



# Unit 4



boundless*invitation*

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# Unit overview

**In Unit 4, we will examine the theme of God’s boundless invitation. This unit is designed to introduce how God invites us into God’s story in our communities, our churches and our world.**

This unit is intended to be explored in two complementary sessions. The first session focuses on God’s invitation to Mary in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke. In this story, we see a beautiful example of how God’s invitation extends to the most unlikely and unexpected of people, times and spaces.

The second session delves into our response to God’s boundless invitation. It’s important to know that our calling as Christians is to respond to God’s invitation through the example of Christ. Our response to this invitation occurs both individually and in the communities in which we belong. One aim of this session is for youth to reflect on where they experience community in their lives and how they can respond to God’s invitation in the company of their peers at school, at home and at church.

We encourage you to review the “Overview for adult leaders” section at the beginning of each session outline before your group meets. In this section, you will find more specific goals for each session. You will also find a list of necessary materials and Gathering-related announcements within the curriculum.

Watch to recognize icons and fonts throughout this curriculum:

- Take-home sheet — Each lesson has a sheet for post-lesson reflection. Use these to make connections at home and with the congregation.
- **Bold italics** indicates words that should be read aloud by the leader.
- **Regular font** indicates the lesson plan and leader information.



**Clock** to tell you how long each section should take. Feel free to use more or less time depending on your group.



**Bible** to tell you when you need your Bibles and are reading from Scripture.



**Video** to tell you when you are playing a video. Videos can be found on the Gathering resource list on the Gathering website.



**Music** to tell you when you are using music or a song in the lesson. Songs can be found on the Gathering Spotify playlist (@elcagathering). Just search for the unit name (boundless love, boundless creation, etc.)



**Computer** to provide alternative tips and suggestions if your group is meeting online



**Social media** for opportunities to add to the conversation online. Take note of the Gathering handles below.



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## UNIT 4 – SESSION ONE:

# God's boundless invitation

### Overview for adult leaders:

This session is designed to introduce your group to God's boundless invitation through the story of Mary in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke. The story of Mary is a particularly good example of how God's invitation is truly boundless, as Mary was a poor, unwed teenager when she first heard God's invitation. Instead of seeking out the high and mighty, God chose to appear among the least of all people, which shows us that God invites everyone to be part of God's story.

Make sure that you do the warm-up activity for this session. Many of the questions and reflections for this session rely on the youth's Post-It note responses. If a youth arrives late to the session, invite them to fill out a Post-It note when they arrive and add it to the large sheet of paper.



**If you are doing this session online** see “suggested uses for this resource” on page 9 for ideas to be able to share in the chat or on a whiteboard and to share videos in a digital meeting.

## *suggested supply list*

- An internet-connected device on which to show videos/play music
- Post-It notes
- Large sheet of paper
- Pens or pencils
- Bibles



## gather | building of your group

### Warm-up:

- As youth enter the meeting space, give them each a Post-It note. Invite them to think about a time when they were invited to something — maybe a birthday party or a sports game — or invited to do something difficult, such as audition for a school play or try out for a sports team. On their Post-It note, have them write how that invitation made them feel.
- After youth fill out their Post-It notes, have them stick them on a large sheet of paper clearly visible to everyone in the space. Make sure that each youth fills out at least one Post-It note before you move on to the invitation.



### Invitation:

***I invite you at this time and in this space, with a daring vision, to experience God’s boundless invitation, which comes at the most unexpected times to the most unexpected of people.***

### Team building/ice-breaker:



- ***We’re now going to play a game called “Signs.”***
- Have the group sit in a circle, with one person volunteering to be “it” and leave the room momentarily.
- Those left in the circle will designate one person to be the leader. That leader is responsible for choosing and changing a pattern of various motions, which the rest of the youth will have to mimic once the youth outside returns to the room. For example, the leader may start clapping, then switch to whistling, then switch to snapping. The rest of the group will follow their lead as quickly as possible. The returning youth must stand in the middle of the circle and watch very carefully to figure out which of the other youths is the leader.
- Repeat twice or three times, with the leader becoming the youth outside for the next round.



