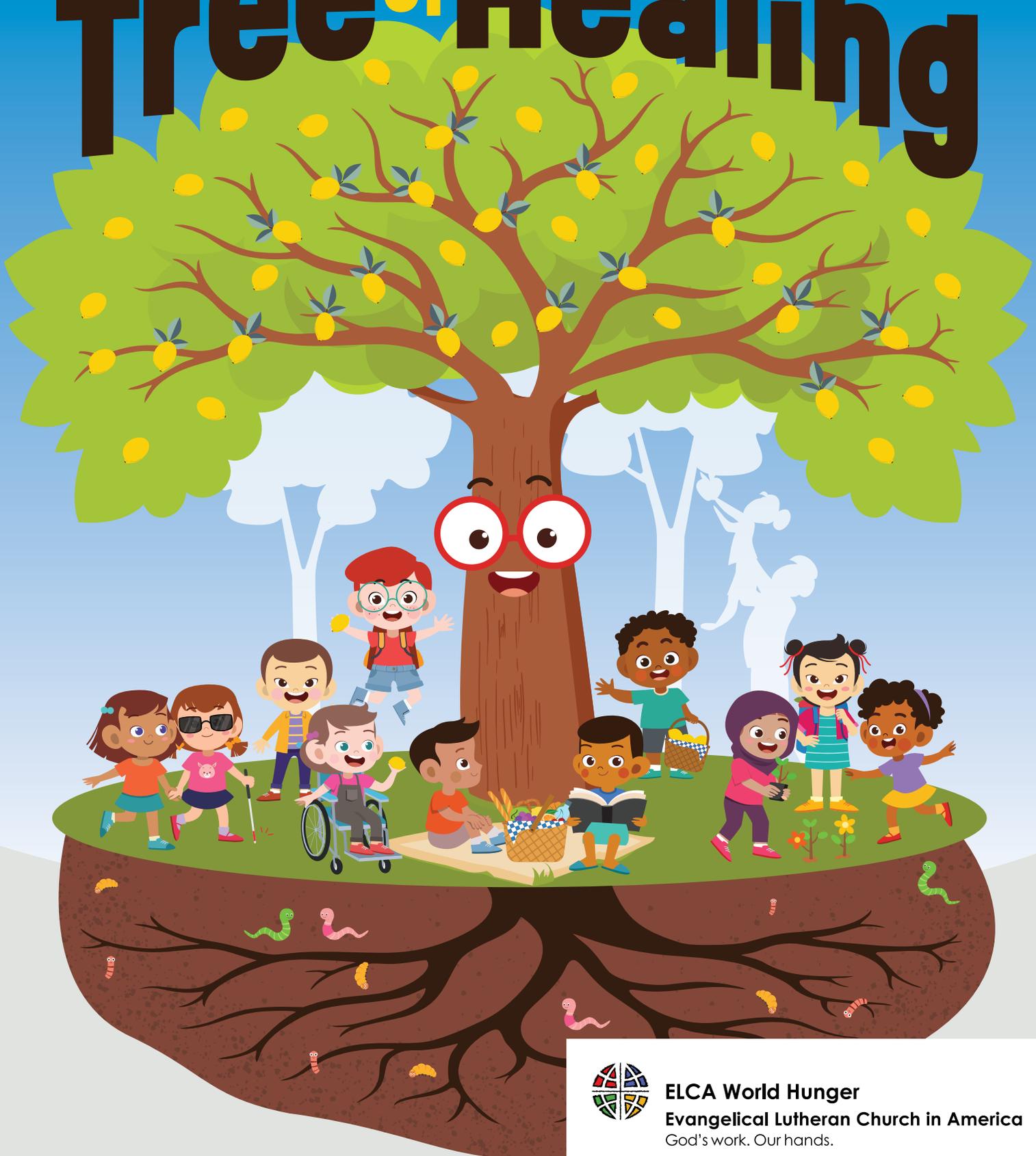


Tree of Healing



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

Welcome to “Tree of Healing,”

ELCA WORLD HUNGER’S VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL PROGRAM FOR 2022!

The theme for this VBS comes from the rich prophetic description of the new Eden in Revelation 22:1-4. In this vision, the “tree of life” stands astride “the river of the water of life,” and St. John assures us that “the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (22:2). Centuries earlier, Ezekiel, too, described this tree with its healing leaves (Ezekiel 47:12). The tree is a symbol of God’s promise and a reminder of God’s will for all the nations to experience healing. As one commentator writes of the city described in Revelation 22, “There is no human need to which the ministry of the golden city will not be adequate” – including the human need for healing.

And yet, these past years have reminded us how far we are from the promise of health and wellness for us and our neighbors. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted in tragic ways our vulnerability to disease and the injustice of unequal access to care, treatment and resources for health. At the same time, we bore witness to God’s promise for health unfolding in manifold ways, including through the work of congregations around the world as they adapted to meet the growing and changing needs of their communities.

“Tree of Healing” VBS is a chance for children and adults to consider what health means and how God invites us to share in the building of a just world where all can enjoy the gifts of God’s creation. The program offers a broad understanding of health and wellness. It dives into topics such as environmental health, mental health, healthy grieving, different abilities and health justice. The stories for each day, drawn from projects supported by your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, highlight the many ways God is at work through ELCA congregations, companion churches and partners.

Each day of “Tree of Healing” has large group and small group activities, including skits, games, crafts and snacks. This year, we’ve also included some suggestions for virtual activities to use with online VBS programs. We encourage you to adapt these to fit your context. As you do, please prayerfully consider encouraging your group to support the work of ELCA World Hunger that helps sustain the ministries you will learn about this week.

Last, we owe many thanks to the leaders who have used ELCA World Hunger’s previous Vacation Bible School programs and shared their stories, photos and feedback. THANK YOU!

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

Ryan P. Cumming

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



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Look for pictures, graphics, music and other materials online at [ELCA.org/hunger/resources](https://www.elca.org/hunger/resources) under the “VBS” tab. These graphics can be used for printing posters, signs, shirts and more.

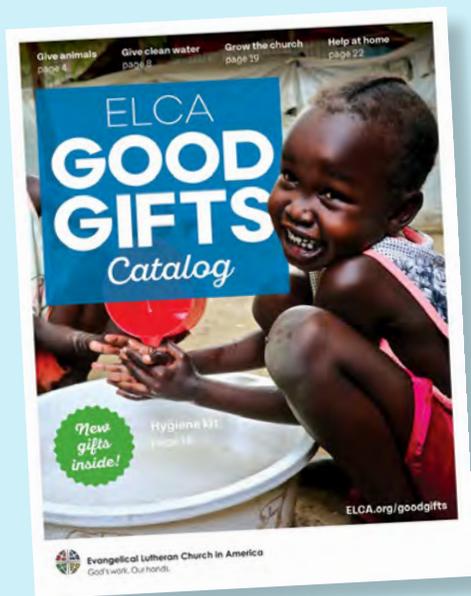


Videos for “Tree of Healing” VBS can also be found on ELCA World Hunger’s Vimeo page at vimeo.com/showcase/7224146.



Look for this symbol to find activities for virtual VBS!

Good Gifts Catalog



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

Each of the stories in “Tree of Healing” describes a real project supported by ELCA World Hunger. As you host “Tree of Healing” VBS, consider including an opportunity for giving within your program. The ELCA Good Gifts catalog found at ELCA.org/goodgifts has some great ideas. Here are just a few:



Clinic visit for a child
\$10



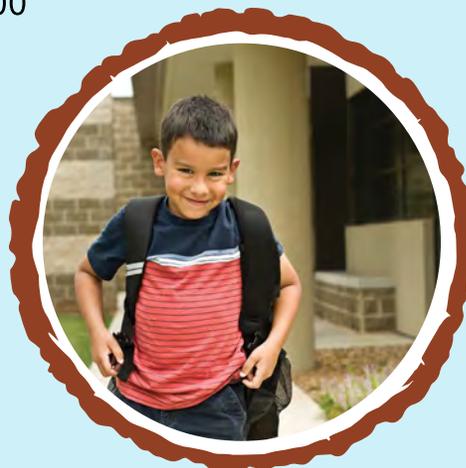
Month of internet connectivity for students
\$100



Stock a health clinic for a week
\$75



Vaccinations for a child
\$30



Stock a backpack with food
\$10



SAMPLE SCHEDULE

TIME	ACTIVITY
9 – 9:20	Large Group Opening
9:20 – 9:35	Small Group Time
9:35 – 10	Rotation 1
10 – 10:25	Rotation 2
10:25 – 10:50	Rotation 3
10:50 – 11:15	Rotation 4
11:15 – 11:40	Rotation 5
11:40 – 12	Large Group Closing

TIME	ACTIVITY
	Large Group Opening
	Small Group Time
	Rotation 1
	Rotation 2
	Rotation 3
	Rotation 4
	Rotation 5
	Large Group Closing

TIME	ACTIVITY
	Large Group Opening
	Small Group Time
	Rotation 1
	Rotation 2
	Rotation 3
	Rotation 4
	Rotation 5
	Large Group Closing

TIME	ACTIVITY
	Large Group Opening
	Small Group Time
	Rotation 1
	Rotation 2
	Rotation 3
	Rotation 4
	Rotation 5
	Large Group Closing

TIME	ACTIVITY
	Large Group Opening
	Small Group Time
	Rotation 1
	Rotation 2
	Rotation 3
	Rotation 4
	Rotation 5
	Large Group Closing

DAY 1

Roots of Creation

“What a wildly wonderful world, God! You made it all, with Wisdom at your side” (Psalm 104:24 MSG).

Story Time: A community garden brings fresh food in Eswatini.

Bible Story: Psalm 104

DAY 2

Healthy Minds and Bodies

“Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul” (3 John 1:2).

Story Time: A whole health clinic in Egypt helps families coping with trauma.

Bible Story: 3 John 1:1-5, 11-14

DAY 3

Different Bodies, Different Gifts

“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14a).

Story Time: A young man in Bangladesh lives with limited vision.

Bible Story: Psalm 139:1-18

DAY 4

Healthy Grief

“If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8).

Story Time: Grieving and remembering a neighbor in Palestine.

Bible Story: Romans 14:6-9

The focus on grief in Day 4 may be challenging for some groups. The appendix on page 109 offers alternate activities for Day 4 that focus on “Being Filled.”

DAY 5

Bearing Fruit

“Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34b).

Story Time: A garden in St. Paul, Minn., brings health through fresh food and supportive community.

Bible Story: John 13:3-15, 33-35

LARGE GROUP OPENING

- Welcome and prayer
- Theme song
- Opening skit
- Reiterate the daily theme and focus prayer
- More songs
- Sending

Some of the activities in “Tree of Healing” have adaptations for use online. Look for this icon  for online and virtual versions of activities.

SMALL GROUP TIME

ROTATIONS

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

Games — Every Vacation Bible School needs time for play! We’ve included some ideas of fun activities you can plan, based on the size of your group and your available space.

Snack — Recipes are included for each day, related to the country highlighted in Story Time. Each day has an option for something to buy or something to make. Either will give the children a “taste” of the country or region highlighted in the story.

Crafts — Directions for each craft are included in the daily rotations. Like the other rotations, crafts are related to the country from Story Time.

Simulation Station — The Simulation Station offers a chance to learn more about the day’s theme and how our faith calls us to respond.

LARGE GROUP CLOSING

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

Including everyone

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

1. Talk with the child or the child’s parents/guardians about strategies to help the child feel comfortable.
2. Make adjustments only when necessary, and when you do, aim at increasing the child’s participation, success and enjoyment. Help them feel as if they have a say in making adjustments — or not making them.
3. **Be fair in adapting activities.** Try to make every child feel included but be careful not to stigmatize or single out a child with a different ability level.
4. Plan ahead. Talk with parents/guardians about any special equipment that might be needed before the activity begins, so that the child can participate from the very beginning.
5. If a child has specific dietary restrictions, do your best to make adjustments that help the child feel included rather than singled out. (Adapted from CIRA Ontario.)

Openings and Skits



Day 1 — Roots of Creation

FOCUS VERSE: “What a wildly wonderful world, God! You made it all, with Wisdom at your side” (Psalm 104:24 MSG).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to “Tree of Healing” VBS, using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Hello everyone! Welcome to “Tree of Healing” VBS. This week we will be growing together, along with this tree, as we learn about God’s plan that we and all creation can live healthy and happy. We will be learning about different kinds of health this week – not just physical health, like growing up strong, but also the health of God’s creation, mental health, healthy friendships and how health looks different for different people. As we grow together, we will also be traveling around the world to see how ELCA World Hunger helps communities stay healthy.

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

Leader: Each day we’ll also be joined by a special guest, who will tell us more about the day’s theme and how they live it day by day. Today we’re going to talk about the root of all health – creation. But before we introduce my friend, let’s ground ourselves with some singing!



Check the appendix at the end of this guide for song suggestions, or use songs your group already knows.

DAY 1 SKIT

For this skit, Sage is dressed as a tree. Fashion a tree costume out of paper or cardboard, or ask the performer to wear brown pants and a green shirt. Sage should also be wearing glasses, an important detail for Day 3.

Emcee (E): Great singing, everyone! We finished up that song just in time, because I think I see our special guest now!

Sage (S): Hello, hello! Thank you so much for including me in “Tree of Healing” VBS. I am so glad to meet you all and excited to go on this journey with you.

E: Hello! *[Confused.]* You’re a tree!

S: I am a tree. And a glorious one at that. Look at my deep roots, my strong trunk, my long branches. I am a tree that has grown wise, planted deep in God’s good creation. What, were you expecting a person?

E: I guess when we spoke on FaceTime it was hard to get a good view of you.

S: FaceTime is good for staying connected to friends and family who are far away but not the best for appreciating trees. For that, it’s best to get up-close and personal, like inviting them to your VBS. We trees are very social. Did you know we have our own internet?

E: You have the internet? Do you have tree social media, like TreeFace? InstaTree? TreeChat?

S: No, nothing like that. Our wifi is right here. *[Points to self.]* It’s our roots.

E: Your roots?

- S:** Yes, we trees “talk” to each other through our roots. We send carbon – that’s like tree vitamins – water and other things we need, along with warnings about weather or other dangers. We even move our roots around to make room for new trees. Our roots are how we pass on our wisdom to new trees that are just starting in life.
- E:** That sounds like what we do at VBS. We come together to share what we know about God so we can root each other in faith. We all know different things and have had different experiences, and we share those with each other to learn. And we have snacks.
- S:** I smelled good smells when I came by the snack area, but not my favorite snacks, which are carbon and nitrogen.
- E:** No, we don’t have carbon or nitrogen. We have snacks that people like. But we do have water to drink because people, like trees, need lots of water.
- S:** Isn’t that cool about God? We’re so different. You’re a person, I’m a tree. You like to eat fruits and vegetables; I like to eat carbon and nitrogen. You talk using your mouth, and I talk using my roots. But we both need water to live. We both care for our friends and neighbors. We both share what we have to help those around us.
- E:** God is pretty cool. God creates all of us to be different, but we also have a lot in common. Today we’re talking about creation, how God created it, how God takes care of it, how creation heals us and how we can help heal it. Do you have any thoughts to share about creation?
- S:** Do you have all day? Probably not. Oh, I have so many things I could tell you about creation. We trees are some of the oldest living things on earth. I have gotten to see a lot of God’s creation come and go.
- E:** Well, we humans are not the oldest living things on earth. Also, we have a bit of a schedule. You remember, snacks and all that. Maybe just tell us one thing to think about today.
- S:** Ah yes, snacks. OK. The most important thing I could tell you is that God made creation for us, and God made us for creation.
- E:** What do you mean?
- S:** God made creation for us because we need many things in creation to live healthy lives. We need clean water to drink, clean air to breathe. We need soil that grows healthy food, and we need sunshine and wind and places to run and play and explore.
- E:** That’s what we need from creation. But I don’t understand why creation needs us. It’s creation. Doesn’t it take care of itself?
- S:** Creation needs us to care for it, to keep its waters and air clean, to nurture its plants and all living things. Our health and creation’s health are linked in that way. God made creation so that our small ways of helping add up to a big change.
- E:** Thanks for sharing, Sage! What are you going to do today while we’re learning and playing at VBS?
- S:** I have a great day planned! It’s *[insert the day’s weather]*, which is perfect weather for a tree. I plan on *[soaking up some sun, blowing in the breeze, enjoying some rain, etc.]*.
- E:** Sounds great. See you tomorrow, Sage.
- S:** Goodbye. See you tomorrow!
- Sage leaves.*

REVIEW OF DAY 1 THEME / CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Today’s theme is “Roots of Creation.” Today we’re learning about the wildly wonderful world God made, from the highest mountains to the deepest oceans. We’re going to learn how we can help heal God’s creation and how God’s creation helps heal us. And, as we’ll read in the Psalm during small group time, we’ll make a joyful noise for God’s creation!

Closing Songs

Closing Prayer

What a wildly wonderful world you have made, God. From the highest mountain to the deepest ocean, from the birds that fly to the fish that swim, from tiny insects to huge elephants to each one of us, you have made all creatures different and blessed them with gifts. Help us this week as we learn how we can heal your creation and each other. Amen.

Dismissal to Small Group Time

Day 2 — Healthy Minds and Bodies

FOCUS VERSE: “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul” (3 John 1:2).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to “Tree of Healing” VBS, using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Hello, everyone! Welcome to “Tree of Healing” VBS. This week we’re learning about all kinds of health and healing. Our VBS is called “Tree of Healing” because one of our companions on this journey is a tree named Sage. Trees live long and see a lot, so Sage brings lots of wisdom about God’s wish that we and all creation live healthy lives. Before we meet Sage today, who remembers what we learned about yesterday?
[Affirm all answers.]

Today we’re talking about all different kinds of health. When we think of being healthy, most of the time we think about our body, but God also cares about our mind and spirit, our thoughts and emotions. During today’s Story Time, we’ll travel to Egypt to visit with a family that needed help to be healthy, and we’ll hear how they got this help because of our church and its partners.

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

As we open our time together, let’s start with some singing.



Check the appendix at the end of this guide for song suggestions, or use songs your group already knows.

DAY 2 SKIT

For this skit, Sage is dressed as a tree. Fashion a tree costume out of paper or cardboard, or ask the performer to wear brown pants and a green shirt. Sage should also be wearing glasses, an important detail for Day 3.

Emcee (E): Hi Sage! Welcome back. It’s so good to see you this morning.

Sage (S): Hello to you, my friend! And hello to all of you! I hope everyone had a good sleep and is ready for another great day.

E: I know I am. Sage, I’ve been thinking about something you said yesterday: that trees talk to one another.

S: Oh, yes. We have networks under the ground where we can communicate. Trees can share information about weather changes or a dangerous fungus or insect that we might need to protect ourselves against. Trees can even send nutrients through the network to support a tree that might be struggling.

E: I had never thought of a tree as being connected to the other trees around it.

S: We are individual trees, but we are also part of a forest. For us to be healthy, the forest needs to be healthy, and for the forest to be healthy, we need to be healthy.

E: That makes sense.

S: Think about it this way: The theme for VBS this week is “Tree of Healing.” When you think of being healthy, what do you think about?

Day 3 — Different Bodies, Different Gifts

FOCUS VERSE: “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14a).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to “Tree of Healing” VBS, using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Hello, hello! It’s good to see everyone today for another great day at “Tree of Healing” VBS. Our theme for today is the different shapes health can take. We’ll be talking about how health is not a “one size fits all” item. Being healthy means different things for different people. Sometimes what needs healing isn’t the person but the world around us. We’ll be learning about how the ELCA helps communities so people of all abilities can be full participants in God’s mission and ministry.

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



Check the appendix at the end of this guide for song suggestions, or use songs your group already knows.



DAY 3 SKIT

For this skit, Sage is dressed as a tree. Fashion a tree costume out of paper or cardboard, or ask the performer to wear brown pants and a green shirt. The person playing Sage will also wear eyeglasses for this skit.

Emcee (E): Hi, Sage. Welcome back!

Sage (S): It’s good to be back!

E: Sage, we’ve been talking about health and healing this week, and I wonder if you might want us to pray for your healing?

S: Prayer is always good, but can I ask why?

E: Well, I noticed you wear glasses, and I wonder if you ever wish you didn’t have to. Maybe God would just heal your eyes so you could see without the specs.

S: That’s a good question, but no, actually. My glasses are part of me. They are how I see. They are an example of God’s healing. Before I had glasses, everything was fuzzy and I used to get headaches. But then I went to an eye doctor and she made me these glasses, and now I see great.

E: I never thought of glasses as healing.

S: I’m glad you said that, because when we’re talking about health, we need to remember that health looks different for different people. I wear glasses to help me see. Some people use a wheelchair or crutches to help them walk or a hearing aid to help them hear. Sometimes people use those things for a short time, like if you broke your leg and needed crutches until it healed. But for other people, glasses, crutches, a wheelchair or a hearing aid is

something they use all the time, because everyone's body works a bit differently. And the differences God gave us aren't always physical. Some people may need special help in school because their brains learn differently. These are all just things that make each of us individuals.

- E: Like the young man we're going to meet in Story Time! He injured his eyes, so he had to find a new way to do things that require sight – especially reading!
- S: That's right. Some people whose eyes work differently need glasses. Others may need a white cane or maybe even a guide dog to help them get around safely. These are all different ways of finding our way in the world around us.
- E: But if you have problems seeing, don't you still wish it was easier to get around?
- S: Sure, I do! I wish that people were more welcoming, that they didn't stare or say things that are unkind. And I wish that my town were set up to make it easier for everyone to get around, with ramps or different kinds of signs maybe. But as for me? Well, the psalm for today reminds me that I am "fearfully and wonderfully made." God made me and each one of us. So, what I wish is that more people understood that.
- E: Thanks, Sage, for talking so openly with me. If you don't need me to pray for your healing, what can I pray for?
- S: There's a lot you can pray for. You can pray that people will be more welcoming of others, and you can pray that communities will be inspired to provide signs that are easier to read, ramps for wheelchairs or other things that let everyone know they are welcome.
- E: But what if I don't know what someone needs?
- S: You can always ask. If you see someone who seems to be struggling, ask if they need help and what you can do. Don't assume you know what someone else needs. Another way to support people with different abilities is to speak out if you hear someone saying unkind things. God made all of us different, and all of us are made in the image of God – wonderfully made. *[Points to self.]*

E: Thanks, Sage. You've given us a lot of great things to think about today, as always.

S: My pleasure. We trees are good at thinking. Have a great day today at VBS!

Sage leaves.

REVIEW OF DAY 3 THEME / CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Today's theme is "Different Bodies, Different Gifts." We're learning that people of all different abilities are part of God's family and that we can make spaces more accessible to all God's children.

Closing Songs

Closing Prayer

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

Dismissal to Small Group Time

NOTES

Day 4 — Healthy Grief

FOCUS VERSE: “If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8).



NOTE FOR LEADERS: Today’s lesson deals with the difficult issues of grief and trauma. Because these issues are both sensitive and important, we strongly encourage you to invite parents or caregivers to join the children for your entire session, so that they can be ready to offer support when needed, both during VBS and at home afterward. If your VBS is online, you may want to send a note to parents or caregivers ahead of time so they can accompany their children online. The appendix on page 109 offers alternative activities for Day 4 that focus on “Being Filled.”

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to “Tree of Healing” VBS, using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Hello, and welcome back to “Tree of Healing” VBS! Today we’re taking on a tough topic: grief and death. When someone dies, we can feel lots of different feelings, which is normal, and we can remember people or even pets we’ve lost in lots of different ways. All these emotions are part of healing. As we proceed, it’s important to keep track of how you’re feeling. If you have any thoughts or questions, ask me or your group leader.

