

Welcome to the “River of Life”!

Dear Friends,

It has been a long, hard year for many of us and our communities. There is renewed hope with the vaccine and the progress of measures to slow the spread of COVID-19, but we know that there is work still to be done to ensure that all communities can share in this hope. So much remains uncertain as we look ahead to this summer, even as we hope in the work of God through caregivers, scientists, public officials and neighbors.

And yet, amid this uncertainty, we know that God is still at work through the many ministries of your congregations, inspiring hope, motivating change and leading us to a brighter future in creative and new ways.

The hope for good health and well-being for all is a key part of our yearning for a just world where all are fed. ELCA World Hunger’s “River of Life” Vacation Bible School for 2021 focuses on a central part of our well-being: access to safe, clean water for all. In this new VBS program, children and adults are invited to think deeply about God’s gift of water and the justice the church is called to seek if we are to ensure that everyone can enjoy this life-giving resource.

The title of “River of Life” comes from Ezekiel 47:1-12. Each day of the VBS focuses on a different story about water from the bible and one aspect of our relationship to water – including caring for creation, protecting families from contaminated water and building resilience against climate-related natural disasters.

In this packet, you will find helpful links, revised small group times that can be used at home, adapted games and crafts, and conversation starters for snacks. Our hope is that these materials will help you adapt your VBS program as best fits your needs.

Even in times of social distance, we are reminded of how closely God has knitted us together as church. In times of remote worship, we are reminded that God’s church is bigger than a building. In times of uncertainty, we are reminded of God’s promise of a just world where all are fed.

Thank you for your ministry,

ELCA World Hunger



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

ELCA World Hunger

Almost 690 million people around the world face severe hunger. In the United States alone, more than 35 million people aren't sure where their next meal will come from. And COVID-19 has only made these challenges worse for many people. But we know that hunger is not the whole story. God graciously provides all that we need to ensure everyone is fed.

Through ELCA World Hunger, a ministry of the ELCA, our church walks with neighbors around the world as they creatively and courageously respond to hunger and poverty. The comprehensive approach of ELCA World Hunger helps communities meet their most immediate needs – and take steps toward long-term change. Through congregations, partners and companion churches, ELCA World Hunger addresses the root causes of hunger. This includes accompanying farmers as they adapt to a changing climate, walking with refugees and migrants, and providing support for schools, health clinics, job readiness programs and more.

The stories in “River of Life” feature some of the key areas of our church’s work through ELCA World Hunger. Access to safe, clean water and improved sanitation is a critical part of ending hunger. Waterborne illnesses from unsafe water can severely impact the health of children and adults and can burden families with high costs for care. Climate-related disasters like droughts and floods can thrust farming families into poverty, while living in poverty can also leave families with fewer resources to access the water they need to survive and thrive.

Most of the stories also show one or more of the ELCA’s Good Gifts in action:

Day 1 – Cambodia – [community vegetable garden](#), [seeds and gardening tools](#)

Day 2 – El Salvador – [share of a safe water project](#)

Day 3 – US – [water filter](#), [Where Needed Most](#)

Day 4 – Papua New Guinea – [farmer's field school for a woman](#)

Day 5 – Central African Republic - [latrine](#)

“River of Life” is also an example of another priority of ELCA World Hunger – hunger education. By learning about hunger and poverty and how God calls each of us to respond, we can be ready to say “Yes!” to God’s invitation to be part of the building of a just world where all are fed.

This free Vacation Bible School program and the other resources from ELCA World Hunger are made possible because of gracious gifts to ELCA World Hunger. As you journey down the “River of Life,” please prayerfully consider supporting this work by making a gift today.

To donate online, visit [ELCA.org/hunger/donate](https://www.elca.org/hunger/donate).

To send a gift by mail:

Make checks payable to “ELCA World Hunger” and mail to:

ELCA

P.O. Box 1809

Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

THANK YOU!

Daily Themes

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

“Meet Our Neighbor” Videos

This year, we are excited to share videos from ELCA World Hunger’s companions and partners from some of the regions featured in “River of Life.” In these videos, participants can hear from someone from the featured region sharing more about their community and themselves. You can find these videos on the ELCA’s Vimeo page online at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7224146>.

“River of Life”...At-Home Vacation Bible School

Skits

Getting Started with Skits

The skits in “River of Life” help to introduce the themes for each day. We have updated the other activities so that the rest of the program will still make sense if you cannot use the skits, but we do encourage you to find creative ways to do them. In the skits, you will meet Sage and the Captain of the riverboat *Ezekiel*, whose conversations will help set the theme for the day.

If space, safety and time allow, you can record your own skits for your congregation or invite older youth or adults to perform the skit during an online meeting. This can be a great way for many folks in the congregation to participate. If you create your own recorded skits and feel comfortable doing so, consider sharing these with ELCA World Hunger at Hunger@ELCA.org. We can help share them with other congregations throughout the ELCA.

Using Skits Online

If you are hosting sessions online with a variety of people, consider sending the link to parents and caregivers ahead of time, so they can watch them at home first. This will give young children time to ask questions, if needed.

Using Skits at Home

If households are doing VBS independently at home, consider recording videos that they can use, if this can be done safely. Or, invite families to perform the skits together. The skits are a great way to learn more about the theme and the focus prayer for the day.



“River of Life”...At-Home Vacation Bible School

Small Group Activities

Getting Started with Small Group Time

The small group time for “River of Life” is meant to help children get more familiar with the themes for the day and the ways the bible reveals the relationship between God, humans, creation and water. Each day opens with reading a story from the bible. Each small group plan has a brief introduction, an opening activity, a bible story and a closing prayer.