***For online meetings, the person sent out of the room is sent to a breakout room while the group determines the person responsible for switching up the sign, and then the person is brought back once the group has started.***

## GATHERING CONNECTION

***Five hundred years before Columbus, Viking explorers from Scandinavia were the first Europeans to set foot in North America. Leif Erikson — like his father, Erik the Red — was a courageous explorer in search of a new world. Erickson was a convert to Christianity who gathered a crew after hearing news of an unexplored coast spotted west of Greenland. He and his crew sailed west and landed on the shore of modern-day Newfoundland around the year 1000. Almost 900 years later, Scandinavian and German immigrants were looking for freedom and opportunity in North America. They found their new world in Minnesota and made it their home.***

In summer 2022, Minneapolis, Minnesota, will host the ELCA Youth Gathering. The people of Minneapolis are inviting us to explore their city and make ourselves at home. Will this be your first expedition to Minnesota, or have you explored it before? Your visit to Minneapolis is an opportunity to sample a variety of cultures, from that of its native Dakotan inhabitants to that of its most recent settlers. An experience as rich and diverse as this will certainly be one to enjoy. Better still, the Gathering will be a time of faith formation like no other, an opportunity to explore what God is inviting you to discover. A new world and a new life, filled with all that God is.

- Connection/transition: ***In this game, the leader invited other members of the circle to follow their pattern. Sometimes, our leader would do the same action several times in a row. Other times, the action changed every few seconds. Throughout this game, we were invited to follow the leader's directions and signs, which would continue and change at different points.***
- ***We similarly are invited by God to follow God's actions in our world. When we look to God through Scripture and in the world around us, we can see how God invites us into certain actions and patterns of life.***

### Opening prayer:

***God of invitation, we give you thanks for gathering us here together today. We ask that you guide our conversation and inspire in us a sense of wonder so that we can experience how you invite us into your story. We bring before you our questions and our imaginations, our thoughts and our dreams, in hope that you will continue to reveal to us the boundlessness of your love and invitation. Amen.***

## word | learn about God's word and connection to our lives

*"I want you to know (head) all about Christ's love (heart), although it is too wonderful to be measured. Then your lives (body) will be filled with all that God is (community)."*



***Today, we are going to talk about God's boundless invitation.***

## Our head:



We see many examples of how God invites people just like you and me throughout the Bible. Today, we are going to focus on the story of God's invitation to Mary, found in the beginning of Luke. Since today's story is a little long, we're going to break it up into pieces. Would someone be willing to read Luke 1:26-38?

- Make sure that everyone in the group has a Bible and is following along with the story.
  - <sup>26</sup>One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee <sup>27</sup>with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. <sup>28</sup>The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. <sup>30</sup>Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, <sup>31</sup>and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. <sup>33</sup>He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end." <sup>34</sup>Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not married!" <sup>35</sup>The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. <sup>36</sup>Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. <sup>37</sup>Nothing is impossible for God!" <sup>38</sup>Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said." And the angel left her.***
- After the youth finish reading the text, continue with the next series of prompts.
  - ***Could anyone give a quick summary of what was just read?***
  - ***Where do we notice invitation in this part of the story? Who is invited? Who is the one inviting?***
  - ***I wonder how Mary felt when she received God's invitation. Based on what we read, how would you describe Mary's feelings about God's invitation?***

- **The story of God’s invitation of Mary doesn’t end here. It actually continues into the next few verses, where we can see how Mary processes and responds to the boundless invitation of God. Would anyone be willing to read Luke 1:39-55?**