Today may be heavy at times, but it will also be fun. Part of remembering someone we’ve lost is remembering all the good times we shared. Joy and laughter can also be part of grief. During Story Time, we’ll travel to Palestine to learn about how a community remembers a woman who meant a lot to them and how they’re honoring her life while they miss her.

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



Check the appendix at the end of this guide for song suggestions, or use songs your group already knows.

DAY 4 SKIT

For this skit, Sage is dressed as a tree. Fashion a tree costume out of paper or cardboard, or ask the performer to wear brown pants and a green shirt.

Emcee (E): Hi, Sage.

Sage (S): Hello! How are you today?

E: I’m OK, but I have a question. Trees live a very long time, right?

S: Yes.

E: But not forever?

S: No, nothing on earth lives forever. Why do you ask?

E: Well, we’ve been talking about healing so much this week. And I was just wondering about what healing means when someone dies. Why didn’t they get healed?

S: That’s a very good question. I’m so glad you feel comfortable enough with me to bring me such big questions. When someone dies, it doesn’t mean that healing didn’t work or that God wasn’t there. Death is part of life.

E: But why?

S: I don’t know why. Trees have a lot of wisdom, but there are some things we just can’t know.

E: That’s scary. And sad.

Day 5 — Bearing Fruit

FOCUS VERSE: “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34b).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to “Tree of Healing” VBS, using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Hello! Welcome to our final day of “Tree of Healing” VBS. I hope you’ve had a great week learning about all the different ways in which God wishes for us to live full and healthy lives. What are some things you’ve learned this week? *[Affirm all answers.]* Today we’re talking about how healing can have good effects on a whole community and the world. When a tree is healthy, it bears fruit that nourishes the health of others. When we are healthy and our communities are healthy, we bring health to the world.

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



Check the appendix at the end of this guide for song suggestions, or use songs your group already knows.



DAY 5 SKIT

For this skit, Sage is dressed as a tree. Fashion a tree costume out of paper or cardboard, or ask the performer to wear brown pants and a green shirt.

Emcee (E): Sage, hello! Can you believe we’ve reached our last day together?

Sage (S): It’s gone by so fast, and I’ve had so much fun. Thank you for inviting me to share this time with you.

E: You’re welcome! Sage, I’ve been thinking about our focus verse for the week: “The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” As a tree yourself, what do you think that verse means?

S: Remember, back on Day 2, when we talked about how healthy trees make healthy forests and healthy forests make healthy trees? I think it’s like that. Just think of all the things we’ve talked about!

E: Well, let’s see ... we talked about the health of creation, and how we need fresh air and clean water.

S: And we talked about the importance of caring for our minds and our relationships.

E: We talked about how God created everyone differently – and everyone wonderfully – and how we can make everyone feel welcome.

S: Yep, and we talked about healthy grief and how to care for ourselves and others when someone we love dies. All these things are part of a healthy and whole world.

E: As we talked about these different types of health,

Small Group Time





LESSON FOCUS: Creation shows us that God loves to create and play, and we can play and create too.

SMALL GROUP TIME: DAY 1

Materials Needed

- Bible
- Paper for each child
- Pens, pencils, crayons for coloring
- Skittles or M&Ms to share
- Uno cards (online activity only)

Opener: Joyful Name Noise

Leader: The Psalm we are going to read today is all about singing praise to God for all that God created. But before we make a joyful noise to God, since it's our first day together, we need to make some joyful noise to get to know each other.

Have the group stand in a circle so everyone can see each other. Then teach the group this simple chant:

2-4-6-8, who do we appreciate?

[Name], [Name], YAAAYYYY!! [NAME]!!!

Going around the circle, ask each child their name. Then lead the group in the cheer. Repeat until everyone has had a chance to be cheered for.



Encountering Scripture: Psalm 104

Ask the group if anyone likes to sing. Do they have a favorite song? What about a favorite instrument to play?

Leader: Today we're going to read a psalm. A psalm is a song to God, just like the songs we sang in opening today. Psalms, like songs, can be happy or sad, silly or serious. Today's psalm is thanking God for all God created.

Read together Psalm 104. You might want to consider reading out of the Message Bible or another translation for kids. Marie-Helene Delval's *Psalms for Young Children (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2008)* is a good resource. The psalm is a little long, so you may want to consider reading it in sections or reading only parts of it. A good condensed version is verses 1-4, 14, 16-23 and 31-35.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- The psalmist (writer of the psalm) starts by blessing God and calling God great. Why is the psalmist giving thanks to God? [*Because of all God created.*]
- What are some of the creations for which the psalmist praises God? [*Clouds, wind, the earth, mountains, plants, trees – the list here is endless.*] What parts of creation do you praise God for? What would you add to the psalmist's list?
- The psalmist promises they "will sing to the Lord as long as [they] live" (Psalm 104:33). How do you praise God? [*Singing, dancing, telling jokes, making art.*]
- Many parts of God's creation are important for our health. For example, we need fresh water to drink and healthy food to eat. We get vitamin D from the sun. We can get exercise by playing outside. What part of creation makes you feel healthy?
- Creation helps us stay healthy, and it needs us to keep it healthy as well. What are some ways you can care for creation?

Engaging the Text: I Praise God For ...

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Give each student a sheet of paper with the words "I Praise God For ..." printed across the top. Invite them to draw a picture of something for which they praise God. Come back in a circle and invite students to share their drawings and what they praise God for. Make a joyful noise about their creation by inviting the group to applaud after each person has shared.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Give each child a verse or two of the psalm and invite them to illustrate that section. Come back together and either read the psalm together again, with each student holding up their picture to illustrate their verse, or have the child read the verse they illustrated and then talk about their creative approach.

Here's another idea. As a group, write your own psalm. On a large sheet of paper, invite each student to add one "verse." This can be a creative thank-you to God, or the child can give thanks for a specific thing in their life. After small group time is finished, post the "psalms" in the space where the large group gathers for the closing.



This activity can easily be adapted using an online whiteboard, which is available as an app for most computers. If the activity is completed individually, invite children to submit their drawn or written psalms via email.



Engaging the Text, Part 2: “Oh Lord, How Many Are Your Works” (all ages)

Read together Psalm 104:24 MSG. If you are using the NRSV translation, explain that “manifold” means “many.” Divide into three groups.

To group one, read again the first section of v. 24: “O Lord, how manifold are your works!” Ask the group to pick a number between one and five.

To group two, read again the second section of v. 24: “In wisdom you have made them all.” Shake out as many candies as group one chose.

To group three, read the final section of v. 24, “The earth is full of your creatures.” Ask group three to name something from God’s creation that matches the number and color of the candies given. For example, if a red candy and a blue candy are given, group three would name two red things, such as fire and a ladybug, and two blue things, such as the sky and a blue jay.

Repeat the process three times, so that each group gets a chance to execute each task. Then share the candies.



Engaging the Text, Part 3: Online Version

For this activity you will need a set of numbered cards from the game Uno. If young children in your group are not yet reading proficiently enough, read the verses for them and invite them to repeat the verses.

Divide the children into three groups. Hold three cards up to your computer camera so that the children can see only the backs of them. Invite group one to choose a card, then read together the first part of v. 24 (display it on-screen, if possible): “O Lord, how manifold are your works!” Next, invite group two to read or repeat the second part of v. 24: “The earth is full of your creatures.” Flip over the card, revealing the color and number. Ask group three to name something from God’s creation that matches the color and the number. For example, if the card is a yellow 5, the children must name five yellow things in God’s creation.

When everyone is finished, invite them to name other things for which they are thankful. They can also name these in the closing prayer.

Closing Prayer

Invite the children to think about something they want to praise God for. It could be a favorite animal, a friend at school, a family member, anything they think God did a great job creating. Tell them that during the prayer everyone in the circle will have an opportunity to share something and the whole group will respond: “Yay, God, for creating [item].”

Leader: Dear God, thank you for creating so many glorious things. We praise and thank you especially for creating some of our favorite things. *[Invite the children to share, leading the whole group in responding, “Yay, God, for creating (item)!”]* Amen.



LESSON FOCUS: God wishes us to have not just healthy bodies but also healthy minds, relationships and lives.

SMALL GROUP TIME: DAY 2

Materials Needed

- Inflated balloons (one per person, plus a few extra in case one pops; latex-free balloons are best)
- Music
- Paper (one sheet per person)
- Crayons, colored pencils or markers
- Envelope

Opener: Beloved Balloons

Here are two fun balloon games for various ages. Both give children a chance to reintroduce themselves and get some wiggles out.



FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Give each child an inflated balloon. For younger kids, write their name on the balloon for them. Older children can sign and decorate their own balloons. Tell the group that you are going to play some recorded music. When the music starts, each person should throw their balloon in the air and the group should then work together to keep them all in the air while the music plays. When the music stops, each person should grab the balloon closest to them and freeze.

Play the music and let the children bop around with the balloons.

When the music stops and everyone has a balloon, invite the children one by one to read the name on the balloon they are holding, as part of the phrase “Beloved [name].” The child whose name is called then responds, “I am beloved [name] and I love [ice cream, my mom, my dog, the moon, etc.]” Continue until everyone’s name has been called.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Inflate a balloon (have extras available in case it pops). Have the group sit or stand in a circle, and quickly review their names. To start play, one child stands in the center of the circle holding the balloon, shouts the name of another child and bumps the balloon into the air. The child whose name was called must hit the balloon before it touches the ground. As they hit the balloon, they call out the name of another child, and the sequence repeats.

As the group gets more comfortable, you can make the game more difficult by having them hit the balloon with a body part other than their hands. Or you can introduce up to three more balloons. If you add balloons, make them different colors so that the children don’t confuse them.

Small Group Time: Day 2

Encountering Scripture: 3 John 1:1-5 and 11-15

In our skit today, Sage shared that trees talk to each other through their roots. If you wanted to talk to someone who was a long way away, one way to do that would be to write them a letter. Today's Bible reading is a letter that the elder – elder is a title for a leader in the church, like a pastor – wrote to his friend Gaius.

Read 3 John 1-5, 11-14. Use a translation that will be accessible to children.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- The elder started his letter, "To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth." How might you start a letter? *[Dear friend, hello, what's up?, etc.]*
- The elder prays that Gaius will be healthy in his body and his soul. What are some ways you keep your body healthy? *[Exercising, eating healthy foods, brushing teeth, getting plenty of sleep, etc.]* What are some ways to keep your soul healthy? *[Spending time with friends and family, praying/talking to God, telling jokes, etc.]*

Digging Deeper for Younger Children

- What brings you joy? How can you bring joy to others?
- In the letter, two people are mentioned – one who is kind of mean and one who is really nice to everyone. Which would you like to be, the nice person or the mean one? The letter writer tells people to be like the good people they see, not the mean or dishonest people. Who are some good people that you can be like? What makes them good (or nice)?

Digging Deeper for Older Children

- The elder says he is joyful that his children are walking in truth. Walking in truth means living as God wants us to live. What are some ways to walk in truth? How can you help others walk in truth?
- One way to learn to walk in truth is by following the example of others. The elder encourages Gaius to follow the example of Demetrius. What people do you learn from?
- How can you teach others?



Engaging the Text: Write a Letter

Leader: How do you think Gaius felt about getting a letter from his friend? He probably felt happy knowing that his friend was thinking about him. And he probably felt good to know that he brought his friend such joy. How do you feel when someone compliments you and tells you what they like about you?

Today you get to share that good feeling with someone else. Think about someone in your life that you are thankful for. Use the piece of paper to write or draw something about them that makes you joyful. When you finish, you can put this note in the envelope and either write the person's name on the outside or have one of the leaders help you.



If doing this activity online, invite the children to share their letter or drawing with the group.



Engaging the Text: Demetrius Does

The elder encourages Gaius to imitate what is good and follow in the example of people such as Demetrius. Practice imitation with a few rounds of “Demetrius Does,” a variation on “Simon Says.”

Choose one person to be Demetrius. Demetrius gives directions, such as: “Demetrius jumps on one foot.” “Demetrius skips.” “Demetrius pats his head.” The group then imitates whatever Demetrius is doing. But if the leader omits the word “Demetrius,” commanding the group, “Jump on one foot,” “Skip” or “Pat your head,” the group should ignore the command. Anyone who obeys the command becomes the next Demetrius.



If doing this activity online, invite each child to find a large room and place their computer camera so that it will capture their movements. Or invite them to perform “online” tasks such as typing in the chat space, raising their hand or using a reaction function in the web conference room.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- What was it like to follow the commands of Demetrius? Was it hard or easy?
- If you were Demetrius, what was it like giving commands?
- Were any of Demetrius’ orders easier to follow than others? What was different about how they led the game?
- What sort of actions do you think Demetrius from our Bible story might have been doing that others wanted to imitate? *[Sharing, being a good friend, praying, reading the Bible, etc.]*
- Who might be a Demetrius in your life, someone that you follow? *[A parent or guardian, an older sibling, a teacher, a friend, a pastor, etc.]*

Closing Prayer

Invite the children to think about someone for whom they are thankful. This could be the person they addressed their letter or drawing to, or it could be someone else. Tell them that during the prayer everyone in the circle will share something, to which the whole group will have an opportunity to respond: “Peace be to [name].”

Leader: Dear God, thank you for all the people whom we love and who love us. Today we thank you especially for these people: *[Invite children to share here, leading the whole group in responding “Peace be to (name).”] Amen.*



LESSON FOCUS: We are all made in God's image.

SMALL GROUP TIME: DAY 3

Materials Needed

- Paper (one sheet per person)
- Crayons, colored pencils or markers
- Large sheet of poster paper

Opener: Guess Who?

God made each of us different and each of us special. This game is a fun opportunity to reflect on what makes us different.

Before the session begins, learn one interesting fact about each child, but make sure that the other children don't know it! This could be their favorite food, a unique place they've traveled, a sport they play or a hobby they like. Compile all the facts into a list.

Read through the facts one at a time and invite the children to guess who the fact belongs to. For older children, you could have them write down their guesses and review them at the end. For younger children, you could ask them to take a guess out loud and then announce the correct child.



If you are doing this activity online and your web conference platform allows for chat, invite the children (with the help of parents or caregivers, if necessary) to share their interesting fact through a chat with just you.

Encountering Scripture: Psalm 139:1-18

Leader: Did anyone learn something new about someone in our group from the game? [*Devon has never been to Hawaii, Martha likes ice cream, etc.*]

It's fun to learn new things about people. Today we're going to read a psalm about how God knows everything about us, because God created us and loves us. Do you remember from Day 1 what a psalm is? It's a song to God.

Read Psalm 139:1-6. Use a translation that will be accessible for children.

GUESS WHO?

- * Born in France
- * Loves pepperoni pizza
- * Traveled to Egypt
- * Plays tennis
- * Speaks 4 languages
- * Has 7 brothers
- * Has 3 dogs & 3 cats
- * Lives with aunt
- * Takes piano lessons
- * Loves the color green
- * Is allergic to seafood
- * Knows sign language



QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- Who knows you best? Who do you know best? [*Parents or other family, friends, teachers.*]
- The psalmist (person who wrote the psalm) is amazed that God knows everything about them. God knows you even better than the person who knows you best. And God doesn't just know you; God loves you! How does it feel to think about how well God knows you and loves you?

Read Psalm 139:7-12.

Digging Deeper for Younger Children

- If you were going to a new place, what might you take to help you feel comfortable? *[A favorite blanket or toy, a familiar book, a picture of a family member.]*
- What are some things that remind you God is always with you? *[A song you like to sing, a favorite prayer.]*

Digging Deeper for Older Children

- In this part of the psalm, the psalmist marvels that, wherever they go, God goes with them. What is the farthest you have ever traveled from home? *[Allow time for responses.]* God was there with you.
- Where do you feel close to God?
- Where do you feel loved and welcome? *[Allow time for responses.]* Wherever we feel loved and welcome, that's where God is! And when we feel lonely, God is there too. That's when it is most important to remember that God is with us!

Read Psalm 139:13-18.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- What does the word “awesome” mean? What are some awesome things you’ve seen? *[A beautiful sunset, a big mountain, a cool skateboard trick.]*
- The word “awesome” comes from the word “awe.” Awe is the feeling we have when we see something really amazing or cool – some amazing part of God’s creation or a really cool bike trick. When the psalmist says that they praise God because they are “fearfully and wonderfully made,” the word “fearful” doesn’t mean scary; it’s that same feeling of seeing something amazing. God made you awesome, which is pretty awesome.
- What do you think it means to be “wonderfully made”? *[It means you are delightful, great, amazing.]*
- Who made you wonderfully? *[God.]*
- Does God delight in you? *[Yes.]*
- How does it feel to know that God made you wonderfully and finds you delightful?



Engaging the Text: Wonderfully Made

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Give each child a piece of paper with the words “My name is” at the top and “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” at the bottom. Help them write their name in the blank, then invite them to draw a picture of themselves in the center.

After everyone has finished their drawings, invite them to share their work with the group. Encourage them to share details about their drawings and what choices they made, such as “These are my brown eyes,” “Here is my curly hair,” etc.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Divide the group into pairs and give each student a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Invite the children to draw a picture of their partner. Each child gets to keep the picture the other person drew of them.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- When you were drawing, what was it like to pay close attention to someone else? Did you notice something about your partner you hadn’t noticed before?
- When you were being drawn, what was it like to have someone paying close attention to you?
- None of us is a professional portrait artist, but was there something your partner drew, or left out, that you didn’t expect?
- Do people see us differently than we see ourselves? In what ways could that be a good thing?



Engaging the Text: Wonder Wall

Leader: “Wonder” is a good word for this psalm and today’s theme. We can wonder how someone did a bike trick or how God created the mountains or how pickles are made. We might wonder why Sage from the skit needed glasses or how to help a friend feel better.

Write the words “I wonder ...” at the top of a large sheet of poster paper. As a small group, brainstorm as many things as you can to wonder about. These can be big questions, about God, faith and life, or fun questions such as “I wonder what my dog dreams about.”



Consider sharing the list of wonderings from children with your congregation’s pastor or children, youth and family minister, so they can use the wonderings to guide future teaching.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION (FOR ALL AGES)

- Of all the things we wondered about on this list, which is your favorite? Why?
- Have you ever had a big question and felt as if no one was listening? How might you let someone know? *[You could ask if they have time to talk.]*

Digging Deeper for Younger Children

- Who helps you learn new things?
- How can you teach others new things?
- What do you wonder about God?
- What does God wonder about you?

Digging Deeper for Older Children

- Did any of the wonderings make you think about something you hadn’t before?
- How does curiosity make the world a better place?
- Why is it good to ask questions and track down answers?
- Are there some questions that don’t have answers?
- What do you wonder about God? What does God wonder about you?

Tell the children the Wonder Wall will stay up throughout VBS, and invite them to add wonderings to the wall whenever they think of something. For older children, you could also invite them to share anything they know about any of the wonderings and let them teach each other.



If you are doing this activity online, consider using an online whiteboard, available as an app for most computers, or visit Slido (www.sli.do) to create a free word cloud that children can type into directly.



LESSON FOCUS: In life and in death, God is with us and those we love.

SMALL GROUP TIME: DAY 4



Today's topic can be challenging for some children. If parents and caregivers have been invited to join the children for Day 4, include them in this small group time. At times during this activity, some children may get a little silly. That's OK! When the topic is uncomfortable, it's natural to try to ease the tension with silliness. Even when talking about heavy topics, we don't need to be morose to learn about God.

Materials Needed

- Poster board — one piece to make the puzzle pieces and another large, differently colored piece to reassemble the puzzle on
- Markers, colored pencils, crayons
- Tissue paper in various colors
- Glue
- Paintbrushes
- Paper
- Paint
- Small smooth stones, one per child

Opener: Healing Heart

Before the session starts, make a heart puzzle by cutting a large heart shape out of poster board and then cutting the heart into puzzle pieces. For younger children, cut one piece per child. For older children, you may want to cut more pieces to make the puzzle more challenging. Regardless of the age group, it can be helpful for children to observe an adult leading by example. Before inviting the children to share their worries or fears, share with them one or two of your own to model trust of the group.

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Invite them to write or draw one thing they worry about or fear.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Invite them to write or draw on a piece of the heart something or someone that weighs heavily on their heart. This could be someone who has died, something they are worried about or a fear they have.

Without telling the group what the shape is, have them work together to reassemble the heart on top of a large piece of colored paper.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- How did you work together to finish the puzzle?
- What shape did we make? [*A heart.*]
- What does a heart symbolize? [*Love.*]
- Notice how, even though the heart is whole, there are still cracks where the pieces come together. Our hearts can be like this too. Sometimes, when we lose someone, long for them or even argue with them, we can feel as if something is missing or broken in our hearts. If we are worried about something or afraid, being strong can be hard. But God promises us that, no matter how broken our heart might feel or how worried we might be, God is always with us and can help us be whole again. [*Point out the colored paper visible through the cracks.*] In between the cracks, we still see the colored paper. Sometimes we need to be reminded that God's love can shine through those cracks in unexpected ways.
- Today we are talking about grief and how we heal when someone dies. This is a heavy topic, and it's OK to feel lots of feelings. We can help support and care for each other, and just like this heart, we can heal while the cracks are still there.

Encountering Scripture: Romans 14:6-9

Leader: When a person or animal dies, their body stops working. They don't breathe or eat or move anymore. We cannot see them or call them on the phone. Death is part of life. As Sage said in the skit, everything that is living – even trees, even people – eventually dies.

Death can bring up a lot of feelings. You might feel sad or angry. You might miss the person or pet who has died. You might laugh at happy memories you shared or be thankful for what they taught you. All these feelings can be part of grief.

When you feel big feelings, it can help to talk with someone you trust, such as a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, teacher, pastor or friend.

If someone you love is sad, you can help them just by being there with them. They may want to talk, or they may just want to sit quietly. Being present with someone is a great way to help a friend.

Someone you can always talk to is God. As Sage explained in the skit today, God is always with us.

Read Romans 14:6-9. Use a translation that will be accessible for children.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION (ALL AGES)

- Have you ever felt sad or lonely? What or who helped you feel better?
- Have you ever helped someone who was feeling sad or lonely? How did you help them?
- Check in on your feelings. What feelings does this bring up in you?
- Do you have questions about anything we've discussed today?

Kids ask excellent questions. If you don't know the answer or aren't sure how to answer, don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." This teaches kids that it's OK for them to not know everything. Ask the children, "Who might know the answer?"

Digging Deeper for Older Children

- What are some things the reading says people do to honor the Lord? *[Observe the Sabbath, eat.]*

- At the end of the passage, Paul says that Jesus is the Lord of the living and the dead. That means that God is always with us and with everyone else. In all our feelings, we are never alone.
- Check in on your feelings (again). What feelings does this bring up in you?
- Do you have questions about anything we've discussed today?

Kids ask excellent questions. If you don't know an answer or aren't sure how to answer, don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." This teaches kids that it's OK for them to not know everything. Ask the children, "Who might know the answer?"



Engaging the Text: Feelings Tree

With the group, brainstorm a list of emotions. Assign one color of tissue paper to each.

Provide each child with a sheet of paper and invite them to draw a tree with roots, a trunk and branches, but no leaves. (For younger children, preprint a picture of a similar tree or help them draw one.) Pass out small pieces of tissue paper, ensuring that each child has at least one piece of each of the different colors. Using the tissue paper, add "leaves" to the tree. Make sure every color is used.

Invite the children to share their creations but also give them permission not to share.

