

“At the Table”

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



ELCA World Hunger

Welcome to “At the Table”

ELCA World Hunger’s Vacation Bible School program!



Dear fellow educators in Christ,

We are grateful that we can share stories – your stories, our church’s stories, and ELCA World Hunger partners’ stories – “At the Table.” This Vacation Bible School curriculum is driven by a conviction that all stories are sacred and deserve to be shared because they are part of God’s story.

The phrase “at the table” comes from a story in the Gospel of Luke (24:13-35), in which the resurrected Jesus appears to two followers traveling on a road to the town Emmaus. They don’t recognize him at first, and instead discuss recent events about Jesus’ death. The three of them show openness to each other, asking questions and answering with vulnerability. Finally, when Jesus eats with them and breaks bread around the table, the two people recognize him and he disappears.

So much of this story – from the vulnerability shown to others, to the willingness to listen and tell one’s own story, to revelation of God around a meal – resonates with ELCA World Hunger’s dedication to advocacy. While high-level political advocacy is often too abstract for children, we can invite kids to grow as storytellers and storyhearers in preparation for a life lived on behalf of others.

Being a faithful disciple means we can learn from *everyone’s* stories. Thus, we have made this program an intergenerational VBS. Throughout this leader guide you will find “Intergenerational Connections,” which are suggested opportunities for multiple generations to learn together. As you share stories together, we pray that your common ministry is enriched through deeper understanding of what you hold in community.

Finally, “At the Table” is a chance to build your faith community’s confidence in telling its own story, from young to old, in preparation to share that story with the world around. Indeed, this is the first step toward advocacy: having the strength to tell our own stories and the openness to hear and learn from others.

We are grateful to meet you at the table,

Peter McLellan

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Daily Activities

LARGE GROUP OPENING

- Welcome and prayer
- Songs*
- Opening skit
- Repeat the daily theme and focus prayer
- Sending

SMALL GROUP TIME

Review the Bible story of the day.

ROTATIONS



Story Time — This is a time for an adult to share with the children a story of a ministry supported by ELCA World Hunger.



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



Snack — To give children a “taste” of the region highlighted in Story Time, we've provided a recipe for a related snack and suggestions for two easy snacks to buy.



Crafts — Our craft projects create simple yet creative connections to the message of the day, using materials you may already have freely available within your congregation.



Simulation Station — This session offers children a chance to learn more about the week's theme and how bread and stories are related to the call of our faith.

LARGE GROUP CLOSING

- Music
- Review of the day
- Prayer
- Sending

MEDIA KIT AND SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Additional crafts, games, activities, songs and media are all available for download at [ELCA.org](https://elca.org/resources). Head to [ELCA.org/resources](https://elca.org/resources) for these resources.



You can also find a child-safety checklist there. We highly recommend that all volunteers working with children be prepared and trained to act appropriately and to respect the children's and their own boundaries.



*See “Songs” section in the “At the Table” Supplemental Resources Guide.

Day 1

What is a Story?

"THE ROAD TO EMMAUS,"

Luke 24:13-35.

Focus verse: "When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him" (*Luke 24:30-31*).

BREAD: NAAN



Small Group Time

- Name-sharing Game
- Intergenerational Story Walk
- Paper Hearts



Story Time

"Ahmad's Journey From Afghanistan to Serbia"



Games

- Road to Emmaus Obstacle Course
- Tushla Bazi (Afghan marble game)



Snacks

- Kulche e Nowroze (Afghan New Year cookies)
- Naan or Roti (flatbreads)
- Pistachios, Almonds, Apricots or Figs



Crafts

Point-of-view Fan



Simulation Station

- The Story of the Little Red Hen
- Types of Wheat
- Wheat Planting



Take-home Dinner Table Question

Was there a time in your life when you saw something differently from someone else but you were both telling the truth?

Day 2

What is Your Story?

"THE THREE VISITORS,"

Genesis 18:1-15.

Focus verse: "Is anything too hard for God?" (*Genesis 18:14 MSG*).

BREAD: NUM-PANG VENG



Small Group Time

- What Makes You Laugh?
- Life Map
- Practicing Hospitality



Story Time

"Yun's Unexpected Life Change in Cambodia"



Games

- What's Your Story?
- Lot Bao (Cambodian rice bag races)



Snacks

- Chrouk Bunlai (Khmer pickled vegetable salad)
- Baguette
- Mangoes and Bananas



Crafts

Welcome Sign



Simulation Station

- From Seed to Wheat Berry
- Threshing and Winnowing by Hand



Take-home Dinner Table Question

What event in your life surprised you and changed your life for the better?

Day 3

What Are the Stories of the People You Know?

"THE FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS,"

Acts 2:42-47.

Focus verse: "They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God" (*Acts 2:46 MSG*).

BREAD: SLICED SANDWICH LOAF



Small Group Time

- 10 Things in Common
- Four Pillars of the Early Church
- Crayon-sharing Game



Story Time

"Oscar's New Sense of Community in Fort Collins"



Games

- Listening Game
- Four Old Cats



Snacks

- Trail Mix
- Sandwich Loaf
- Beef Jerky



Crafts

"At the Table" Placemats



Simulation Station

- Wheat Sensory Box
- From Wheat Berry to Flour



Take-home Dinner Table Question

Was there a time when you felt as if you didn't have enough and someone shared with you?

Day 4

How Does it Feel to Not Have Your Story Heard?

"THE TURNING OF THE TABLES,"

Mark 11:15-17.

Focus verse: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations" (Mark 11:17).

BREAD: PALYANITSYA



Small Group Time

- A Precious Thing
- Money Changers and Doves
- Interruption



Story Time

"Mariia's Unheard Story in Ukraine"



Games

- Majority or Minority
- Rybalka (Ukrainian fishing game)



Snacks

- Burka I Yabluk (Ukrainian apple and beet salad)
- Round Wheat Loaf
- Sunflower Seeds



Crafts

Handprint Doves



Simulation Station

- Baking Bread
- Yeast Balloon



Take-home Dinner Table Question

When was the last time you felt unheard? How did that make you feel?

Day 5

How Can We Listen to and Share Other People's Stories?

"THE GOOD SAMARITAN,"

Luke 10:25-37.

Focus verse: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:26).

BREAD: BAGELS



Small Group Time

- Pick a Gift
- Friends, Enemies and Neighbors
- Connecting Our Story With God's Story



Story Time

"Willie, Brianna, Kitty and Calla Go to the United Nations"



Games

- Wound-bandaging Relay
- Mini-Olympics



Snacks

- Summer Salsa
- Bagels
- Pulses



Crafts

Paper Plate Advocacy Project



Simulation Station

- Breaking Bread Together
- Sharing Stories and Bread



Take-home Dinner Table Question

In what ways have you loved your neighbor as yourself?

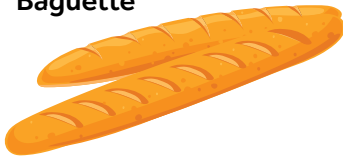
About the Breads

NAAN-E-AFGHANI Flatbread



Naan is so popular in Afghanistan that it's considered the national bread and is eaten at every meal. It is generally torn into shreds and used to wrap foods, so that they can be picked up and eaten. Traditionally, Naan is cooked in a 900-degree, freestanding brick or clay oven, fired with wood.

NUM-PANG VENG Baguette



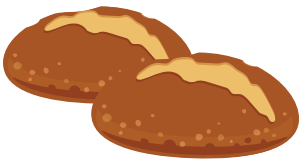
The French baguette was incorporated into Cambodian cuisine when Cambodia was a French protectorate. The Cambodian version tends to be a little shorter but retains the thin, crisp crust and soft, airy texture. Num-pang veng is often split lengthwise, filled with savory ingredients (as with a sandwich) and served as a meal.



SLICED SANDWICH LOAF

Sliced bread was first sold in the United States in 1928 in Chillicothe, Mo. Because commercially sold bread had uniform and somewhat thinner slices that were easier to handle, people ate more slices of bread at a time and ate bread more frequently, which increased bread consumption in the United States.

PALYANITSYA Round wheat loaf



Palyanitsya is a type of Ukrainian bread, made mostly of wheat flour and baked in a home oven. Yeast hearth bread has a semicircular cut across the top third of the loaf. The word "palyanitsya" comes from the Ukrainian palyty, meaning "to burn," because sometimes the raised crust can be burned during baking. Palyanitsya has become a symbol of Ukrainian identity during Russia's invasion.



BAGELS

The first mention of bagels is in a 1610 document from the Jewish elders of Krakow, Poland, declaring that bagels were permitted and expected gifts for midwives and women in labor. Bagels were brought to New York City during the 1880s by Polish Jews fleeing persecution in their home country. By 1900, there were over 70 bagel bakeries in New York City. The roll-with-a-hole has become synonymous with the city.