**A short time later Mary hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea. <sup>40</sup>She went into Zechariah’s home, where she greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, her baby moved within her. The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth. <sup>42</sup>Then in a loud voice she said to Mary: God has blessed you more than any other woman! He has also blessed the child you will have. <sup>43</sup>Why should the mother of my Lord come to me? <sup>44</sup>As soon as I heard your greeting, my baby became happy and moved within me. <sup>45</sup>The Lord has blessed you because you believed that he will keep his promise. <sup>46</sup>Mary said: With all my heart I praise the Lord, <sup>47</sup>and I am glad because of God my Savior. <sup>48</sup>He cares for me, his humble servant. From now on, all people will say God has blessed me. <sup>49</sup>God All-Powerful has done great things for me, and his name is holy. <sup>50</sup>He always shows mercy to everyone who worships him. <sup>51</sup>The Lord has used his powerful arm to scatter those who are proud. <sup>52</sup>He drags strong rulers from their thrones and puts humble people in places of power. <sup>53</sup>God gives the hungry good things to eat, and sends the rich away with nothing. <sup>54</sup>He helps his servant Israel and is always merciful to his people. <sup>55</sup>The Lord made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his family forever!**

- After the youth finishes reading the rest of the story, continue with the following series of prompts.
  - **Could anyone quickly summarize what just happened in the story?**
  - **How does Mary respond to God’s invitation?**
  - **Was Mary’s response to this invitation similar to or different from what you expected?**
  - **How do you imagine you would have responded to receiving this invitation from God?**

## Our heart:



**It’s important to know that when the angel Gabriel visited Mary, she was just like us in many ways. She was probably the same age as many of us gathered here today, and she probably felt a wide range of emotions as she received God’s invitation, just as we might respond to invitations differently than our peers.**

**We’re now going to revisit the Post-It notes that we wrote on as we entered this space.**



*If you are meeting online, revisit the whiteboard image from the beginning of the meeting.*

**Do I have a volunteer who would be willing to read the Post-It notes on the paper?**

- Invite one youth to read through the responses. Ask the youth to begin each response by saying, “When I was invited, I felt \_\_\_\_.”
- After reading through each response, ask the wider group the following questions. Give time for a few responses.
  - **Did you notice any common feelings we have when we receive an invitation?**
  - **What differences do you notice between the Post-It notes? Why might we respond to an invitation differently than our peers?**
  - **Do invitations from different people affect how you feel about the invite?**
  - **When you get an invitation, how might you prepare for what you were invited to? (For example: If someone was invited to a birthday party, they might buy a gift or make sure they were available to go to the party.)**
  - **I wonder if Mary felt the same way about God’s invitation as we feel when our friends invite us. Could we use any of the Post-It notes on the paper to describe how Mary felt after God’s invitation?**

## Our body:



We're now going to do the following activity. **This game is called "Red Rover."**

- In this game, youth are invited to form two lines facing each other. The first team agrees to call one player from the other team and chants, "Red Rover, Red Rover, we invite [player's name] over." The person called runs to the other line and attempts to break the chain formed by the linking of hands. If the person called fails to break the chain, this player joins the team that called Red Rover. But, if the player successfully breaks the chain, they may capture either of the two players whose link was broken by the dash, bringing them back to their original team. Teams take turns calling out "Red Rover" and challenging a player on the opposing team.
- The objective of the game is to end with the most players on your team by maintaining the integrity of your chain. The game ends when all the players end up on one side.
- After playing the game once, youth are invited to return to their regular seats within your youth group space and continue with the rest of the session.



**Zoom Alternative - Would You Rather** - Ask the group a few "Would You Rather" situational questions. Follow up by asking them why they picked their answer. Here are three example questions. 1) Would you rather go to the past to meet your ancestors or the future to meet your great - great grandchildren. 2) Would you rather have a rewind button or a pause button for your life? 3) Would you rather invite or be invited?