After everyone has finished, share the following with the group:

RESOURCES TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH

These resources can be helpful to families.
If possible, share this list with adults before Day 4 of VBS.

VIDEOS

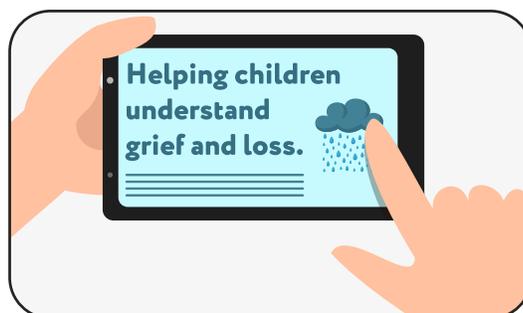
- The website Sesame Street in Communities offers a series of videos and other resources to help children understand grief and loss: sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/grief/.
- In “Blue Fish Is Dead,” episode 320 of the PBS program *Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood*, Mom and Dad Tiger help Daniel explore his sadness after his favorite goldfish dies: www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwjaeavuWts.

BOOKS

- In Warren Hanson’s classic children’s book *The Next Place* (Waldman House Press, 2002), gentle verse and exquisite color illustrations reveal a safe and welcome destination free from earthly hurts and filled with wonder and peace. It offers a comforting message of hope and of compassion for the bereaved.
- In Patrice Karst’s relatable and reassuring *The Invisible String* (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018), a mother tells her two children that they’re all connected by an invisible string. “That’s impossible!” the children insist, but still they want to know more: “What kind of string?” The answer is a simple truth that binds us all: a string made of love.
- In Lisa Tawn Bergren’s *God Gave Us Heaven* (Waterbrook, 2008), Little Cub wonders aloud, “What is heaven like?” as the sun rises on her snow-covered world. With tender words, her papa describes a wonderful place, free of sadness and tears, where God warmly welcomes his loved ones after their life on earth is over.

OTHER RESOURCES

- Along with the videos above, Sesame Street in Communities offers activities and articles for talking to kids about death and grief: sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/grief/.
- NPR’s “Life Kit” podcast has a series called “Parenting: Difficult Conversations” that includes an episode on talking to children about death: www.npr.org/2019/04/24/716702066/death-talking-with-kids-about-the-end.



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LESSON FOCUS: God loves us and teaches us how to love one another. John 13:3-15, 33-35

SMALL GROUP TIME: DAY 5

Materials Needed

- Markers, colored pencils, crayons
- Paper

Opener: Pass the Movement (For Younger Children)

Have the group stand or sit in a circle. The leader starts by making a movement. This should be something simple such as touching your ears, hopping once, patting your head, etc. The leader then “passes” the movement to the person next to them, who does the movement and “passes” it to the person next to them, until it gets all the way around the circle. Then the person next to the leader gets to pick a movement to pass.

After everyone has had a chance to pick a movement, see if you can remember all the movements and do them in order. You can even play some music, do the movements to the music, and create your own small group dance.



If you are doing this activity virtually, make sure to say the name of the person to whom you are passing the movement. The leader may want to call out the name of the next child so that everyone gets a turn.

Opener: Find the Leader (For Older Children)

Have the group sit or stand in a circle. Select one child to be the first detective and have them step out of the room. Select one child to be the leader. The leader chooses a movement for everyone in the group to perform, such as clapping, patting your head, snapping, tapping your knees, etc. Everyone continues doing the movement the leader has started until the leader starts a new movement, then everyone switches to that movement.

Let them practice a few transitions, then invite the detective back into the circle. The detective’s job is to guess who the leader is. The group tries to keep the leader’s identity a secret by paying attention and switching between movements quickly. When the detective figures out who the leader is, the leader becomes the detective and a new leader is chosen.

Encountering Scripture: John 13:3-15, 33-35

Start with a couple of questions for conversation:

- What does love mean?
- How do you know someone loves you?
- How do you show someone you love them?

Read John 13:3-15, 33-35. Use a translation that will be accessible for children.

Leader: Back in the time of Jesus, everyone wore sandals and walked around on dusty roads. This made people’s feet very dirty. Jesus washed the disciples’ feet to show he loved them. Then he asked the disciples to do the same for others.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- This week we have been talking a lot about healing. Taking care of someone who is sick or sad is an act of love. Another example of love is celebrating with another person when they are happy. What examples of love have you learned about this week?
- Jesus showed love by washing feet. How do you like to show love? How do you like others to show love to you?
- How can you share Jesus’ love with others?



Small Group Time: Day 5

Engaging the Text: Affirmation Circle

Since this is the last day the group will be together, give them time to share affirmations. Have one child at a time sit in the middle of the circle, and invite everyone else to say something they like or appreciate about that person. For younger children, write down the affirmations of them on separate paper plates or cards and give them to the children after the activity.

Alternative activity for older children: Give each child a paper plate and invite them to write their name in the center. With tape, attach each child's plate to their back. Invite the children to wander the room and write affirming messages or words on each plate.

Engaging the Text: Prayer Tree

Before your small-group time, draw the outline of a tree on a sheet of poster paper. Invite the group to brainstorm people or situations they could pray for. These could be people or projects they have learned about this week in Story Time, other projects in your community, or whatever is in their hearts. Have them write their prayers on leaves made out of construction paper, to hang on the branches of the tree, or simply write them on the posterboard, in the branches.



For virtual VBS, you can create a tree using a whiteboard app, Google Slides or another collaborative drawing tool. Draw the tree with large leaves and invite children to add their prayers to the illustration. Once the tree is done, print it out and display it in your church building, or share it through a congregation newsletter.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- What new things did you learn to pray about this week?
- The ELCA has a saying: "God's work. Our hands." How is God's work being done in some of the places we learned about?

- How can you be God's hands in the world?
[Encourage younger children to think about being a good listener, helping a sibling, picking up trash to care for the planet, etc. Older children can talk about local volunteer projects, helping raise money for ELCA World Hunger, etc.]
- With older children, talk about how prayer is not only you and I talking to God but also God talking to us. Prayer can help us center our minds on how to do God's work. Images such as a prayer tree can help us remember to pray, and serve, in the world.

Closing Prayer

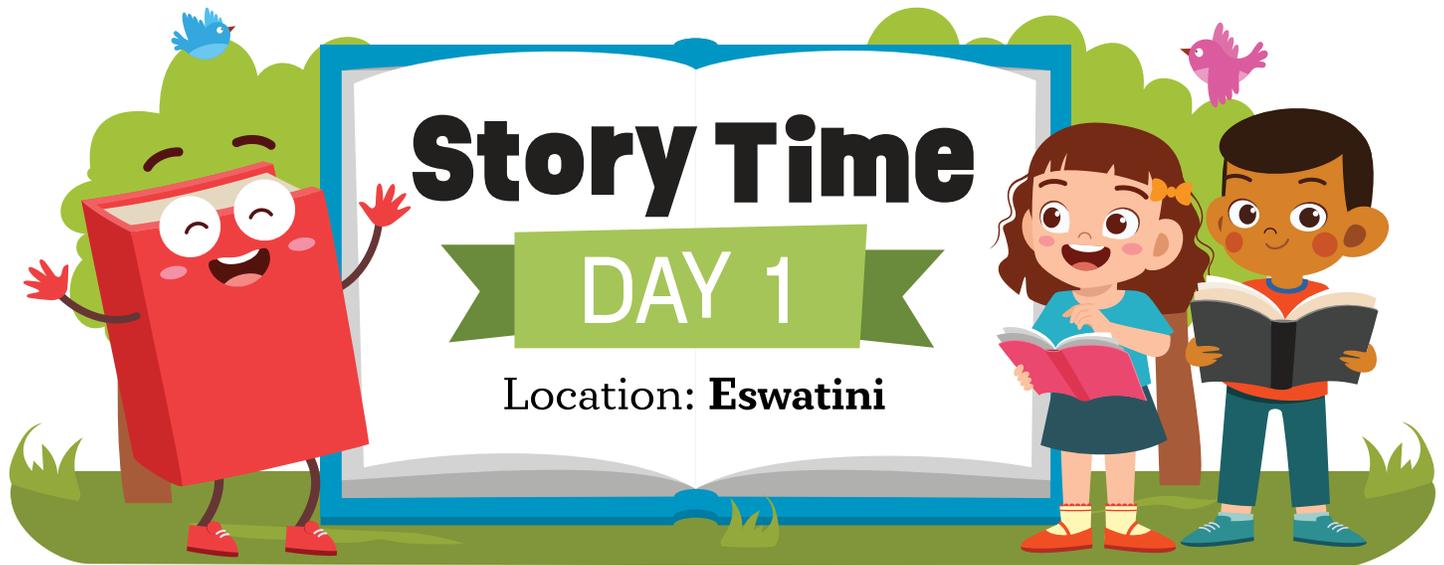
Pray in thanksgiving for each member of your group. For older children, you can invite them to go around the circle and pray for the child next to them. For younger children, name each child by name.

Leader: Dear God, thank you for this wonderful week of VBS and all the fun we have had. I thank you especially for every member of this group. Thank you for: *[name all the children]*. Let them feel your love and help them share your love with everyone they meet. Amen.



Story Time





On page 55, you will find a map of the world. This can be used for a quick opening activity at the start of each Story Time station and will tie together the stories from each day, helping children see the many places in the world where God is at work. If you will be seeing different groups in the rotation, you may want to make a copy for each group, so that each can have its own map to follow with you during its Story Time.

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

Doing Story Time online? ELCA World Hunger has videos you can show during a live session, or you can share the links for households to watch at home. Visit the ELCA World Hunger collection on Vimeo to find videos of the Story Time stations for "Tree of Healing." You can find these at vimeo.com/showcase/7224146.

Make the Connection

Leader: Today's theme is "Roots of Creation." In our opening skit, we met Sage, dressed as a tree, and learned about how wonderful God's creation is. God created the whole world so that each part of the world is tied together. Animals and plants need humans to care for them and tend to them, and we humans need the water, air, plants and animals for us to live and be healthy. We know that we are part of creation. In today's story, we will learn how one community is using the gifts of God's creation from its garden to be healthy.

Facts About Eswatini

- Eswatini (*ESS-wah-TEE-nee*) is a small country in the southeast corner of Africa. It is about the size of the state of New Jersey. Its neighbors are South Africa and Mozambique.
- Eswatini used to be known as Swaziland. In April 2018, on the 50th anniversary of its independence, it changed its name to Eswatini, which means "land of the Swazis."
- Sibebe Rock in Eswatini is the second largest rock in the world.
- Eswatini is one of the only countries in the world with both black rhino and white rhino. It is also home to 132 other species of mammals, 500 species of birds, 111 species of reptiles and amphibians, and over 3,500 species of plants.

Leader: Today's theme is all about health. In fact, this whole Vacation Bible School is about health! Why do you think being healthy is important? *[Allow a variety of responses: We can live longer, we can be healthier to help other people, etc.]*

If we want to be healthy, we need a lot of the things that God's good creation provides, such as clean air and water, vegetables and open spaces to play!

We know that God provides more than enough for us to be healthy and happy, but not all our neighbors can use and enjoy the gifts that God creates. Sometimes, their families may not have enough money to afford food. Or they may not have a store to buy food from or land to grow their own food on. Through ELCA World Hunger, our church works to end hunger. But we can't do it alone, so we work with other churches around the world. This helps us meet some really great people, and it helps us find new ways to work together to make sure that everyone can enjoy God's gifts.

One way the church helps in Eswatini is by working with children, especially by making sure they have enough food to eat and the support they need to do well in school. The church also helps their families find new ways to make money for other needs.

One of these children is Sphamandla Mamba (*spa-MAHND-la MAHM-ba*). Sphamandla lives in Eswatini with his family. Sphamandla had trouble concentrating in school sometimes because he was hungry. Then the church in his community started a garden project to help people grow their own fresh, healthy vegetables. Because of the garden, Sphamandla can get the food he needs for his body to grow without his family having to pay a lot of money for fresh veggies. He can get vegetables straight from his garden, or his family can trade the vegetables for other foods. Sphamandla is a lot healthier now, and he is even doing better in school.

Sphamandla's caregivers have been able to do more with the garden than feed him! They buy seedlings to grow more food that they can sell, so that they have money to buy other things. Sphamandla says, "The garden gave us wonders in one of the days, when one of our neighbors decided to give us a chicken in exchange for the vegetables. This gave us a chance to have chickens [because of] the garden."

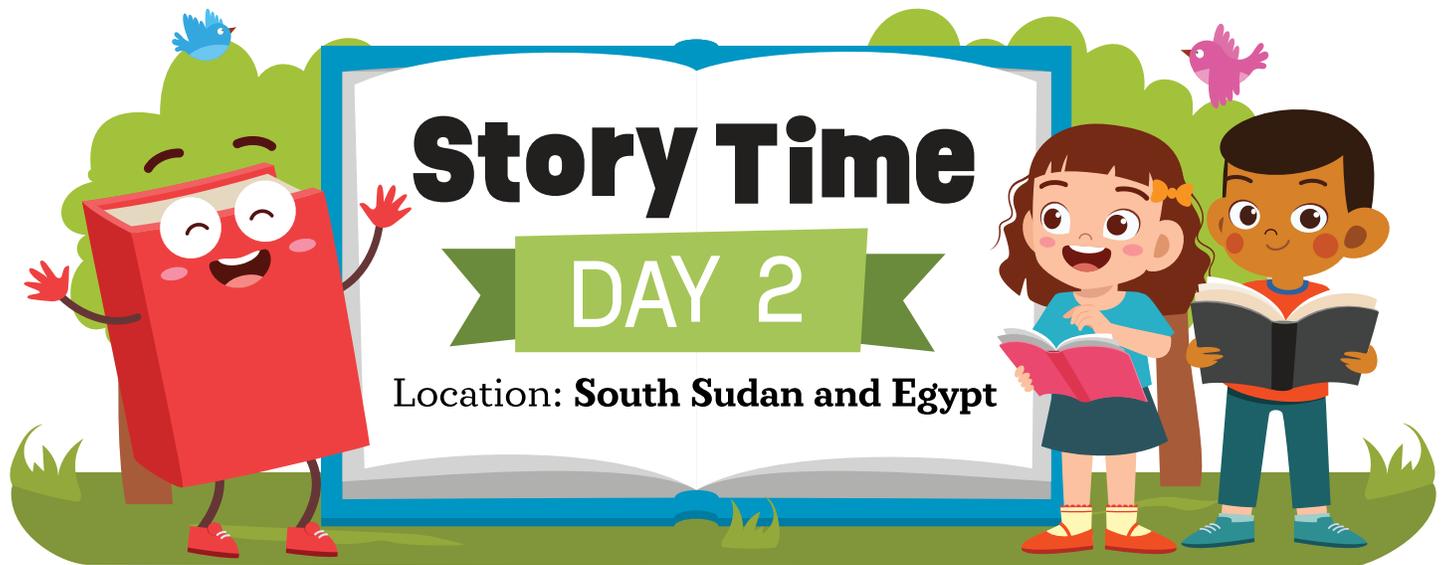


Why do you think Sphamandla called getting the chicken a "wonder"? *[Allow time for responses.]* The chicken can provide his family with eggs, which have protein. Trading vegetables for the chicken also shows how all the neighbors in his community can work together to help each other. That's wonderful too!

Because of their hard work, the garden helps Sphamandla and his caregivers enjoy God's gifts and be healthy – today and in the future. By working with other churches and walking with our neighbors, such as Sphamandla, our church can be part of God's work in the world, helping everyone enjoy the gifts of creation and the healthy lives God wants for us.

Sphamandla is happy about this, too. He has the food he needs, and he is doing better in school. He has a message for the church in southern Africa and for us: "We really appreciate the help from the Lutherans, and we can't thank them enough." Sphamandla also says that he is praying for our churches, so that God will keep helping us to help each other. We can give thanks for Sphamandla and his family, too, especially for their helping us see how God's gifts of soil, seeds and gardens can make a big difference in our lives and the lives of our neighbors.

How can we see God at work in Eswatini? What can we learn about God from farming and gardening? *[Allow time for responses.]*



If you are using the map activity for the Story Time station (see the note for “Story Time: Day 1”), help the children find and mark Egypt and South Sudan on the map. Be sure to teach the children the names of the countries and share some of the facts below.

Make the Connection

Leader: Today’s theme is “Healthy Minds and Bodies.” In our opening skit, Sage shared that health is about our minds as well as our bodies. Having a healthy mind does not mean we are happy all the time. It’s OK to be happy or sad, silly or scared, mad or glad. God created us with all kinds of emotions for all kinds of situations. In today’s story, we will hear about a family who went through some challenges as they got used to living in a new place. During the skit, Sage said that one way we can help someone who is struggling is to “be like a tree and listen.” In this story, we will learn about people who listened to this family and helped support them.

Facts About Egypt

- The longest river in the world, the Nile River, flows through Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea. Almost everyone in Egypt lives along the river. The rest of the country is desert, very hot and dry, with very little rain.
- One of the most famous sites in Egypt is the Great Pyramids. These giant towers were built 5,000 years ago.
- The ancient Egyptians had very advanced medicine for their time. Five thousand years before the discovery of penicillin, a medicine derived from mold and used to treat infections, the ancient Egyptians recommended applying moldy bread to wounds to prevent infection.
- Egypt invented the 365-day calendar, pens, paper, musical instruments, locks and the world’s first prosthetic body part, which was a toe.

Facts About South Sudan

- South Sudan became a country in 2011, which makes it the youngest country in the world.
- South Sudan’s flag has three horizontal stripes: the black stripe represents the people, the red stripe represents their blood, and the green stripe represents the land. Along the side is a blue triangle, representing the Nile River, with a yellow star inside it, representing hope.
- The Nile River (which runs through Egypt) also runs through South Sudan. The White Nile, one of the rivers that feeds the Nile, runs through Juba, South Sudan’s capital. It joins the Blue Nile in neighboring Sudan’s capital.
- Boma National Park in South Sudan is home to one of Africa’s largest animal migration routes. Every year, two million animals migrate through the park in “mega-herds.”



Leader: In our story yesterday, we heard about a boy from Eswatini (*ESS-wa-TEE-nee*) whose garden provided him with fresh food that kept him healthy and helped him concentrate in school. Today our story is about a family in Egypt. The two girls in the family, Eman and Razan, also were having trouble in school because of their families' health, but for some different reasons than the boy in Eswatini.

Do you remember the skit from today? What did we learn about health from the skit? [*Mental health is part of our overall health.*] Sometimes the things that keep us from being healthy are easy to notice. Maybe we have an injury, such as a cut, or maybe we have a fever. But health is about much more than just our body. God cares about the health of our whole person, every part of us, including our bodies, minds and souls – and the health of our families and communities. As a church, we care about every part of ourselves and our neighbors. And that means caring about our thoughts and our emotions.

Have you ever felt sad or upset? [*Allow time for responses.*] What made you feel that way? [*Allow time for responses.*]

Sometimes we can have a lot of things going on in our lives, and they can get a little overwhelming. We might feel sad, upset or even angry, and we might have trouble focusing or sleeping. When this happens, we can need help to be healthy. We need help learning how to deal with our thoughts and feelings when we don't feel well, and we need help dealing with the things that are making us sad or angry.

Who has helped you when you were feeling big emotions, like if you were really angry or very sad? [*Allow time for responses.*]

In our story today, we are going to hear about one family who were able to get the help they needed because of a partner of ELCA World Hunger and our church.

Eman and Razan are sisters. Eman is 3 years old, and Razan is 4 years old. Their family is from the country of Sudan, but now they live in Egypt,

Story Time: Day 2

where Eman and Razan attend preschool. When they started preschool, their teachers noticed that Eman and Razan were often quiet and would cry when the teachers tried to talk to them. Sometimes, Eman and Razan would get angry, too, and would scream or throw their toys.

When the teachers talked with their mom, Hiba, they noticed that Hiba wasn't feeling well either. She seemed really tired and sad. When the teachers asked Hiba about this, Hiba told them that things had been hard for her family. Her husband worked two jobs, one in the morning and one at night, but they still didn't have enough money to buy the things they and their children needed. Hiba also told them that she sometimes didn't like going home because they had to share their apartment with other families, so it was really crowded there.

How do you think all that made Hiba feel? What about Eman and Razan? *[Allow time for responses.]*

After hearing from Hiba, the teachers talked with Eman and Razan's father and learned that he was worried about not having enough money for his family. He wanted the situation to be better and wanted to provide a better life for his family, but he felt helpless.

Have you ever felt as if things weren't going well? That can be hard to deal with, especially if you aren't sure they will get better. For Hiba, her husband and their daughters, struggling to make enough money to care for themselves was very hard and made it difficult for them to be healthy. Hiba was sad and tired. Her husband was often angry and frustrated. And Eman and Razan were a little bit of each – sometimes angry, sometimes sad, and often very quiet.

Hiba and her family got the help they needed from a group called St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) in Egypt. Here *[show picture from page 43]* is a picture of someone working with people at StARS. Our church helps to make the work of StARS possible. The people at StARS helped Hiba and her husband find a counselor to talk to about their thoughts and feelings. They also made sure Eman and Razan met with a school counselor, who worked with their teachers and parents to help the girls be healthy and do better in school.

StARS helped in other ways, too. One big thing that made it hard for Hiba and her family to be healthy was the stress they felt over not having enough money. When the StARS people learned about this, they told Hiba and her husband that Eman and Razan could go to school for free.

What other things do you think their family could afford with the money they saved? *[Allow time for responses.]*

StARS even gave Hiba and her husband money for transportation, so they could take the girls to classes and to meetings with a school counselor who would talk with them about their thoughts and feelings. Now, Eman and Razan are doing a lot better in school and join in activities with other children more often.

We want to be happy all the time, but that might not always be possible. Sometimes we feel sad, and that's OK. Sometimes we feel angry, and that's OK. Sometimes we don't feel like talking to other people, and that's OK too. But when we feel this way all the time or most of the time, or when that feeling makes it hard for us to care for ourselves or other people, we might need help to get better.

Hiba knew that she and her family needed help. The people at StARS knew it too, and they found ways to work with Hiba, her husband, and Eman and Razan to make sure that the family would be healthy – in their bodies, their minds and their emotions. But StARS also knew that helping the family be healthy meant helping them with some of the things that were making them sad, angry or tired.

Our church supports StARS' work because we know that ending hunger isn't just about food. It's about the health God wants for us. Sometimes that means making sure there are clinics or hospitals to treat our bodies. Sometimes it means making sure that neighbors such as Hiba and her family have what they need to be healthy and hopeful for their future. That's part of God's promise to us, and it's part of how God wants us to help each other and our neighbors.





If you are using the map activity for the Story Time station (see the note for “Story Time: Day 1”), help the children find and mark Bangladesh on the map. Be sure to teach the children the name of the country and share some of the facts below.

Make the Connection

Today’s theme is “Different Bodies, Different Gifts.” God creates each of us differently, with our own gifts and talents and our own needs. God also gives us a community to support and help us be healthy and happy. In the story today, we will meet a young man who became blind, and hear how his hard work helped him find new ways to succeed in school and support himself. No matter how God creates us, each of us has gifts that we can share with others, and each of us is an important and loved part of God’s world.

Facts About Bangladesh

- Bangladesh is home to the Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta, the largest delta in the world. A delta is a flat wetland that forms where a river meets a sea.
- The national animal of Bangladesh is the Royal Bengal tiger. Its roar can be heard up to a mile and a half away.
- Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, is one of the most densely populated cities in the world.
- Bangladesh has six seasons, *grisma* (summer), *barsa* (rainy), *sarat* (autumn), *hemanta* (late autumn), *seeta* (winter) and *basanta* (spring).

