That's something that can't just dry up, even if the water does.

Today, we're going to make tie-dye clothes. To make tie-dye, we add colors to water and use them to make shirts, socks and other items colorful. These colors won't be invisible once we're done! And like the water in baptism and God's love for us, they won't fade away!

TIE-DYE CLOTHES

Materials needed

- powdered dye (Note: Review the instructions for the dye a few days ahead of your event. Also, try to avoid dyes that require items to be soaked overnight.)
- water
- clear squeeze bottles
- gloves (one pair per child and volunteer)
- rubber bands (at least five or six per child)
- plastic trash bags
- plastic storage containers
- white T-shirts, socks or other items (one per child)

Instructions

If working indoors, cover the tables and floor in plastic. If you are working outdoors, know that some dyes do stain grass. Gloves and aprons can help keep children and volunteers clean. To prepare the fabric, follow the instructions that come with the dye. Some dyes work best if items are already wet, and some require items to be dry. This activity calls for powdered dye or dye concentrate. If dyes require that clothing items be prewashed, do so and include instructions to do so in your note home to parents and guardians.

Fill the plastic storage containers with the prepared dyes and spread out the containers so children and volunteers can access them easily.

When you are ready to dye, show the children a few different images or samples of what they can do with the tie-dye. Some common patterns are scrunches, spirals and rings. You can also go to YouTube to learn more complex patterns such as hearts. After you have shown them some samples, invite the children to gather around you, and demonstrate how to make the different patterns. The scrunched pattern is made by scrunching up the fabric into a ball and wrapping rubber bands around it. The spiral pattern is made by using a wooden spoon handle or dowel stick to turn the fabric into a spiral. Start by laying the fabric flat and placing the stick into the center of the fabric. Then twist the stick around and around to form a circle of fabric. It will look like a pie shape. When the circle is complete, gently put the rubber bands around it to secure the spiral. When the spiral is secure, the dyeing process can begin. The ring pattern is created by pinching a small section of fabric and placing a rubber band below the section. You can make concentric rings by adding additional rubber bands a short distance below the first rubber band.

After you have shown the children how to create a few different patterns, have everyone put on gloves and any other gear, such as aprons or ponchos, needed to protect their clothes from the dye. Then help them create their shapes and dye their items.

TIE-DYE PAPER

Materials needed

- coffee filters
- washable markers
- spray bottles with water
- 8-1/2-by-12-inch white card stock

Instructions

After using the script above to talk about baptism, return to the simulation station space and invite the children to sit at tables. To begin, give each child one coffee filter and one sheet of card stock. Put markers on each table. Next invite the children to pick one color and color in one section of their coffee filter. While they color, invite the children to think of someone special to them such as a family member, a teacher or a friend. Ask each child the person’s name, why they are special and what the child likes about them. Repeat the process until the children have colored the whole coffee filter.

Now invite the children to lay their coffee filters on top of their piece of card stock. Review with the children how water works with the word of God to transform people in baptism. Tell the children that the coffee filter with all its colors is beautiful on its own but that when we add water it is transformed into something new, just as we are in baptism. Now help the children spray their coffee filters, and watch the colors bleed together, stain the card stock and transform into a new work of art. For the best effect, leave the coffee filter on the paper until the paper is dry.

Next, ask the children to think about the people represented by the colors on their coffee filter. Ask them if they remember from earlier what gift we receive in baptism. Remind them that we are claimed as children of God and become part of God’s family. Ask them to look at their coffee filters and observe how the water brought all these different people together and created new colors. Invite some of the children to share their art with

the group. Explain to the group that this is what it is like to be part of God’s family. God brings different people together, even if they are not baptized, to create something new and beautiful.

Lastly, label the piece of card stock with the child’s name and set the art aside to dry. Once it’s dry, peel away the coffee filter and enjoy the art left behind on the paper! You can repeat this process as many times as you like.

NOTES

PEACE BAGS

As Christians, 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. This includes proclaiming peace, just as Jesus did in our Bible story today, in word and deed.

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 act as a physical manifestation of the peace of Christ to our neighbors. Putting kits together can help the people preparing them remain mindful of their neighbors in need. Kits such as these can be important reminders that, in God’s world, we are all neighbors and we all need a sign of peace once in a while.

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

The list below includes suggestions, but feel free to adapt the supplies as fits your community’s context. 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 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.