## Our community:



**The story of Mary's invitation shows us God's boundless invitation in several ways. Mary was the last person expected to bring God's child into the world — she was young, unmarried and poor. Despite these perceived bounds, God still chose Mary! God's invitation of Mary was boundless because God invited someone with few qualifications and many doubts to be a part of God's story.**

**Just as Mary did, God continues to take normal people such as you and me — people with doubts, stresses and questions — and invites us into God's boundless story of love, justice and accompaniment. In the story of Mary, we see God looking beyond the expected and the ordinary to show us that the invitation to follow God extends to everyone and that God's invitation is boundless.**

**We're going to end today's session by thinking about what God's boundless invitation means for our communities. With two or three people sitting near you, discuss the following questions:**

- **What might God be inviting you to do? What might God be inviting our youth group to do? What might God be inviting our congregation to do? Who might God want us to invite?**

**In school, in church and with our friends, we play the important role of responding to God's invitation. We've only begun to think about Mary's response to God's boundless invitation, and that's OK. Next session, we'll think even more about what God may be inviting us to do and how we can respond to those invitations.**



**Before we end today's session, we're going to spend time with the first few minutes of the song "We Say Yes" by Housefires. Pay attention to the lyrics of the song, as they demonstrate how we respond to God's boundless invitation.**

Link: <https://youtu.be/DFNgtfpGXJw>. It is a long song, so play only through 2:58.

## sending

reflect on what we  
have learned and  
ask questions

- Include your local group announcements here.
- Refer to the calendar/timeline on pages 76-81 in your Official Gathering Handbook for timely announcements.



### **Closing prayer (youth led/read):**

***God of invitation, we thank you for our conversations, our questions and our friendships. We are grateful for your boundless invitation, which welcomes all of us into your story. Through the example of Mary, teach us that you invite all of us — even the most unlikely and unexpected — into following you. We pray that Christ Jesus and the church will forever bring praise to God. God’s power at work in us can do far more than we dare ask or imagine. Amen.***

### **Dismissal/blessing — call and response:**

Leader: ***God’s love is ...***

Participants (place hand over heart): ***boundless***

Leader: ***God’s creation is ...***

Participants (open arms wide): ***boundless***

Leader: ***God’s forgiveness is...***

Participants (cross wrists): ***boundless***

Leader: ***God’s invitation is...***

Participants (uncross wrists, cradle open palms outstretched): ***boundless***

Leader: ***God’s promise is...***

Participants (cross on another’s forehead or hand): ***boundless***

***Pass out the  
take-home sheet!***



## Take-home sheet for Unit 4 – Session one:

# God's boundless invitation

*We want you to find ways to share the boundlessness of God with your friends, family and congregation. What happened here today should be shared, and we hope that the lesson doesn't end here, that it continues in conversations on the car ride home, with families around the dinner table, at school tomorrow... that this multiplies and becomes boundless!*

We talked about God's boundless invitation through the story of Mary in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke. The story of Mary is a particularly good example of how God's invitation is truly boundless, as Mary was a poor, unwed teenager when she first heard God's invitation. Instead of seeking out the high and mighty, God chose to appear among the least of all people, which shows us that God invites everyone to be part of God's story.

Share what you remember. Try to retell our story from today, Luke 1:26-55, or look it up in your Bible app (we were using the CEV: Common English Version).



### Different lens:

- Another lens to understanding Mary's response to God's boundless invitation, called the Magnificat, is one of few hymns appearing in the Bible. Along with Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1-10) and the psalms, the Magnificat shows us how people responded to God's invitation through music. Throughout the past two millennia, these songs have inspired countless Christians to respond to God's boundless invitation.
- For an example of a contemporary hymn based on the words of the Magnificat, see "Canticle of the Turning" (ELW 723), <https://youtu.be/F9QeTmRCpW4>.

### Wondering questions

#### (discuss these questions with someone at home):

- How did this passage help you understand God's boundless invitation?
- What would we consider the "bounds" of our world? I wonder how God's invitation might break those bounds?
- I wonder how we can tell about God's boundless invitation to someone in our lives this week?