Leader: What do you think it means to be healthy?
[Allow time for responses.]

[Ask each child individually:] What do **you** think it means to be healthy?

These are all good answers. And they are all different! There are some things we all need in order to be healthy, but being healthy can mean different things to different people. What are some things we need to be healthy? [Allow for a variety of responses.]

That’s right, we need all these things. We need healthy food, water, exercise, shelter and someone to care for us if we get sick or hurt. Sometimes we might need other kinds of help too. If we need help walking, we might use a cane or a special chair with wheels to get around. Or maybe you’ve seen someone speaking sign language with their hands to communicate with someone who can’t hear.

In today’s story, we’re going to meet a young man who needed help from his neighbors because his eye was hurt.

Story Time: Day 3

Imran Ali is a young man from a country called Bangladesh. Imran's parents separated when he was only 2 years old, and Imran went to live with his grandmother. One day, while doing his schoolwork at home, Imran was hit in the eye with a pen. His family took him to the hospital, but Imran was hurt badly, and he lost sight in his left eye. Eventually he lost sight in his right eye too. Imran couldn't see anymore, so the people at the hospital told him that he should learn Braille.

Do you know what Braille is? Maybe you've encountered it before. Braille is a kind of code writing that uses raised dots that people can read on signs or in books by feeling the dots with their fingers. Sometimes Braille is used in places such as elevators, so that people can read the floor number for each button. Braille is one way people can communicate with each other and learn.

Note: The children will get a chance to experience Braille in the Simulation Station for today. If your group is doing rotations, ask if they've had a chance to work with Braille yet today.

Imran worked hard to learn Braille, and within a short time he knew it very well. Knowing Braille helped Imran stay in school and finish the tests for his grade. His real passion, though, is for music. He took a music class at school and then spent three years training in music. He even placed first in a song competition and second in four other competitions!

In addition to making music, Imran likes to make crafts from jute. Jute is a fiber that can be used for a lot of different things. It can be twisted into rope, woven into fabric for clothes or bags or tied into floor mats. It is a really useful thing! Imran learned about jute and how to use it when he was in a program at a center for people who are blind or visually impaired. Now he makes crafts from jute for his job. The center is supported by our church through ELCA World Hunger.





Imran didn't expect to lose his eyesight when he was young or to need to learn new ways of doing things. With his hard work and the help of the center, he did well in school, found a job he likes and still enjoys music. He just had to reach his goals in new ways.

How do you think we can better understand how blind and visually impaired people experience the world? *[Allow a variety of responses.]* What other ways has God given us to experience the world around us? *[Hearing sounds and voices, smelling scents, touching/feeling, etc.]*

What do you think Imran had to learn to do differently once he lost his eyesight? *[Learning Braille, learning to walk or move without sight, learning music, etc.]*

If we lose one of our senses, or if we have a harder time using one of our senses, such as sight or hearing, we might have to learn to do things a little differently

and we might need help from other people. Being healthy means learning what we can do and what we might need to do in different ways. When Imran first got hurt, his family thought that being healthy meant being able to see with his eyes. But once he lost his eyesight, being healthy meant something different for Imran. It meant learning new ways to read and finding new ways to learn, work and play.

Imran's story teaches us that we can be healthy and happy in a lot of different ways. His story also tells us that having different abilities doesn't mean that we can't find new ways of doing things, and that, no matter what abilities we have, we are all important in our community. We can't do everything on our own. We all need help sometimes. Just as God creates each of us in beautiful and wonderful ways, God also gives us friends, family, neighbors and the church to love us and help us be the best we can be.



If you are using the map activity for the Story Time station (see the note for “Story Time: Day 1”), help the children find and mark Palestine on the map. Be sure to teach the children the name of the country and share some of the facts below.

Make the Connection

Today’s theme is “Healthy Grief.” We cannot talk about healing without talking about death, because death is a part of life. In our skit today Sage talked about some of the feelings we might have when someone we know has died. We might feel sad, scared or angry sometimes. Other times we might laugh at happy memories or be thankful for our time together. Today we will learn about a community that is grieving the loss of someone it loved. We will see how the members honored her memory and how God walked alongside them in their grief.

Today is a challenging day of VBS. We are learning about death, trauma and grief, which can be very hard for young children. Today’s story involves the death of a much-loved member of a community in Palestine. As you plan the Story Time for today, talk with other leaders at your VBS to learn if there are children who may be significantly affected by the topic. If parents and caregivers are not joining the children for Day 4, you may want to have another adult with you to support the children.

For children aged 6 and under, you may want to replace this story with a story from a children’s book to help them think about the topic. Here are some great books for young children that you can use instead of the story below:

- In Jon J. Muth’s *Addy’s Cup of Sugar* (Scholastic Press, 2020), a young girl learns an important lesson about loss after her beloved cat is hit by a car.
- In Frances Hill’s *The Bug Cemetery* (Henry Holt and Co., 2002), a cemetery for bugs becomes a poignant reminder of death and life for children after their dog dies.
- In Heather Smith and Rachel Wada’s *The Phone Booth in Mr. Hirota’s Garden* (Orca Book Publishers, 2019), a community finds a novel way to mourn and remember loved ones lost during a tsunami.

Facts About Palestine

- Palestine is called the Holy Land because it is sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.
- Olives are an important part of Palestinian culture. Some olive trees in Palestine are 4,000 years old, the oldest in the world, and have been tended by the same families for generations.
- The Dead Sea is 1,400 feet below sea level, the lowest point in the world. It is called the Dead Sea because it is so salty that fish and plants cannot live in it.
- In Palestine, Christmas is celebrated three times. The Western Christian tradition celebrates on Dec. 25, the Greek Orthodox tradition on Jan. 6 and the Armenian tradition on Jan. 18.

Leader: We've learned a lot about health this week, and we learned that God wants us to be healthy and able to enjoy all the gifts of creation. In fact, a lot of the stories about Jesus are stories of Jesus healing people. In the Bible, we read about Jesus helping people see again, helping heal people's bodies so they can walk on their own and helping sick people become well.

Those are really great stories about how God can help us. What do you think that tells us about God? *[Allow a variety of responses.]*

In the Bible, Jesus tells us that God's wish for us is abundant life. "Abundant" means more than enough. When something is abundant, we mean that it will never run out; there will always be plenty.

What do you have a lot of, at home or in our church? *[Allow time for responses. As children respond, use the term "abundance" to describe what they are sharing. For example, "It sounds as if you have an abundance of socks at home."]*

If abundance means a lot of something, what do you think "abundant life" means? *[Allow time for responses.]* Abundant life means life that never ends, and more than that, it means life filled with good things. That's not just God's "wish" — it's a promise! God is at work through us and our neighbors to fulfill that promise. God works through doctors, nurses, counselors and other

people who help us heal; through people who take care of the earth by planting or caring for plants and water; and through each of us when we show other people we care about them.

Sometimes we can celebrate God's promise of abundant life, as when a friend gets better after they've been sick. But sometimes we have to look a little harder to see God's promise at work. Sometimes the people we love who are sick don't get better. When they don't get better, what happens? *[Allow time for some responses.]* When someone is too sick or too hurt, or when they can't get the care they need, they can die.

When people we care about die, it can be hard to remember that God promises us life. We might ask why the person died or why God didn't make them better. This can be a hard time, and we might be sad that the person is dead. We might even be angry or feel lots of different things at the same time.

Our church works with other churches and neighbors all over the world to help everyone enjoy God's gifts and to live healthy, happy lives. That gives us so much to celebrate with our neighbors. We heard some stories already this week about things we can celebrate, such as new gardens or new chances for kids to go to school. Loving our neighbors means sharing in each other's joys, but it also means walking together when sad things happen, such as death.

One of the churches that we work with through ELCA World Hunger is in a place called Palestine. Palestine is in an area that people call the Holy Land because it's the area where Jesus and other people in the Bible lived. The Holy Land is important to Christians, Jews and Muslims.

In Palestine, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land helps neighbors get the food they need by delivering meals to their homes *[show picture from page 50]*. This was a huge help during the COVID-19 pandemic. Do you remember some of the things you had to do during the pandemic? *[Stay at home, do school on computers, wear masks, etc.]* To stay safe, many people had to stay at home and not go out to the store or to work. For many of us and our neighbors, going out meant we could catch the virus and get really sick.



One of the people the church delivered meals to was a woman named Kawkab, who lived in a city called Ramallah. This is Kawkab on the right [show picture from page 51]. Kawkab had survived cancer, but because of her health, she couldn't go out to get food. She had hardly any food in her house, so she was really happy when the church brought meals to her home.

When the workers from the church came to her home, Kawkab was always happy to see them. She would greet them with smiles and tell them stories. She would even give the workers advice about how to stay healthy. Kawkab would make them smile and laugh, and the workers loved visiting her. Even though she couldn't go out, she would try to spread joy, and she always looked forward to the next time they would be able to get together for fun and parties.

Our church and the church in Palestine hoped that Kawkab and her neighbors would stay healthy during the pandemic. But sometimes that doesn't always happen. Sadly, Kawkab became sick with COVID-19 and died during the pandemic. The workers from the church in Palestine were sad

that they wouldn't be able to hear her stories anymore or see her when they dropped off meals.

Sometimes, no matter how hard we try, death can take people we love, such as Kawkab. The church was with her until she died, showing her God's love and seeing in her God's Spirit, which keeps us positive even during hard times. With support from our church, the church in Palestine provided meals and company to Kawkab, and she gave back smiles, laughter and stories.

When someone we love dies, we have to remember the many different shapes that God's promise of abundant life can take. For the church in Palestine, Kawkab's happiness and friendliness were signs of God's promise. Through her, the people who delivered her meals could feel happy and laugh even during the hard time of the pandemic. And for Kawkab, the church lived out God's promise by helping her and sharing food with her. Even though she is no longer alive, we can remember her story and see signs of God's promise at work.

That doesn't mean we can't be sad or mad when someone dies. Even Jesus was sad when his friend



Lazarus died. In the Bible, when Jesus found out his friend died, he cried. Sometimes we may cry when someone dies, because death isn't part of God's plan for us.

What do you think God's plan for us is? *[For us to have life.]*

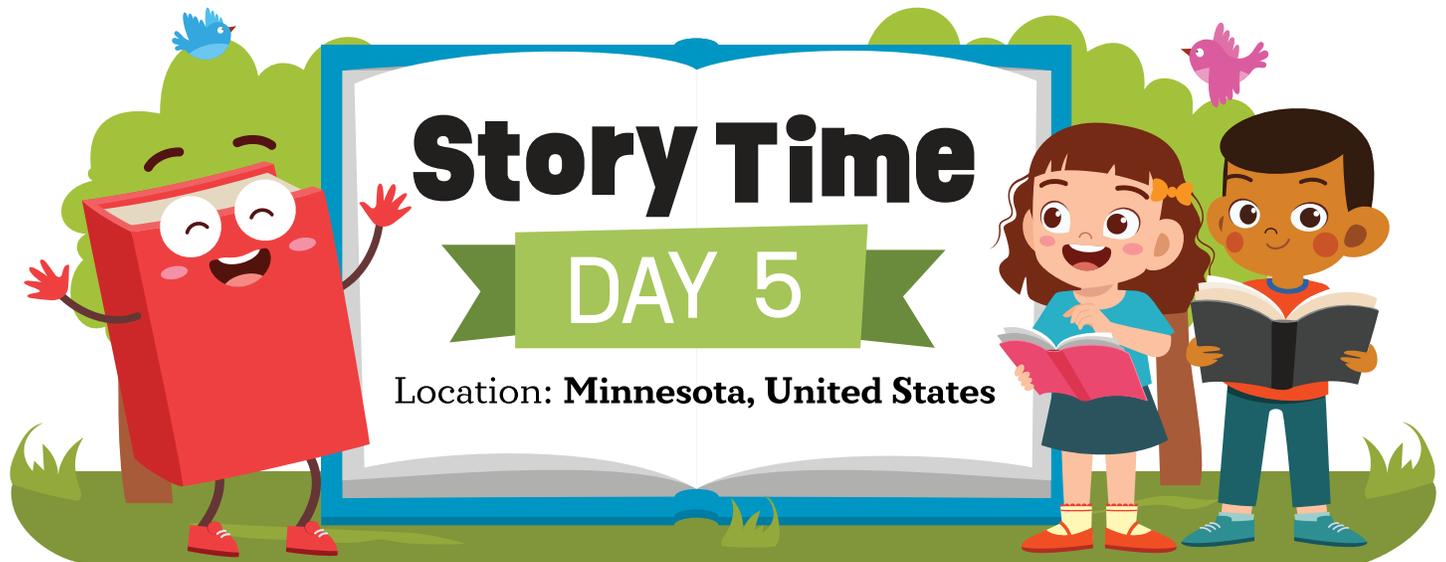
God doesn't make people die, and God doesn't refuse to help people who are sick. God is always at work to help us enjoy God's promise of abundant life. Sometimes that means helping sick people get better. Or it means working through churches to make sure that our neighbors feel loved and welcomed, or it means God working through people such as Kawkab to bring a smile to someone's face. When someone dies, it means celebrating the good things they did in life – and remembering that, even now, they are with God in heaven, being loved and welcomed by God.

What are some ways we can celebrate people, whether they are alive or dead? *[Allow time for responses.]*

Remembering God's promise is one way we can stay healthy when bad things happen, such as death. Remembering God's promise means remembering that God is still at work and still with us, even

when we are sad. And it means remembering that we can be there for each other – giving food to neighbors, sharing our stories and learning from other people's stories, and helping remind each other that we aren't alone, even when we are sad. That's all part of being healthy. Kawkab helped the workers from the church be healthy by helping them smile and laugh and by sharing her advice with them. The workers from the church helped Kawkab be healthy by giving her food and spending time with her. And we can help each other be healthy by sharing in each other's sadness during bad times.

We're going to hear a lot of stories about our church helping people be healthy. But being healthy doesn't always mean being happy. Being healthy can also mean letting ourselves be sad when someone dies or gets hurt, or being there for each other when that happens. That's different from helping our neighbors plant gardens or go to school, but it's part of being church. And it's one way God works through each one of us as signs of God's promise.



If you are using the map activity for the Story Time station (see the note for “Story Time: Day 1”), help the children find and mark Minnesota on the map. Show the children where Minnesota is and where you are, and share some of the facts below.

Make the Connection

Leader: Our theme for today is “Bearing Fruit.” In “Tree of Healing” VBS, we have learned that God wants us to be healthy. Today’s theme – “Bearing Fruit” – is about how God makes God’s promise of health for us a reality by working through us and our neighbors to make sure our whole community can be healthy. In today’s story, we are going to hear about how God is at work through a community in Minnesota, where neighbors are joining together to grow a garden that provides more than just food. It is a place where everyone is welcome and can share in the healthy food they grow and the healthy friendships that make it possible.



Leader: What is this a picture of?

That’s right! It’s a garden. What kinds of things grow in a garden? *[Allow a variety of responses.]* What do you need to make plants grow in a garden? *[Dirt, sunshine, water, etc.]*

We need lots of things to help our gardens grow. Have you ever grown a garden? What kinds of things did you grow? If you could have your own garden, what would you like to grow?

OK, I’m going to surprise you a bit. Do you know one of the best things that can grow in a garden? *[Allow time for responses.]* One of the best things that can grow in a garden is friendship! We might not need to water other people or put dirt on them, but in our gardens

Facts About Minnesota

- The first people to call Minnesota home were the Dakota and Ojibwe.
- The name “Minnesota” comes from a Dakota word meaning “cloudy water” or “sky-tinted water.”
- As we will learn in the story, people from all over the world now call Minnesota home. For example, the Twin Cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul) are home to the largest Somali population in North America.
- Minnesota is known as the “Land of 10,000 Lakes,” but it is home to many more, including Lake Superior, the largest freshwater lake in the world.

we can grow strong friendships with other people. In fact, that’s one of the reasons our church supports so many gardens in our country and around the world. Gardens are special places where people can work together and learn from each other. There might be people who can share with us what they know about plants or help us lift heavy bags or shovel dirt to keep our plants healthy.

One way we can help each other be healthy is by making sure everyone can participate and enjoy the things they need for good health, such as fresh food, exercise and friendships with other people.

This *[picture on page 52]* is Rice Street Garden in St. Paul, Minn. It’s the second largest community garden in the state. There are over 250 different plots in the garden, which means more than 250 different families can have a space there. When we give to ELCA World Hunger, our gifts support Rice Street Garden, but keeping the garden growing takes a lot more than that. Each of the gardeners contributes, volunteering at the garden during the year, keeping it clean and well-organized. And each gardener gives money to the garden to buy supplies. In exchange, they get to enjoy time in the garden and all the fresh veggies they grow.

This is why people such as Elodie work so hard in their gardens. Elodie, one of the gardeners at Rice Street, came to Minnesota five years ago as a refugee. Refugees are neighbors who have been forced to leave their homes because it isn’t safe for them to

stay. Sometimes they are forced to move to a totally new country and start again, and that can be hard to do. Elodie and her daughter came to Minnesota from a country called the Congo, where they had lived for a long time. Living in Minnesota was hard for them. Elodie was lonely and couldn’t speak English very well, which made getting a job difficult.

One day Dana, pastor of Galilee Lutheran Church in St. Paul, visited Elodie at her home. Pastor Dana told Elodie about the Rice Street Community Garden, which their church had just started, and invited Elodie to join the garden.

Elodie did, and now she can walk right to her plot from her apartment. She grows all kinds of vegetables there and cooks them every day for herself and her daughter. In fact, Elodie has so many vegetables that she can keep her freezer full all winter! Those veggies help Elodie and her daughter stay healthy, but they don’t cost extra money.

To Elodie, the garden means more than just vegetables. “When I plant my vegetables I feel at home,” she says. “I feel like I have the food from my country. When I eat my vegetables that I planted, I feel very good.” Working in the garden helps Elodie feel at home in Minnesota. It reminds her of the vegetables she used to grow in the Congo. The garden makes her feel welcome and proud of herself. We need those feelings to be healthy too, maybe even more than we need vegetables!

What things make you feel “at home” somewhere?
[Allow time for responses.]

At the garden Elodie met a young man named Grace. Another refugee from the Congo, Grace was still in school when he came to the United States without his parents. Like Elodie, Grace grows vegetables that he remembers from the Congo, especially dark, leafy greens called cassava leaves. Together, Grace and Elodie tend each other’s gardens, and Elodie even keeps vegetables for Grace in her freezer, so that he can have them to eat during winter too.

Rice Street Garden provides a place where newcomers to the U.S., such as Grace, Elodie and her daughter, can feel welcome and important. At the garden they can meet new friends and find ways to support their neighbors, just as Elodie does by storing Grace’s vegetables in her freezer.



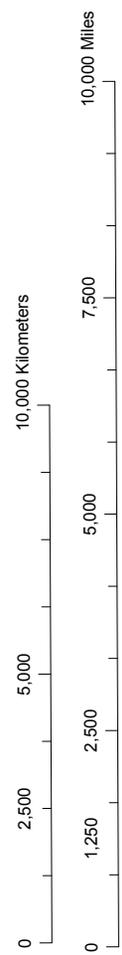
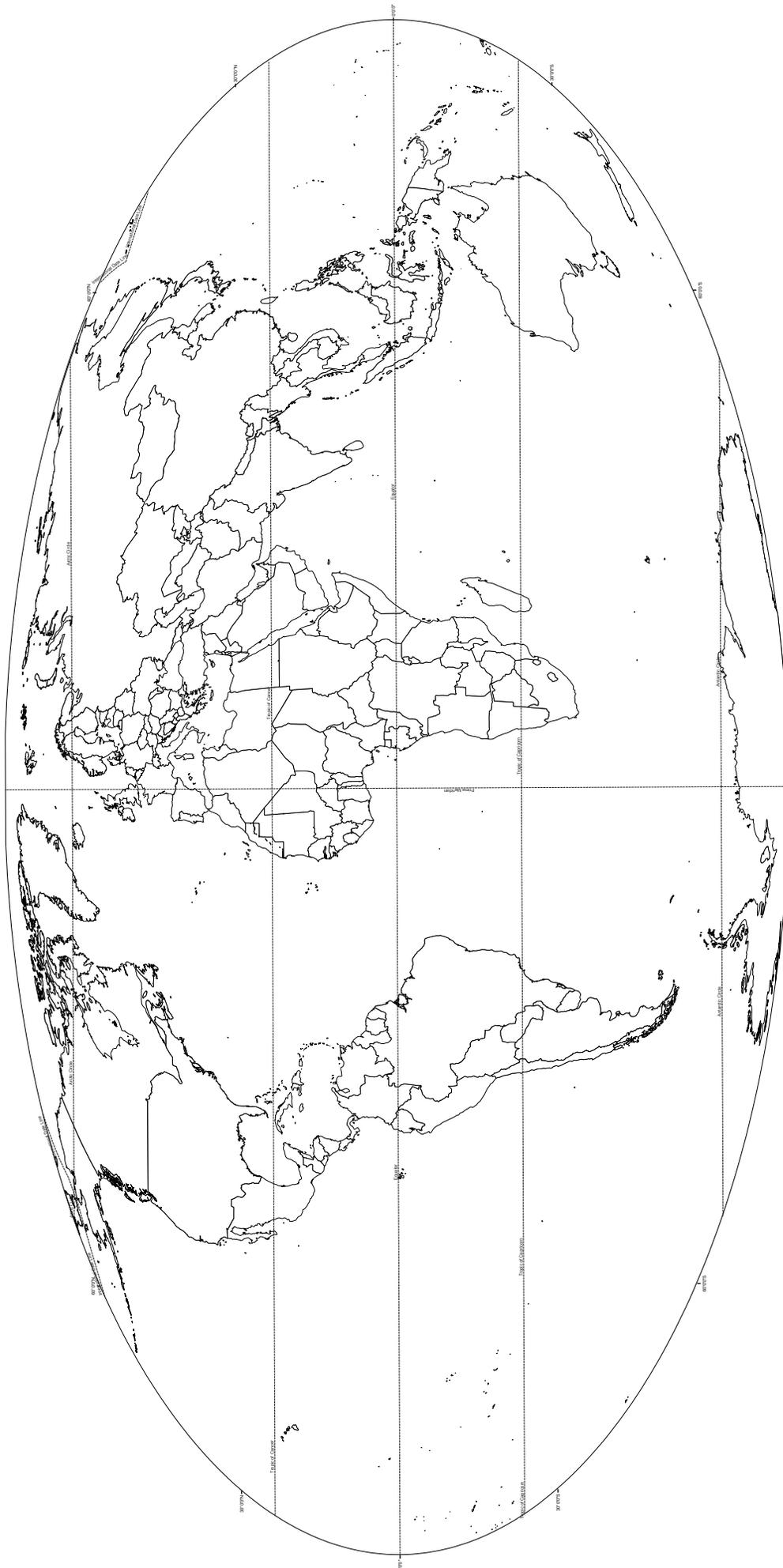
Because of ELCA World Hunger, the church in St. Paul and our church know how important it is to be healthy in both our bodies and our spirits. But the people at Rice Street Garden know that many of their neighbors don't have access to everything they need to be healthy. That's why the church works with other partners in the community to help the gardeners in other ways.