Suggested supplies for bags

- brochure of local shelters and hot meals (if available in your community)
- dried fruit
- meal bars
- peanut butter crackers
- hand sanitizer, toothbrush and toothpaste sample
- water bottle
- pair of socks or tie-dyed socks from Day 3 simulation
- lip balm
- hand warmers
- preloaded rail or bus pass
- adhesive bandages

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 the Sunday before the program, 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.

Materials needed

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

Instructions

Before you start packing the bags, invite the children to sit in a circle with you for a discussion.

Ask: What do you remember about the Bible story? [Wait for and affirm answers.] What I remember most is that the disciples were scared. When is a time that you felt scared? What did you do? [Wait for and affirm answers.]

Tell: As the Captain said in our opening time today, sometimes we get scared, even when we know God is with us. It can be hard to feel Jesus' presence when things are hard or scary. Sometimes, we can feel like the storm will never be calmed.

Ask: Does anyone remember what Sage said they do when they are scared? Sage thinks about the people that love them and reaches out to people they trust. Sage looks for a sign of God's peace in the people around them. We all need a sign of God's peace now and then. Today we are going to do something that will help us be a sign of peace for people in our community.

To start packing bags, pair younger children with an adult. 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-sized 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 blessing cards below.

Conclusion

Invite the children back into a circle to talk about the bags they have just packed.

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. Or, if your church has a food pantry, you can ask the food pantry to share the bags with visitors and guests. 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 peace bag ready in your car or backpack so that, if you happen to see someone in need, you have the bag 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.

For younger children

Tell: Helping a neighbor in need is one way we can share the peace of Christ 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.

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

Tell: Everyone in our community is important. Jesus tells his followers that every time they help

someone in need, they're helping him. Our bags remind us to keep an eye out for our neighbors and remember that, even if someone doesn't have all the things they need, they are loved by God and are part of God's family, just like you. We are called to share a sign of God's peace with 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 makes you feel at peace and loved?

Tell: Having the things we need, such as food, can help us feel at peace and focus on other things, such as school, jobs and family.

Ask: What are some 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 be a sign of God's peace in the world. That might be more important than the

things inside the bags.]

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 and reminding us that God calls all of us to be a sign of peace in the world. Even if we cannot stop storms or make every scary thing disappear, we can walk with our neighbors in need and provide them with comfort and support with our words and our actions.

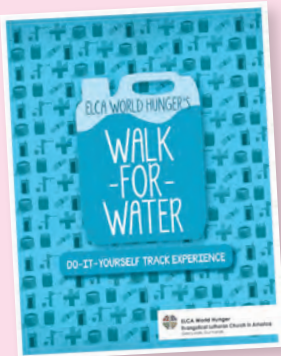
Blessing of the bags

God, you call us to be a sign of peace in this stormy and sometimes scary world. Bless these bags and our work today, that they might be a sign of peace to our 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 these bags as a sign of your peace and love. Amen.

Peace Bag Samples

<p>This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of the community.</p> <p>Have a hopeful day!</p>	<p>This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of the community.</p> <p>Have a hopeful day!</p>
<p>This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of the community.</p> <p>Have a hopeful day!</p>	<p>This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of the community.</p> <p>Have a hopeful day!</p>
<p>This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of the community.</p> <p>Have a hopeful day!</p>	<p>This bag has been blessed by our church. We hope it reminds you that God loves you, and you are an important part of the community.</p> <p>Have a hopeful day!</p>

MINI-WALK FOR WATER



This simulation is a shortened, kid-friendly version of ELCA World Hunger's "Walk for Water." If you are looking to add an intergenerational component to your VBS, consider doing the full version of "Walk for Water." This could be done in the evening on the final day of VBS with family members, guardians, congregation members and community members. This could also be done on the Sunday following VBS. You can find the original "Walk for Water" do-it-yourself guide at ELCA.org/Hunger/Resources under the "Hunger Ed" tab.

Materials needed

- track story signs
- barrier for the track (Examples: plastic cones and rope, latticework, PVC pipes, chairs, painters' tape, chalk outline on pavement.)
- water bottles or small buckets
- optional: jugs (Any kind of jug can be used, but try to find one that holds five gallons and has a closed top. We recommend the five-gallon Scepter Water Can, sold for \$15 at Amazon.com.) These may be too heavy for most children, but one or two can be used for display and discussion.