Using Small Group Time Online

If you are hosting meetings together online, encourage children and parents or caregivers to join together. Small children, especially, may be reluctant to speak up or may have difficulty following along without help. Encourage them to share during the questions for conversation, even if the children only share their responses with the parent or caregiver who is physically present with them. As they share responses, especially during the “optional activities,” collect these on posterboard to share with the congregation either online or in the church building when we return to worship together.

Using Small Group Time at Home

The sessions below are designed to be easy to use at home. For the bible stories, try to find a translation of the Bible that is easy for small children to understand. Sparkhouse’s Spark Bible (available at <https://www.wearesparkhouse.org/>) is a great choice. Some translations may have minor differences in the verses listed for the stories. That’s okay!

Each day includes a journal activity to do as a family. Older children can write in the journals, while younger children can draw in them. Each day has a prompt related to the prayer for that day. The journals can be a great activity to do together as a family, with each person responding to the prompt.

Whether done online or at home, each small group session should take about 20 minutes.

Making a Journal

If you use the journals at home, simply take three sheets of 8.5x11 paper, fold them in half and staple them along the folded edge. This will give you two interior pages for each of the five days.

Day One: God Creates

Lesson for the Day: Everything God created is good.

The story of creation in the book of Genesis describes God's relationship with all created things, including us! The story helps us to see just how much God cares for and loves all of creation. It also reminds us that everything in creation is a gift from a loving God – a gift we are called by God to care for. This includes resources such as water and one another. God's plan for creation begins with God's overwhelming love and care, as well God's desire for harmony in the world.

Opening Activity

Tell the participants that today, you will be hearing the story of how God created the world. Invite each person to think of something God has created. Next, invite them to think of one thing God created that starts with the same letter as their first name. Take turns, allowing each person to share their name and the creation (for example, Gabriella Grapefruit or Chris Clouds.) Continue until everyone has had a turn. For younger children, allow them to name things from creation that don't match their name. If you are doing "River of Life" at home with your family, you can also invite each person to take one minute to find something around the house that God created and then share your objects together.

Bible Reading

This is meant to be an immersive reading of the creation story, involving all five senses. If you are doing "River of Life" online with a group, consider using pictures or audio as you read the story. Remember to be inclusive of children in your group with different sensory abilities.

Part 1

- *Action:* Turn out the lights in your room.
- *Read:* Genesis 1:1-5.
- *Ask:* What do you think it would be like without light? What would it be like if it were light all the time? (ex. *It might be difficult to sleep.*)
- *Tell:* God created day and night because we need both, and God called them "good." We need light to see and for most plants to grow. But we need night, too.

Part 2

- *Action:* Use a light spray bottle and a fan to spray a gentle mist over the children as they listen. If doing VBS online, share a picture of a body of water. Have a plant ready to show after the bible reading.
- *Read:* Genesis 1:6-13
- *Ask:* Show the children the plant and ask them, what does this plant need to grow? How do plants get water?
- *Ask (younger children):* What is your favorite fruit or vegetable? How many vegetables or fruits can you name?
- *Tell:* God separated the sky from the water, but even in the sky, there is still water – in clouds, in rain and in that sticky feeling you might get on your skin in summer. Everything God created needs water to live, including the plants around us. Without water, there is no life.

Part 3

- *Action:* Show pictures of birds and undersea creatures. If doing VBS at home, invite children to find pictures, books or toys that represent birds or undersea creatures.
- *Read:* Genesis 1:14-23
- *Ask:* How many birds can you name? How many things can you name that live underwater? For older children, ask them to name things that live underwater that are *not* fish.

Part 4

- *Read:* Genesis 1:24-31
- *Ask (older children):* What did God call everything God had made? (God called everything good.) Why do you think God called everything “good”? What are some ways that different parts of creation depend on each other? (*ex. Humans need water to drink. Animals need plants to eat. Plants need the sun.*)
- *Ask (younger children):* What did God call everything God had made? (God called everything good.) What are some of your favorite parts of God’s creation?
- *Tell:* God created everything, and God called each thing “good.” Each part of God’s creation is important and can show us how much God loves the whole world.

Closing Prayer

Invite children to think about one thing God created that they are thankful for.

Dear God, thank you for creating so many amazing things, from the sky to fish to each and every one of us. Especially today, we give you thanks for the things we name now: [*Invite the children to say what they are thankful for.*] Be with us today as we learn about the people you created who live in Cambodia. Amen.

Journal Activity

In the journal, invite children to write about or draw one thing God created for which they are thankful.

Day Two: God Provides

Lesson for the Day: God gives us everything we need so we can share and work together.

Everything God created is a gift – but that doesn't mean that everything is a gift just for us alone. Humans, too, are created as "gifts" for each other and for creation. We are given the special job of finding new ways to help and share with each other and to care for all creation. God gives us all we need, including each other!

Opening Activity

Gather a large pile of Legos or other small building toys and divide them between the participants. Each person, on their own, should try to build as high of a building as they can. Once everyone is finished, tell the participants to build an even higher building (one that you know, and they do not, will require more building blocks than any one person has.) After they have built the higher tower by working together, share with them the following:

God gives us all that we need to live healthy and happy lives. But God also gives us each other, so we can work together and share what we have. Together, we can take care of one another and do even more than we can alone.

If you are doing VBS online, invite each person in the online meeting to find one thing in their room or home that helps them throughout the day. This could be a toy that comforts them, food, soap – any item that they need. After everyone has had a turn, share with them that in the bible story for today, they will be hearing about how God provided God's people what they needed on a long journey, and God still provides for us today.

Bible Reading

A long time ago, God's people were in a faraway place that was led by a man called Pharaoh. God's people were slaves in this land. They had to work and work for Pharaoh, and they were punished if they stopped. So, God sent Moses to free them and bring them to a new home where they would be safe. It was a very long trip to get to the new home, and on the way the people started to worry that God had forgotten them. This is a story from during that journey.