Large Group Closing Ideas

During “At the Table,” ELCA World Hunger’s Vacation Bible School program, children will learn how sharing stories and meals are important for our faith. Stories and fellowship are basic building blocks of our identity as a church. Each day, after rotating through the various activities, gather all the children into a large group for closing time before you dismiss them.

SING A SONG

- Choose a song from the supplemental resources for leaders, use the QR or go to [ELCA.org/resources](https://www.elca.org/resources) and search for “VBS Supplemental Resources”
- Use a song that the children know from their congregation’s worship.



TALK TOGETHER/REVIEW THE DAY

- What games did you play today?
- What crafts did you create today?
- What snacks did you try today?
- What stories did you learn today?

Distribute to each child the day’s “Dinner Table Talk” page. This will provide parents with an overview of the day’s activities and extend the lesson with a question to prompt family conversation.

End with a prayer and sending. Make the prayer spontaneous and base it on what the children shared with you as they reviewed their day.



Intergenerational Connections

Accompanying one another in faith, with a genuine interest in one another's stories, opens us to being changed by our relationships across lines of difference. Churches offer many opportunities outside the home for multiple generations to learn and grow together — if congregations take up those opportunities. This is intergenerational ministry: people growing and learning together as disciples through mutually sharing their stories.

Authentic intergenerational ministry is hard, and developing this mission within your own congregation will require more than a single VBS curriculum. But we hope this program can build your community's intergenerational muscle. Specifically, you will find "Intergenerational Connections" throughout this curriculum. These are specific opportunities for older children and adults involved in your VBS programming to get involved in learning alongside younger kids.

These Intergenerational Connections will work best if you make a concerted effort to draw older members of your community into your programming so that their participation in these intergenerational moments feels more natural. Below you can find some suggestions for scaffolding your VBS program to best accommodate the Intergenerational Connections throughout.

BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR GOALS

Be transparent in your advertisements for volunteers in your congregation about why you want adults involved: you want them **to help and to learn**. State clearly that discipleship means learning and growing together across generations as the body of Christ.

Create a volunteer schedule for VBS leaders that allows them to participate as learners, not just facilitators.

INVITE FAMILIES INTO THE PROGRAM

Every lesson has a take-home "At the Table" discussion starter. This gives kids an opportunity to engage their families in their VBS learning.

Designate time at the beginning and/or end of each day for parents and congregation members to join in.

CREATE A PARALLEL ADULT EDUCATION SPACE

Organize an adult education cohort that meets during the same time as the children's VBS. Try to align the lessons with each day's subject matter.

This cohort will join children for activities that involve storytelling. Adults should spend as much time telling stories as they do listening to children's stories.

- In adult-only time, allow adults to reflect on the children's stories and how they felt about telling their stories to the children. What did they learn about themselves and their faith community?
- If you go this route, you may need to schedule your VBS for evenings or weekends to accommodate adults' and teens' schedules.

The "**At the Table**" curriculum encourages participants to engage in advocacy. Contact your local synod office for resources it might have on advocacy education. Many synods are connected with an **ELCA-affiliated state public policy office** that can assist your local advocacy efforts. In addition, ELCA World Hunger can connect you with adult education speakers and resources; email hunger@elca.org.



ELCA Advocacy
map and list.

Notes

[illegible]

Openings *and* Skits





Day 1: What Is a Story?

FOCUS VERSE

"When [Jesus] was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him" (Luke 24:30-31).



WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to "At the Table" VBS, using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Hello, everyone! Welcome to "At the Table" Vacation Bible School. This week we will be breaking bread together and sharing stories so we can understand one another better. There are so many stories we could tell! Bible stories! Funny stories! Stories of people all over the world! Stories from your life and mine! Do you know where many good stories are told? At the table! A dinner table, a lunch table, a restaurant table — around a meal together. Then we will travel around the world to consider how ELCA World Hunger joins people at the table, learning their stories and sharing food with them.

Use this time to introduce information about the building, the grounds or safety, or other helpful tips that visitors might need.

Leader: Each day we will gather as a large group before dividing into smaller groups. You will spend most of the day with your small group before we come back together at the end. Today we're going to discuss the question "What is a story?" and share stories from different points of view. We're also going to learn about bread, an important part of many meals around the world! But first, let's sing!

Intergenerational Connection: Bring people from across generations into these skits as regular actors. These skits are a great opportunity for a volunteer from your congregation who does not regularly work with young people to build relationships with the children. Children acting in skits can see themselves as leaders.



For supplemental resources for leaders, use the QR code on the left or go to [ELCA.org/resources](https://elca.org/resources) and search for "VBS Supplemental Resources".

DAY 1 SKIT

SETUP:

Table and chairs

Basket with the five breads (naan, num-pang veng, sliced sandwich loaf, palyanitsya, bagels)

The Emcee stands next to the table with the Bible. Sandy the Seagull can be somebody in costume OR a seagull puppet/drawing. Get creative! Wear a white baseball cap with the brim painted yellow and eyes above it, or add feathers!

- Emcee **E** Great singing, everyone! Look, we have a special guest joining us! It's a seagull!
Sandy comes in and sits down at the table, poking and pecking at the basket of bread.
- E** Hi! Welcome to the table!
- Sandy **S** *[Startled.]* Hello! I was just flying by. Don't mind me, I'll be on my way.
- E** It's OK — you can stay. What's your name?
- S** I'm Sandy the Seagull.
- E** Hello Sandy. I'm *[insert your real name]*.
 It's nice to meet you. Stick around for a while!
 Everyone is welcome at God's table!
- S** God's table? Who is God?
- E** How do I describe God? God is the Creator. God made everything! You, me, these kids.
- S** *[Suddenly notices children.]*
 Oh, hello kids! Kids love to feed me bread at the beach.
- E** I thought birds aren't supposed to eat bread. Isn't it bad for you?



- S** *[Sheepishly.]* Well ... seagulls like me are supposed to eat fish, clams, shrimp and mice. But we're scavengers. We're not picky eaters. I, for one, LOVE bread. It's my favorite food.
- E** I have some good news for you, Sandy. We're learning all about bread this week. Today the kids are going to hear a story about how sharing a meal of bread opened the eyes of some people who didn't recognize that Jesus is God.
- S** I don't mean to be rude, but a minute ago you said God was the Creator. Now Jesus is God? What is a Jesus? And why is God so many things?
- E** This is getting deep. Let's see how I can explain this. God is the Creator and gives us all good things. God is in everything, everywhere, all the time. But there was a special moment in history when God became human, like me. That human was named Jesus. Jesus is God's son, who came to earth to show us how God thinks, loves and forgives.
- S** So a long time ago, bread helped humans like you see that Jesus is God? I didn't know bread could do that.
- E** Bread can do more than we think. Did you know that one of the most important foods for preventing hunger around the world is bread? We're going to learn about how God uses the simple act of sharing bread to help us understand each other better.
- S** *[Sandy picks up the naan.]* Ah, I recognize this bread! It's called naan [pronounced "non"]. I once flew 3,000 miles to find it along the shores of Pakistan. It's cooked in a very hot clay oven, sometimes 900 degrees! That gives it these delicious crispy and crunchy bits!
- E** Whoa, you really do love bread.
- S** Yes, I've flown all over the world in the hope that children would feed me their local breads. Every country has its own way of making bread, and it's all so yummy.
- E** Sandy, we would be really honored if you stayed with us for a few days and taught us all you know about people, the world and bread. You seem like a real expert!
- S** Really? But I'm just a seagull. Don't you think I'm obnoxious? *[Sadly.]* People are always shooing me away.
- E** Everybody is somebody in God's kingdom. We'd love to share a table with you! We can swap stories!
- S** What is a story? Is it a type of bread?
- E** *[Giggles]* Sorry, I forget that you're a seagull and human things are new to you. A story is when one person tells another person something that happened, either real or imaginary. Sometimes we tell stories with words, sometimes with pictures, with music or by acting them out. Sometimes stories are very short, and sometimes they are very long. Stories are how we learn about each other. Everyone has a story.
- S** *[Looks suspiciously at the children.]* Do kids have stories?
- E** Kids love stories! Sometimes kids read stories in books. Sometimes they tell their own stories about something that happened to them or something they imagined. Sometimes they watch stories on TV. This week we're going to learn stories from the Bible *[points to Bible]*, which are God's stories.
- S** *[Shocked.]* God has stories?
- E** God has many stories! The Bible collects old stories about God, but God is always telling a new story. Where God's story overlaps with your story and my story, that's where the most beautiful stories are found.
- S** I have a story?
- E** Yes, and I'd love to hear it! Maybe while the kids are learning and playing at Vacation Bible School today, you and I can talk, eat some bread and get to know each other.
- S** You had me at bread! I might eat this whole basket.
- E** Sounds great. Do you want to help me send the kids off to Small Group Time? We usually send them off with a prayer.
- S** I hate to sound like a broken birdy, but what's a prayer?
- E** Another good question! A prayer is a conversation with God.
- S** I can talk to God? The Creator of all good things?