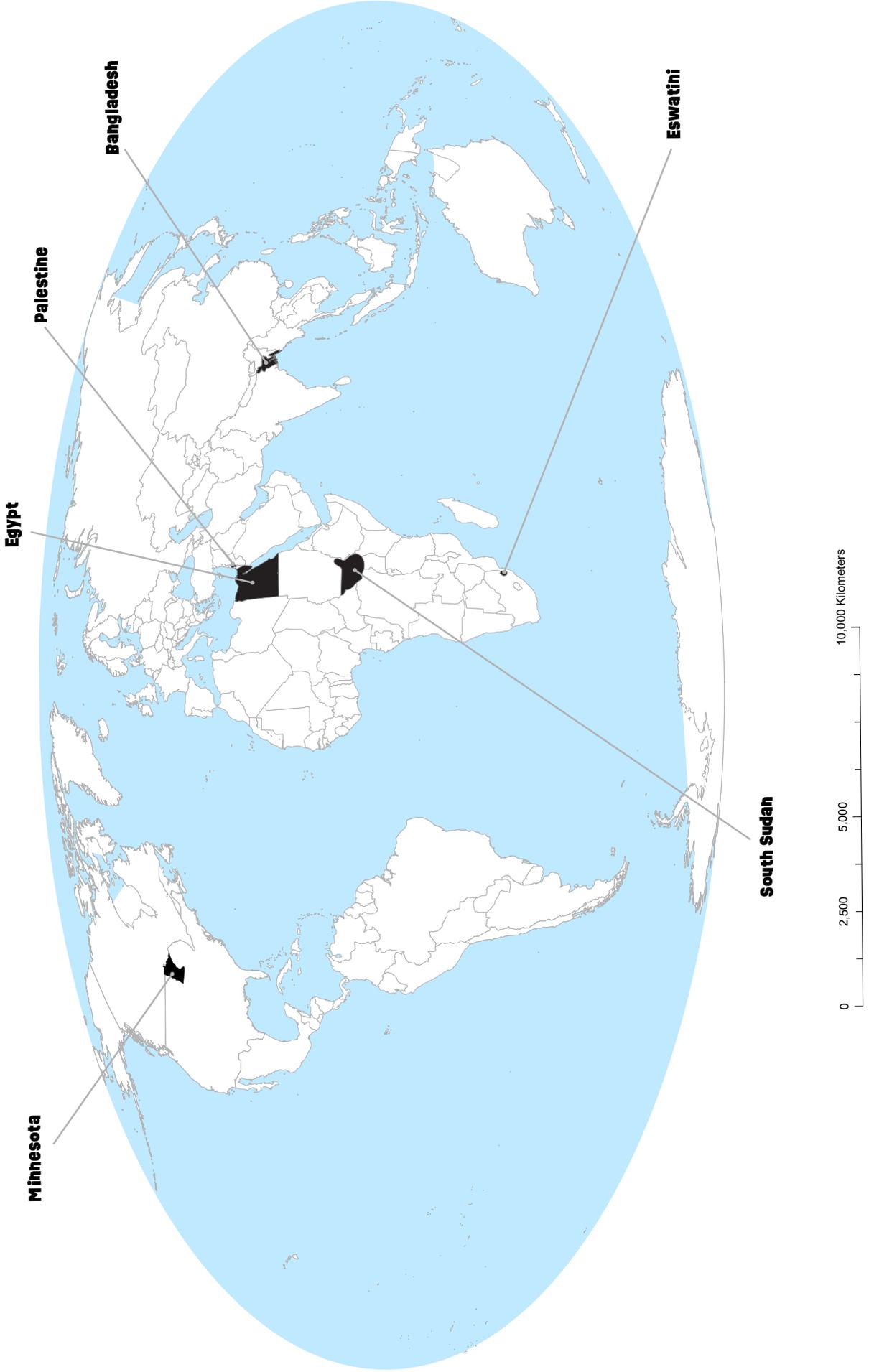
Do you remember one of the challenges Elodie faced when she came to the U.S.? She didn't know English very well. That's true of many neighbors at Rice Street Gardens. To help them, volunteers from the garden worked to improve people's English skills. The garden program makes sure that neighbors at the garden can get their eyes tested and their teeth checked, so that they can stay healthy and get help if they need it. Last year, it also worked with a local partner to make sure neighbors from the garden could get vaccines to protect them from COVID-19.

We all need healthy food, safe water and clean air to be healthy. What are some other things we need to be healthy? *[Allow time for responses.]*

We need lots of things to be healthy. We need friendships with our neighbors, places where we can feel welcome and important, and the right kinds of help to make sure we are healthy and safe. This is what makes Rice Street Garden so important. The volunteers and gardeners there are growing more than food – they are planting the seeds for the kind of world God wants for us, a world where everyone has enough to eat, help when they need it and a strong community that makes them feel welcome and loved.

The story of Rice Street Garden can help us think about what we can do for each other in our communities. Maybe we can talk with our neighbors, just as Pastor Dana talked with Elodie. Maybe we can work together, as Elodie and Grace do. Either way, when we work together to make sure everyone is healthy and welcomed, we can see God working through us in some amazing ways.





Games





Education involves learning basic information (such as recognizing colors) and deeper values (such as the diversity of God's world). Some of the games today involve learning colors and patterns, whereas others involve learning to see the many colors of God's world.

GOD'S COLORS

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

Instructions

This game works best outdoors in a large, safe space. Gather a wide variety of paint-sample strips from a local hardware store. Cut each strip so that each color tone is a separate piece. Mix the pieces in a bag or basket.

Gather the children and explain that they will each draw a certain number of cards of different colors from the bag or basket. Three or four colors is a good number to start with. Once they draw the colors, they have to find items in the space that match the colors. Define the boundaries of the space they must stay within and explain any other rules (for example, if they find a flower that matches the color, they should leave the flower where it is rather than pick it).

Once they find their items, they will come back to the leader. You can offer an incentive to the first person who returns and accurately matches all their colors. Or you can set a time limit for how long they have to find their matches.

Materials Needed

- Paint-sample strips from a local hardware store



MAKE A RAINBOW

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

Materials Needed

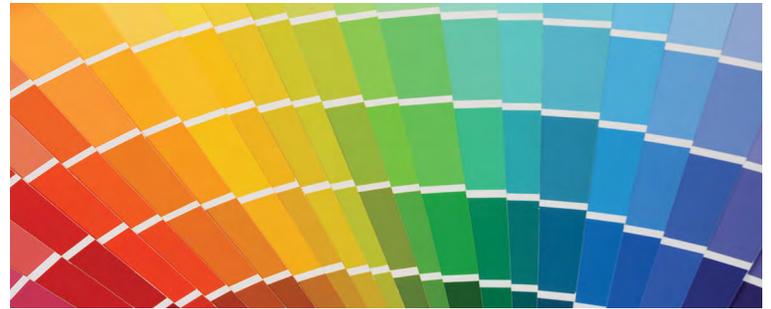
- Paint-sample strips from a local hardware store

Instructions

This game is a variation on Go Fish. Gather a wide variety of paint-sample strips from a local hardware store. Cut each strip so that each color tone is a separate piece. Mix the pieces in a bag or basket so that there is a variety of colors that match the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and purple. For younger children, you may want to post a picture of a rainbow or a list of the colors somewhere in the space.

Explain to the children that they will each draw a certain number of cards of different colors from the bag or basket. Each child should choose seven cards without looking and hold them so that the other children cannot see them. (For younger children, use a clothespin to clip the cards together like a fan.)

Once everyone has their cards, explain that the goal of the game is to gather all the colors needed to make a rainbow by asking each other for different colors. In each encounter, each child can ask the other for one color. If the other child has the color, they must pass it to the first child; if not, they will tell the first child, "Make a rainbow!," and that child must find the color from another child. If a child cannot find all the colors to make a rainbow, they can trade in one color card and draw another. The game continues until all or most of the children have made a rainbow.



COLORFUL STORIES

AGE RANGE: 8 YEARS AND OLDER

Materials Needed

- Paint-sample strips from a local hardware store

Instructions

Cut each paint-sample strip so that each color tone is a separate piece. Mix the pieces in a bag or basket, and invite each child to draw six to eight cards. The children can look at the cards and need not hide them from others.

In this game, each child will come up with a simple story that includes each of their colors. You may want to set certain parameters. (For example, don't use all the colors in one sentence such as "The car was red, green, yellow, blue and orange"). Give the children a minute or two to think of a story and then invite them to share their stories with each other.

As a final round, combine all the colors and place them in a row. Invite the children to sit in a circle around the colors and then tell a story in a round, with each child adding a line that includes the next color in the sequence. For example, if the first colors in the row are green, yellow and blue, the first child will start the story and include something green, the next will continue with something yellow, the third will continue with something blue, and so on.

DIKETO

AGE RANGE: 6 YEARS AND OLDER

This jacks-style game is popular across southern Africa.

Materials Needed

- Ten small stones, balls (such as golf balls or ping-pong balls) or marbles (balls or marbles may roll too easily out of the circle!)
- Two slightly larger balls (such as tennis balls) or marbles
- Chalk or tape to mark an area on the ground

Instructions

- 1) Place ten small stones in a circle drawn on the ground, a foot or so in diameter (like a jacks circle).
- 2) Two players take turns tossing the larger stone in the air, grabbing as many small stones as they can with one hand, and then catching the large stone before it hits the ground.
- 3) If they do not catch the large stone, they put the small stones back and the other player gets a turn.
- 4) When all the stones have been taken from the circle, the player with the most stones is the winner.



LUDZIWO (POTTERY) BALANCING RACE

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

Pottery is a primary handcraft in Eswatini. People living in rural communities use pottery to transport all sorts of items, including water for cooking, drinking and cleaning. Often this is a household chore, but during community festivals, women will race to see who can travel the fastest while balancing a pot on her head.

Materials Needed

- Small plastic buckets with handles, the kind used in a sandbox
- Something to transport — water is fun, but for inside activities use ping-pong balls or tennis balls

Instructions

Set up a series of races depending on the age and ability level of your group. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- 1) Race to fill a large bucket. Younger children can carry the small buckets in their hands; older children must hold them atop their heads the entire time (including as they pour the contents into the large bucket).
- 2) Pass water from bucket to bucket; the team with the most water at the end wins. Again, younger children can use their hands; older children must hold the bucket atop their heads.
- 3) Have the children navigate an obstacle course while holding a bucket of water, either in their hands or on their heads, depending on their age and ability level.



“PEACE, BE STILL” TAG

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

Materials Needed

- Cones
- Large open space

Instructions

- 1) Establish the boundaries of the play area.
- 2) Designate one child as the tagger, who must chase the other children to tag them.
- 3) When the tagger successfully tags another player, the tagger must say “Peace, be still!” and the other child must freeze and remain frozen until another player who has not been tagged chooses to unfreeze them.
- 4) The game continues until all runners have been frozen, then a new person becomes the tagger.

TURTLE RACE

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

Players “race” to be the *last* person to travel a set distance. Moving slowly teaches body control and helps still the mind.

Instructions

- 1) The goal of the game is to walk as slowly as possible and be the last person to reach the far side of a room or marked space.
- 2) Players must be moving forward all the time; no stopping or standing.
- 3) Players may not move diagonally; they must keep moving forward.
- 4) Players must stay on their feet the whole time; no crawling or rolling.
- 5) Points can be awarded for the most creative movement while slow-walking.



PASS THE TOUCH

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

“Passing” a gentle touch around a circle helps with focus and concentration.

Instructions

- 1) Have the group sit or stand in a circle, roughly an arm's length apart from each other.
- 2) Reach out hands to gently touch palm to palm, with one person's hand facing up and the other person's hand facing down.
- 3) The leader starts the energy by gently pressing against the palm of the person's hand. That person then presses the hand of the person next to them, and so on, until the energy gets all the way around.
- 4) After the group has successfully passed the energy around a couple of times, try again with everyone's eyes closed.



SQUISH 'EM

AGE RANGE: 8 YEARS AND OLDER

In this fast-paced but simple game, players must squish stress-inducing “troggs” before their stress level rises. The game highlights how our stress level rises when we feel overwhelmed or feel like we can't succeed, and suggests ways to manage stress. To play, visit mindyourmind.ca/tools/squish-em.



KABADDI

AGE RANGE: FIRST GRADE AND OLDER

Sort of like tag but with a twist, kabaddi is the national sport of Bangladesh and is popular throughout southeast Asia. Teams of players take turns trying to tag each other, with points scored for the most tags. Highlights from World Cup kabaddi are available on YouTube.

Instructions

- 1) Before you begin, divide the playing area in half, using chalk or a rope to mark a center line. Divide children into two teams, which will alternate between offense and defense.
- 2) Choose one player from the offensive team to be the “raider.” When play begins, this person runs into the defending team’s territory and tags as many players as they can.
- 3) The raider must shout “kabaddi-kabaddi-kabaddi-kabaddi” as long as they are inside the defending team’s territory. When they run out of breath, their turn is over. The offense scores a point for every player the raider tagged before running out of breath.
- 4) Offense and defense switch, and another player gets a turn being the raider.
- 5) There are some great ways to adapt this game so that everyone can play:
 - Give the raider a pool noodle to use for tagging people, or provide them with soft balls they can throw to tag opposing players.
 - Reverse the chant and have the defending team yell “kabbadi” as the raider tries to find and tag them.
 - Mix both teams together and have them tag as many other players as possible while the adult leader chants “kabbadi.” Players get a point for every person they tag.



PAC-MAN TAG

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

Pac-Man tag is usually played on a basketball court, but it can easily be set up in any large open space. The game is played with one or two taggers, like the ghosts in the arcade game. Both the tagger and the other players must move along the lines of the basketball court (or the chalk or tape lines set up in the area). They can step forward or backward, but they cannot leave the lines. To set up your area so that everyone can play, use cones to mark the corners and line intersections. Tie string to a stick or pole, insert the stick or pole into the mouth of a cone and pull the string to the next cone. Players can hold the string to guide them along the lines.

CALL-AND-RESPONSE TAG

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

This tag game is similar to the swimming pool game Marco Polo.

Instructions

- 1) Choose one player to be the tagger. If needed, the tagger can have a helper. Before the other players move, blindfold the tagger or ask them to cover their eyes.
- 2) Give the other players five seconds to move to a place in the defined playing area and then freeze.
- 3) The tagger must find and tag someone. When the tagger yells "Jesus!," all the other players must yell, "Loves me!" in response.
- 4) Once another player is tagged, they become the tagger and the game restarts.

MUSIC GAMES

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

Imran, the young man in the Story Time today, loves music. Here are a couple of games involving music and movement that are good for any age. To ensure that the musical games will be inclusive of all children, use visual cues along with the music. Try playing a video with the music on a screen and then pausing it to freeze the game. Or, in addition to stopping the music, turn the room lights on or off to indicate the change.

Musical Balloons

Each child gets a balloon. While the music is playing, invite them to dance around and toss the balloon in the air. When the music stops, everyone freezes and whoever is holding a balloon wins.

For older children, have one fewer balloon than there are people, and have everyone race to grab a balloon when the music stops.

Statues

Direct the children to move to the music but, when it stops, be still as statues, holding their positions until the music starts again. For an additional challenge, before each round of dancing, give them a pose they must freeze into (a ballerina, a monkey, a rock star, etc.).





One of the gifts that Kawkab, the woman from Story Time today, offered to her community was laughter and joy. This day may be a bit demanding emotionally for children. Use the game time today to give space for lots of motion and laughter, which are an important part of building community.

Below are some carnival-type games for all ages that can be set up together, so that children can try them all. Offer small, nonedible prizes for the games, ensuring that every player gets to “win” a prize. Feel free to add as many games as you like to this mini-carnival!

WATER SPRAY GAME

Materials Needed

- Golf tees
- Golf balls
- Three or four small squirt guns



Instructions

- 1) This game can be set up in the grass or on a table, using foam blocks to hold the golf tees.
- 2) Place the tees about 12 inches from each other and place the balls on them.
- 3) Create a line of tape or sidewalk chalk about 6 feet from, and parallel to, the line of tees. (For younger children, you may want to place the line a little closer.)
- 4) Give each player a squirt gun and have them stand behind the line.
- 5) The winner is the first person to knock a ball off a tee with their squirt gun.
- 6) Alternate version: the winner is the person who knocks down the most balls within a set time limit, such as 15 or 30 seconds.

BEANBAG TIC-TAC-TOE

Materials Needed

- Six beanbags of one color
- Six beanbags of another color
- Sidewalk chalk

Instructions

- 1) On a hard surface, draw a large tic-tac-toe board. Draw a line about 3 feet away from one side of the board. Draw another line an equal distance away from the opposite side of the board.
- 2) Players choose beanbags of one color. Each player gathers their beanbags and stands behind the line on their side of the game board.
- 3) The game proceeds like tic-tac-toe, but to “claim” a square, players need to toss their beanbag into the square.
- 4) If a player knocks another player’s beanbag out of the square, they can claim the square as their own.
- 5) Play continues until someone claims three squares in a row.

BALL TOSS

Materials Needed

- Piece of thick cardboard or wood, 18 by 36 inches
- Colored tape, paint or stickers to decorate the board
- 10 large disposable plastic cups
- Tacks or staples
- Ping-pong balls

Instructions

- 1) Before the game, write “Ball Toss” across the top of the board and decorate it with colored tape, paint or stickers.
- 2) Using tacks or staples, attach the bottoms of the cups to the board so that the cups are arranged in a tight pyramid.
- 3) Set up the board so that it leans slightly backwards.
- 4) Draw a line parallel to and 6-8 feet away from the board (for younger children, about 3 feet).
- 5) The goal of the game is to get as many ping-pong balls in the cups as possible. For older children, try setting a short time limit, such as 30 seconds, to make the game more challenging.

WIPE THAT SMILE OFF YOUR FACE (for younger children)

Instructions

- 1) Players sit in a circle, with one person in the middle.
- 2) The players in the circle must keep a straight face while the person in the middle tries to make them laugh.
- 3) The player in the middle can make any sort of silly face they want, but they cannot touch the other players in any way.
- 4) After 10-20 seconds, the player in the middle uses their hand to “wipe” the smile off their face and hand it to a new person, who then takes their turn in the middle.
- 5) Continue until everyone has had a chance to be in the middle.

NO LAUGHING ALLOWED (for older children)

Instructions

- 1) Players sit in a circle, facing each other.
- 2) Each player takes a turn telling a very short silly story. This can be a true story about themselves or another person, or it can be completely made-up. Here are a few examples to get you thinking:
 - One time I laughed so hard I snorted hot chocolate through my nose.
 - A cat got its head stuck in a paper bag and ran around the house bumping into things.
 - One time our teacher couldn't find his sunglasses. He looked all over until he realized they were on his head.
- 3) As soon as one person finishes their story, the next person in the circle starts telling one.
- 4) Continue telling stories until someone bursts out laughing.

ROCK STAR

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

In a day with a lot of big conversations and feelings, this game gives children some space to just run around and be silly.

Instructions

- 1) Have the group stand in a circle. Inform them that they are all super-famous rock stars.
- 2) From the people in the circle, each is to pick someone in the group as their bodyguard and someone as their fan without telling anyone who.
- 3) When the game starts, everyone tries to stay behind their bodyguard and away from their fan.
- 4) Because everyone has a different goal and no one knows the identity of anyone else's bodyguard or fan, chaos should ensue.
- 5) Let the game run for a few minutes, then gather the group, have them pick new fans and bodyguards, and play again.



ALL YOU NEED

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

God has created our world with abundance, providing for our every need. When we consider how God is calling us to work with our neighbors to ensure that everyone has access to the resources they need to thrive, one important thing to remember is that everyone has something to contribute – and something to gain. This game is a fun way to help players of any age remember that God has given us “all you need” to be part of building a just world where all are fed.



Instructions



- 1) Before starting the game, explain to the children that they will need to find one thing each to bring back to the group. This could be a book, a pencil or writing utensil, a piece of clothing – anything that is not fragile or edible. You may want to limit the size or weight of the object. Generally, objects smaller than a pillow work best. Don't tell them what they will be doing with the object just yet. Give them one or two minutes to find their object.
- 2) Once the children have their objects, divide them into groups of five to seven people. If there are few children, form smaller groups and invite them to find two objects instead of one. Ask the children to sit in a circle and place their items in the center.
- 3) Using the suggestions below or your own ideas, call out an item for the groups to make (for example, a pizza).

- 4) Using only the items they have assembled, each group must make their best version of the item requested in the allotted amount of time. Keep the time short to keep the game moving; 1 to 2 minutes works best.
- 5) Once the time is up, invite a member from each group to present to the rest of the large group the “item” they have created. The members presenting should rotate with each round of play so that each person has a chance to present a creation.
- 6) As the children get used to the game, invite them to shout out their own “item” for the groups to make.

Suggestions for Items

- Slice of pizza
- Sandwich
- Teddy bear or stuffed animal
- Robot
- Nativity scene (invite them to use their bodies for this item)
- Car
- Musical instrument
- Birthday cake
- Mystery item (make whatever they want and have other groups guess what it is)



Friendship-building Games

A big theme in today's Story Time was making new friends. Here are two games that teach about friendship.



YOU'RE SMART. YOU HAVE GREAT MANNERS. I LIKE YOUR STYLE. YOU HAVE THE BEST LAUGH. I APPRECIATE YOU. YOU ARE THE MOST PERFECT YOU THERE IS. YOU LOOK GREAT TODAY. YOU'RE STRONG. YOU'RE AN AWESOME FRIEND. YOU LIGHT UP THE ROOM. YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF YOURSELF. YOU'RE MORE HELPFUL THAN YOU REALIZE. YOU HAVE A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOR. YOU ARE BRAVE.



THAT'S ME (for younger children)

Instructions

- 1) Players sit in a circle, with one person in the middle.
- 2) The person in the middle says something about themselves – a favorite color, animal or food, for example.
- 3) Anyone who shares that affinity stands up and yells, "That's me!"
- 4) Keep playing until everyone has gotten a chance to be in the center.

THE COMPLIMENT GAME

Instructions

- 1) Players sit in a circle, with one person holding a beanbag.
- 2) The person with the beanbag compliments someone and then tosses them the beanbag.
- 3) The catcher then compliments someone and tosses them the beanbag.
- 4) Keep going until everyone has had a chance to compliment and be complimented.

Materials Needed

- Beanbag or other soft object to toss

BALLOON JUGGLE AND SORT

Instructions

- 1) This game works best in a large, open area. The goal is for the group to keep all the balloons in the air. The number of balloons you use depends on the age and ability of your group. For younger children, have one balloon per person, or fewer. For older children, have more balloons than people. Or start with one balloon per person and then add balloons to see how many the group can handle.
- 2) As the group starts to master keeping the balloons in the air, direct them to separate the balloons by color while still keeping them in the air.

Materials Needed

- Inflated nonlatex balloons (number depends on group)

Snacks



Eswatini

RECIPE

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

Slaai (Avocado Salad)

“Slaai” means “salad” in Afrikaans. Avocado, ginger, peanuts and lemons are all common ingredients in Swazi cooking. If you have children with nut allergies, this salad can be made without the peanuts.

Serves 24

INGREDIENTS

- 12 large ripe avocados, diced
- 1 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup grated ginger
- 3 teaspoons salt
- 3 cups crushed peanuts

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Mix lemon juice, ginger and salt in a large bowl.
- 2) Add avocado and mix gently.
- 3) Sprinkle with crushed peanuts.



SOMETHING TO BUY:

UMNCWEBA (BEEF JERKY)

People have been curing meat as a form of preservation for centuries. Beef jerky is not cured in the same way in the United States as it would be in Eswatini, but the processes are similar.