Read Exodus 17:1-6.

Ask:

Why were the people complaining? (Example: They didn't have enough water.)

What did Moses do? (Example: He asked God for help.)

How do you think the Israelites felt when God gave them water? How do you think Moses felt?

Share:

God showed Moses a new way to get water so the people would have what they needed. Sometimes, we might not know how to solve a problem, but we can pray to God, and God will show us a solution. It might be a big solution, like Moses got. Often, it's not as flashy. Sometimes, it is a friend or a teacher who can help us, or someone who has the thing we need.

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.

Journal Activity

What is one way we can help others, using what God has given us? Invite the children to write about or draw one way they can help others.

Day Three: God claims.

Lesson of the Day: God claims us and calls us 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.

Opening Activity

Use this opening time to talk about each person's name. If doing VBS at home with family, talk with children about where their names come from and what they mean. Invite the children to share what they like about their name. If your VBS is online, invite the online participants to share their names and to say what they like about their names. If the children use a nickname for themselves, invite them to share that nickname and how they got it. Invite adults to share their own names and, if possible, to share the story of where their name comes from and what it means to them.

Bible Reading

Read Matthew 3:13-15.

Ask:

Why didn't John want to baptize Jesus?

What was Jesus' response?

Read Matthew 3:16-17.

Ask:

What happened at Jesus' baptism?

What did God call Jesus? What do you think "beloved" means?

Who might call you "beloved"? Who might you call your "beloved"?

Share:

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.

Closing Prayer

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. Be with us today as we learn about your children near and far. Amen.

Journal Activity

In their journals, invite children to draw a picture of themselves. For young children, this can be as simple as a face or a stick-figure. Once they are finished, invite them (or help young children) to write the words "Child of God" at the top of the page. As they draw and finish, remind them that God claims all of us as God's children, which means God loves and cares for us no matter where we are.

Day Four: God Protects

Lesson of the Day: Even when we are scared, God is always with us.

The world can be a scary place. Even the disciples with Jesus in today's bible story were afraid because Jesus was asleep, and they thought he didn't care about them. Sometimes when we feel alone or afraid, it helps to remember that Jesus is always with us.

Opening Activity

If you are hosting VBS online, consider playing audio of a storm or a short video. Be cautious that the audio or video is not too scary for younger children. If you are doing VBS at home, share the script below and talk together about the questions.

We have been learning about all the good things water can do for us and for other animals and plants. But water can sometimes be scary, too, right? Have you ever been scared of water, maybe when you were swimming? What about a lot of water, like in a rainstorm?

What do you do when you are scared? What helps you feel less scared? What are some things we can do to stay safe when we're around water, either the water in lakes, rivers, or pools, or in a storm?

When we're feeling scared, there are some things we can do to stay safe, like wearing a life jacket when we're in water or staying inside when it is storming. In the bible story today, we will be hearing about a time when the disciples were scared, too, because they were in a storm on a boat.

Bible Reading

Read Mark 4:35-41.

- 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?

Remembering that Jesus is with us wherever we go can help us feel a little less afraid. When we aren't worried about being afraid, we can remember, too, the things we can do to stay safe, especially around storms or water.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for always being with us. Today we ask especially that you be with us in these times. We also give you thanks for all the people we're meeting this week who help us remember how much you love us. Amen.

Journal Activity

This is a different kind of journal activity. Invite each child to tear a page from their journal (help younger children as needed.) Now, tear the page in half. Next, invite them to write or draw something that reminds them of God on both halves of the sheet. It could be a word such as "peace" or a cross or whatever makes sense to them. Have them decorate the paper, 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 someone else, to remind them that God is also with them.

Day Five: God loves, we love.

Lesson of the Day: God loves us, so we can love each other.

There are so many signs of God's love all around us: in the beauty and diversity of creation, in the foods we enjoy, and the gift of water that we need. We know that we can trust in God's love, and this lets us focus on loving each other by sharing, caring and being there for one another. God's love sets us free to love each other, and God's love shows us how to love each other.

Opening Activity

What does it mean to love someone?

How do we show other people that we love them?

One important way to remind others that they are loved is to tell the how much we appreciate the good things they do and are! In this opening activity, participants will get the chance to name the things they enjoy or appreciate about other people and themselves.

If hosting VBS online, invite each of the children to share one thing that they like about themselves. Maybe this is one thing they do well, or something that they enjoy doing. As the leader, start by sharing one thing you enjoy about yourself, and share with the children that it's important to remember that God has blessed each of us with something special that we can share with the world. After everyone has had time to share, give thanks together for the many wonderful ways God has blessed your community with the diversity of gifts of your group.

If doing VBS at home, gather around a table, with enough paper plates or blank cards for each person and a set of markers or crayons. Give each person a paper plate, and invite them to write (or help them write) their name in the center of their plate. Working in a round, pass the plates to the person sitting to the right. On the plate, write or draw something that you love about the person whose plate you have. After enough time, pass the plates again. Keep going until every person has had a chance to write on everyone's plates.

Remind every participant that God loves them, and that each of us has a special gift to give the world. Maybe it's our sense of humor or our talent for drawing or the way that we can have fun with friends. Everyone has something to share!

Bible Reading

Read John 13:3-15.

Ask:

- Why did the disciples need their feet washed? (Example: They were walking around dusty paths in sandals all day.)
- Peter at first didn't want Jesus to wash his feet. Why might he not have wanted his feet washed?
- Would you want to wash someone else's feet? Would you want someone else to wash yours?

Read: John 13:33-35.

Ask:

- What did Jesus tell his disciples to do? (Example: Love each other as he loved them.)
- How can you show Jesus' love to people?