Setup

The track can be set up inside, but if weather permits, outside is better. Each child will need one small bucket or water bottle to carry along the path.

Download the "Walk for Water" track story signs at ELCA.org/hunger/resources under the "Hunger Ed" tab. The story signs are in order at the end of the section; set these up at various points around the track in order, making sure to leave room for up to three obstacles. Story sign #1 should go right at the start of the track, with story sign #2 close behind.

Because the signs involve some reading, you may want to have one adult at each sign to help the

children. The adults can read the signs or offer a short summary. Next, decide where your track will be and how long you would like it to be. A full "Walk for Water" track is one tenth of a mile. However, if you have younger children at your VBS or lack sufficient space, consider a shorter distance and focus on education through the obstacles you choose.

Now choose your obstacles. You can have as many or as few as your time and space permit. Below is a list of obstacles to choose from:

Flood: The purpose of this obstacle is to highlight the crises that can be caused by too much water and the risks to health posed by unclean water. This can be as simple as laying a blue tarp down in the middle of the track so everyone has to walk over it. Or, if you are outside, you can set up a sprinkler aimed at the obstacle or have a children's pool full of water that the participants have to walk through. Immediately following the flood, we recommend the health clinic, which is focused on water-related diseases. More information on that is below.

Heat tent: The purpose of this obstacle is to help participants experience briefly some of the factors that make walking for water very hard work. If you are inside, you can set up space heaters in a room that all walkers have to travel through. Exercise caution with these; make sure that an adult is present in or near the room at all times. One alternative is to use floodlights or workshop lights to symbolize the

bright sunlight. Or, if you are outside in warm weather, you can instruct walkers to put on a heavy coat for 30 seconds. You can also use orange paper to symbolize a hot sun or sand to symbolize a desert.

Bump in the road: This obstacle is designed to help participants reflect on the challenges people face when they have to walk for water on uneven or treacherous terrain. For this obstacle, you can have them walk up a flight of stairs or over or under playground equipment. Be creative! The point is to help them see the walk as work and not a pleasant stroll. It's a good idea, too, to be aware of your participants' differing abilities. If someone is unable to clear this obstacle or uncomfortable with it, help them find a way around.

Health clinic: If you want to deepen your "Walk for Water" experience, you can easily create a health clinic for water-related diseases. This is best placed immediately after the flood obstacle. Be sure to have one or two people in the clinic location to help direct participants. When participants get to the clinic, present them with three jars of water – one with clear water, one with visibly dirty water and one slightly tinted with a drop of yellow food coloring to symbolize iodine. Label the bottom of each jar: the clear water is "lead," the dirty water is "cholera" and the yellow water is "sanitized." Ask participants which water they would drink and then show them the labels. The yellow water has been sanitized with iodine. The other jars contain water contaminated with either bacteria (cholera) or lead (lead poisoning). Remind them that it is impossible to tell if water is safe just by sight. Some of the projects ELCA World Hunger supports provide training in water sanitation, access to safe water sources or advocacy for policies that protect water.

If a participant picks the jar labeled "cholera," explain to them that someone who drinks dirty water can get diarrhea. Read the script below to the children while they sit on the latrines or chairs. After you read the script, provide them with fresh water and a piece of candy to represent medicine.

When the children finish their water and candy, they may move on to the next part of the track.

Tell: Even though water may look clean and harmless, it can be unsafe to drink or to use for cooking and bathing. "Diarrhea" may sound funny, but it is a serious problem. It doesn't just mean having to go to the bathroom. It can mean having to go to a doctor or even a hospital. Those are expensive, and many families can't afford doctors or hospitals. Thank God, most of the time people can get better by taking medicine and drinking lots of fluids. Take a seat on the latrine and rest. This clinic is stocked with clean water for you to drink and "medicine" (candy) to help you recover.

If they choose the water labeled "lead," give them a piece of candy to represent vitamins that can slow lead poisoning and read the brief script below (or an adapted version):

Lead is a metal that can sometimes get in water because of lead pipes. Lead is very dangerous, especially for kids. Lead can make it hard for their brains and bodies to grow the way they should. This is why our church works to help our neighbors get filters for their water at home and work with leaders in the community to pass laws that protect people from lead poisoning.