E Yes, we can all talk to God and listen to God’s voice in our hearts. What do you say? Do you want to talk to God with me? We usually pray by folding our hands — er, wings — together, like this. *[Emcee and Sandy fold their hands in prayer.]* God, who knows our stories and is always writing a new one, bring our bodies and our hearts to humbly receive the bread and nourishment we need today so that we might accompany each other to learn more about your story. Amen.

S *[Eyes still closed.]* Psst, what’s “amen”?

E It means “So be it.” It’s how we end prayers.

S So the prayer is over? The kids are going?
And you and I get to eat all this bread?

E Yep! We’ll see the kids again tomorrow.

S Goodbye, kids! See you tomorrow.

E Who can lead us in prayer?

Leader: Dear Jesus, thank you for the bread that sustains our bodies and the stories that sustain our souls. From the creativity of storytellers to the strong hands of bakers, everything in this world reveals your love and care for us. Help us this week as we learn about the many things you’ve given us that help us to grow and to share with one another. Amen.

Leader: Let’s give a big round of applause to *[Emcee’s real name]* and Sandy! I can’t wait to hear what they learn about each other during their conversation. Today’s theme is “What Is a Story?” We’re going to learn about all the important parts of stories and how they relate to the breaking of bread together. During Small Group Time, you’ll get to read the story of the road to Emmaus. During Story Time, you’ll get to hear the story of Ahmad. And all week long, we’re going to learn how to make bread! We’re going to learn about bread from growing the wheat all the way to eating bread at the table with other people.

CLOSING SONGS



Day 2: What Is Your Story?

"Is anything too hard for God?" (Genesis 18:14 MSG).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to "At the Table" VBS, using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Welcome back to "At the Table" Vacation Bible School. This week we're learning about the stories we tell when we're gathered with friends or family at the table. Yesterday we had an interesting guest join us at the table. Do you remember who it was? *[Prompt them to remember Sandy the Seagull.]* Yes! I can't wait for Sandy to come back — *[he, she, they]* bring[s] me a lot of joy! Before Sandy comes out, who remembers what we learned yesterday? *[Affirm all answers.]*

Yesterday we learned what a story is and talked about surprises in stories, like the disciples' surprise when they realized that the stranger they were walking with was actually Jesus. Today we will talk about YOUR story, and we will have a chance to tell each other those stories. Maybe we'll get some surprises of our own!

Use this time to introduce 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!

A good song for today would be "Father Abraham Had Many Sons/Kids," which is in the public domain and requires no licensing.



For supplemental resources for leaders, use the QR code on the left or go to [ELCA.org/resources](https://elca.org/resources) and search for "VBS Supplemental Resources".

DAY 2 SKIT

SETUP:

For this skit, the layout of the performing area should be the same as it was the previous day, with a table and chairs on the stage area. On the table, place a basket with the five types of bread being used this week: naan, num-pang veng, sliced sandwich loaf, palyanitsya and bagels. Sandy and the Emcee sit at the table together, sharing some bread. They pick up where they left off after Day 1.

Emcee **E** Sandy, I'm so glad we get this time together to talk, break bread and get to know each other.

Sandy **S** Thanks for letting me join you at the ... what do you call this again? *[Points to table.]*

E The table.

S Yes! Thanks for letting me join you at the table! And thanks for sharing your bread! *[Eagerly looks at bread.]*

E What's your story?

S What's a "story," again? I know you told me this yesterday, but birds don't have very big brains.

E When someone says, "What's your story?," they're usually asking you, "Where are you from?" or "What brought you here?" or "Where are you going?"

S Got it. *[Awkward silence.]*

E So ... what's your story, Sandy?

S You want ME to answer all those questions?

E Yeah, I want to learn who you are!

Continued on next page.

- S** I'm a seagull. My name is Sandy.
- E** I know that. Let me think of another question. What's your favorite food?
- S** Bread.
- E** Maybe that was too easy. How about this one: What's your number-one goal in life?
- S** *[Thinks.]* To get more bread.
- E** I guess I should have expected that. How about another question: What brought you to this table?
- S** *[Thinks.]* The basket of bread.
- E** *[To the children.]* This is going to be harder than I thought! All Sandy wants to talk about is bread! What questions do I ask a seagull to learn its story? *[Listen to a few answers.]* You're right! I can ask a question about the past. Let me think of a good one. *[Turns back to Sandy.]*
- S** Were you just talking to the kids? Hi, kids! *[Waves to them.]*
- E** Yes, I was talking to the kids, and they want to know your story too. We have a better question for you. When did you start loving bread?
- S** *[Dramatically.]* I remember it like it was yesterday. The sun was shining as I glided along the palm-lined coasts of the island of Martinique. I hadn't seen a human in days, and I'd lost all enthusiasm for hunting fish — their skin is too scaly for my delicate taste buds. In the doldrums of my suffering, I looked down to see two kids — much like these kids here — ripping apart slices of bread and throwing the pieces into the air. Curious, I swooped down and caught a piece. It was like a million angels had flown into my mouth and gifted me with the cellular power of carbohydrates. I've been on a mission to find more bread ever since.
- E** I guess all I had to do was ask the right question. The bread those kids gave you really changed your life, huh?
- S** Oh, yes.
- E** That's what people mean when they say, "What's your story?" They want to know, "What are the things that have changed your life?" Today at Vacation Bible School we will hear stories about things that have changed people's lives. In the Bible story, we'll learn about Abraham and Sarah and a surprising change in their

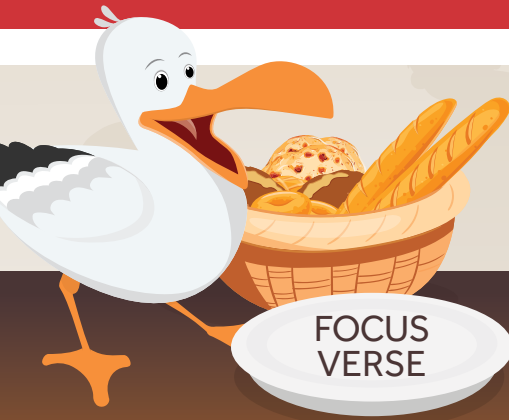
lives. Sarah was so surprised, she laughed! Then, in story time, we'll hear the story of a Cambodian mom named Yun whose life was changed by a gift of chickens.

- S** I've been to Cambodia! They have great bread! This is it, right here: num-bang veng. The French call it a baguette, but the Cambodian people make their own version.
- E** You amaze me with your bread knowledge! Yes, num-bang veng is bread from Cambodia. We'll hear a Cambodian story today, and I hope we get to hear from all these kids and adults about the important things that have happened in their lives.
- S** That's a lot of stories.
- E** I know! Isn't it exciting?
- S** I'm not sure my bird brain can remember all those stories!
- E** Luckily, stories are meant to be told over and over. Sometimes stories change. So it's always OK to ask for someone's story again.
- S** Good. Can I learn your story now?
- E** Sure. How about we dismiss these kids to their next activity. While they're doing their Vacation Bible School, I can share my story.
- S** Num-bang veng, a story and a new friend. Sounds like the perfect day!
- E** Let's wave goodbye to the kids and adults. See you tomorrow!
- E** Who can lead us in a prayer?

Leader: Dear Jesus, you are the author of all our stories and know what happens even before we do. Be with us today as we learn about the big and little things that change lives. Give us a space to craft our stories and the bravery to tell them to each other. We give thanks for this day and this time together. Amen.

Leader: Give a big round of applause to *[Emcee's real name]* and Sandy! Like they said, today's theme is "What Is Your Story?" We're going to be learning about the events in our lives that make us who we are today. Even YOU have a story! Can you believe it? But first, let's sing a few more songs and join in a closing prayer before we move on to our activities.

CLOSING SONGS



Day 3: What Are the Stories of the People You Know?

“They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God” (Acts 2:46 MSG).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to “At the Table” VBS, using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Hello, hello! It’s good to see everyone here for another great day “At the Table.” Our theme today is learning the stories of people we break bread with all the time: our families, our neighbors and even the people sitting right next to you. We’ll talk about community and cooperation. We’ll talk about sharing our stories and special gifts with one another. We’ll talk about how the ELCA helps create communities of all kinds, all over the world — from churches to colleges to soup kitchens. Through breaking bread with people who are different from us, we create a new community — and God made us for community.

Use this time to introduce information about the building, the grounds or safety, or other helpful tips that visitors might need.



For supplemental resources for leaders, use the QR code on the left or go to [ELCA.org/resources](https://elca.org/resources) and search for “VBS Supplemental Resources”.