Loving other people means helping them and being there for them. For Jesus, washing the disciples' feet was a way he could show his love. Maybe we don't need to wash other people's feet, but there are so many ways we can show people we love them and put them first. We can help them when they need help, or we can think of kind things to do for them even when they don't need help. We can also remind each other just how special we are in God's eyes and how each of us makes our community special.

Closing Prayer

Ask the children to think about a friend or family member for whom they want to pray. Tell them that there will be time in the prayer for them to say their prayer, aloud or silently.

Dear God, thank you for always being with us. Today we give you thanks, especially for these people. *[Invite the children to add their own prayers.]* Thank you for all the people in our lives who love us. And thank you for your Son, Jesus, who teaches us to love. Amen.

Journal Activity

On the left side of this last journal page, write the letters "L-O-V-E." For older children, invite them to write one thing they can do that starts with each letter to show others God's love. For younger children, invite them to draw signs of love on their page.

“River of Life”...At-Home Vacation Bible School

Story Time

Getting Started with Story Time

Each of the stories featured in “River of Life” is of a project supported by gifts to ELCA World Hunger. These stories show the many amazing ways that God is working with and through our neighbors to end hunger. The stories help show the themes of each day in action, from ending hunger to working for gender equality.

Format

The video stories are each about 5-7 minutes long and are told by staff of the ELCA churchwide organization. In addition, there are also several “Meet Our Neighbor” videos available that feature neighbors from some of the regions featured in the stories. These are great opportunities to hear more about the communities.

ELCA congregations are free to share these videos on their websites or on social media. The videos are available on ELCA World Hunger’s Vimeo page at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7224146>. If adults or children in your household or congregation prefer, the stories are also available in print in the leader’s guide for “River of Life” on pages 33-48. You can download the leader’s guide at [ELCA.org/hunger/resources#VBS](https://elca.org/hunger/resources#VBS).

How to Use

The videos can be watched at any point, but they might work best after the skit and small group time. If you are hosting VBS online, try watching the story video together. As the story is told, invite the group to think of the gifts of each community and how God is working through them to end hunger. This is a great time to learn about the many places where the ELCA walks with our neighbors through ELCA World Hunger.

If you are a leader in your congregation and sharing these videos to promote VBS this year, please see the “VBS Permissions Letter” included in the next section of this guide. Some of the stories in “River of Life” feature pictures of children from the ELCA’s companion churches. Congregations, companion churches and partners provide these photos in trust that they will be used in appropriate, respectful and sensitive ways. Please use the videos or stories in the leader’s guide to provide context for the photos. If the photos are of children, please do not add names or locations directly to the photographs, particularly if they will be posted online. Take steps to ensure that access to the photos, especially downloading, is as restricted as possible. Lastly, please do not alter the photos (for example, by adding illustrations or stickers or by cropping.)

You can access the videos at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7224146>.

“River of Life”...At-Home Vacation Bible School

Music

Getting Started with Music

ELCA World Hunger’s “On Earth As in Heaven” Vacation Bible School program from 2020 featured five original songs that can still be used in 2021 with “River of Life.” ELCA congregations are free to use and share the songs. On the next page, there is a permissions letter that explains the rights and some of ELCA World Hunger’s hopes for the use of the songs. If you link to or share the songs on a website, please include the appropriate credits for the songwriters and performers.

Format

There are three files available at elca.org/hunger/resources#VBS for each song:

- 1) the full song, with vocals;
- 2) the full instrumental version of the song, without vocals; and
- 3) the lyrics and chords.

On elca.org/hunger/resources#VBS, there are five zipped folders for each day’s music. After you download the zipped folder, right-click on the folder on your computer and click “Extract All...” The folder will contain the three pieces listed above.

Using Music Online or at Home

The music files are audio only, so if your group is meeting together online, there won’t be any video or images to share of the song, other than the lyrics. You may want to play the day’s song as folks join the online meeting. Or, you may want to use the songs as part of your online worship. If children are participating at home on their own, try playing the songs during craft or game times. The songs are easy to learn and can help liven up the activities. They can also be added from your computer to a mobile device to stream.

The Songs

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

All songs written by Bennett Williams and Jen Joyce. Performed and recorded by Jen Joyce (vocals), Bennett Williams (guitar and keyboards), Dennis DeFrank (bass guitar), Jordan Williams (guitar), and Jeff Meglio. Engineered & Mixed Recorded at Cape Sound Productions (PA).



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

April 1, 2021

Dear Friend in Christ,

Thank you for your interest in using ELCA World Hunger's Vacation Bible School program for 2021!

With the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we know many congregations are looking at adapting materials for at-home use. ELCA World Hunger is working on developing materials to help support you as you creatively engage children and families at this time.

As an ELCA congregation, you are free to use the images, graphic elements and content of "River of Life" and our other VBS programs to fit your context. This includes recording and sharing videos, hosting live web-conferences, printing newsletters or providing your own handouts to share electronically or via mail. You are also free to post and share the *original* music of this VBS. These materials, and all of our resources, are made possible by generous gifts to ELCA World Hunger, so you are welcome to share it.

We do ask a few things as you share materials:

- 1) Please include in your adaptations an acknowledgement of ELCA World Hunger. The brandmark for this ministry is available at <https://elca.org/Resources/ELCA-Branding#Churchwide>. Helping people connect the material to ELCA World Hunger will help more people see the ways we are church together as we respond to hunger and grow in faith.
- 2) If you include pictures from the storytime section of the leader's guide, please do so with care. Congregations, companion churches and partners provide these photos in trust that they will be used in appropriate, respectful and sensitive ways. Please use the stories in the leader's guide to provide context for the photos. If the photos are of children, please do not add names or locations directly to the photographs, particularly if they will be posted online. Take steps to ensure that access to the photos, especially downloading, is as restricted as possible. Lastly, please do not alter the photos (for example, by adding illustrations or stickers or by cropping.)
- 3) Please share what you create with our team! You can let us know about your plans, share your successes or ask questions by contacting Ryan Cumming, program director for hunger education, at Ryan.Cumming@elca.org, or by tagging @ELCAWorldHunger on social media.