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Think about the leaders of your congregation. These leaders could include pastors and deacons, members of your congregation’s council or leaders of other ministries.

Once you think of a leader, find time to talk with them before or after worship. Tell them about what you learned about God’s boundless invitation and ask them how they got invited into leadership in your congregation. After hearing their story, ask them where they notice God’s boundless invitation in your congregation.

What does God’s boundless invitation mean to you? Post your answers to this question on social media with the hashtags **#ELCAYG2022** and **#boundlessinvitation**.



**Prayer**

God of boundless invitation, we thank you for our conversations, our questions and our friendships. We are further grateful for your boundless invitation, which welcomes all of us into your story in our communities, church and world. Through the example of Mary, teach us that you invite all of us — even the most unlikely and unexpected — to follow you. We pray that Christ Jesus and the church will forever bring praise to God. God’s power at work in us can do far more than we dare ask or imagine. In your name we pray. Amen.

**Dismissal/blessing — Call and response:**

- God’s love is (place hand over heart) boundless.
- God’s creation is (open arms wide) boundless.
- God’s forgiveness is (cross wrists) boundless.
- God’s invitation is (uncross wrists, cradle open palms outstretched) boundless.
- God’s promise is (make the sign of the cross on another’s forehead or hand) boundless.



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## UNIT 4 – SESSION TWO:

# responding to God's boundless invitation

### Overview for adult leaders:

This session is designed to expand upon what your group discussed in the previous session. We know that God's invitation is boundless — now what? In this session, youth are encouraged to think about the communities in which they belong as sources of support as they respond to God's boundless invitation through reflection and action in their community.



**If you are doing this session online** see “suggested uses for this resource” on page 9 for ideas to be able to share in a digital meeting.

## *suggested supply list*

- An internet-connected device on which to show videos/play music
- Post-It notes
- Blindfolds
- Pens or pencils
- Bibles
- Paper (to write/draw on)

## gather | building of your group

### Warm-up:



- As youth enter the meeting space, give them each a Post-It note. Invite them to think about the communities to which they belong — maybe a sports team, maybe school music programs or maybe even your church's youth group. Ask the youth to write on their Post-It notes one or two groups of their peers that they would define as a community. We'll revisit this question later in our time together, so make sure youth hold onto their responses.
- When everyone is present, move on to the invitation.

### Invitation:

***I invite you, at this time and in this space, with a daring vision to experience, hear and respond to God's boundless invitation, which calls us into a life of reflection and action within our communities.***

### Team building/ice-breaker:



Find a friend

- Invite everyone in your group to form pairs, then have one youth put on a blindfold. After half the group is blindfolded, scatter several smaller objects throughout your room (these objects could include shoes, water bottles, hats, etc.). Invite (and help) the youth who are blindfolded to line up horizontally on one side of the room and the youth who can still see to line up on the opposite side of the room.
- The object of the game is for the blindfolded youth to cross the room and meet up with their partner without touching any of the objects scattered across the floor. After you say "Go!," the blindfolded youth should try to slowly make their way across the room, relying on the verbal instructions from their partner to avoid the objects on the floor.

## GATHERING CONNECTION

***God's invitation is for all. We have learned through these lessons that God includes us in a divine purpose for love, creation, forgiveness, invitation and promise. When we assemble in Minneapolis from July 24 through 28, we will engage in these purposes with others by our side. Together we will witness them, experience them and inspire others to grow in faith as we live these lessons in our daily lives. God's invitation is for you.***

In Minneapolis you will be invited to something new each day. These daily invitations include: Service Learning to take part in meaningful community service and reflection, Interactive Learning to engage in a variety of exciting ministries and Synod Day to worship and share fellowship with friends from your geographical region. At the end of every day, you are invited to attend a Mass Gathering inside the U.S. Bank Stadium. There, you will hear inspiring speakers and enjoy uplifting live music. On Saturday morning, join the closing worship at the stadium, with a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. To learn more about the daily Gathering schedule, please see page 41 of the Official Gathering Handbook or visit [www.elca.org/YouthGathering/Schedule](http://www.elca.org/YouthGathering/Schedule).