SOMETHING TO BUY:

CARROTS, PAPAYA OR PUMPKIN SEEDS

Eswatini is known for producing a lot of vegetables, both in the wild and in gardens and farms. Carrots and pumpkins are grown by farmers, while papayas grow wild. Fresh carrots, fresh papaya and shelled pumpkin seeds can be easy, healthy snacks for Day 1.



Egypt and South Sudan

RECIPE

SOMETHING TO MAKE: OPTION 1

Aswad Salad

Note: This recipe takes a bit of prep time.

Serves 24

INGREDIENTS

2-3 large eggplants, cut into cubes
 1 teaspoon olive oil
 2 cups plain yogurt
 1 cup mayonnaise
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon sugar
 Juice from one lemon
 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
 1 cup shredded carrots

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Heat oil in skillet over medium heat.
- 2) Add eggplant and stir-fry until lightly browned. Remove from heat and drain excess oil.
- 3) Mix yogurt, mayonnaise, garlic, salt, sugar, lemon juice and vinegar. Fold eggplant into sauce.
- 4) Garnish servings with shredded carrots.



Egypt and South Sudan



SOMETHING TO MAKE: OPTION 2

Taameya

Taameya, also called falafel, is a simple, tasty snack. If you make a double batch, you can use this snack again for Day 4.

Serves 24 taameya (dough can be frozen)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 15-ounce cans of chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 2/3 cup chopped fresh parsley or cilantro
- 8 garlic cloves, minced
- 1-1/2 cups minced white onion
- 4 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 cup flour
- Oil (olive or vegetable)
- Bread crumbs for coating (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- 1) With a food processor or blender, mix chickpeas, parsley, garlic, onion, sesame seeds, cumin, salt and pepper into a crumbly dough.
- 2) Mix in the flour one tablespoon at a time until the dough is no longer wet and sticky.
- 3) Refrigerate dough for 1-2 hours.
- 4) Form rounded tablespoons of dough into small discs.
- 5) Optional: Sprinkle bread crumbs onto discs and press them in.
- 6) Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat, swirling oil to coat pan.
- 7) Add discs to pan and cook until deep, golden brown, 4-5 minutes.



SOMETHING TO BUY:

RICE PUDDING

Store-bought rice pudding can be a simple substitute for roz bi laban, a popular snack in Egypt.



Bangladesh

RECIPE

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

Vegetable Wraps

Kathi rolls are a popular Bangladeshi street food. They are often made with meat, vegetables, spices and paneer, a soft cheese. Easy-to-make vegetable wraps are a healthy and easy alternative. Paneer is best cooked, so for simplicity, you can substitute mild feta, queso blanco or light cream cheese

Serves 12 mini-wraps

INGREDIENTS

6 12-inch, whole wheat tortillas
 3 cups fresh spinach
 2 cups shredded carrots
 3/4 cup light cream cheese or 1-1/2 cups feta cheese
 2 cucumbers
 1 pound cherry tomatoes, sliced in half
 Olive oil, salt, pepper

**DIRECTIONS**

- 1) Lay the tortillas on a flat surface.
- 2) If using cream cheese, spread two tablespoons on each tortilla. Divide the spinach and shredded carrots between the tortillas.
- 3) Slice the cucumbers in half, crosswise, then slice into thin spears, lengthwise. Divide among tortillas.
- 4) Add the sliced tomatoes to each tortilla and top with feta (if using).
- 5) Sprinkle with olive oil, salt and pepper to taste. Roll the tortillas up, tucking in the ends. Slice in half to make 12 servings.

SOMETHING TO BUY:

BAKED CHIPS

Potato chips are a popular snack among children in Bangladesh. Look for individual serving packages of baked potato chips or other vegetable chips.



Palestine

RECIPE



SOMETHING TO MAKE:

Falafel

Made from ground chickpeas or fava beans, this is a popular street food throughout the Middle East.

24 patties

INGREDIENTS

- 3 15-ounce cans chickpeas
- 1 cup fresh parsley leaves, stems removed
- 1 small onion, quartered
- 7-8 garlic cloves, peeled
- Salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Combine all ingredients except baking power in a food processor. Pulse until mixture is finely ground, like a coarse meal.
- 2) Mix in baking power.
- 3) Form into golf-ball-sized balls or flatten slightly for patties.
- 4) Oil a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes, flipping falafels over halfway through cooking.
- 5) Serve with hummus and tahini, or make falafel sandwiches with pita bread, hummus, falafel, lettuce, tomato and cucumbers.



SOMETHING TO BUY:

HUMMUS

Made by mashing chickpeas with tahini, lemon juice and garlic, this dip is popular throughout the Middle East. Serve hummus as a dip with pita bread, crackers or a variety of vegetables, such as carrots, bell peppers or cucumbers.



Minnesota

RECIPE



SOMETHING TO MAKE:

Wild Rice

Native to the Great Lakes region of North America, wild rice is the seed of a grass that grows in lakes and streams.

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

2 cups wild rice
 1 quart (4 cups) vegetable broth
 1 cup water
 3/4 teaspoon salt
 Optional: 1 cup yellow onion, diced small (1 small onion) and 1 cup celery, diced small (about 3 celery ribs)

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Dice onion and celery (optional).
- 2) Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan.
- 3) Bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer 45-50 minutes, until rice is split and tender.
- 4) Drain any remaining liquid. Serve drizzled with olive oil and additional salt to taste.

For a heartier meal, create a simple grain salad by adding chickpeas, sliced vegetables, oil and vinegar.



SOMETHING TO BUY:

LOCAL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES



The heart of today's Story Time is the community formed around a local community garden.

Introduce children to some of the flavors of your community by serving fruits and vegetables grown locally. If your church has a community garden, show the children what the food looks like as plants, to make the connection between gardens and the food we buy in grocery stores.

Crafts





PLANT A SEED

Note: This craft can also be planned for Day 5. An alternate craft option for Day 1 is on the next page.

Materials Needed

- Paper cups
- Markers or stickers for decorations
- Potting soil
- Seeds — green beans are recommended because they sprout quickly.

Directions

- 1) Decorate the outsides of the cups with markers or stickers.
- 2) Fill the cups most of the way with soil.
- 3) Moisten the soil.
- 4) Bury a seed in the soil, following the directions on the seed package for how deep to bury your particular seed.

Craft Connection

Eswatini

In Story Time we heard about a community garden in Eswatini that provides healthy food to its community. For this craft project we will be decorating a pot and planting seeds in it to grow our own healthy food.



GLUE BATIK (bah-TEEK)

Note: A popular craft in both Eswatini and Bangladesh, this is a two-day project to be started today and finished on Day 3 (see page 82).

Materials Needed

- For each child, a plain white T-shirt or a 10-inch square of white or cream-colored canvas or cotton fabric
- Fabric paint or acrylic paint
- Washable white glue or Elmer's blue, washable School Glue Gel
- Paintbrushes
- Pencil
- Plastic wrap or plastic placemat

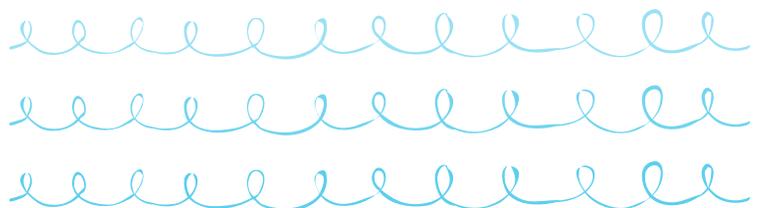
Directions

- 1) Older children may want to sketch their design on the fabric with a pencil first. Younger children can skip this step.
- 2) Place the plastic wrap or placemat under the fabric in case any glue seeps through. Squeeze white glue or blue glue gel onto the fabric to make a design. Older children can follow their pencil marks; younger children will enjoy making random designs with the glue.
- 3) Let the glue dry fully, for at least six hours.
- 4) Paint the fabric on Day 3. Older children can use paintbrushes to fill in designs; younger children can simply dip-dye the fabric, as with tie-dye.
- 5) Let the fabric dry.
- 6) Remove the glue by soaking the fabric in warm water for 15-30 minutes and then hanging it to dry.

Craft Connection

Eswatini

Batik is a technique for making patterns on fabric by decorating the fabric with wax, dyeing the fabric, and then peeling off the wax to display the pattern. The word "batik" (Javanese for "dot") originated in Indonesia, but the craft is practiced around the world. Some of the earliest designs were found in Egypt, and batik-dyed cloth is popular throughout Africa.





FLAG BRACELETS

Materials Needed

- Elastic cord thin enough to string beads on
- Scissors
- Pony beads in red, white, black, green, blue and yellow
- Pictures of the flags of Egypt and South Sudan

Before you begin, show the children pictures of the flags of Egypt and South Sudan. The Egyptian flag is three horizontal stripes of red, white and black, with the Eagle of Saladin in the center. The South Sudanese flag is three horizontal stripes of black, red and green with a thin, white stripe between each. On the left side is a blue triangle with a yellow star in the center. Visit <https://bit.ly/3ovj4IQ> to learn what each of the colors on the flag means.

Directions for Older Children

- 1) Cut three 18-inch pieces of elastic per child.
- 2) Help the children tie 2-3 knots about one-third of the way up each piece of elastic.
- 3) Invite each of the children to pick a flag they would like to create with beads on their bracelet.
- 4) For Egypt's flag, use one piece of elastic with five red beads; one piece of elastic with two white beads, one yellow bead and then two more white beads; and a third piece of elastic with five black beads. For South Sudan's flag, use one piece of elastic with one blue bead followed by five black beads; one piece of elastic with one blue bead, one yellow bead, another blue bead and then three red beads; and a third piece of elastic with one blue bead and five green beads.
- 5) Tie off the elastic to secure the beads.
- 6) Tie or braid the three pieces of elastic together at both ends and then tie a knot to secure them. Tie both ends of the bracelet together.

Craft Connection

Egypt and South Sudan

Today's Story Time features a family that has moved from South Sudan to Egypt. Learn about the flags of these two countries, then make these brightly colored bracelets to remember the colors of the flags.

Directions for Younger Children

- 1) Cut one 12-inch piece of elastic per child.
- 2) String onto the elastic a series of beads in the colors of the South Sudanese or Egyptian flag.
- 3) Tie a knot at the other end of the elastic to secure the beads.
- 4) Tie the ends together to form a bracelet.





JUTE WOVEN NECKLACE OR BRACELET

Materials Needed

- Roll of 1-millimeter jute (or hemp) cord
- Beads large enough to fit onto the jute (for the more complicated version, holes should be at least 2 millimeters in diameter)
- Scissors
- Tape or safety pin (to secure weaving)

For Younger Children

- 1) Give each child a 2-foot length of jute cord.
- 2) Tie a knot at the end of the cord and string the first bead.
- 3) Tie another knot an inch or so from the first, and string another bead.
- 4) Repeat until the necklace is the desired length.

For Older Children

- 1) Each child needs two lengths of cord, one 70 inches long and one 20 inches long.
- 2) Find the center of each cord, align the center points, form a loop at the center with both cords and tie a knot below the loop to secure it.
- 3) Secure the knot to a table with tape, or pin the knot to your pant leg.
- 4) Hanging from the loop will be two long ends and two short ends. To weave them together, pull one long cord to the left and the other to the right, leaving the two shorter cords together in the middle.



Craft Connection

Bangladesh

In the Story Time today, we heard how Imran learned to make crafts out of jute. Here are two simple jute bracelets you can make to experience working with jute.

- 5) Bring the right long cord under the center cords and over the left long cord.
- 6) Bring the left long cord over the center cords and under the right long cord.
- 7) Pull to tighten.
- 8) Repeat until your weave is the desired length.
- 9) Alternating which cord you start with (right cord under, left cord under, right cord under) will result in a flat weave. Starting on the same side every time will result in a spiral.
- 10) You can also periodically weave a bead through the two center cords and then continue the weave from either side.



GLUE BATIK

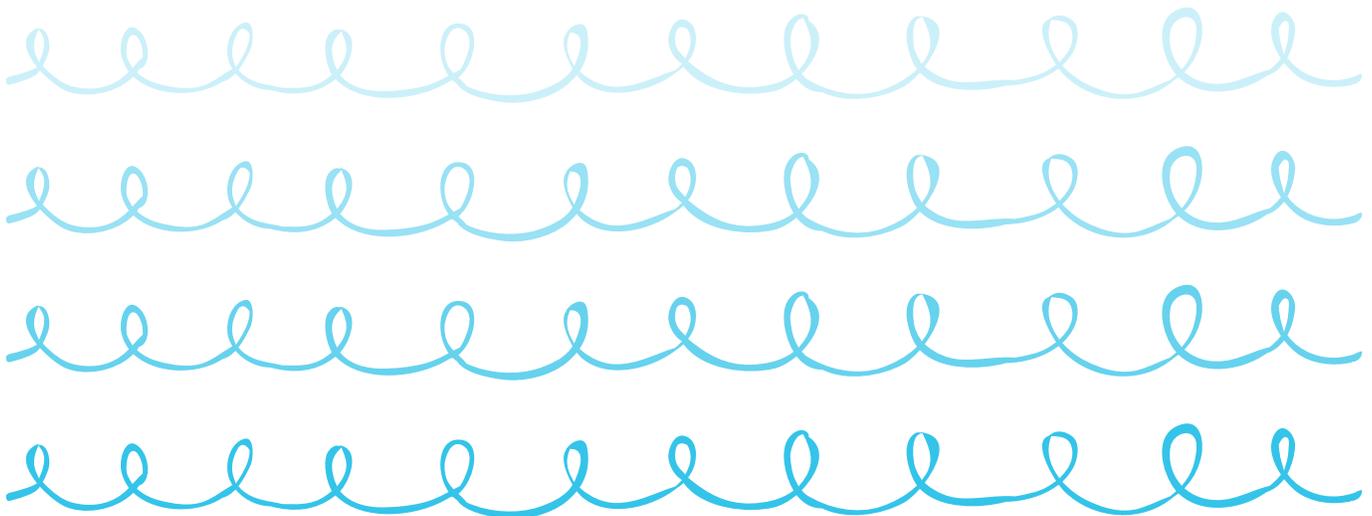
Note: This is a two-day project. If you started it on Day 1 (page 79), the children can finish it today.

Materials Needed

- Fabric pieces from Day 1
- Plastic wrap, placemats or newspaper
- Fabric paints or acrylic paints
- Paintbrushes (large, sponge-type brushes work well)
- Large plastic tubs
- Clothesline or string

Directions

- 1) By today, the glue on the fabric from Day 1 should be dry. Spread the plastic wrap, placemats or newspaper on a table and give each child their fabric from Day 1.
- 2) Invite the children to paint their fabric piece. They should paint right over the glue – the batik looks best if the whole front side of the fabric piece is painted.
- 3) Allow the paint to dry. Remove the glue by soaking the fabric in warm water for 15-30 minutes and then hanging it to dry.
- 4) When the batik is finished, the design should show through the paint, with a crackled effect.





INFUSED OLIVE OIL

Materials Needed

- Small (2- to 3-ounce) plastic or glass jars with lids, one per child
- Enough olive oil to fill the jars
- Funnel
- Sprigs of fresh lavender, rosemary, sage, tarragon or other herbs, cut short enough to fit into the jars
- Small stickers or decals
- Twine
- Heavy paper or card stock, cut into 1-by-2-inch labels, one per child

Directions

- 1) Before getting started, wash the jars and lids.
- 2) Set up an assembly line with the jars at one end of a table, followed by the stickers or decals, the fresh herbs, a station for filling the bottles, the lids, and the twine and labels.
- 3) Each child takes one jar and decorates it with a sticker or decal.
- 4) Each child adds one or two sprigs of herbs to their jar.
- 5) At the filling station, an adult uses a small funnel to fill each jar almost to the top with olive oil.
- 6) Each child fastens the lid on the jar and adds a tag with their name, a small drawing or whatever they would like.

Craft Connection

Palestine

Olive trees are central to Palestinian culture. These trees live for centuries, often tended by generations of the same family. The olive harvest is an important community time. Olive oil is also used to anoint people in the church, especially people who are sick.





FRIENDSHIP WREATH

Materials Needed

- One to two piece(s) of 8-1/2-by-11-inch card stock per child
- Pencils, pens or markers
- Scissors
- Glue

Directions

- 1) Give each child a pencil and one or two sheets of card stock. The number of sheets will depend on the size of the child's hand.
- 2) Invite each child to trace their hands on their pieces of card stock. Each child will need 5-6 traces of their hand to share with the other children. Younger children may need help tracing their hands.
- 3) Help the children cut their traced hands out of the card stock and write their name on one of the fingers. For older children, you can invite them to draw designs on their handprint cut-outs.
- 4) Invite the children to trade their handprint cut-outs with others.
- 5) After the children have traded hand cut-outs and each child has several different hand cut-outs, help them glue the hand cut-outs into a wreath shape.

Craft Connection

Building Community

Today's theme is "Building Community." Make this wreath to remember all the friends you made at Vacation Bible School.



Other Craft options for Day 5

Complete the glue batik project from Day 3 or begin the planting activity from Day 1.

Simulation Station



Simulation Station: Day 1

Today's theme is the wildly wonderful world God has made. God provides each community and each person with a variety of gifts. When it comes to solving big problems such as hunger, we start with faith that God will provide all that we need, even if these blessings come in new or unexpected ways.

PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES



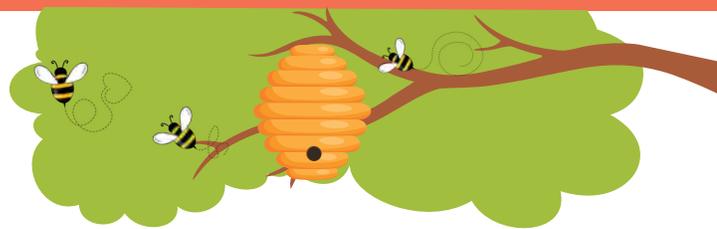
If you are doing VBS online, invite children to share their pictures to a central email address or post them to a file-sharing platform such as Dropbox.

Materials Needed

- Scavenger hunt checklists for each pair of children (see next page)
- Cell phones, tablets or cameras to take pictures and record videos
- Computer or digital projector (optional)
- Small prize for each team (optional)

Instructions

- 1) Divide the children into pairs. Ask an adult or an older youth to accompany younger children.
- 2) Make sure that each pair of children has a device for taking pictures and videos.
- 3) Pass out the lists and explain that each pair of children has 10 minutes to find as many items as they can. (Adjust the time as necessary for your needs.) Once they find an item, they will take a picture or record a video of it and cross it off their list.
- 4) Specify any areas that are off-limits and set the children loose.
- 5) When the time is up, call the group back together.
- 6) Invite each pair to share their pictures, connecting their devices to the computer or projector.
- 7) If you have small prizes, award them for having the most pictures, the smallest item, the largest item, the most unusual item, etc. Choose awards that will enable each pair to receive a prize.



QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- God has created the world with so many blessings – things we can use and enjoy, things that can help us, food to eat, water to drink and new friends to meet. What were some gifts of God that you found?
- What are some gifts that God has given you? What activities are you good at? In what ways do you help other people?
- Why do you think God has given our world so many gifts? [*Because God loves us and all of creation.*]
- Are all God's gifts things that we can see? [*No.*] Some of God's gifts are sounds we hear, such as a friend's voice, or things we feel, such as the warmth of the sun or the coolness of water, or things we taste, such as snacks. There are lots of ways to experience God's gifts.
- Have you ever received a gift from someone, maybe for a holiday or birthday? How do you take care of the gifts you are given?
- What does that tell us about caring for the gifts God has given the world, such as plants, animals, water, nature and each other?

Leader: This week at "Tree of Healing" VBS, we are learning a lot about health and hunger and some of the things we and our neighbors need. But we also should remember that God has given each of us many gifts. Even if a family is hungry, they have other gifts from God that they can share. And we have gifts that we can share with each other. Making sure that everyone is healthy and happy – and that the world around us is healthy – means being on the lookout for where we can find God's gifts in God's wildly wonderful world.

Scavenger Hunt Checklist

- Something red
- The sound of someone singing (Record a video!)
- Something purple
- A tasty food
- A cross
- A picture of your group with a new friend
- A sign for VBS
- Something that smells good
- Rocks
- Someone laughing or smiling (Record a video!)
- A book
- Water
- Something beautiful

Scavenger Hunt Checklist

- Something red
- The sound of someone singing (Record a video!)
- Something purple
- A tasty food
- A cross
- A picture of your group with a new friend
- A sign for VBS
- Something that smells good
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- A book
- Water
- Something beautiful

Scavenger Hunt Checklist

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- Something beautiful

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- Something purple
- A tasty food
- A cross
- A picture of your group with a new friend
- A sign for VBS
- Something that smells good
- Rocks
- Someone laughing or smiling (Record a video!)
- A book
- Water
- Something beautiful

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Simulation Station: Day 2

Today's theme is "Healthy Minds and Bodies." God wants us to be healthy in our bodies, but God also cares about the health of our minds, emotions and spirits. One of the most important steps to emotional and mental health is knowing how to name what we are feeling and thinking. For young children – and even many adults! – this can be tricky sometimes. The activities in this station are designed to help children think about the verbal and nonverbal cues that reveal our own emotions and the emotions of friends around us.

WHO'S FEELING WHAT?

AGE RANGE: 8 YEARS AND OLDER

Materials Needed

Cards with emotions written on them: "sad," "happy," "angry," "tired," etc. With older groups, try using more complex emotions such as "confused," "nervous" or "afraid."

Instructions

In this improv-style game, a small group of children will try to get one child to guess the emotion their character is feeling.

- 1) Choose one child to be the guesser and send them away from the group.
- 2) Place the emotion cards in a bowl or box, and invite up to four other children to choose one card each. Explain that, during the game, they cannot say how they are feeling but will need to act it out.
- 3) Invite the guesser back to the group and explain that they and the four children are at a party. During this party, the guesser will try to identify what emotion the other characters are feeling. If their guess is correct, the child playing that emotion sits down.
- 4) Play continues until the guesser has correctly guessed all the emotions.



EMOTIONAL CHARADES

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

Materials Needed

Cards with emotions written on them: "sad," "happy," "angry," "tired," etc. With older groups, try using more complex emotions such as "confused," "nervous" or "afraid."

Instructions

- 1) Choose one child to start the game. Invite them to choose an emotion card from the box or bowl without showing anyone else the card. (For groups with younger children, have an adult go first to demonstrate how to play.)
- 2) Once the child has read the card, they will act out the emotion for the other children, who will try to guess the emotion.
- 3) The first child to guess the correct emotion chooses the next emotion card. Continue playing until everyone has had a chance to act out an emotion.