Instructions

After you have set up your track and chosen your obstacles, you are ready to begin! Gather the children and other participants together and invite them into a discussion before you start the track.

Ask: How do you use water at home? Try to think of as many ways as you can.

Ask: What about at school or church? [Look for "baptism" as a response.] Water is a major part of our life in church and of this VBS. We have learned that water helps sustain life, that water can give blessings, and much more.

Ask: What stories from the Bible involve water? What are some of the stories we have learned about here at VBS? Can you think of any other stories? (Examples: Creation, Noah and the flood,

Jonah, the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, water coming from rocks in Exodus, Jesus and the woman at the well, John the Baptist at the Jordan, Jesus walking on water, Jesus as living water, Jesus' baptism and Jesus calming the storm.)

Ask: What does water have to do with hunger? [Look for answers such as growing food and good health.]

Tell: It might seem odd, but not having enough water and not having enough food are connected. If people don't have clean water, they can't grow food or give water to livestock. Without clean water, they can get sick, which means they can't work to provide for themselves and their families. And without easy access to clean water, children have to spend so much time walking to collect water for their families that they can't go to school.

Ask: How would your life be different if you didn't have water? (Examples: nothing to drink, no way to grow food, no way to wash hands, fruit or vegetables.)

Tell: For many people in the world – more than 780 million people – this is a daily reality. ELCA World Hunger supports a lot of water projects around the world that help communities get access to clean, safe water. Some of them you have heard about this week at VBS. Today we will learn a little about what it is like to not have easy access to clean water, so that we can share with others why clean water is important. Understanding and sharing with others why clean water is important helps us to become better neighbors.

After you have finished your introductory discussion, walk with the children along the path through the different obstacles. When they have completed the track, gather them for a debrief.

Debrief

- What was the easiest part of the track? What was the hardest?
- Tell me about your clinic experience. What did you learn?

- How accessible is clean water for you? What changes must a person make if they lack easy access to clean water?
- How much water do you think you use in a day?
- What effects did access to clean water have on the people in the story we followed?

NOTES

WELCOME AND MUSIC

Welcome the children (and adults!) to the closing time for the day. Sing the theme song and some other songs as people are gathering.



**Talking Together:
A Review of the Day**

Welcome the children (and adults!) to the closing time for the day. Invite them to share with the group what happened during the day. Questions to ask:

- Where did you travel today?
- What did you learn about in today's part?
- What was your favorite part of today?
- What was one new thing you learned today?
- Where did you experience God today?
- What will you share with others when you get home?

Return to Theme Verse

Our theme verse is "Everything will live where the river goes" (Ezekiel 47:9). How did you see God bringing life today?

Prayer and Sending

Invite someone to offer a closing prayer. If you have a sound system, letting the prayer leader use the microphone is a surefire way to get a volunteer. Close with any final announcements or reminders.

APPENDIX 1: MUSIC

Songs for “River of Life”

SONGS ABOUT WATER

- “Calm to the Waves” (ELW 794)
- “I’m Going on a Journey” (ELW 446)
- “Wade in the Water” (ELW 459)
- “Waterlife” (ELW 457)

SONGS ABOUT PEACE AND HEALING

- “Have No Fear, Little Flock” (ELW 764)
- “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds” (ELW 620)
- “Neither Death nor Life” (ELW 622)
- “The Peace of the Lord”/“La Paz del Señor” (ELW 646)
- “What a Fellowship, What a Joy Divine” (ELW 774)
- “When Our Song Says Peace” (ELW 709)

SONGS ABOUT COMMUNITY

- “In Christ There Is No East or West” (ELW 650)
- “Let Us Go Now to the Banquet”/“Vamos Todos al Banquete” (ELW 523)
- “We Are All One in Christ” (ELW 643)

SONGS ABOUT BUILDING GOD’S KINGDOM

- “Build Us Up, Lord” (ELW 670)
- “Go in Peace and Serve the Lord” (WP 46) verses 2 and 3
- “Lead Me, Guide Me” (WP 84 or ELW 768)
- “Send Me, Jesus” (ELW 549)
- “Send Me, Lord” (ELW 809)
- “We Are an Offering” (WP 146 or ELW 692)

ELCA WORLD HUNGER MUSIC

Songs from ELCA World Hunger’s “On Earth As in Heaven” Vacation Bible School from 2020 are still available! Visit elca.org/hunger/resources and click on the “VBS” tab to find folders of the five songs. Each folder contains lyric and chord sheets and links to audio recordings of the songs, both with and without vocals. The five songs are:

- “Share Everything”
- “Healing Hands”
- “Everyone Is in the Kingdom”
- “Glory”
- “Share the Peace”

Recordings of the songs can be found at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7224146>.