DAY 3 SKIT

SETUP:

The layout of the performing area is the same, with a table and chairs on the stage area. On the table sits a basket with the five types of bread used this week. Sandy and the Emcee start the skit at the table together, sharing some bread and picking up where we left off on Day 2.

- Emcee** **E** Sandy, it’s a joy to share my story with you. Thank you for being such a great listener.
- Sandy** **S** I really love learning peoples’ stories. But I have more questions.
- E** Like what?
- S** Yesterday you said that a person’s story answers the questions “Where are you from?” or “What brought you here?” or “Where are you going?” When I asked you what brought you here, you said that you’re a Christian and that’s why you come to church.
- E** Yes, I did say that.
- S** My question is, what’s a church?
- E** Ah, good question. This is a church!
[Raises hands to indicate everything.]
- S** *[Confused.]* The air is a church?
- E** No, THIS is a church — the building around us, the people gathered here, the time we spend together. It’s all part of the church.
- S** So everything is a church?
- E** Not necessarily, but many different places and groups of people could be a church. In the Bible, in the book of Matthew, Jesus says that “where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” A church is wherever Christians gather to meet and talk about Jesus.

Continued on next page.

S Yeah, that was my other question.

E What was it?

S What's a Christian?

E Oh, I suppose that's a new concept for a seagull. Remember the first day, when I said that God is the Creator and Jesus is God's son?

S Yes.

E A Christian is someone who believes that the stories of Jesus are true. A Christian also believes that God loves us so much, he sent Jesus to earth to set us free so that we might love and serve other people.

S Is every human a Christian?

E Another good question, Sandy! No, not every human is a Christian. People started calling themselves Christians after Jesus died and was raised from the dead three days later. It was a miracle! That's one reason why Christians believe Jesus is God's son. He is both human and a part of God.

S Oh! So Jesus is still alive? Can I meet him?

E Gosh, you're full of good questions today! Jesus is both alive and not alive.

S *[Gives the Emcee a skeptical look.]* What?

E Let me think how I can explain this.
[Picks up num-pang veng from the bread basket.]
Let's pretend this num-pang veng is Jesus.

S I'm listening.

E Jesus was alive on earth. *[Stands bread up.]*
Then he died on the cross. *[Points to a cross in the church building and lays the bread down.]* Then, three days later, Jesus rose from the grave and walked the earth for another 40 days. *[Stands bread back up.]*
Then Jesus ascended into heaven *[lifts bread up into the air]* so the Holy Spirit could be with us.

S What happened then?

E Today's Bible story explains what happened next. It's about the early church and what the first Christians were like. You'll like this part because bread was a big part of the early Christian story.

S No way!

E Yah-weh! *[Winks at the audience.]* Today's Bible story says that the first Christians "broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts." So today we're learning about whom we break bread with and how we can listen to their stories.

S Christians share their bread? Does that mean I can eat more of your bread? I really, really like this one.
[Points to sliced sandwich loaf.]

E Sure. A big part of being Christian is having something so good you want to share it with everyone — in this case, God's love. We know God loves us, so we want to share that love with everyone else. Sometimes love is a hug or a kind word, and sometimes love is a loaf of bread.

S I love bread.

E We know, Sandy. That sandwich loaf you're about to eat is from right here in the United States, from a state called Colorado. It represents the love and care we share with young people at Colorado State University. In Colorado, 1 out of every 9 people doesn't get enough food to eat.

S *[With a mouthful of bread, drops jaw in shock.]*
Not enough bread?

E Remember how we talked about church and about having something so good you want to share it? My church is called the Lutheran Church, and through a program called ELCA World Hunger, we share our resources so that everyone has enough. We're going to learn about one of those projects today.

S I love stories about humans! Especially if the story is about humans and bread.

E Remember how, on the first day, we learned "What is a story?" Then, yesterday, we learned "What is your story?" Today we'll learn "What are the stories of the people you know?" We're going to learn about how people of the early church listened to each other's stories, and how we continue that today. Before we dismiss the kids to their activities, let's pray together. Are you ready?

S Yep! My wings are folded, and my beak is bowed.

E Who can lead us in prayer?

Leader: Dear Jesus, we know you are a God who listens, who sees and knows. We thank you for another day to learn about stories, bread and faith in Vacation Bible School. Help us to grow in understanding and patience as we learn more about the stories of the people we know. Amen.

CLOSING SONGS



Day 4: How Does It Feel to Not Have Your Story Heard?

**"My house shall be called a house of prayer
for all the nations"** (Mark 11:17).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to "At the Table" VBS, using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Welcome back to "At the Table" Vacation Bible School! So far, we've learned a lot about stories. We've learned to tell our stories and listen to other people's stories. Today we're going to talk about how it feels when you want to tell your story but you're not taken seriously. When this happens, we often feel angry or sad — as if we don't matter. But everyone matters in the kingdom of God. We're going to pay close attention to whose stories haven't been respected, and to how Jesus felt when he wasn't respected. During Story Time, we'll travel to a country called Ukraine and learn about a woman named Mariia, whose stories were not respected. I hope that, at the end of the day, we understand better how important everyone's story is to God.

Use this time to introduce information about the building, the grounds or safety, or other helpful tips that visitors might need.

Intergenerational Connection: The Day 4 story features refugees from Ukraine, and the Day 5 stories come from international advocacy efforts by our church. The work of advocacy on international, state and federal levels on behalf of communities we accompany is key to the way our church sees God at work in the world. To this end, we recommend that adults learning alongside children have the opportunity to communicate with the nearest ELCA-affiliated state public policy office. You can find contact information for these offices here.



https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/ELCA_Advocacy_map_and_list.pdf



For supplemental resources for leaders, use the QR code on the left or go to **ELCA.org/resources** and search for "VBS Supplemental Resources".

DAY 4 SKIT

SETUP:

For this skit, a table and chairs should be on the stage area. On the table sits a basket with the five types of bread for the week: naan, num-pang veng, sliced sandwich loaf, palyanitsya and bagels. Sandy stands offstage while the Emcee, wearing headphones, uses a rag to wipe down the table.

Sandy **(S)** *[Singing to self.]* Do, do, do. La, la, la.
[Sandy walks onstage, trips and falls.
The Emcee doesn't notice.]

(S) *[Dramatically and loudly.]* Ow! That hurt!

Emcee **(E)** *[The Emcee still doesn't notice.]*

(S) *[Stands up and holds knee, hopping on one foot.]*
Oh golly! I'm in pain!

(E) *[The Emcee still doesn't notice. Looking frustrated, Sandy lifts up one of the Emcee's headphones.]*

(S) Hello?

(E) Oh! Hi, Sandy! I didn't see you there.

(S) Did you HEAR me? I fell! I cried!

(E) I'm so sorry — I didn't hear you. I like to listen to music while I'm cleaning. Are you OK?

(S) *[Feels leg, stands on it.]* I guess I'm OK. But for a second there I was afraid you would never notice me. What if I were really hurt? Who would help me?

Continued on next page.



OPENING AND SKIT: DAY 4

- E** I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you feel scared. I was just distracted.
- S** Why were you distracted? Don't I matter to you?
- E** Of course you matter to me, Sandy. You're my only seagull friend. You're precious to me.
- S** Precious?
- E** Yeah, "precious" means "of great value," something not to be wasted or treated carelessly.
- S** You think I'm precious?
- E** Yes. God thinks everyone is precious.
- S** Then why didn't you treat me like a precious thing when I fell? You just ignored me! *[Stomps foot.]*
- E** I can see that you're angry. You know what? I understand that anger. It makes God angry when people don't treat each other as precious. Today's Bible story is about that — Jesus getting angry in the temples and flipping over tables because people aren't treating each other well. Come to think of it, today's theme is "How Does It Feel to Not Have Your Story Understood?" I guess you can answer that question. How did it feel when I didn't notice that you were hurt?
- S** *[Softens.]* I was scared. My heart was beating fast, and I couldn't breathe. Then I started to get angry at you for not noticing me.
- E** You're not alone in those feelings. Our global story today is about a woman named Mariia from Ukraine. Like you, she also felt scared that she might get hurt because people wouldn't take her story seriously, and then angry because no one paid attention to it. See this bread? *[Points to the palyanitsya.]* This is palyanitsya. It's from Ukraine, Mariia's home, which is known as "the breadbasket of the world" because it produces so much food.

- S** That looks like a tasty one!
- E** Again, I'm sorry I didn't respond when you were hurt. But you know what? Jesus always knows what's happening with you. Remembering that helps me feel less scared sometimes. Should we communicate with Jesus right now? We can say a prayer.
- S** Sure! Do you think Jesus also has an ice pack?
- E** I can get you an ice pack after we pray and the kids are dismissed to their activities. Who can lead us in prayer?

Leader: Dear Jesus, thank you for understanding us when we feel ignored and alone. We pray that everyone's stories will be heard, because we know that everyone's stories matter to you. We pray that when people feel disrespected, when there is injustice and whenever righteous anger arises, you will soften our hearts to see your kingdom. Amen.