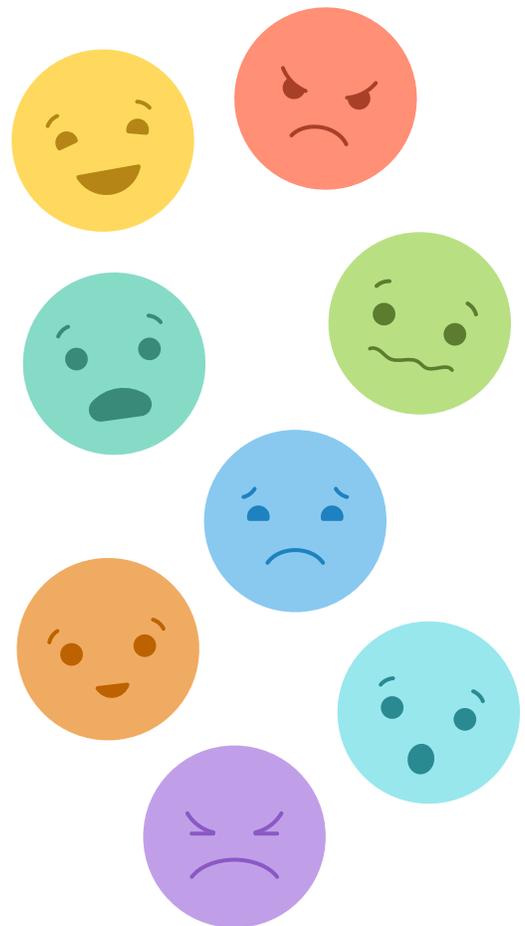
QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- How can other people tell how we are feeling? How might people know if we are happy or sad or angry?
- What are some ways we can tell how other people are feeling?
- In the game(s), how could you tell what other people were feeling?
- Why is it important for us to share our feelings with other people? Why is it important for us to think about how other people might feel?
- Why do you think God cares about how we feel and what we think?

- What are some ways we can help other people when they feel angry, sad, afraid or confused?
- How can we let other people know we need their help when we feel these emotions or aren't sure how we feel?

Leader: One reason God cares about the health of our minds and our spirits is that God knows how some of our emotions feel. In the Bible, Jesus feels happy sometimes and sad sometimes. In one story, Jesus even cries because his friend has died. Jesus felt afraid, and he felt angry, too.

The things we feel and think are important – to God and to people who care about us. That's one reason our church helps people who might be feeling angry, sad, afraid, confused or unsure. When it comes to being healthy, we care about the whole person – every part – because God cares about each one of us.





Simulation Station: Day 3

To help children and adults learn more about blindness and ways your congregation can be more welcoming, affirming and inclusive of people who are blind or have low vision, contact the American Council of the Blind (ACB). The organization provides many resources and can put you in touch with a local speaker who can visit your congregation and share ways we can become communities where all are welcome. Visit the ACB website at www.acb.org. The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) has some great resources of its own and links to those of other organizations, including Braille calendars, Braille children's books and more. Visit the NFB at www.nfb.org. If there are children who are blind in your congregation, your state superintendent of schools may have additional resources.

In today's Story Time station, we heard the story of Imran, a young man who became blind. With the help of workers at a local center, Imran was able to learn to read Braille, which helped him continue in school. In today's Simulation Station, children will have the chance to experience two ways of communicating that may be new to them: American Sign Language and Braille.

LEARNING TO SIGN

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

American Sign Language (ASL) is a language expressed through movements of the hands and face. It is the primary language of many North Americans who are deaf. How it originated is not known, but the roots of ASL may be over 200 years old!

In this activity, children will learn to use ASL to sign some common words.

One important lesson to note: ASL is not just a motion-based version of English. ASL is a distinct language all its own, with its own rules for expression. As with other languages, there is variation within ASL, including regional accents and dialects. For more information visit www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/american-sign-language.

Instructions

- 1) Share the Leader's Script below to introduce the activity.
- 2) Provide children with the ASL page (see page 95) either individually or in small groups.
- 3) Each child can use the ASL page to find and sign common words. Younger children may need some help to locate and form the signs.



Materials Needed

Printed copies of the ASL page
(on page 95)

WRITING IN BRAILLE

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

(YOUNG CHILDREN MAY NEED ADULT ASSISTANCE)

Materials Needed

- 2-3 half-dozen muffin tins
- 10-12 tennis balls
- Copies of the Braille sheets below (one for every two children)
- Puffy paints
- Pencils or pens
- 8 1/2-by-11-inch sheets of card stock cut in half vertically to make sheets measuring 8 1/2 by 5 1/2 inches (at least one per child, with some extras)
- Note: The tennis balls and muffin tins can be replaced with golf balls and 12-count egg cartons. Simply cut off the top of the egg carton and cut the bottom in half to create two sets of six empty pockets.

Instructions

- 1) Use the muffin tins and tennis balls to familiarize the children with Braille. The balls, when placed in the tins, symbolize the raised dots.
- 2) Divide the group into pairs or small groups and provide each with a tin.
- 3) Place the balls in the tins to represent letters from the alphabet on page 97:
 - A (one ball in #1)
 - B (one ball each in #1 and #2)
 - C (one ball each in #1 and #4)
 - D (one ball each in #1, #4 and #5)
- 4) Once each child has had a chance to feel the letters in the tins, give them a chance to make their own letters using the alphabet page, the tins and the tennis balls.
- 5) When everyone has taken a turn, share with them the verse written in Braille at the bottom of the alphabet page. Read the verse aloud and allow them to feel the dots at the bottom of page 97.



A



B



C



D



Now, it is their turn to use Braille to spell their names.

- Give each child a half-sheet of card stock and allow them to choose puffy paints.
- Explain that they will use the paints to make small dots that represent the letters of their name.
- Invite them to write their names near the bottom of the paper in large letters. (For younger children, have an adult write their names for them.)
- Using the Braille alphabet, apply a dot of paint where each dot in the letter should be. Make the dots large enough to be felt, but avoid dripping paint between them or smearing the paint.
- Allow the paint to dry completely before touching the dots.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- How did it feel to use American Sign Language or Braille in the activities? Have you ever used or encountered ASL or Braille before this?
- Why is it important to learn different ways of communicating with each other?
- Why do you think God gave us different ways of communicating?
- If someone uses a language different from ours or communicates in a different way, how can we show them that we care about what they are sharing? How can we make everyone feel welcome at school, in our church or in our community?

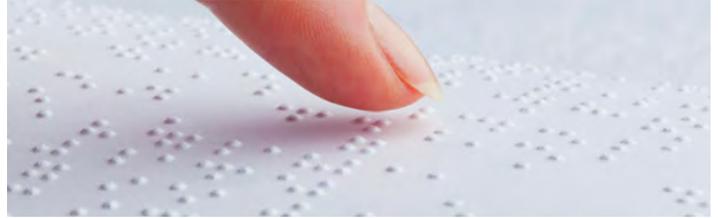
Introducing American Sign Language and Braille

Leader: What do you think it means to communicate? *[Allow time for responses.]* To communicate means to share our ideas, thoughts and feelings with other people. Sometimes, we communicate with our voices. Sometimes, we might share our feelings by the expressions on our faces or through our motions. For example, waving at someone can mean “hello” or “goodbye.” Smiling might help other people know we are happy.



There are a lot of ways to communicate with other people. God creates us to be part of communities with other people, and communication can help with that. The different ways we share our thoughts, ideas and feelings with each other can reveal the beautiful diversity of God’s gifts that help us build friendships and relationships with each other. Have you ever had a chance to experience someone using a language different from the one you usually use? Maybe you heard someone speaking a different language, saw someone share their ideas through their hand movements, or found a book written in a language you don’t understand.

Today we will get a chance to experience two ways of communicating. The first is a language called American Sign Language, or ASL. American Sign Language is a way of communicating with each other using our hands and faces. It’s one way that people who are deaf or hard of hearing can communicate without needing to hear or use their voices. It’s not the same as just using hand motions to share words in English. ASL is a completely different language that is used by many people.



The second way of communicating that we will experience is called Braille. In the story from Story Time today, we met Imran Ali, a young man who became blind. Imran learned Braille so that he could read and do his schoolwork.



Imran Ali

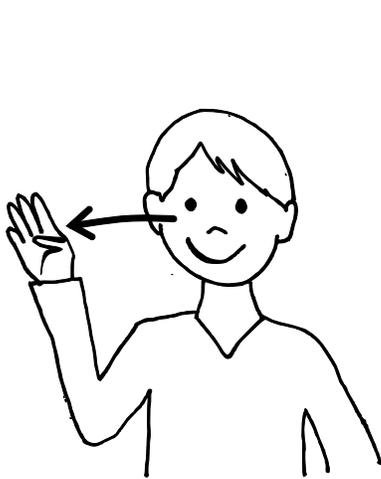
Braille is a kind of code that uses dots you can touch instead of words. Braille helps Imran and many other people who are blind read even if they cannot see the words.



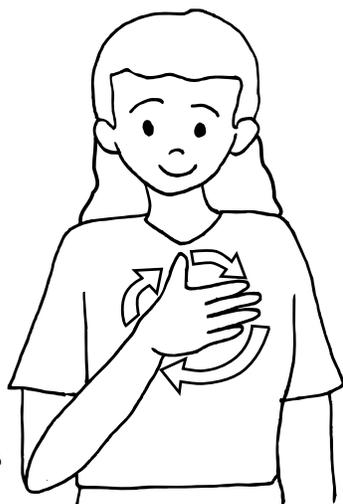
Tree of Healing

Simulation Station: Day 3

Common Words and Phrases in American Sign Language



Hello



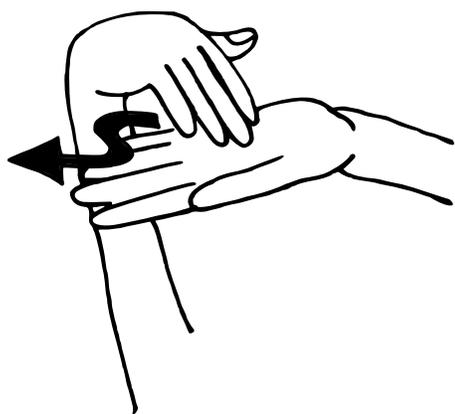
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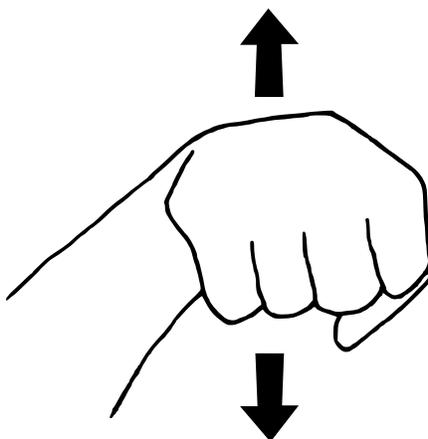
Thank you!



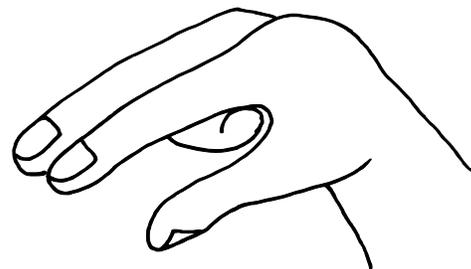
Sorry



Excuse me



Yes



No



INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Tree of Healing

Simulation Station: Day 3
Braille Sheet

A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H



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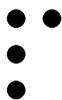
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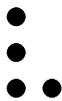
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God is love



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Simulation Station: Day 4

Today's theme, "Healthy Grief," can be difficult for children to deal with. In the Simulation Station today, there are a few options you can choose depending on your group's needs.

SERVICE DAY

This is a great time in your VBS to plan a day of service for a ministry or organization within your congregation or community. Work with a leader to plan an activity that children can participate in during your time together. Consider options such as:

- Tending a community garden at your church.
- Helping gather and sort donations for a food pantry.
- Assembling hygiene kits for a local homeless shelter.
- Writing cards for neighbors of nearby residential facilities.

Need some help to get your service day going? ELCA World Hunger Education and Networking Grants can provide your group with financial support for service learning. See page 117 to learn more.



SHARE THE PEACE

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

When we are sad or grieving, we trust that God will send the Holy Spirit to give us peace — even if, amid our grief, peace may seem hard to find. In this activity, we can remind one another of the peace that passes all understanding, symbolized by a dove.

Materials Needed

- Paper doves (see page 101 or design your own)
- Markers, pens, stickers

Instructions

In this activity, participants will spread peace by making doves to share with the congregation at the next service or, if worshipping remotely, to send to homes. The space should have enough room for children to move around and enough tables for each child to work comfortably.

Leader: Today we're learning about death and grief. These aren't easy topics, and they shouldn't be! Death is not part of God's plan for us, and God's promise is that, one day, death will be no more, that we will have new life. Part of God's promise to us now is that we can experience the gift of peace through the Holy Spirit, even when we are sad or have lost someone we love. Peace is a pretty important part of God's plan for the world.

What does peace mean? *[Affirm all responses.]*

In the Bible, peace means that we support and encourage each other and that we work together if we disagree. Peace means putting our trust in God and being there for each other to support our friends and neighbors when they are sad or unhappy. Peace in the Bible is also a gift of God through the Holy Spirit. In fact, one way Jesus greets his disciples is by saying, "Peace be with you."

What do you think it means if we tell someone, "Peace be with you"? *[Affirm all responses.]*

We are all called to be a lot of different things, but one thing we are all called to do is be peace-builders. God calls each of us to work for peace with other people and with all of God's creation. One way we can do that is by encouraging each other and supporting each other, especially in times of sadness.

Invite the children to sit at the tables. Pass out the doves (see page 101) or, for older children, blank paper on which they can draw their own dove.

Leader: One symbol of peace and the Holy Spirit is the dove. Today we are going to decorate doves that we will share with the people in church as a way of reminding them of God's gift of peace.

Simulation Station: Day 4

Provide craft supplies for the children and enough paper so that each child can make two or three doves. As they finish, collect the doves in a basket or bag. Keep these for the next worship service or to send to people's homes. If your congregation is worshipping together physically, invite children who attend to pass a dove out to each person in the congregation during the passing of the peace.

If your church has a feeding ministry or other community ministry, ask the children to make enough doves so that they can be shared with folks coming to the church as part of the ministry. Remind them that God's gift of peace includes everyone in the community and that the church is called to share that gift with everyone.



Invite adults to help children decorate the doves — or make their own — at home. Ask them to send either a picture or a scan of the dove to a central email address so that the images can be shared via email with the congregation, perhaps as an attachment to a regular newsletter or as a special greeting to members.

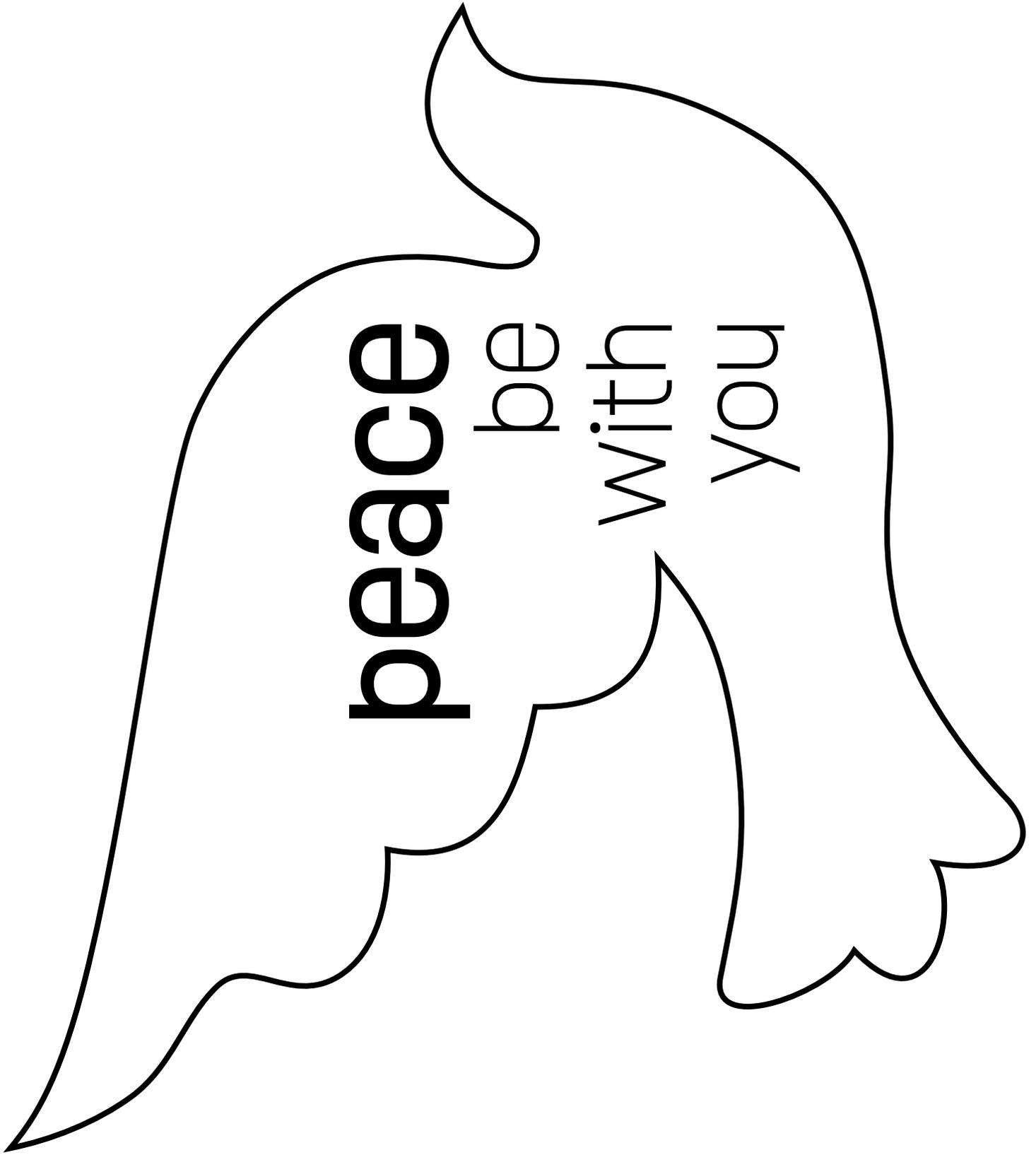
Debrief

- How do you know that you are loved?
- How can we help other people know that they are loved?
- Who does God want us to be “at peace” with?
[Everyone!]
- How can we share peace outside of church — at home, at school, etc.?

Leader: The word “peace” isn’t confined to the passing of the peace. At the end of church services, we often say, “Go in peace!” To “go in peace” means to leave church knowing that God loves us and wants us to love one another.

As the group leaves the station, invite them to “Go in peace!”





MAKING UNLEAVENED BREAD

This is a good activity for making bread for Holy Communion if your congregation is worshipping together in person. The recipe calls for the dough to be split into several small portions, so each piece can be given to one household to take communion on their own.



SERVINGS
7 flatbreads

Ingredients

2 cups, 2 tablespoons flour
1 cup cold water
1/2 teaspoon salt

Directions

- 1) Make sure that each participant washes their hands and wears gloves.
- 2) Combine salt and flour in a large bowl. Stir in the water a bit at a time. Invite the children to take turns kneading the dough. In total, the dough should be kneaded for about five minutes.
- 3) If cooking during your time together, preheat a nonstick skillet over medium-low heat.
- 4) Divide the dough into seven equal pieces, roll into balls and give each ball to a child or pair of children.
- 5) Lightly flour the workspace, then help the children roll out their dough balls to 6-7 inches in diameter.
- 6) When ready, cook for about 2 minutes per side. Store covered.



Leader: Today we have been talking about difficult subjects: death and grief. Do you remember what grief means? *[Allow time for responses.]*

Grief is the feeling we have when we lose someone we love. We feel grief when someone we love dies, or when a pet dies. We can feel grief even if a close friend moves away or we can't see them anymore. Even though God promises us that we will live forever in heaven and that, one day, there won't be any more death, someone dying can still make us sad or even angry.

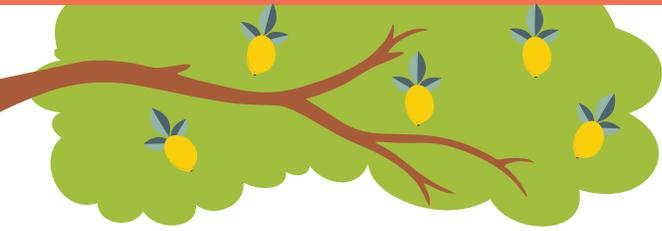
Bread is a good thing to be making today, especially the kind of bread we just made, because bread like this – pita bread and matzah – is often eaten in the parts of the world we heard about in today's Story Time.

But there's another reason bread is a good thing to make today. In the Bible, bread is talked about in some important stories about death and new life. The kind of bread we made today is called "unleavened." If you look at it, you'll see that it's flat. It isn't puffy like the bread we might know. In the Bible, God helps God's people escape from slavery in Egypt. They have to leave quickly, so God tells them to make unleavened bread because it was faster to make than bread that had to rise. So they made the flatbread and took it with them as God led them to freedom.

We use this kind of bread in church today, too, when we celebrate a special meal called Holy Communion. Do you know what Holy Communion helps us remember? *[Allow time for responses.]*

Holy Communion reminds us of Jesus' last meal with his disciples before he died. Jesus took bread, broke it into pieces, gave it to the disciples and said, "This is my body, which is given for you." The bread reminds us of Jesus' death, and it reminds us that Jesus rose from the dead and will always be with us.

As we share this bread with other people, we remember all these things too. We remember God's people escaping slavery and death and being led by God to freedom. We remember Jesus dying and rising again. And we remember God's promises: that even though there might be death, the new life from God is greater than death, and that even though we might feel grief, God will give us peace.



Simulation Station: Day 5

Today's theme is "Bearing Fruit." We've learned just how much God cares about our health. Because God cares about health and about every one of us, we should care about everyone's health and do what we can to provide our neighbors with everything they need to be healthy.

HOST A HEALTH FAIR

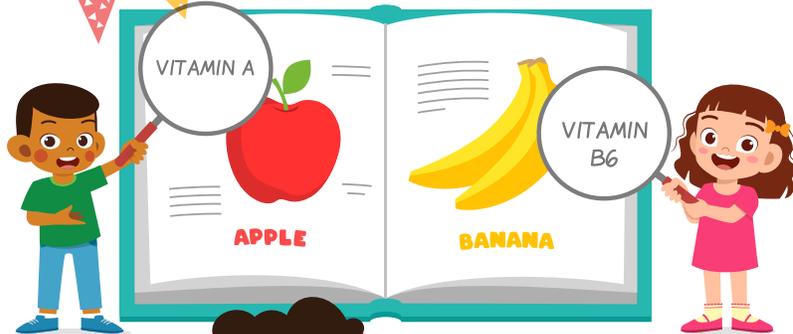
Providing people with access to health screenings and health information can be an important way to show God's love for everyone. For today's activity, consider talking with a local health care provider, clinic or hospital about hosting a health fair at your church. Lack of time or money hinders many people from accessing these kinds of services. At a health fair, children and adults can take advantage of important screenings and learn more about protecting their health.

Here are some ideas for stations to consider hosting at your fair:

- Vision screening.
- Hearing screening.
- Blood pressure screening.
- Information about good nutrition, along with healthy recipes and/or ingredients to take home.
- Lead testing of water from homes.
- COVID-19 information and free masks.
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training.
- First aid training.

For support, try contacting both local and national organizations, such as:

- American Heart Association.
- American Cancer Society.
- County health department.
- Local doctors or care providers.
- Local gyms or fitness clubs.





FIRST AID KITS

First aid is one of the most important elements of health care. These small first aid kits can help provide the supplies neighbors need to treat minor injuries, and they can be a great way of showing care for our neighbors.