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 at www.AugsburgFortress.org! Our VBS song recommendations come from these resources.

- *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006.
- *Life Together, LifeSongs Songbook (LS)*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999.
- *Worship & Praise Songbook (WP)*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999.

A note on licensing: If you plan to reproduce the words or music for any of these songs, please be aware of licensing concerns! Songs that are fully in the public domain require no license. If you choose to reproduce any songs that are not in the public domain, you must acquire permission. This can be done on an individual basis in conversation with the copyright holder, or by purchasing a license that gives you permission to reproduce a certain collection of songs. We know that many ELCA congregations purchase collective licenses (such as Augsburg Fortress Hymns License, OneLicense, CCLI and LicenSing) on an annual basis. For that reason, we have noted which licenses apply to the songs we’re recommending. (Some songs are available under multiple licenses.) If you’d like more information about copyright holders for the suggested songs, please contact the publishers of the songbooks.

¹ Licensed under OneLicense: www.OneLicense.net.

² Licensed under CCLI (Church Copyright License): www.CCLI.com.

³ Licensed under LicenSing: www.LicenSingonline.org.

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An asterisk (*) indicates that the song’s words and music are in the public domain but the musical arrangement in the songbook is under license to OneLicense.





Take-home Activities: DAY 1

During "River of Life," ELCA World Hunger's Vacation Bible School program, children are learning about faith and action in the world. But the learning doesn't have to stop with the session each day. By talking together at home, children can share their perspective and learn from other family members. We invite you to use this sheet at home to continue conversations about the theme, activities and stories the children experienced during the day.

The theme for "River of Life" is drawn from Ezekiel 47:9 — "Everything will live where the river goes." In "River of Life," participants learn about the importance of water and visit important "ports" during the week to hear Bible stories about water. They also hear about communities working to restore watersheds, to protect rights to water and to ensure safe water for everyone.

From the waters of baptism to the waters that sustain farms and gardens, water is life. Through ELCA World Hunger, this church is committed to ministries that accompany communities without access to clean water or proper sanitation, both in the United States and around the world. The simple reason for this is that all creation relies on water to live. But water is much more than a resource. For people of faith, water is a powerful symbol, with significance as deep as the natural stores that cover the globe.

The theme for Day 1 was "God creates."

The story of creation in the book of Genesis tells us about the wonderful ways God's creation is connected. Each part of creation — the land, plants, animals, humans — depends on the rest of creation to live. In the story, we also see God's love and the many ways God provides for the life and well-being of all creation.

We played games and took part in activities to learn about the importance of God's creation and how we can care for it.

In the story for today, a community in Cambodia received seeds, tools and training to help families grow new vegetables to feed themselves and sell at the local market. The children also met Khath Saradey (*Kat Sarah-dee*), director of a school in Cambodia, who helped start a garden for students and teachers through the project.



Talk Together/Younger Children

What did you learn about water today?

What crafts did you make?

What snacks did you try?

What did you hear about in the story?

Talk Together/Older Children

What did you learn about water today?

What snacks did you try? What crafts did you make? What country did they represent?

What do you think it means to be created by God?

What story did you hear? How did water, seeds and tools help the people in the story?

Share: What are some ways your family, household or church can help care for God's creation?

Pray: At dinner or before bed, use this prayer as a family:

Dear God, thank you for the many gifts you have given us in the world. Help us to care for each other and for all creation. Help us to share these gifts with others, so that everyone can enjoy your world. Thank you for the leaders and new friends we met today, and be with us this week as we learn more about you. Amen.

Learn and do: In an activity today, children were invited to nurture a seed together. As a family or household, find a place to keep the seed, take care of it and watch it grow!

One way we can remember to care for God's creation is to be mindful of the ways we use natural resources. As a household, talk together about adopting a practice to be mindful of the water you are using. Perhaps this means shutting the water off while brushing teeth, or taking shorter showers, or baths. You can find other ideas at the EPA's WaterSense website: <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/watersense-kids>.