CLOSING SONGS



Day 5: How Can We Listen to and Share Other People's Stories?

FOCUS VERSE

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

WELCOME AND PRAYER

Welcome everyone to "At the Table" VBS, using the script below or something similar.

Leader: Welcome to our final day of "At the Table" Vacation Bible School! I hope you've had a great week learning about stories, bread and God's love for us. What are some things you've learned this week? [Affirm all answers.] Today we're going to talk about how we can appreciate and share other people's stories. My story and your story are not divided by boundaries; both are part of God's greater story. God wants us to see others not from our human point of view but from God's point of view.

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DAY 5 SKIT

SETUP:

A table and chairs sit on the stage area. On the table sits a basket with the five types of bread for the week: naan, num-pang veng, sliced sandwich loaf, palyanitsya and bagels. The Emcee and Sandy sit at the table, picking up where they left off on Day 4. An ice pack rests on Sandy's knee.

Sandy **S** My knee still hurts.

Emcee **E** From your fall yesterday?

S Yeah. The last time my knee hurt this bad was when Jerry tried to steal a piece of bagel from me. I pecked him in the wing, and then he pecked me in the knee.

E Who is Jerry?

S My neighbor when I lived in New York City. We both slept in the same tree. He was always following me, trying to steal my bread. He's a real pain in the tail feathers. But don't worry, I got the bagel in the end.

E Do you want to know what God says about that?

S I remember from the day we learned about Christians. You said that God wants us to share our bread with everyone. There is no way I'm sharing my bagel with Jerry! He always claims everything is his. "Mine! Mine! Mine!" Nope — I stole that bagel from the dumpster behind 2nd Avenue Deli. It's my bagel.

E *[The Emcee raises their eyebrows.]*

S OK, fine. What does God say about it?

E The Bible says you should love your neighbor as yourself.

Continued on next page.



OPENING AND SKIT: DAY 5

- S** *[Rolls eyes.]* But Jerry is the worst!
- E** In today's Bible story, there's a guy who is an expert in the law. He thinks that these people called Samaritans are the worst. Jesus tells him a story about a Samaritan, and even the legal expert has to admit that the Samaritan was a good neighbor. Jesus' stories always make you think.
- S** Jerry was not a good neighbor.
- E** Were you?
- S** I guess not.
- E** Did you and Jerry ever sit down and learn each other's stories like we did this week?
- S** No.
- E** I think that's the most important thing we learned this week. When we gather at the table, when we break bread together, we get to know each other's stories better. And when we get to know each other's stories better, we're better at caring for one another, both in small ways, like sharing our bread, and in big ways, like speaking up for each other's needs. Look, there's a bagel in our breadbasket. Why don't you take it to Jerry and offer to share it while you get to know each other's stories? In fact, I think this bagel may even be from the 2nd Avenue Deli, because that's near the United Nations Headquarters and that's where our global story takes place today.
- S** Jerry is still in New York City. It's too far away. Besides, I'm busy here with you and these kids.
- E** In the story Jesus tells about the Samaritan there are a couple other people who have excuses to not be a good neighbor. Sometimes we make up excuses to do what's easiest and most comfortable rather than reach out to treat our neighbor as ourselves. I think that's why Jesus not only mentions loving our neighbors but spent a lot of his time on earth showing us how to love our neighbors.

- S** Did Jesus ever have a neighbor like Jerry?
- E** Trust me, Jesus' neighbors were way worse than Jerry.
- S** Fine. I guess I'll take this bagel to Jerry, but can I at least wait until after Vacation Bible School is over? This is the last day, and I'm really going to miss you guys!
- E** Sure, Sandy! We'll miss you too. Why don't we say a prayer? Then we'll do our last day of Vacation Bible School and you can be a good neighbor and take the bagel to Jerry.
- S** Sounds good.
- E** Who can lead us in prayer?

Leader: Dear Jesus, we thank and praise you for this week of Vacation Bible School. We've learned so much about the bread that sustains our bodies and the stories that sustain our souls. We pray that you will help us to love you with all our hearts, all our souls, all our strength and all our minds. And we pray that, today, we'll learn more about how to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.

CLOSING SONGS

Small Group Time

SMALL GROUP TIME



Day 1: Stories, Feelings, Point of View and What We Share

LESSON FOCUS

Stories touch the most human parts of us — our feelings, our points of view, and what we share in common.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bible	Markers
Paper	Cameras

OPENER: NAME-SHARING GAME

Have each child make a “name sign” on a piece of paper. Gather in a circle, hold up your name signs and introduce yourselves. What parts of your name sign do you share with others? (“My name is Lucy, and I share the letters ‘L’ and ‘U’ with Luke.” Or for younger children, “My name is Mia, and I share a mmmm sound with Mateo.”) Help kids who might be shy about their spelling ability to find other connections. (“Greta, you wrote your name in blue, and so did Malik!”) At the end of the day, keep these signs at the Small Group Time station to use for the next few days.

Intergenerational Connection: When there are different generations present, talk about who gave you your name. Adults might have some history on where their name came from. Ask participants to share some common names among their peers, noting similarities and differences.

ENCOUNTERING SCRIPTURE: LUKE 24:13-35

Ask the children if they have ever been surprised by someone else’s story. Were they surprised today when Sandy the Seagull knew so much about bread?

Leader: Today we’re going to read a story about Jesus. Jesus had best friends who called themselves his disciples. After Jesus died, the disciples were sad and confused. They couldn’t understand why he had died, and they missed their best friend. This is a surprise story about Jesus. Are you ready to read it?

Read Luke 24:13-35 together.

Use a translation that will be accessible to children.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

- How do you think the disciples were walking on the road to Emmaus? *[Get up and act this out.]* Were they skipping? Jumping like a frog? Bunny-hopping? Tiptoeing? Crawling? They were probably walking really sad. Can you show me what it’s like to walk when you’re sad? What does your body look like? *[Lowered head, dragging feet, etc.]*
- Why were the disciples sad? *[Jesus had died.]*
- How was Jesus feeling in this story? *[Reread verses 25-28 if they’re struggling.]* Can we walk like Jesus might have felt? *[Angry stomps, frustrated huffs, etc.]*
- When people are sad and mad as Jesus and his disciples were, what can happen sometimes? *[Fights, conflict.]*
- But was there a fight here? *[No — Jesus used a meal to help everyone see each other and find peace.]*

QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- Why do you think the disciples didn’t recognize Jesus? *[Affirm all answers.]*
- Jesus seemed really frustrated with the disciples. Why was he frustrated? *[He had been telling his story to them all along, but they didn’t believe it.]*
- How did Jesus reveal himself to the disciples? *[Through the breaking of bread, sharing a meal.]*
- At the end of the story, Jesus “vanished from their sight.” Where do you think Jesus went?
- What did the two people who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus do after Jesus revealed who he was? Why were they so eager to tell people?

ENGAGING IN THE TEXT: INTERGENERATIONAL STORY WALK

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Polaroid camera (ideal), cell phones, or pen and paper for making drawings instead of photos

Intergenerational Connection: This activity is designed to facilitate and celebrate connections between people in your faith community. Make sure the groups walking together include at least one adult. The discussion questions below will guide intergenerational conversation after the activity. During the activity, direct both adults and children to suggest things to photograph. This will allow all generations to take the lead in shaping the discussion of perspective that follows.

Get into small groups of two to four. Ask each group to take a short walk near the church and take three photos of things they find interesting. At the end of the walk, gather and compare your pictures.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Did you all take pictures of the same things?
- Why did you end up taking pictures of these three things?
- How does our point of view change what we see? For example, do younger people think about things differently from older people? If so, how?
- In the story of the road to Emmaus, how was the disciples' point of view different from Jesus' point of view? What did Jesus see that they couldn't see?

ENGAGING IN THE TEXT: PAPER HEARTS

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Paper
- Scissors

Read Luke 24:30-32 again. Repeat the sentence "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" The disciples talk about their hearts being warmed when Jesus is speaking to them. What do you think this means? Perhaps the disciples' hearts were recognizing Jesus before their heads did! Cut out paper hearts and write on them some examples of when your heart felt warm. For example, "when my mom gave me a hug" or "the end of a happy movie." Discuss how, when our hearts feel warm, Jesus is there even if we can't see him.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for this wonderful, mysterious story of the road to Emmaus and for the stories from our own lives that warm our hearts and reveal to us who you are. Help us this week to be open not only to your story and my story, but to everyone's stories. Amen.

Day 2: Stories, Humor and Patience

LESSON FOCUS

Stories, especially life stories, require a sense of humor and patience.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Joke books

Markers, crayons

Paper

or colored pencils

OPENER: WHAT MAKES YOU LAUGH?