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

Suggested Materials

- Bandages in a variety of sizes
- Small rolls of cloth tape
- Gauze pads
- Cotton balls
- Safety pins
- Sterile gloves
- Antiseptic wipes
- Hydrocortisone ointment
- Tweezers
- Small scissors
- Antibiotic ointment
- Hand sanitizer
- Instant cold compress

Instructions

- 1) Create an assembly line of the materials on a large table or set of tables.
- 2) Ask each participant to wash their hands thoroughly, then give each participant a resealable plastic bag.
- 3) Children can either carry their own bag through the assembly line, gathering the materials they need, or sit at stations along the line, adding one item to each bag before passing it to the next person on the line.
- 4) After all the first aid kits are assembled, distribute them to households attending VBS. If your congregation has a relationship with a community ministry, such as a food pantry, consider providing first aid kits to the ministry for distributing to neighbors who may need them.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- Have you ever used one of the things we put in the first aid kits? Why did you need it? How did it help you?
- How can a first aid kit remind us that God cares about us?
- Why might it be hard for some of us or our neighbors to have all the things we need to treat cuts, scrapes, burns or other injuries? *[Cost.]*
- Will a first aid kit solve all the health problems everyone might face? *[No.]*
- Can it be a first step? *[Yes.]*
- What else can we do to care for the health of ourselves and our neighbors?
- This week, what did we hear during Story Time about how our church helps communities care for the health of our neighbors?



LARGE GROUP CLOSING



WELCOME AND MUSIC

Welcome the children (and adults!) to the closing time for “Tree of Healing.” Sing the theme song and some other songs as people gather.

“Talking Together” – A Review of the Day

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

- What was the theme for today?
- What was something Sage taught you that you didn't know?
- What was your favorite part of today?
- What was one new thing you learned today?
- Where did you experience God today?
- What will you share with others when you get home?



FOCUS VERSE: “The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2).

Return to Focus Verse

Our focus verse is “The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2). What did you learn about healing or health today?



Prayer and Sending

Invite someone to offer a closing prayer. If you have a sound system, invite them to use the microphone. (Nothing makes prayer more fun than leading it over a sound system.)

Close with any final announcements or reminders.



Songs for “Tree of Healing”

Augsburg Fortress has published several songbooks containing kid-friendly songs, and we recommend checking them out! Our VBS song recommendations come from these resources:

- *All Creation Sings (ACS)*, 2020, www.AugsburgFortress.org.
- *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)*, 2006, www.AugsburgFortress.org.
- *Worship & Praise Songbook (WP)*, 1999, www.AugsburgFortress.org.



ELCA World Hunger has free music available! You can find compressed (zipped) folders for each song at elca.org/hunger/resources. Click on the VBS tab to find the folders. Each contains:

- Chords and lyrics.
- Audio file with music.
- Audio file with music and voice.

SONGS ABOUT CREATION

- “Earth Is Full of Wit and Wisdom” (*ACS* 1064)^{1, 4}
- “For the Wholeness of the Earth” (*ACS* 1067)^{1, 4}
- “God Created Heaven and Earth” (*ELW* 738)¹
- “God of the Sparrow” (*ELW* 740)¹
- “How Majestic Is Your Name” (*WP* 66)²
- “May This Church Be Like a Tree” (*ACS* 1042)¹

SONGS ABOUT HEALING

- “Deep Peace” (*ACS* 1018)^{1, 4}
- “Healer of Our Every Ill” (*ELW* 612)¹
- “He Who Began a Good Work in You” (*WP* 56)²
- “I’m So Glad Jesus Lifted Me” (*ELW* 860)*
- “In the Peace of God Find Rest” (*ACS* 1029)^{1, 4}
- “Lead Me, Guide Me” (*WP* 84 or *ELW* 768)¹

SONGS ABOUT COMMUNITY

- “Bind Us Together” (*WP* 18)²
- “Christ, Our Peace” (*ACS* 1037)¹
- “God Extends an Invitation” (*ELW* 486)^{1, 4}
- “God, We Gather as Your People” (*ACS* 1038)^{1, 4}
- “Hine Ma Tov” (*ACS* 1039)
- “We Are Called” (*ELW* 720)¹



SONGS FOR SADNESS AND GRIEF

- "Beauty for Brokenness" (*WP* 17)²
- "Be My Home" (*WP* 16)^{1, 2}
- "Cares Chorus" (*WP* 27)²
- "Holy Ground" (*WP* 59)²
- "If We Live, We Live to the Lord" (*ACS* 1025)^{1, 4}
- "In All Our Grief" (*ELW* 615)^{1, 4}

SONGS ABOUT BUILDING GOD'S KINGDOM

- "God Bless to Us Our Bread" (*ACS* 1056)
- "God Is Love" (*ACS* 1041)^{1, 4}
- "Send Me, Jesus" (*ELW* 549)
- "Send Me, Lord" (*ELW* 809)¹
- "The Trees of the Field" (*WP* 138)²
- "What Does the Lord Require of You?" (*ACS* 1057)¹
- "We Are an Offering" (*ELW* 692 or *WP* 146)²

MORE SONGS

- "Don't Be Afraid" (*ACS* 1027)¹
- "Hallelujah! We Sing Your Praises" (*ELW* 535)¹
- "Here on Jesus Christ I Will Stand" (*ACS* 1024)¹
- "Jesus Loves Me!" (*ELW* 595)
- "Lord, Be Glorified" (*WP* 89 or *ELW* 744)^{1, 2}
- "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying"
(*WP* 92 or *ELW* 752)^{1, 2}
- "Praise, Praise, Praise the Lord!"
(*WP* 116 or *ELW* 875)
- "Thank You, Lord" (*ACS* 1092)
- "Uyaimose (Come, All You People)" (*ELW* 819)^{1, 3}
- "We've Come This Far by Faith" (*ELW* 633)^{1, 2}
- "Who Is Like Our God" (*ACS* 1098)⁴

A NOTE ON LICENSING

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We know that many ELCA congregations purchase collective licenses – such as Augsburg Fortress Hymns and Songs, One License, CCLI or LicenSing – on an annual basis. For that reason, we have noted which licenses apply to the songs we're recommending:

¹ Licensed under One License:

www.OneLicense.net.

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

³ Licensed under LicenSing:
www.LicenSingonline.org.

⁴ Licensed under Augsburg Fortress Hymns and Songs: www.AugsburgFortress.org.
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Songs marked with an asterisk (*) are songs for which the words and music are in the public domain but the musical arrangement used in the songbook is under license. In these cases the arrangements are under One License.

—ALTERNATE MATERIALS— Day 4 — Being Filled

FOCUS VERSE: “And they ate and were well filled,
for [God] gave them what they craved”
(Psalm 78:29).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to “Tree of Healing” VBS using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Hello, and welcome back to “Tree of Healing” VBS! Today, we are going to keep learning about health by talking together about something we all like and need: food! When it comes to being healthy, we definitely need food. What kinds of foods do we need to stay healthy? *[Allow time for children to shout responses.]*

The right kinds of food help keep us full. They give us vitamins and other good things our bodies need to grow. Having enough food means we can get better more quickly if we are sick, and it can help us stay healthy. Food can also bring us together in important ways, like when we are with our families and friends during special meals. In today’s Story Time, we are going to hear about a community in Palestine that helps neighbors get food so they can stay healthy.

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



Check the music appendix on pages 107-108 for song suggestions, or use songs your group already knows.

SKIT

For this skit, Sage is dressed as a tree. Fashion a tree costume out of paper or cardboard, or ask the performer to wear brown pants and a green shirt.

Emcee (E): Hi, Sage.

Sage (S): Hello! Good to see you today.

E: Sage, I have a question. Today we’re talking about food and health, and this got me thinking: What do trees eat? Do trees eat? You don’t have a mouth.

S: You’re right, trees don’t have a mouth, but we do eat. Just like humans, we need water and vitamins. Our roots help us get those from the soil. We also eat sunlight.

E: You eat sunlight?! How do you do that?

S: It’s pretty simple, actually. My leaves get energy from the sun and use it to turn the air you exhale into sugar, which I eat.

E: That doesn’t sound simple at all. I do like sugar, though.

S: You know the maple syrup you put on pancakes or waffles? That comes from trees.

E: You eat maple syrup! I wish I were a tree.

S: We don’t eat maple syrup – we make maple syrup. Well, maple trees do. But all trees make sap. The point is that, just like you, we need water and vitamins to grow. The difference is that we get ours through our roots and our leaves whereas you get yours through nutritious food.

Appendices: Day 4 Alternate Materials

- E:** For our Bible story today, we're going to read about God providing food for the Israelites in the wilderness. It came down from heaven, like dew, and it tasted sweet, like honey. Or maple syrup, I guess.
- S:** God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness, God provides for trees, and God provides for you. Food doesn't rain down from heaven, but God still provides. What are some ways God provides for your food?
- E:** Um ... grocery stores?
- S:** Eventually, yes. But God provides food long before it arrives in a store. God created the world to help plants and animals grow. God watches over farmers and workers to grow food and get it to stores or markets. And what about people such as those in our story today? How does God provide for them?
- E:** Through neighbors and friends, through churches. Oh, and through us, with the help of ELCA World Hunger.
- S:** That's right. When we support programs such as ELCA World Hunger, we're helping provide modern manna for our neighbors.
- E:** We're like the sun!
- S:** You're like the sun's helper. God does the work through us. But, yes – God's work, our hands. Or your hands, at least. I don't have hands; I have branches. I'm a tree.
- E:** Thanks for stopping by again, Sage. You've given us a lot to think about.
- S:** You're welcome, as always. Have a great day at VBS!
- Sage leaves.*

Small Group Time



LESSON FOCUS: God gives us what we need and enough to share.

FOCUS VERSE: "And they ate and were well filled, for [God] gave them what they craved" (Psalm 78:29).



Opener: What Is It?

In the Bible story we are going to read today, the people called the food God gave them "manna," a Hebrew word that means "what is it," because they didn't know what the food was. For an opening activity this morning, invite the children to guess each other's favorite food. Sit in a circle and have one child start by saying, "I'm thinking of my favorite food – what is it?" The rest of the children can ask as many as ten yes or no questions to narrow down the food: "Is it a dessert?" "Is it fruit?" You can also divide the children into pairs for this activity and rotate partners so they can get to know one another.



Small Group Time (continued)

Encountering Scripture: Exodus 16:11-16, 21-26

Leader: In our skit today, Sage talked about what trees eat. Our Bible story today shows God providing enough for the people of Israel while they are in the wilderness.

Read Exodus 16:11-16, 21-26. Use a translation that will be accessible to children.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- What did God provide for the Israelites to eat? [*Quail (meat) and manna (bread).*]
- The Israelites called the bread manna, which means “what is it,” because they’d never seen it before. When have you tasted food that was new to you? How was it?
- How do you think the Israelites felt when they saw the food God had provided?
- God gave the Israelites rules to help them share the food.
 1. Exodus 16:16 – Take as much as you need to feed your family but no more than you need.
 2. Exodus 16:19 – Don’t keep the food overnight. God will provide more.
 3. Exodus 16:23 – On the day before the Sabbath, gather twice as much so that you can rest on the Sabbath. (The Israelites were not allowed to work on the Sabbath day.)

Why did God give the Israelites rules to help them share? [*To help them trust God and have enough for everyone. To give them time to rest.*]
- How do we make sure there is enough for all?

Engaging the Text: Enough Crayons

Materials Needed

- Paper and crayons
(one color per person)



Ask the children to help you draw pictures of the Bible story. Give each child a piece of paper, but when you get crayons, “discover” that some are missing and give the group the same number of crayons as there are people, each crayon a different color. Tell them they need to figure out a way to share the crayons.

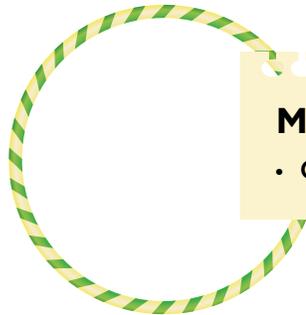
QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- How did you go about sharing the crayons?
- What did you do when two people wanted the same color?
- Was it possible for everyone to color at the same time?

Appendices: Day 4 Alternate Materials

Small Group Time (continued)

Engaging the Text: Helium Hoop



Materials Needed

- One large hula hoop

Invite the children to form a circle. Direct them to point their index fingers outward and upward, and lay the hula hoop on their outstretched fingers. Hold onto the hoop until it is balanced and everyone is in contact with the hoop. Explain that the goal of the exercise is to lower the hoop all the way to the ground without anyone losing contact with the hoop. If anyone loses contact, the activity restarts.

Once they have lowered the hoop, tell them to raise it once again, from the ground to as high as they can reach.

After the whole group has gotten a chance to successfully complete the activity, divide the children into smaller groups of two or three. Invite them to try again, this time racing the other teams to see who can lower and raise their hoop the fastest.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- How did we work together to solve the problem?
- How could we have worked together better?
- Was it easier with fewer people or with a larger group?
- Could you have done the activity on your own?
[If anyone says yes, invite them to try!]

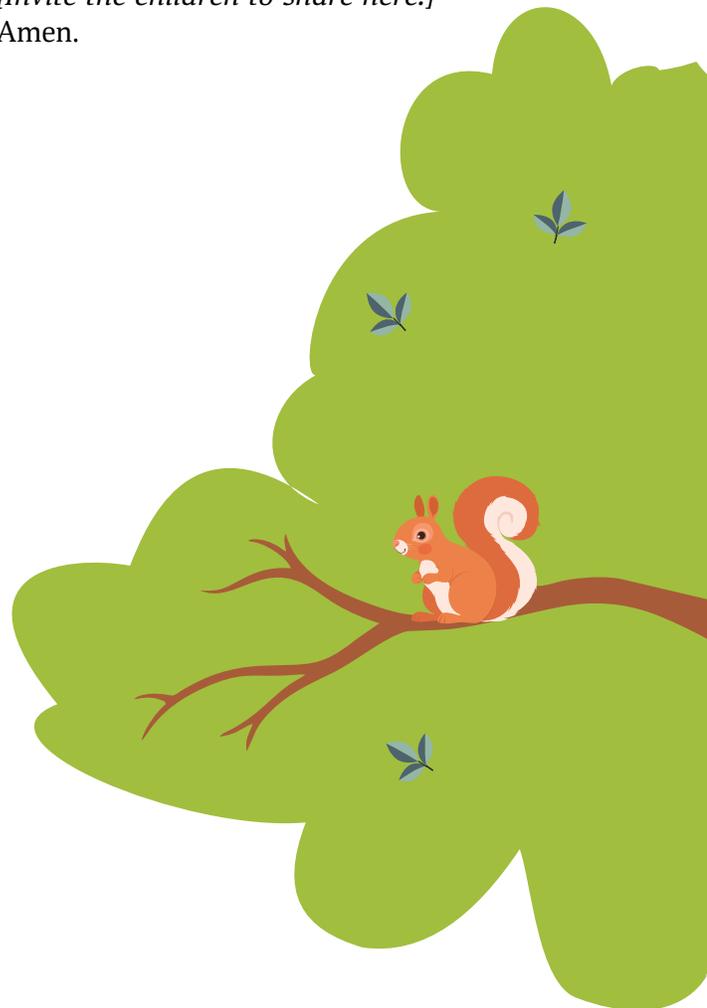
God gave the Israelites lots of blessings to help them on their journey, especially manna from heaven and water that flowed from rocks. But God also gave the people each other! To get through their long journey, the people needed to depend on each other's gifts. What are some ways we depend on each other?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Today we've been talking about how God provides for our needs.

Invite the children to think about something or someone God has given them that they are grateful for. It could be a friend, a family member, a pet or a favorite food. Tell them that they will have time to share this during the prayer.

Dear God, you give us everything we need and help us to share. Thank you for these gifts you have given us:
[Invite the children to share here.]
Amen.



Story Time



If you are using the map activity for the Story Time station (see the note for “Story Time: Day 1”), help the children find and mark Palestine on the map. Be sure to teach the children the name of the country and share some of the facts below.

Make the Connection

Leader: Today’s theme is “Being Filled.” We cannot talk about health without talking about hunger or talk about hunger without talking about health. When we or our neighbors don’t have enough to eat, it can be harder for us to get or stay healthy. We might not be able to afford the kinds of food our body needs, or have the energy we need to fight off sickness. When we aren’t healthy, adults might have to miss work and children might have to miss school. Missing work can make it hard for their families to earn money to buy food. Being filled and being healthy go together.

Today’s story is about a ministry that helps neighbors when their health keeps them from getting food on their own. The food the ministry delivers helps neighbors stay healthy – and builds relationships that can keep the whole community thriving.



Facts About Palestine

- Palestine is called the Holy Land because it is sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.
- Olives are an important part of Palestinian culture. Some olive trees in Palestine are 4,000 years old, the oldest in the world, and have been tended by the same families for generations.
- The Dead Sea is 1,400 feet below sea level, the lowest point in the world. It is called the Dead Sea because it is so salty that fish and plants cannot live in it.
- In Palestine, Christmas is celebrated three times. The Western tradition celebrates on Dec. 25, the Greek Orthodox tradition on Jan. 6, and the Armenian tradition on Jan. 18.

Appendices: Day 4 Alternate Materials

Story Time (continued)



PICTURE 1

Leader: We've learned a lot about health this week, and we learned that God wants us to be healthy and able to enjoy all the gifts of creation. In fact, a lot of the stories about Jesus are stories of Jesus healing people. In the Bible, we read about Jesus helping people see again, helping heal people's bodies so they can walk on their own and helping sick people become well.

Those are really great stories about how God can help us. What do you think that tells us about God? *[Allow a variety of responses.]*

In the Bible, Jesus tells us that God's wish for us is abundant life. "Abundant" means more than enough. When something is abundant, we mean that it will never run out; there will always be plenty.

What do you have a lot of, at home or in our church? *[Allow time for responses. As children respond, use the term "abundance" to describe what they are sharing: "It sounds like you have an abundance of socks at home."]*

If abundance means a lot of something, what do you think "abundant life" means? *[Allow time for responses.]* Abundant life means life that never ends, and more than that, it means life filled with good things. That's not just God's "wish" – it's a promise! God is at work through us and our neighbors to fulfill that promise. God works

through doctors, nurses, counselors and other people who help us heal; through people who take care of the earth by planting or caring for plants and water; and through each of us when we show other people we care about them.

In the Bible, one way we see God's promise at work is when people who are hungry are fed. Today's focus verse from the Bible is "They ate and were well filled, for [God] gave them what they craved" (Psalm 78:29). The people were hungry, and God gave them what they wanted and needed. Sometimes, what we crave is good food – and a lot of it! Sometimes what we really want is a chance to make a new friend or to feel that people care about us. Sometimes being filled with food and being filled with love can go hand in hand.

Our church works with other churches and with neighbors all over the world to help everyone enjoy God's gifts and live healthy, happy lives. That gives us much to celebrate with our neighbors. Already this week we've heard stories about things we can celebrate, such as new gardens or new chances for kids to go to school.

What are some things you can celebrate from this week of VBS? *[Stories from ministries around the world, new friends, trying new foods, etc.]*

One of the churches that we work with through ELCA World Hunger is in a place called Palestine. Palestine is in an area that is called the "Holy Land" because it's where people in the Bible lived and where Jesus was from. It is an area important to Christians, Jews and Muslims.

In Palestine, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land gets neighbors the food they need by delivering meals to their homes *[Picture 1]*. This was a huge help during the COVID-19 pandemic. Do you remember some of the things you had to do during the pandemic? *[Stay at home, do school on computers, wear masks, etc.]* To stay safe, many people had to stay at home and not go out to the store or to work. For many of us and our neighbors, going out meant we could catch the virus and get really sick.



One of the people the church delivered meals to was a woman named Kawkab, who lived in a city called Ramallah. Kawkab had survived cancer, which can be a dangerous disease, but because of her health, she couldn't go out to get food. She had hardly any food in her house. Kawkab knew she would need food to be healthy, but she also knew that, to stay healthy, she couldn't go out to get food.

So Kawkab was really happy when the church brought her meals. When workers from the church came to her home, Kawkab was always happy to see them. She would greet them with smiles and tell them stories. She would even give the workers advice about how to stay healthy. Kawkab would make them smile and laugh, and the workers loved visiting her. She cared a lot about them and about her other neighbors. Even though she couldn't go out, she would try to spread joy, and she always looked forward to the next time they would be able to get together for fun and parties [Picture 2, with Kawkab at right].

Have there been times when you shared joy with other people over food? [Allow time for responses.] Maybe it was a birthday party or having fun with friends during school lunch or a snack. Or maybe you shared a special meal with family or friends.

Our church and the church in Palestine hoped that Kawkab and her neighbors would stay healthy during the pandemic. They delivered healthy meals so that she wouldn't be hungry or need to go

outside. Many of the people the church helped were able to stay healthy. Sadly, Kawkab became sick with COVID-19 and died during the pandemic. The workers in the church were sad that they wouldn't be able to hear her stories anymore or see her when they dropped off meals.

To be healthy, we need healthy bodies. We also need healthy friendships and a community that makes us feel happy and loved. The church provided both, giving neighbors food, visiting them at home and sharing stories and laughter with them so that everyone would feel welcome and loved. They would have the food they needed to be healthy and would feel supported by other neighbors in the community. And the church was able to enjoy the laughter and stories that neighbors like Kawkab shared with them. Everyone has something to gain and something to offer.

Kawkab's death was a sad time for the church and its neighbors. But we know what God promises: that even if people don't stay healthy, the work God does through us when we share food and are there for each other is still important.

By working together, we can share in the church's sadness about Kawkab and its joy at being able to provide food for its neighbors. Sometimes we can be the tools God uses to give people the food and friendships they crave – and, at the same time, we can receive from others the things we need to be healthy.

One of the most important things we need to be healthy is the reminder that God's love is always with us, in the food we share and the friendships we make.

God's love is with us when we are happy and when we are sad. And God is with us when we share food together to make sure everyone has enough to eat.



Appendices: Day 4 Alternate Materials



Games

If you are using the alternate theme for Day 4, “Being Filled,” you can still use the games for Day 4. Remind leaders to adjust how they introduce the games to children so that the theme is consistent for the day.



Snacks

If you are using the alternate theme for Day 4, “Being Filled,” you can still use the snacks for Day 4 as listed in the leader’s guide.



Crafts

If you are using the alternate theme for Day 4, “Being Filled,” you can still use the craft for Day 4 as listed in the leader’s guide.



Simulation Station

The activities listed for the Simulation Station can be used with the alternate theme for Day 4, “Being Filled.” If your group pursues the bread-making activity, you can use the following script and questions or something similar:

Leader: Bread is a great thing to be making today and during our VBS. In the Bible, bread is an important food. When people listening to Jesus were hungry, Jesus gave them bread to eat. Our focus verse for today states that God gave the people what they “craved,” which was bread, dropping it from heaven so they wouldn’t be hungry.

When do we use bread in church?
[Holy Communion.]

Holy Communion reminds us of Jesus’ last meal with his disciples before he died. Jesus took bread, broke it into pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “This is my body, given for you.” The bread reminds us of Jesus’ death. It also reminds us that Jesus rose from the dead and will always be with us. With the bread, we remember how much we need God to save us, feed us and lead us. We remember God’s promise, that no matter what, God is with us. This gives us hope that we might be filled – in our spirits and our bodies.

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ELCA World Hunger Education and Networking Grants are designed to support projects that help participants learn more about hunger, poverty and how faith calls the people of God to respond.

These grants can be used to purchase supplies, promote your VBS or provide new opportunities to learn about hunger. If you are using one of ELCA World Hunger's Vacation Bible School programs to help share the ways the ELCA works with neighbors to end hunger, you may be eligible for a grant of up to \$250 in 2022!

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Note: ELCA World Hunger Education and Networking Grants do not support direct service projects. If your group is interested in a service project that does not involve service learning, visit [ELCA.org/DomesticHungerGrants](https://blogs.elca.org/worldhunger/DomesticHungerGrants) to learn more about ELCA World Hunger's Domestic Hunger Grants program.



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

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