Take-home Activities: DAY 2

During "River of Life," ELCA World Hunger's Vacation Bible School program, children are learning about faith and action in the world. But the learning doesn't have to stop with the session each day. By talking together at home, children can share their perspective and learn from other family members. We invite you to use this sheet at home to continue conversations about the theme, activities and stories the children experienced during the day.

The theme for "River of Life" is drawn from Ezekiel 47:9 — "Everything will live where the river goes." In "River of Life," participants learn about the importance of water and visit important "ports" during the week to hear Bible stories about water. They also hear about communities working to restore watersheds, to protect rights to water and to ensure safe water for everyone.

From the waters of baptism to the waters that sustain farms and gardens, water is life. Through ELCA World Hunger, this church is committed to ministries that accompany communities without access to clean water or proper sanitation, both in the United States and around the world. The simple reason for this is that all creation relies on water to live. But water is much more than a resource. For people of faith, water is a powerful symbol, with significance as deep as the natural stores that cover the globe.

The theme for Day 2 was "God provides."

In the story of the Exodus, God frees the people from slavery in Egypt and leads them on a long journey to the Promised Land. But God doesn't leave them to fend for themselves. Along the way, God provides food, called manna, and water so that the people will not hunger or thirst during their journey. The story reminds us of the many ways we depend on God and each other. And it reminds us that God cares about justice for the people. As we walk together toward a more just world, God is still with us, sustaining us on the way.

We played games and took part in activities to learn about the many gifts God provides, especially water, and the ways we can work together to make sure everyone can enjoy these gifts.

In the story for today, we learned about community leaders working to restore and protect watersheds in El Salvador. We met Miguel, one of the leaders of the project. Miguel is working with people in eight different communities along the rivers in his region of El Salvador to help protect the waters and to advocate for the rights of the communities to access the water.



Talk Together/Younger Children

What did you learn about water today?

What crafts did you make?

What snacks did you try?

What did you hear about in the story?

Talk Together/Older Children

What did you learn about water today?

What snacks did you try? What crafts did you make? What country did they represent?

What story did you hear? What are some of the ways Miguel and his neighbors are working to protect the waters in El Salvador?

Why is it important for the church to help people access water?

Share: What are some ways your family, household or church can help care for God's creation?

Pray: At dinner or before bed, use this prayer as a family:

Dear God, thank you for the many gifts you have given us in the world. Help us to care for each other and for all creation. Help us to share these gifts with others, so that everyone can enjoy your world. Thank you for the leaders and new friends we met today, and be with us this week as we learn more about you. Amen.

Learn and do: In an activity today, children were invited to nurture a seed together. As a family or household, find a place to keep the seed, take care of it and watch it grow!

One way we can remember to care for God's creation is to be mindful of the ways we use natural resources. As a household, talk together about adopting a practice to be mindful of the water you are using. Perhaps this means shutting the water off while brushing teeth, or taking shorter showers, or baths. You can find other ideas at the EPA's WaterSense website: <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/watersense-kids>.



Take-home Activities: DAY 3

During "River of Life," ELCA World Hunger's Vacation Bible School program, children are learning about faith and action in the world. But the learning doesn't have to stop with the session each day. By talking together at home, children can share their perspective and learn from other family members. We invite you to use this sheet at home to continue conversations about the theme, activities and stories the children experienced during the day.

The theme for "River of Life" is drawn from Ezekiel 47:9 — "Everything will live where the river goes." In "River of Life," participants learn about the importance of water and visit important "ports" during the week to hear Bible stories about water. They also hear about communities working to restore watersheds, to protect rights to water and to ensure safe water for everyone.

From the waters of baptism to the waters that sustain farms and gardens, water is life. Through ELCA World Hunger, this church is committed to ministries that accompany communities without access to clean water or proper sanitation, both in the United States and around the world. The simple reason for this is that all creation relies on water to live. But water is much more than a resource. For people of faith, water is a powerful symbol, with significance as deep as the natural stores that cover the globe.

The theme for Day 3 was "God claims."

In Matthew 3:13-17, Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan River. After he is baptized, God claims Jesus as God's son, saying, "This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well-pleased." Today, we learned about what it means to be a child of God and how water can be an important symbol of God's love for us and our love for one another. Even before we were born, God formed us and claimed us as God's own. And God sends us into the world to learn from each other and to show our love for one another and all creation.