Lay out in a circle the “name signs” from the previous day. Have each child sit next to their name sign. Once everyone has sat down, say, “In a few minutes we’re going to read a Bible story where someone named Sarah laughs at God. Before we see what makes her laugh, we’re going to learn a little more about each other. What makes you laugh?”

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

- Start talking and then pretend to fall asleep. Make loud snoring noises. Wake up, begin talking again, and fall back asleep.
- Move in super-slow motion, then super-fast, then super-slow again.
- Use an everyday item for something that it’s not meant to be used for (a sponge for a cell phone, a book for a hat, etc.).
- Sing a familiar song with silly words. For example, “The wheels on the bus go quack, quack, quack.”

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Let them look through some joke books and write down their favorite joke. Once everyone has a joke to share, go around the circle, each child saying their name and their joke. After everyone has had a chance, discuss whose joke was the funniest.

ENCOUNTERING SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 18:1-15

In our skit today, Sandy told us a story about how two kids shared bread with him and it changed his whole life. In this Bible story, we’re going to learn how Abraham and his wife, Sarah, shared bread with three mysterious visitors and how this act of hospitality changed their whole lives too.

Optional: *Abraham and his family lived in tents. Let the kids help you set up a tent as you tell the story, or if you don’t have a tent, drape a sheet or two over a table and go inside while you share the story of Abraham.*

Read Genesis 18:1-15.

Use a translation that will be accessible to children.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

- In this story, Abraham receives three special visitors. Have you ever had special visitors at your house? What did your family do differently for the special visitors that you don’t do normally? *[Clean more, eat special food, set the table with nice plates, etc.]* What does it feel like when your family welcomes special visitors? Is it stressful? Joyful? How do you think Abraham and Sarah felt to receive these visitors?
- Patience can be really difficult. God promised Abraham and Sarah a LONG time ago that they would have children, but now they are very old and don’t believe God’s promise. They have lost their patience. Have you ever lost your patience? What does it look like when you lose your patience? *[Huffing, puffing, rolling eyes, etc.]* How long did you have to wait until you lost your patience? Sarah had to wait 25 years between the time when God promised her a baby and when she had her son, Isaac.
- Have you ever met someone who is 90 years old? *[Wait for responses.]* What did they look like? What color was their hair? Was their skin smooth or wrinkly? Sarah was 90 years old when she gave birth to her son, Isaac. What did Sarah do when God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son even though she was almost 90 years old? *[She laughed.]*



QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- Who do you think these three visitors were? What did they look like? How did they know so much about Abraham and Sarah? Some Bible scholars say they were angels. Some say it's the trinity — God in three persons. Some say it was God and two other people. What do you think? *[Reread the early verses again to see if you can find any clues. Let this be a conversation rather than a right answer, because this is a question that theologians still debate.]*
- There are many possible lessons here. What do you think God wants us to learn from the story of Sarah and Abraham? *[A few ideas: God values hospitality to strangers, God calls us to serve, God keeps promises, nothing is too hard for God, God gives us joy and laughter, God wants us to be patient, God creates families.]*
- Sarah had a hard time believing that she would have a baby, even though God told her she would. Do you believe that God can do amazing things in your life?

ENGAGING IN THE TEXT: LIFE MAP

Leader: Some stories, especially on TV or in movies, are exciting and get better and better. But most real-life stories have lots of ups and downs and require patience and a sense of humor. Abraham's life story is a great example of this. Abraham is one of the main characters in the Old Testament of the Bible. Through the Bible we learn about his whole life story, which is long and complicated. If Abraham had to make a map of his life, it wouldn't be a straight line or a simple road that goes from here to there. Some crazy stuff happens in Abraham's life! He goes to Egypt but, to protect his wife, Sarah, pretends that she's his sister. God changes his name from Abram to Abraham. He gets impatient and doesn't believe God's promise that he will have a son, so he has a baby with a woman named Hagar, which makes Sarah mad. And a lot more! Abraham's life map would be a road with hills and valleys, detours and dead ends. What would a map of your life look like?

Continued on next page.

Intergenerational Connection: This activity is intergenerational, so everyone can participate! Have everyone draw their life as a road map, with the different life-changing events in their lives representing turns, hills, ditches, detours or stop signs. Think of it as a visual timeline of a life, starting at birth and continuing to the present day. This map is just one way of telling our own story.

Directions

- Here are a few prompts for events that might mark a change in the road:
 - A move to a new house.
 - A new sibling or pet.
 - The death of a family member or pet.
 - The first time someone tried the sport or activity they now love.
 - An accident or illness.
 - The day someone met their best friend.
 - Graduation or passing an important certification.
 - Marriage or divorce.
 - A special trip or vacation.
- After everyone is done making their life road maps, pair people up and have them share their life road map with their partner. Feel free to pair kids with adults. Sharing in pairs feels safer than sharing a story with the whole group.
- Before moving on to the next activity, remind everyone that no matter what their life map looks like right now, it will go to new and different places in the future. God promises us a future, just as God promised Abraham and Sarah a future.

ENGAGING IN THE TEXT: PRACTICING HOSPITALITY

This is an improv game where kids and adults have to imagine together what would be the most hospitable way to respond to an unexpected guest at their door.

Directions

- Before the kids arrive, write down a few different scenarios, keyed to your church's context, of people who might show up at a family's door. Feel free to make up your own scenarios or to choose from the scenarios below:
 - An elderly neighbor ("I'm having trouble getting this jar open. Can you open it for me?").
 - A young child ("I accidentally threw my toy over the fence into your backyard. Can you get it for me?").
 - A family whose car has broken down ("Do you have a wrench we can use to get the bolts off our flat tire?").
 - A mail carrier with a package ("Could you sign here for this package?").
 - A political canvasser ("Can you help us keep drinking water in our community clean?").
- When you have at least four scenarios that make sense for your context, write each scenario on a slip of paper and put it in a hat or cup for the kids to draw out.
- Once the kids arrive, explain, "In today's story, Abraham and Sarah welcome their visitors in some pretty amazing ways. Not only do they offer water, they also bake bread for them, prepare some fresh meat and cheese, and wash their feet. When we welcome strangers as family, that's called hospitality. Abraham was showing hospitality to the three visitors. Hospitality is one of God's favorite things. In today's world, sometimes it's hard to know how to show hospitality. We're all so busy. Sometimes unexpected visitors feel either inconvenient or scary. We're going to play a game where we imagine what it would be like to show hospitality to different kinds of people. Let's act out some scenes where people show up on our doorstep and we have to find ways to show them God's love."
- Have the children volunteer, one at a time, to draw a slip of paper.
- Once the child knows their character and their opening line, have them ring a pretend doorbell and wait for the rest of the group (the household) to answer. When they do, the volunteer reads the description of who they are and makes their opening request.
- The rest of the class then reacts to the person on their doorstep. As they work together, urge them to think how they can not only help the person but also show radical hospitality as Abraham and Sarah did. Repeat with a new scenario until the time is up.

Day 3: Sharing Our Special Gifts

LESSON FOCUS

God has given each of us special gifts. At the table, we share our gifts with each other.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A whiteboard or poster board	Coloring sheets
Dry-erase markers (for whiteboard) or regular markers (for poster board)	Crayons
	Dice

OPENER: 10 THINGS IN COMMON

This is an icebreaker to help the children discuss what they all have in common, which will be a good introduction to today's Bible text.

Go around the circle and have everyone say their name again. Then, using the whiteboard or poster board, ask the group to figure out 10 things you all have in common. This game is about working together to uncover 10 things everyone shares, whether it's a favorite hobby, a favorite food or even weird habits. The conversation the kids have will build connections and establish safety, so don't rush it. This activity is not about getting to the 10 commonalities quickly; it's about discovering who each person is. When the children find something they all have in common, write it on the board until you have 10.

QUESTIONS TO PROMPT THEM:

- What kinds of food do you like?
- Have you been to any cool places?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- What do you like on your pizza?
- What calms you down?
- What makes you mad?

If the children are stuck and can't think of anything they have in common, ask them to "zoom out" and see themselves from God's perspective. What does God think they all have in common?

ENCOUNTERING SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:42-47

Leader: I'm so glad we played that game to find what we share in common. Did you know we shared all of these things? *[Review list together.]* Today we're going to learn about the very first Christians and what they shared in common. We have to use our imaginations to go back in time a very, very long time ago. Jesus died and then rose from the dead over 2,000 years ago. Can you imagine that long ago? *[Wait for answers.]* When Jesus rose from the dead, he stayed around on earth for a while to meet and talk with people. Remember the story of the road to Emmaus from the first day of VBS? That was during the time after Jesus rose from the dead. But eventually Jesus had to go back to heaven, and he left his spirit — which we call the Holy Spirit — here on earth for us to feel close to God. The book of Acts in the Bible is about what happened to the first people who believed that Jesus was the Son of God. We're going to read a section of the book of Acts to see what the very first Christians did after Jesus went to heaven.