Thank you for all you are doing to contribute to a just world where all are fed!

In Christ,

Ryan P. Cumming
Program Director, Hunger Education
ELCA World Hunger

“River of Life”...At-Home Vacation Bible School

Snacks

Getting Started with Snacks

Each of the days of ELCA World Hunger’s “River of Life” VBS has suggestions for snacks that are drawn from the countries featured in the stories for that day. Food is one way we share culture, history and identity with one another. Trying the foods of a culture different from our own can be one simple way to get a small “taste” of the traditions of our neighbors.

Each day’s snacks have options for “something to buy” and “something to make.” If you have these items on hand or are able to purchase them with your regular grocery trips, feel free to try them out!

Using What’s on Hand

If you are not able to get the foods listed here, or if there just isn’t time to make a special snack for each day, you can use the guide on the next page to start a conversation about food using what you have on hand.

One of ELCA World Hunger’s priorities is helping our church remember the importance of food. Food nourishes us and gives us energy, but it also reminds of the good gifts we receive from God. And food helps us stay connected to our culture, family traditions and history. The table at which we share food is a place where relationships are made and strengthened, a place for fellowship and hospitality. Use the conversation starters on the next page to guide a discussion with children about this important role that food plays in our lives and in all of creation.

Eating Online?

There are some easy ways to adapt the snacks if hosting live VBS online. First, you can use this time for rest. Being in an online meeting can be pretty tiring after a while, so snack time can be a welcome break, especially for young children and parents or caregivers.

Second, you can use the snack time to talk about food! Invite children to bring different foods to the web meeting each day, and encourage them to share a bit about why they chose that food and, perhaps, what it means to them or why they enjoy it (or, for even more fun, why they DON’T enjoy it.)

Third, the snack time can be a great way to have “table” conversations about other things happening in the children’s lives. Using a “table talk” can give the children space to talk about their feelings, how things are going at home or to share creative ways they have spent their time thus far in the summer. Remember, eating together is about coming together!

Snack Time Daily Conversation Starters

Use these suggestions to start conversations about food during snack times!

Day 1

If you could only eat one food for a week, what would it be and why?
What is one special meal you remember? What made it special?

Day 2

Name one food for each color of the rainbow (fun to do as a round!)
Where did the food for your snack come from? (Consider farms, processing plants, stores, garden, etc.)
Why is it important to have *healthy* food?

Day 3

Where did your snack come from? (Consider farms, processing plants, stores, etc.) How many people do you think helped bring your food from a seed (or other starting point) to your plate?
What are some traditional foods in your family? Who prepares them?

Day 4

Our world produces more than enough food for everyone, but many people still don't have enough food to be healthy. Why do you think that is?
Why do you think it is important for God that we help people not go hungry?

Day 5

Describe a time when you ate a food that was totally new to you. What made it different from foods that you are used to?
How might trying different foods help us learn about different people?

SNACKS: DAY 1

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

3 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.

SNACKS: DAY 2

El Salvador

SOMETHING TO MAKE :

MINUTAS (MEE-NOO-TAS)

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

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

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.

SNACKS: DAY 3

Wisconsin

SOMETHING TO MAKE :

BRATWURST

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, 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.



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

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.

SNACKS: DAY 4

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.

Directions

Ingredients

Sweet potatoes, washed and dried

Butter

Cinnamon-sugar

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 and let cool.
3. 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.

SNACKS: DAY 5

Central African Republic

SOMETHING TO MAKE :

POTOPOTO TI LOSO (POH-TOH-POH-TOH TEE 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 the Central African Republic, 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.

“River of Life”...At-Home Vacation Bible School

Crafts

Getting Started with Crafts

Each of the crafts listed here is tied either to the country featured in the Story Time. Most are fairly easy to do at home. A full supply list is included at the end of this section.

Doing Crafts at Home

Most of the crafts involve materials you may already have on hand, such as cardboard tubes or yarn. Some may require ordering online or purchasing from a craft store. Feel free to make substitutions with other crafts or, when possible, other materials to avoid an extra shopping trip and reduce costs. You can use this time to talk as a household about the themes for the day or the countries, or you can use the time simply as a creative break in the program.

Doing Crafts Online

An online meeting can be a great place for children and families to showcase their creations. One way to do this is to use the craft time, starting the second day, as a time to share creations from the day before. Consider, too, sharing pictures of the crafts on your congregation’s Facebook page or website.

Vacation Bible School Kits

You might also consider sending materials for all or some of the crafts to people’s homes in a Vacation Bible School kit, using the supply list at the end of this section. This can be helpful for some of the activities that might require items folks do not have on hand.

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 in 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 homemade 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 the pins in a pyramid.
3. Roll ball at pins to knock them down!



CRAFTS: DAY 4

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.

CRAFT SUPPLY LIST

This list includes all the materials needed for one child to do the crafts listed above for each day for one child. Some of the crafts include optional items for decorations; all optional items are included below.