If a blindfolded youth steps on an object, guide them back to the side of the room where they began and, as time allows, have them try again or switch who is blindfolded.

- Quickly process the activity: **What was easy about the activity? What was difficult about it?**
- Connection: **In this activity, you were invited to walk across a room, unaware of the obstacles that you would face. To succeed, you had to rely on the guidance and help of someone else. Our response to God’s invitation works in a similar way: we don’t know what we will face when we respond to God, but through the support of our friends and our community, we can succeed in following God’s call.**

#### Opening prayer:

**God of boundless invitation, we gather here before you today with our questions, thoughts and dreams. We ask that you guide our conversations as we think about your boundless invitation and what it is that you are calling us to do — both by ourselves and in our communities — as a response to your call. Enable us to notice your voice calling us in our present moment and giving us the will to respond to your boundless love and invitation. Amen.**

## word | learn about God’s word and connection to our lives

“I want you to know (head) all about Christ’s love (heart), although it is too wonderful to be measured. Then your lives (body) will be filled with all that God is (community).”



**In today’s session, we’re going to focus on two passages from Scripture that show us how others have responded to God’s boundless invitation.**

## Our head:



**+** **The first story we’re going to talk about is the same one from last session: the story of Mary in the Gospel of Luke. Does anyone remember anything from the story?** If youth don’t remember much from the story, offer this brief recap: In the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Mary receives an invitation from the angel Gabriel to bring God’s child into the world. Although Mary was initially confused and questioned Gabriel, she placed her trust in God to watch over her as she responded to God’s boundless invitation.

- To recap Mary’s response, view the attached video recording of the Magnificat from Holden Evening Prayer,



[https://youtu.be/nABzv\\_Tlnal](https://youtu.be/nABzv_Tlnal)

#### Questions for discussion:

- **Can anyone remind us about how this story reflects God’s boundless invitation?**
- **Does Mary respond to God’s invitation alone? (No. In verses 39-45, Mary goes to her cousin, Elizabeth, after hearing the news of God’s boundless invitation from Gabriel.)**
- **How does Elizabeth help Mary respond to her invitation?**

After youth have responded to the questions, close with the following:

**In the story of Mary’s response to God’s boundless invitation, Elizabeth plays a key role. Elizabeth accompanies Mary during her pregnancy and offers her comfort and support as she processes God’s invitation and prepares to bring God’s child into the world. This story reveals to us that our response to God’s boundless invitation involves not just us and God. It also involves our neighbors and the communities in which we are a part of a whole.**

## Our heart:

## Mary's response:

***We are now going to think about people in our own lives who have been like Elizabeth to us. These people include those who have accompanied us in our journeys of responding to God's boundless invitation – maybe a pastor or deacon at their church, a faith mentor or a parent/guardian.***

- For this section, youth will need a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Youth are invited to begin writing a brief letter to their “Elizabeth,” in which they share what they notice as God’s boundless invitation in their lives and thank their “Elizabeth” for traveling alongside them as they responded to that invitation.
- Following the session, youth are invited to finish their letters and give them to their “Elizabeth.”