We played games and took part in activities to learn about working together to have fun and show each other we care! (Note: Some congregations will use Day 3 as a day for water games, so ask children about the fun things they did! After they dry off, of course.)

In the story for today, children heard about an ELCA congregation in Milwaukee that is working hard to make sure children have safe water to drink. The church is helping people learn about the dangers of lead poisoning from water and paint, which can have serious, long-term effects on children's development.



Talk Together/Younger Children

What did you learn about water today?

What crafts did you make?

What snacks did you try?

What did you hear about in the story?

Why is lead in water bad for us?

Talk Together/Older Children

What did you learn about water today?

What snacks did you try?
What crafts did you make?
What country did they represent?

What story did you hear?
What are some of the ways the church is working to keep children safe from lead?

Why is it important for the church to help people learn about and access safe water?

Share: What are some ways your family, household or church can help care for God's creation?

Pray: At dinner or before bed, use this prayer as a family:

Dear God, thank you for the many gifts you have given us in the world. Help us to care for each other and for all creation. Help us to share these gifts with others, so that everyone can enjoy your world. Thank you for the leaders and new friends we met today, and be with us this week as we learn more about you. Amen.

Learn and do: In an activity today, children were invited to nurture a seed together. As a family or household, find a place to keep the seed, take care of it and watch it grow!

One way we can remember to care for God's creation is to be mindful of the ways we use natural resources. As a household, talk together about adopting a practice to be mindful of the water you are using. Perhaps this means shutting the water off while brushing teeth, or taking shorter showers, or baths. You can find other ideas at the EPA's WaterSense website: <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/watersense-kids>.





Take-home Activities: DAY 4

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The theme for "River of Life" is drawn from Ezekiel 47:9 — "Everything will live where the river goes." In "River of Life," participants learn about the importance of water and visit important "ports" during the week to hear Bible stories about water. They also hear about communities working to restore watersheds, to protect rights to water and to ensure safe water for everyone.

From the waters of baptism to the waters that sustain farms and gardens, water is life. Through ELCA World Hunger, this church is committed to ministries that accompany communities without access to clean water or proper sanitation, both in the United States and around the world. The simple reason for this is that all creation relies on water to live. But water is much more than a resource. For people of faith, water is a powerful symbol, with significance as deep as the natural stores that cover the globe.

The theme for Day 4 was "God protects."

In the Bible story for today, we heard about a time when the disciples were on a boat in a storm. They were scared, but Jesus was with them and calmed the storm — and their fear. The story reminds us that, even when we are scared, God is always with us. We may be afraid, but we won't be alone, and God gives us one another to help us stay safe.

We played games and took part in activities to learn about God's gift of peace and the assurance of hope for the future.

In the story today, children heard about a project supported by ELCA World Hunger that is helping farmers in Papua New Guinea protect their crops from natural threats, such as droughts or rains. As part of the project, farms and homes in the community were also connected to a new water system to help ensure that the people have enough water for their homes and farms.



Talk Together/Younger Children

What did you learn about water today?

What did you learn about how God helps keep us safe?

What crafts did you make?

What snacks did you try?

What did you hear about in the story?

Talk Together/Older Children

What did you learn about water today?

What snacks did you try?

What crafts did you make?

What country did they represent?

What story did you hear?

What are some of the ways the church is helping our neighbors in Papua New Guinea have enough food and water?

Why is it important for the church to learn from and support people around the world?

Share: What are some things that make you feel afraid? When is a time when God helped calm your fears? How have you helped someone else who was scared?

Pray: At dinner or before bed, use this prayer as a family:

Dear God, we all feel afraid sometimes. Thank you for always being with us, even when we are afraid. Help us be with our friends and family and neighbors when they feel afraid too, so that they don't have to feel alone. Thank you for our neighbors in Papua New Guinea and for the hard work they are doing to protect their farms and feed their families. Thank you for the chance to learn about them and help them in their work. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Learn and do: In 2015, ELCA World Hunger hosted the "Walk for Water" at the ELCA Youth Gathering in Detroit. Learn more about water crises in the United States and around the world, and the ways our church has responded, by visiting <https://elca.org/walk4water>.