- Paper Products
 - 1 paper lunch bag
 - Three, six or 10 empty toilet-paper tubes (number depends on size of bowling set)
 - 1-2 sheets of 8-1/2-by-11-inch construction paper, cut into 1-inch strips
 - 3-5 cardboard tubes of various sizes (toilet paper, paper towels or wrapping paper tubes work well)
 - 1 sheet of 11-by-17-inch construction paper
- Fabric and String
 - Four streamers (longer than 12 inches)
 - Two yards and 12 inches yarn
 - One rectangle of colored fabric (12 inches by 6 inches)
 - Fringe or trim for decorating
 - One yard of ribbon or embroidery floss
- Other Supplies
 - Tape
 - Hole punch
 - Paint
 - Markers
 - Stickers
 - Washi tape
 - Fabric glue
 - One drinking straw
 - 1 small plastic or rubber ball

River of Life”...At-Home Vacation Bible School

Games

Getting Started with Games

In this section, we’ve included instructions for games that can be played at home. The games for “River of Life” are fun ways to reinforce the lessons for each day. Some of the games require materials that can be ordered or purchased. If it is safe to do so in your community, you can purchase these on your regular shopping trip.

Playing Games at Home and Online

The games here can easily be played with a small family or group. You can also use this time to play other board games, outdoor activities or puzzles that can help reinforce the themes for the days:

- Day 1: “God creates.”
 - Game Theme: celebrating creation
- Day 2: “God provides.”
 - Game Theme: working together, sharing
- Day 3: “God claims.”
 - Game Theme: Water Day!
- Day 4: “God protects.”
 - Game Theme: helping each other
- Day 5: “God loves, we love.”
 - Game Theme: seeing God at work

If you are hosting Vacation Bible School online, consider using simple games like Pictionary, trivia or, for older children, Scattergories.

Have fun!

GAMES: DAY 1

Title: And It Was Good

Age range: all ages

Materials needed:

- List of items to find (sample included)

Instructions:

To start, invite the children to join you in a scavenger hunt. Tell the children that this scavenger hunt includes words from today's bible story. Then ask the children if they remember what God says after God is finished creating something. Give them time to think and provide hints if needed.

After the children recall that everything that God created God called good, share the game instructions with them. Tell them that when you say, "And God saw ITEM and it was good," they will race to see who can find that item the fastest. If you are at home establish a start/ finish line. This will be the place where the children race to and from. If you are playing virtually, children will race to and from the place where their screens are. Remind virtual players to leave their screens where they are when they go to find an item.

Next tell the children that the first person back to the start or to the screen with that item gets 5 points, the second person back gets 3 points and everyone who finds the item you name gets 1 point. The child with the most points at the end of the game wins.

If you are playing virtually, it is fun to have each child share what they brought back after each round. Note that finding some items may require support of a parent or guardian. Make sure to inform them before you start the game or invite them to join in!

Scavenger hunt items:

<input type="checkbox"/>	A spoon	<input type="checkbox"/>	A spoon
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your favorite book	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your favorite book
<input type="checkbox"/>	Something that makes you feel happy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Something that makes you feel happy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Something blue	<input type="checkbox"/>	Something blue
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your favorite toy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your favorite toy
<input type="checkbox"/>	A family member to say hello	<input type="checkbox"/>	A family member to say hello
<input type="checkbox"/>	A pillow	<input type="checkbox"/>	A pillow
<input type="checkbox"/>	A sock	<input type="checkbox"/>	A sock
<input type="checkbox"/>	A blanket	<input type="checkbox"/>	A blanket
<input type="checkbox"/>	A roll of toilet paper	<input type="checkbox"/>	A roll of toilet paper
<input type="checkbox"/>	A hat	<input type="checkbox"/>	A hat

GAMES: DAY 2

Title: Water from the Rock Mini Games

Age Range: all ages

Materials Needed:

- One bucket for each team
- One 16-32 oz jar or cup
- One car wash sponge per team
- One nylon
- One tennis ball
- Five water bottles
- One ball
- Painters tape or chalk
- One empty tissue box per team
- Yarn
- Ping pong balls

Set-up and Instructions

This 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 allows. Below are the set up and play instructions for each mini game.

Mini game one: Water from the rock race

This game uses the bucket, cup or jar, and 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 set up for each team. For extra effect, buy gray sponges and trim them to look like rocks.

The goal of this game is to use the sponge to fill the empty jar. Invite children to stand by the bucket. To start, have the first member of each team fill the sponge with water, run towards 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 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 two: Water from the rock blowing

This mini game uses the nylons, tennis balls and water bottles and works best with 1=3 children. For this mini game you can use single 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 nylon and place tightly sealed water bottles in a line. About five water bottles per child is recommended.

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 the nylon on their head. It should look like they are wearing a long Santa hat. 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 water bottles. They must swing the tennis ball by moving their heads. Once the children have knocked over all of their team's water bottles, they can go to the next mini-game.

Mini-game three: Water from the rock and roll

This mini game uses the ball and painters' tape or chalk and works best with 1-2 children at a time. For this game, draw or tape a path on the ground. The children will roll the ball, the "rock," along the path you create. Make sure the path matches the skill and age of your group.

Invite younger children to roll the ball along the path with their hands or feet. For older children, have them 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" long the path, they can go to the next mini game.

Mini-game four: Shake the water from the rock

This mini game uses the empty tissue box, yarn and ping pong balls and works best with 1-3 children at a time. You will need one empty tissue box per child and 8-10 ping pong balls per child. To set up, make a tissue box belt for each child playing this game. To make the belt, empty the tissues 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 the box like a belt around the child playing this mini-game. Lastly, fill each empty tissue box with 8-10 ping pong balls. For extra effect, paint tissue boxes to look like rocks and use blue ping pong balls to represent water.

To play this mini-game have each child playing put on a belt with the tissue box full of ping pong balls. The tissue box should be sitting at the small of the child's back. The goal of this game is to get all of the ping pong balls out of the box as fast as you can by jumping round. The children may not use their hands to get the ping pong balls out of the box. (Younger children can use their hands to hold the box in place.) The team to empty their tissues box or boxes first wins.