## Our body:

***There are many other stories in the Bible in where we notice how people responded to God's invitation through action in their communities. We're now going to act out one of these stories, which comes to us from Luke 10:1-11:***

***Later the Lord chose seventy-two other followers and sent them out two by two to every town and village where he was about to go. <sup>2</sup>He said to them:***

***A large crop is in the fields, but there are only a few workers. Ask the Lord in charge of the harvest to send out workers to bring it in.***

***<sup>3</sup>Now go, but remember, I am sending you like lambs into a pack of wolves. <sup>4</sup>Don't take along a moneybag or a traveling bag or sandals. And don't waste time greeting people on the road.***

***<sup>5</sup>As soon as you enter a home, say, "God bless this home with peace." <sup>6</sup>If the people living there are peace-loving, your prayer for peace will bless them. But if they are not peace-loving, your prayer will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Stay with the same family, eating and drinking whatever they give***



***you, because workers are worth what they earn. Don't move around from house to house.***

***<sup>8</sup>If the people of a town welcome you, eat whatever they offer. <sup>9</sup>Heal their sick and say, "God's kingdom will soon be here!"***

***<sup>10</sup>But if the people of a town refuse to welcome you, go out into the street and say, <sup>11</sup>"We are shaking the dust from our feet as a warning to you. And you can be sure that God's kingdom will soon be here!"***

- Invite your youth group to read the story together. After having read the story, youth are invited to creatively act it out. One possibility is for a youth to read the story out loud while other youth act as disciples encountering receptive towns and hostile towns and returning to Jesus.
- Once youth have put together their skit, invite them to present it.
- After youth act out the story, continue with the following question prompts:
  - ***Where do you notice God's boundless invitation in this story?***
  - ***Who was invited? What were these people invited to do?***
  - ***What happened as a result of living into this invitation?***
- When Jesus sent out the 72, he knew that they could best respond to his invitation in community with their peers. Even if this “community” was just one other person, Jesus ensured that he would be with them as they traveled and spread the good news of Jesus’ ministry.

## Our community:

**We notice God's boundless invitation not just in stories from the Bible but also in our daily lives. In our next activity, we're going to explore the relationship between God's invitation and our communities. I wonder where you notice God's boundless invitation in your lives, and I also wonder what role the communities we wrote down on Post-It notes at the beginning of the session might play in how we respond to this invitation. Does everyone still have their Post-It note?** Confirm that they do.



- **We're now going to reflect on where we notice God's boundless invitation in our lives and how our communities can help us in our response to that invitation. Thinking about what God might be calling you to do isn't an easy task, and our following activity will help you begin to reflect on this.**
- For this activity, everyone needs a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Pass out paper and pens or pencils to each youth. **On your paper, I invite you to draw or write about two things: 1) one of your communities, and 2) something that excites you or that you are passionate about.**
- After one minute, gather your group back together and invite them to share with one of their peers what they drew and/or wrote about. Youth have only two minutes to share their drawings/writings with their peers, so make sure they do.

- After two minutes of conversation, gather the pairs back together.
  - **Would anyone be willing to share what they talked about with their partner?**
  - **I wonder if our passions and our communities connect in any way. Can anyone notice a connection between their passions and one of their communities?**
  - **Does anyone notice a connection between their passions and communities and what we've learned about God's boundless invitation? How are our passions and our communities important in our response to God's invitation?**
  - **I wonder how others might help us respond to God's boundless invitation. After reflecting on your passions and your communities, how could you regard others as you begin to respond to God's invitation?**

**Often, we notice God's boundless invitation in our lives at the intersections of our passions, skills and communities. God knows each and every one of us and invites us to follow God in how we connect our passions with the needs of our communities. In how we follow God and live out our faith with our peers, we respond to God's boundless invitation.**

## sending

reflect on what we  
have learned and  
ask questions

- Include your local group announcements here.
- Refer to the calendar/timeline on pages 76-81 in your Official Gathering Handbook for timely announcements.