NASA's Climate Kids program has some fun games, interactive activities and easy-to-use lessons about water and the environment. Visit <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/menu/water/> to find activities you can do together to learn more about how climate change is impacting water levels and water availability around the world.

Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) has a fun online game to learn about the role of water in our lives. It teaches children about oceans, fresh water and some ways to use water wisely. Play the game together at <https://www.discoverwater.org/>.



Take-home Activities: DAY 5

During "River of Life," ELCA World Hunger's Vacation Bible School program, children are learning about faith and action in the world. But the learning doesn't have to stop with the session each day. By talking together at home, children can share their perspective and learn from other family members. We invite you to use this sheet at home to continue conversations about the theme, activities and stories the children experienced during the day.

The theme for "River of Life" is drawn from Ezekiel 47:9 — "Everything will live where the river goes." In "River of Life," participants learn about the importance of water and visit important "ports" during the week to hear Bible stories about water. They also hear about communities working to restore watersheds, to protect rights to water and to ensure safe water for everyone.

From the waters of baptism to the waters that sustain farms and gardens, water is life. Through ELCA World Hunger, this church is committed to ministries that accompany communities without access to clean water or proper sanitation, both in the United States and around the world. The simple reason for this is that all creation relies on water to live. But water is much more than a resource. For people of faith, water is a powerful symbol, with significance as deep as the natural stores that cover the globe.

The theme for Day 5 was "God loves, we love."

In the Bible story for today, we heard about Jesus washing his disciples' feet. In this act of service, Jesus shows the way that God calls each of us to love one another as God loves us and to care for each other with love and concern. We also learned that loving each other means wanting what is best for each other. Working together to make sure that everyone has access to safe water, enough food and the other things they need is part of what it means to be the church in the world.

We played games and took part in activities to learn about the challenges people face without access to water and the ways God is working through our church and our neighbors to meet these challenges head-on.

In the story for today, we met Huguette, a woman from the Central African Republic, who is working with a project that is part of the church there. Together with the church and her neighbors, Huguette and her family built latrines to help keep their water safe, and they developed a spring to ensure that the community would have access to safe water.



Talk Together/Younger Children

What did you learn about water today?

What did you learn about God's love today?

What crafts did you make?

What snacks did you try?

What did you hear about in the story?

Talk Together/Older Children

What did you learn about water today?

What snacks did you try?

What crafts did you make?

What country did they represent?

What story did you hear?

What are some of the ways the church is helping our neighbors in the Central African Republic?

Why might latrines be important for people's health?

Why is it important for the church to learn from and support people around the world?

Share: On this final day of "River of Life," talk together about how you think God is calling you to show love for others in the world. How does your congregation show love for neighbors near and far? How have you or your congregation been shown love by your neighbors?

Pray: At dinner or before bed, use this prayer as a family:

Dear God, thank you for the chance to learn more about you and your world this week. Thank you for the leaders and the friends we met. Help us to always remember how much you love each and every one of us, and help us find ways to show love for one another. Bless our church and our neighbors, especially Huguette and her family in the Central African Republic. Help them to stay healthy and safe, and thank you for helping us learn about them. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Learn and do: What are some ways your congregation is active in your community? Talk with your pastor, fellow members and other leaders to find ministries you can participate in to show God's love to others.

Visit the ELCA's Good Gifts catalog online at <https://goodgifts.elca.org/water> to see some of the ways our church is accompanying our neighbors as they work for access to safe water and sanitation. Consider raising money as a family or in your congregation to help support this important work.

Host a "Walk for Water"! Some congregations may have used a shortened version of ELCA World Hunger's "Walk for Water" during VBS today. This interactive track introduces participants to stories of people around the world facing water crises — and some of the ways our church is responding. This track can be a congregation- or community-wide event to help spread the word about the need for safe water. To learn more, download the leader's guide, which can be found at ELCA.org/hunger/resources under the "Hunger Ed" tab. If you are interested in hosting an event, contact ELCA World Hunger at hunger@elca.org with any questions!



Stay Connected!

Thank you for using ELCA World Hunger's
"River of Life" Vacation Bible School!
We'd love to stay connected with you.

Email us

Questions, stories or photos of your
VBS experience to share?
Email them to **hunger@elca.org**.

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8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631-4101
800-638-3522, ext. 2616

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