Day 3

Note: There are a few options for games for Day 3. The first set is a series of water balloon games. The second set is a series of games involving a hose or sprinkler. Of course, conserving water is important for all of us but especially in communities where water is scarce or costly or during dry summers. So, there is also a set of non-water games that you can use.

Water balloon games

Age range: all ages

Materials needed

- Water balloons (latex-free if necessary)
- Water-proof speaker
- Washable paint
- Buckets
- chairs

Instructions

Below is a series of water balloon games. These are great game to play with the whole family or to host an outdoor gathering. You are invited to play as many of these games as time and space allows.

Game 1: Paint Fight

If you're not afraid of a little mess (or a big mess!) then try out this water balloon paint fight! Mix up some washable paint with water and then fill up your balloons. Get everyone a white T-shirts and let the water balloon fight begin!

Game 2: Hot potato

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

Game 3: Water Balloon Relay Race

Fill a bucket with 1 water balloon per participant, plus a few extra. Set out one chair for each team and place a water balloon in the seat. Then have the children take turns running to the chair and sitting on the balloon till it pops. After they pop the balloon, they run and tag the next player. Leaders will need to put a new balloon in after each one is popped. The first team to pop all their balloons in their bucket and cross the finish line wins.

Game 4: Water Balloon Toss

Invite the participants to pair up. Then, have the participants line up across from their partner. Next, have each participant takes turns tossing the balloon to their partner. After each toss, the person tossing will take a step away from their partner. The last team to pop their balloon wins! To add in a fun twist, have the participants 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 participant
- a sprinkler that attaches to a hose
- 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 allows.

Game 1: Liquid Limbo

Take a hose and turn the water on full blast. Use the stream of water as a limbo stick. Invite participants to try to walk under the hose without touching the ground. 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 back on, and players must freeze in the spray until you turn the sprinkler back off again.

Game 2: Rain-bow(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 pour the water in. Younger children could work together to fill one container while older ones could have a race to see who fills their own the fastest. The game is over when one team fills their whole bucket.

Saved by Grace Scrabble Hunt

Age range: 6 and up

Materials needed:

- sponges
- permanent makers
- scissors
- cones
- A white board and white board makers

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, 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 participants into teams and have them stand on the edges of the play area. Then, write your first word on your white board 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 white board. 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.

Games: Day 4

Title: Recycled Boat Regatta

Age Range: all ages

This day comes with two options: a full sized cardboard boat regatta and a mini recycled boat regatta. You may do one activity or both!

Mini-Cardboard Boat Regatta

Age range: all ages (younger children will need an adult to help)

Materials needed:

Mini-boats can be built out of whatever you have around. Below are some materials to consider:

- Juice boxes
- Cardboard
- Tape
- Paper straws
- Paper
- Tin foil
- Popsicle sticks
- Hot glue (make sure that adults are able to help!)
- Pool noodles
- Paper towel rolls
- Paper clips
- Stickers

Instructions:

Ask the children what they remember about today's bible story (who was in the story, what happened, what places or items were in the story?) After the children recall the boat in the story, explain that today's game will involve creating and racing boats. Share with them that each boat will need a main body of the boat and a set of sails. The children need to build boats that can float and can move fast. If you have older children, this is a good time to do some research together on boats. After the children have assembled their boats, they can race them in a bathtub, large sink, plastic tub, lake, river, ocean or pool. If you are in a place where many families don't have access to a bathtub or another place to test and race their boats, or if you have limited access to water, consider setting up a children's pool at church for families to use. To race the boats, have the children place the boats in the water and blow on the sails.

Full-Sized Recycled Boat Regatta

Age Range: all ages

Materials needed:

- Cardboard
- Tape

Instructions:

This is a great full family activity. If it is safe, it is also a great, outdoor, socially distant, community activity. This activity is based on the MIT cardboard boat regatta. You can learn more about it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvjjFhyZZps>.

For this activity, invite families to build full-sized boats out of only tape and cardboard. You may choose to allow additional materials. The boats will need to be able to float, hold 2-3 people and complete a designated obstacle course (such as going to and from a point or around an object). You can choose to have participants build their own propulsion devices or have them use already constructed ones like canoe or kayak paddles.

To prepare for the regatta, find a safe place that allows swimming that you can race. This could be a pool, lake or river. Make sure to have lifeguards on duty and talk to the local park service beforehand.

On the day of the regatta, have participants bring their boats to the designated location and set up your track. Appoint judges to give scores for design, creativity and a few other fun categories.

Next, invite one to two boats to get into the water. Have each team demonstrate that their boat can float with 2-3 people inside. Then, time the boats around the course you created. The boat that can finish or can finish the fastest wins!

Games: Day 5

Title: Fancy feet

Age range: 6 and up

Materials needed:

- Cardboard
- Yarn
- Scissors
- Double stick tape
- Balloons (latex free is needed)
- Cones
- Markers
- Index cards
- Large sheets of paper
- Chair
- Timer
- Chalk

Set up:

To set up this game, you will need to make two to four sets of giant cardboard feet. On the cardboard, draw large cartoon feet. The feet should be 24 to 36 inches long and at least one foot wide. Smaller feet are better for younger children. In the middle of the cardboard feet, cut two lines of three holes parallel to the longer edge of the cardboard and space the lines a little wider apart from each other than the width of 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 feet of the children.

Instructions:

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

Fancy feet obstacle course

Use cones and other items to make an obstacle course for the children. You can make it with chalk or with items around your home. For ideas for a chalk obstacle course see here: <https://handsonaswegrow.com/super-simple-sidewalk-chalk-gross-motor-obstacle-course/>. Next, invite the children to put on the fancy feet and navigate the course. To add an extra element, children can race or try to get the fastest time possible.