### Closing prayer (youth led/read):

***God of invitation, we give you thanks for the time we have spent here together today. We're grateful for your presence in our lives and for how your Spirit moves us and our communities to follow you. As we leave this session, we ask that you continue to inspire us, invite us and accompany us as we hear and respond to your calling. Empower us with the courage of Mary and the love of the disciples to respond to what you invite us into now. We pray that Christ Jesus and the church will forever bring praise to God. God's power at work in us can do far more than we dare ask or imagine. Amen.***

### Dismissal/blessing — call and response:

Leader: ***God's love is ...***

Participants (place hand over heart): ***boundless***

Leader: ***God's creation is ...***

Participants (open arms wide): ***boundless***

Leader: ***God's forgiveness is...***

Participants (cross wrists): ***boundless***

Leader: ***God's invitation is...***

Participants (uncross wrists, cradle open palms outstretched): ***boundless***

Leader: ***God's promise is...***

Participants (cross on another's forehead or hand): ***boundless***

***Pass out the  
take-home sheet!***



## Take-home sheet for Unit 4 – Session two:

# God's boundless invitation

*We want you to find ways to share the boundlessness of God with your friends, family and congregation. What happened here today should be shared, and we hope that the lesson doesn't end here, that it continues in conversations on the car ride home, with families around the dinner table, at school tomorrow... that this multiplies and becomes boundless!*

We talked about God's boundless invitation through the story of Mary in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke. The story of Mary is a particularly good example of how God's invitation is truly boundless, as Mary was a poor, unwed teenager when she first heard God's invitation. Instead of seeking out the high and mighty, God chose to appear among the least of all people, which shows us that God invites everyone to be a part of God's story.



Share what you remember. Try to retell our story from today, Luke 10:1-11, or look it up in your Bible app (we were using the CEV: Common English Version).

### **Different lens:**

Another lens to understand the role of community in responding to God's boundless invitation is the South African philosophy of ubuntu. Archbishop Desmond Tutu defines ubuntu as "... the very essence of being human. ... it is not, 'I think, therefore I am.' It says rather, 'I am because I belong, I participate, I share'" (No Future Without Forgiveness, New York: Doubleday, 1999). In the theology of ubuntu, God boundlessly invites us to see God at work in our neighbors. Hear Archbishop Desmond Tutu explain the concept himself in the following YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/GaiKX5VdfVE>

### **Wondering questions**

**(discuss these questions with someone at home):**

- How did this passage help you understand God's boundless invitation?
- How would a theology of ubuntu differ from the way we might otherwise respond to God's boundless invitation?
- How might we embody a theology of ubuntu in our responses to God's boundless invitation?



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**Think about how your congregation reflects God’s boundless invitation.** There are many ways your congregation could respond to God’s boundless invitation, which include using its facilities to the benefit of neighbors or supporting different ministries. You might also notice a reflection of God’s boundless invitation in your congregation’s mission statement.

Take a few minutes to think about this, and try to identify a few ways in which your congregation lives out God’s boundless invitation. You are also invited to think about additional ways in which your congregation could live out God’s boundless invitation.

After reflecting on this, share with a leader of your congregation (such as a pastor, deacon or personal faith mentor) your thoughts about how your congregation responds to God’s boundless invitation.

**Prayer:**

God of invitation, we are grateful for your presence in our lives and for how your Spirit moves us and our communities to follow you. We ask that you continue to inspire us, invite us and accompany us as we hear and respond to your call. Empower us with the courage of Mary and the love of the disciples to respond to what you invite us into now. We pray that Christ Jesus and the church will forever bring praise to God. God’s power at work in us can do far more than we dare ask or imagine. Amen.

**Dismissal/blessing — Call and response:**

- God’s love is (place hand over heart) boundless.
- God’s creation is (open arms wide) boundless.
- God’s forgiveness is (cross wrists) boundless.
- God’s invitation is (uncross wrists, cradle open palms outstretched) boundless.
- God’s promise is (make the sign of the cross on another’s forehead or hand) boundless.

How does your congregation reflect God’s boundless invitation? How are you responding to God’s boundless invitation? Post an image with your answers to either of these questions on social media, using the hashtags **#ELCAYG2022** and **#boundlessinvitation**.



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