Read Acts 2:42-47.

Use a translation that will be accessible to children.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION (ALL AGES)

- What are four things in this Scripture that the new Christians did together? *[Devoted themselves to the teachings of the apostles, shared what they had in common, worshiped together, ate meals together.]* Do we still do those things today in our church?
- We read that early Christians "shared what they had in common." What sorts of things do you think they shared? *[Food, houses, clothes, sandals, etc.]*
- Here's a much harder question: WHY did the early Christians share? Sometimes we share because an adult orders us, but that's not why the early

Continued on next page.

Christians shared what they had. Why did they share?
[They were inspired by Christ's love, which is a giving love; changed hearts are less worried about earthly things; in Matthew 6:19, Jesus tells us not to accumulate treasure on earth.]

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

- How did the early Christians feel when they gathered? Let's read this verse again and see if we can find all the feeling words. Feeling words are words like "happy," "sad" and "mad." Are you ready? *[Reread the verses slowly and write down any words that have to do with feelings. Depending on the translation, the words may vary. For instance, the NIV has "awe," "gladness" and "sincerity." The Message translation has "exuberant," "joyful" and "harmonious." The NRSV includes "feeling generous." Take some time to define the feeling words identified.]*
 - Awe: Deep respect mixed with fear or wonder
 - Gladness: Joy or pleasure
 - Sincerity: Openness and truthfulness
 - Exuberant: Filled with happy energy
 - Joyful: Cheerful, calm delight
 - Harmonious: Working together nicely
 - Generous: Being willing and ready to give or share
- Have you ever felt these feelings? How do they feel in your body? Can we act out some of these feelings?

QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- When someone uses the word "church," what do you think of: the building, a denomination, worship, a community? Or something else?
- What do we mean when we say "the early church"? A building or a gathering of people?
- What did you hear in these verses about the early church? What are some ways that people took care of one another? How is that similar to or different from what people do in church today?
- Imagine that the other people in this time who weren't Christians — Jewish or Roman people — weren't sharing their things with other people. Why would the early Christians sharing everything in common be so attractive? Why did they gain so many followers?

ENGAGING THE TEXT: FOUR PILLARS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Have the children physically act out the four actions mentioned in the verses as being part of the early church:

- **The apostles' teachings.** Have one child stand in front of the others and teach them something simple from the Bible, such as "Jesus loves you."
- **Fellowship.** Mime spending time together, shaking hands, giving hugs or sharing cups of tea.
- **Breaking bread.** Mime eating a meal together or bring crackers to symbolize the bread.
- **Prayer.** Pray together, using a well-known prayer such as the Lord's Prayer.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Rewrite the verses in Acts 2 to be about modern times, using the following prompts:

- "They learned together ..."
(What do you learn in church?).
- "They ate together ..."
(What sorts of things do you eat with people you know?).
- "They prayed together ..."
(What do you pray for when you're gathered with other people?).
- "They shared the things of their life ..."
(What things do you share with other people?).

Intergenerational Connection: These same prompts work for adults. They might even be more challenging for adults. If you have space for adult education, we recommend you ask them to do this same exercise.

ENGAGING THE TEXT: CRAYON-SHARING GAME

Leader: One important thing in this passage is how unique it was for people with different needs to share what they had. Some early Christians were very poor, while some were quite rich. Yet they all worked together to make sure everyone had what they needed. We're going to do an activity to see if we can work together to make sure everyone has what they need.

Instructions

1. Give each child a coloring sheet. For older children, you can complicate this activity by using color-by-numbers coloring sheets.
2. Ask each child to roll a die. Whatever number the child rolls dictates how many crayons they can pick out of the box.
3. When each child has gotten a coloring sheet and picked out their allotted crayons, ask them to start coloring.
4. Younger children may still be learning how to share. Encourage them to ask their friends if they might borrow the crayons they need.
5. Tell the older children that they may share their own crayons but may not ask the other children for the crayons they need. This means that, for everyone to finish their sheet, they will have to determine what colors other people need, and offer them.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

- How does it feel to really need something and not be able to get it?
- When is it hard to share?
- What are some things that make sharing easier?

QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- When you take the time to notice what your friend needs, how does that affect your willingness to share?
- How does it feel to have only one crayon when some of your friends have six? If you had six crayons, was it hard to remember to look around and see who might need one of them?
- In our world today, where do we see sharing like this, in which people who have more share with people who have less?

CLOSING PRAYER

Invite the children to think of one thing they can share either within their family or at church. For example, they can share a friendly smile or share some of the money they made at their lemonade stand. Tell them there will be a time during the prayer when they can offer to God what they will share.

Leader: Dear God, we thank you for teaching us about how we can share what we have so that everyone is taken care of. Today we offer to share these things with other people. *[Go around and ask each child what they will share.]* Thank you, God, for these blessings we can share and for the things that are shared with us. Each day is an opportunity to love you more and love other people more. Amen.

Day 4: Acknowledging Others' Stories

LESSON FOCUS

When we don't acknowledge and understand other people's stories, we aren't treating God's precious people as valuable.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Timer
- Currency from other nations
- Stuffed animals — a sheep, a goat and a dove/
pigeon (or pictures of these animals)
- A very easy-to-read book

OPENER: A PRECIOUS THING

Leader: We're going to do an imaginary show-and-tell. We don't have the things here with us, so we'll have to use our imaginations to tell about them. Take one minute to think of the most precious, valuable thing you own. Then we'll go around the room, and everyone will have a chance to tell the story of their precious thing. If it's the stuffed teddy bear you sleep with at night, I want to know how you got that teddy bear and how it comforts you at night — all the reasons that teddy bear is precious to you. OK, I'm setting a timer for one minute. Think silently, then we'll share out loud.

Set a timer for one minute. After the timer goes off, go around and allow each kid to share their item.

Leader: Now that everyone has shared their precious thing, I'm going to do something imaginary with it. I'm going use your precious thing to clean the church's toilets. This will save me a lot of money, because I won't have to buy toilet-cleaning supplies. What do you think? How would you feel about that? *[Validate responses.]* I understand that you all would be pretty mad if I used your precious thing to clean the toilets. Why is that? *[Validate responses.]* You're right — we shouldn't use your precious thing to clean the toilets, because your precious thing has a story behind it and it matters to you. Keep that in mind as we read today's Bible story.

ENCOUNTERING SCRIPTURE: MARK 11:15-19

Leader: Today's Bible story is about how angry Jesus got when he saw that people were using his precious thing to do something wrong. You may know this story; it's when Jesus cleanses the temple and flips over tables. This story is in all four Gospels, which means it must be really important. Both the temple and the people of God were Jesus' precious things, and Jesus felt that no one was treating them right.

Read Mark 11:15-19 together.

Use a translation that will be accessible to children.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

- How was Jesus feeling in this story? *[Mad.]*
How can we tell? *[Knocking over tables, making people leave, etc.]*
- What are some things that make you mad?
[Affirm all answers.] What do you do when you feel mad?
[Stomp, scream, etc.]
- In this story, some people are trying to sell things in the temple — doves to use as sacrifices and special money to give to God. Can you sell God? *[No.]* Can you buy God?
[No. God is free and available to everyone.]

QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- In our culture today, we might feel embarrassed to get angry in public. If a little kid is throwing a tantrum, we take them outside. If we're mad at a friend, we try to say something nice to their face, but then we go home and complain about them. Was Jesus embarrassed to be angry in public? *[No.]* Is it a sin to be angry? *[No.]* If we look to Jesus' example, when is it OK to be angry in public? *[Affirm all answers.]*
- On the second day of Vacation Bible School, we talked about what makes us laugh, and we all mentioned different things. Just as there are many types of joy,

there are many types of anger. Jesus' anger in this story was righteous anger. Sometimes humans feel righteous anger, but most of the time humans feel petty anger or resentment. Resentment is a feeling that comes when we've been forced to accept something we don't like. What's the difference between righteous anger and petty anger? *[Righteous anger is purposeful and aims to restore justice and righteousness, whereas petty anger may be more about personal desires or preferences.]*

- In today's world, what might Jesus or God be angry about for righteous reasons? *[Poverty, inequality, racism, etc.]*

ENGAGING IN THE TEXT: MONEY CHANGERS AND DOVES

AGE RANGE: 8 YEARS AND OLDER

Leader: In this Bible story, there are things happening that you wouldn't understand if you weren't a Jewish person living two thousand years ago. We're going to spend some time looking at the sentence "[Jesus] overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves" (Mark 11:15 NIV). Why were people exchanging money and selling doves in a temple? Have you ever seen someone sell doves at our church? Have you ever had to exchange money at church? *[Affirm all answers.]* We're going to dive a little deeper into those two things — money-changing and selling doves.