Fancy feet pick up

For this game, you will need to blow up balloons 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. Give each child a set of 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 the start, take the balloons off the toes and place the balloons in a bucket. 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. Insert a marker into the hole and tape it in place. Next, write words related to the past week of VBS (water, well, boat, calming the storm, baptism and so on) on index cards and place them in a hat or something the children can draw from. Set up a chair in front of a large sheet of paper. Invite a child 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 (longer 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 the rest of the group to begin guessing. If someone guesses before time is up, they get a point. Switch up the person drawing and play until all words are gone. The person with the most points at the end of the game wins. *Note: We all get frustrated at times with difficult tasks. Remember to put the children at ease by reminding them that the goal of the game is to have fun. Maybe start the game by having an adult do a poor job writing one of the words, so that the children feel more comfortable when their own work is less than perfect.*

River of Life”...At-Home Vacation Bible School

Closing and Next Steps

To close each day, remind the participants of the theme for the week: “Everything will live where the river goes” (Ezekiel 47:9). Water is a symbol of life and God’s many blessings. Water can remind us of where we have been and where we are going. Water reminds us of God’s care, love and concern for us and for all creation.

You can use some or all of the questions below to review the day:

- Where did you travel today?
- What did you learn about in today’s “port”?
- What was your favorite part of the day?
- What was one new thing you learned?
- Where did you experience God today?
- What does water mean to you now?

Invite someone to offer a closing prayer, giving thanks to God for all the things we enjoy and asking God to be with us as we continue down the “river of life.”

Next Steps

Learning about water, protecting this important resource and working together to ensure everyone can enjoy clean, safe water don’t have to stop with the end of VBS. Your congregation and family can be part of this important work long after your event ends. Consider some of these next steps as you go forth in peace!

Learn

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>.

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/>.

Give

Each of the stories featured in “River of Life” tells of a project supported by gifts to ELCA World Hunger. Together, through ELCA World Hunger, our church accompanies communities around the world and here in the United States trusting in God’s promise of a time “when we will hunger no more and thirst no more” (Rev. 7:16). Consider choosing a water-based gift from the ELCA’s Good Gift catalog for a fundraising drive for your family or your congregation:



Visit [ELCA.org/goodgifts](https://www.elca.org/goodgifts) to learn more!

Packing Lists by Day

You can use these lists to prepare at-home kits for participants. The full craft supply list is on page 32.

Day 1

Small Group Time

- 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

Story Time

- Videos at <https://tinyurl.com/jtszmzns>
- Map

Game

- List of items to find (sample included with game)

Snack (choose something to make or to buy)

- Something to Make
 - 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
- Something to Buy
 - Tapioca pudding and tropical fruit

Craft

- Paper lunch bags
 - Tape
 - Hole punch
 - Drinking straws
 - Paint, markers, stickers for decoration
 - Streamers
 - Yarn
-

Day 2

Small Group Time

- Card stock or heavy paper (one sheet per person)
- Tape
- A small, lightweight ball (a Whiffle ball works well)
- A single piece of 8-1/2-by-11-inch paper per child (larger paper might be easier for young children)
- Crayons, colored pencils or markers

Story Time

- Videos at <https://tinyurl.com/jtszmzns>
- map

Games

- One bucket per child
- One 16-32 oz jar or cup
- one car wash sponge per child
- One nylon
- One tennis ball
- 5 water bottles
- One ball
- Painters tape or chalk
- One empty Kleenex box per household
- Yarn
- 10 Ping pong balls

Snack (choose something to make or to buy)

- Something to Make
 - 3 cups fruit (mango, coconut and banana are favorites of El Salvador, but you can also use strawberries, pineapple or any other fruits.)
 - 1/4 cup lemon or lime juice
 - 1 1/2 cup water
 - 1 1/2 cup sugar
 - Ice
- Something to Buy
 - Vanilla pudding

Craft

- 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

Day 3

Small Group Time

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

Story Time

- Videos at <https://tinyurl.com/jtszmzns>
- Map

Games (choose one game set)

- Water Balloon Games
 - Water balloons (latex free if necessary)
 - Water-proof speaker
 - Washable paint
 - Buckets
 - Chairs
- Sprinkler games
 - A hose and sprinkler (see game directions for type of sprinkler)
 - Small buckets for each child
 - Waterproof speaker
- Dry game
 - Sponges
 - Permanent makers
 - Scissors
 - Cones

- A dry erase board and dry erase makers

Snack (choose something to make or to buy)

- Something to Make
 - Packaged bratwurst sausage
- Something to Buy
 - Cheese
 - Ice cream sundae

Craft

- 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

Day 4

Small Group Time

- Masking tape
- Lots of pieces of crumpled-up paper,
- Small foam balls or beanbags
- Index cards
- Markers

Story Time

- Videos at <https://tinyurl.com/jtszmzns>
- Map

Games (pick one version)

- Mini cardboard regatta (optional materials)
 - Juice boxes
 - Cardboard
 - Tape
 - Paper straws
 - Paper
 - Tin foil
 - Popsicle sticks
 - Hot glue
 - Pool noodles
 - Paper towel rolls
 - Paper clips
 - Stickers
- Cardboard boat regatta
 - Cardboard
 - Tape

- MIT video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvjjFhyZZps>

Snack (choose something to make or to buy)

- Something to Make
 - Sweet potatoes, washed and dried
 - Butter
 - Cinnamon-sugar
- Something to Buy
 - Bananas

Craft

- 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

Day 5

Small Group Time

- No additional materials needed

Story Time

- Videos at <https://tinyurl.com/jtszmzns>
- Map

Games

- Cardboard
 - Yarn
 - Scissors
 - Double stick tape
 - Balloons (latex free is needed)
 - Cones
 - Markers
 - Index cards
 - Large sheets of paper
 - Chair
 - Timer
 - Chalk
-



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