First of all, what does money-changing mean? Has your family ever traveled to another country and had to exchange U.S. dollars for other types of money? *[Affirm all answers.]* Here in the United States, we use dollars, quarters, dimes, nickels and pennies to pay for things, but other countries use their own bills and coins. Let's look at some of them.

Pass around foreign currencies. Explain what they are and what country they come from.

What would happen if someone from Japan came to the United States and tried to use their currency, yen, to buy something at our local grocery store? *[Affirm all answers.]* No one would take it, right? The same was true two thousand years ago. People came from all over the world to Jerusalem to worship in the temple. When they came, they had the money from their own country, not shekels, which was the money used in Jerusalem. They needed to change their money into shekels. Why would a temple need to take a traveler's money? Why wouldn't a bank exchange their money? *[Affirm all answers.]*

This is one of those things you would know only if you lived back then, so I'll tell you. The temple had a tax, which is like an admission fee. People were told, "You can't come in here to worship God unless you pay." The money changers were in the temple so that these weary travelers could exchange their money, pay their admission fee, go inside and worship God. That made Jesus really mad. For one thing, no one should have to pay to worship God. Making money off a person's need for God is wrong. Everyone needs God. For another thing, people who have traveled a long way should be treated with hospitality. Remember our story from Day 2, about the hospitality Abraham and Sarah showed to the three visitors? Being kind to people who are visitors is really important to God.

Now let's look at the second part of that sentence, where Jesus overturns the benches of those selling doves. The answer to this question can be found in the Old Testament of the Bible, in a book called Leviticus. Who remembers the story of Moses? *[Wait for raised hands.]* Leviticus is a book where Moses wrote down all the rules God gave him, particularly about sacrifices. What is a sacrifice? *[Listen to and affirm answers.]* Back in Jesus' time a sacrifice was often a real animal, brought to the temple to please God. *[Pass around the stuffed sheep, goat and dove/pigeon.]*

The book of Leviticus says that if you sin — meaning that you do something that pulls you away from God — you have to bring a female sheep or goat to the temple to pay for your sin. But many people couldn't afford to buy a sheep or goat to sacrifice. Back then, a sheep or goat was precious because it could provide a family with milk and meat. However, the book of Leviticus, Chapter 5, verse 7, tells us that "if you are poor and cannot afford to bring an animal, you may bring two doves or two pigeons." The people who sold doves in the temple often charged too much money for them and were mean and unfair to the poor people coming to buy them. This made Jesus mad too. Poor people should be able to worship God. They shouldn't have to worry if they can afford to worship God or if someone is going to be mean to them because they can't sacrifice a big animal.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Now that we understand more about why Jesus was mad at the money changers and dove sellers, what have we learned about what makes Jesus and God mad?
[Jesus is mad when poor people and travelers are treated unfairly and prevented from worshiping God.]
- How would you feel if you had traveled from far away to worship God in the temple and discovered when you got there that you didn't have enough money to pay the temple tax or buy the doves to sacrifice?
- We talked earlier about righteous anger. Is Jesus' anger here righteous? Why?

ENGAGING IN THE TEXT: INTERRUPTION

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

Leader: In this Bible story, lots of people are coming to the temple to tell God their story, but the money changers and dove sellers are stopping them from communicating with God. Let's do an activity about how it feels like not to be able to tell your story. Can I get a volunteer to read this book *[Use a book age appropriate for the class. If a book is not available, ask them to tell a story about something that happened to them recently]* to us? *[Pick a child.]* Thanks for volunteering to read this to us. We're all ready to hear a great story. Go ahead. *[As the child reads, interrupt as much as possible — ask questions, add tangents, correct sentences, etc. Keep doing this until the child has finished reading the book.]*

Thanks for being such a good sport! I interrupted the story a lot, didn't I? *[Turn to the child who read.]* How did it feel to not be able to tell your story? *[Affirm their response.]*

How do you think the people in this Bible story felt when they arrived at the temple to worship God but couldn't come in because the money changers and dove sellers asked for money? Did they feel as if they could tell their whole story?

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving, gracious and justice-seeking God, we know that, in our community, our country and our world, there are many precious people whose stories aren't acknowledged. There are many people who face poverty and are not treated with dignity. We know that you care about all people, and help us to care for each other. As we remember Jesus' actions in the temple, we ask that you give us the courage to speak up when we see precious things being treated as worthless. Guide us, soften our hearts and make us your co-creators of a world where all people are treated as precious.

Day 5: We Are Called to Love and Be Loved

LESSON FOCUS

We are called to love and be loved by those who are not like us.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Practical items to fill a “gift basket”	Paper
Whiteboard or poster board	Markers

OPENER: PICK A GIFT

Start with a basket full of practical gifts such as flowers, a can of dog food, a get-well card, a bag of chips, a watering can, a water bottle, a can of soup, a clean diaper, a bandage, a toy or a Bible. Pass the basket around and let each child pick one item from it. After they have picked an item, ask them, “How could you use the item you picked to love your neighbor?” Children might have great ideas right away. They might also ask questions such as “Who is my neighbor?” which is a great lead-in to the Scripture reading for today. Close by saying, “We all have gifts we can use to love our neighbors. Sometimes they’re practical things like these, and sometimes they’re care and love. Our story today is about someone who loved their neighbor in a big way.”

ENCOUNTERING SCRIPTURE: LUKE 10:25-37

Leader: If someone were hurt and were lying in the street near our church, who would be the most likely person to help them? Our pastor? A police officer? Or the person’s enemy? [*Affirm responses.*] Jesus told a story like this, with a surprising turn of events. Jesus’ story uses two words you might not know: “Levite” and “Samaritan.” A Levite would have been someone who knew the law and enforced it, like a police officer. A Samaritan would have been someone the Jewish people didn’t like very much because of politics and religion. Now that you know those words, I’m going to read the story.

Read Luke 10:25-37 together.

Use a translation that will be accessible to children.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

- How many people walked past the injured man without stopping to help?
- What might the priest and the Levite have been thinking or feeling when they walked away?
- What might the Samaritan have been thinking or feeling when he stopped to help?

QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- The first man who talked to Jesus asked, “Who is my neighbor?” Why do you think the man asked Jesus to explain who his neighbor was? How did Jesus’ story answer his question?
- Which person in this story do you think you’re most like?
- Do we ever make excuses for not helping people? Can you think of a time when you could have helped somebody but didn’t?

ENGAGING IN THE TEXT: FRIENDS, ENEMIES AND NEIGHBORS

AGE RANGE: ALL AGES

On a whiteboard or poster board, draw a chart with three columns. In the first column, write “Friends — people I know and like” and ask the children to list all their friends. In the second column, write “Enemies — people I know and don’t like” and ask the children who meets this criteria in their lives. In the third column, write “Neighbors — people I know and feel neutral toward” and ask the children to list all their neighbors (you may need to explain that “neutral” means you don’t have any strong feelings one way or the other).

Once these three columns have been drawn, tell the children you’re going to read the story one more time. But this time, they should pretend to be the man who asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” and try to figure out how the man would have sorted the characters in this story. Remind them that

Continued on next page.

the man was an “expert in the law,” so he would have liked other Jewish people but felt unsure of people who weren’t Jewish. Pause after each character is introduced, to see which column this “expert in the law” would have sorted them into:

- The man going from Jerusalem to Jericho *[neighbor]*.
- A robber *[enemy]*.
- A priest *[friend]*.
- A Levite *[friend]*.
- A Samaritan *[enemy]*.
- The innkeeper *[neighbor]*.
- After you’ve sorted the characters and finished rereading the story, ask, “Why did Jesus ask the expert in the law, ‘Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’” *[Affirm all answers]*. For smaller children, simplify the question: “Does Jesus want us to love our enemies? Or hate our enemies?”

Look back at the list of people the children sorted into the “enemies” category. Ask them what they think about this list after rereading the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus said, “Go and do likewise” when the expert in the law said that a neighbor is someone who has mercy on another. Try to think of ways to move people from the enemies column into the neighbors column by showing them mercy as the Good Samaritan did. *“Mercy” means compassion for someone who has harmed or punished you or for someone you could harm or punish.* One way of thinking about this is to ask, “How are my enemy and I neighbors?”

Explain what Jesus wanted us to know: that even people you don’t like can do good things, because your story and their story are both part of God’s story.

ENGAGING IN THE TEXT: CONNECTING OUR STORY WITH GOD’S STORY*

AGE RANGE: 8 YEARS AND OLDER

Leader: We tell the story of the Good Samaritan to help us think differently about justice and fairness. “Justice” is when everyone has what they need to live and be happy. Was it fair that the man was beaten and robbed on the road to Jericho? *[No.]* Was it fair that the priest and the Levite walked away from the man who’d been beaten? *[No.]* Can anyone share a time when you felt like you weren’t treated fairly? *[Affirm responses.]* I imagine that experience was uncomfortable and upsetting.

Directions

1. Give each child a piece of paper and some drawing supplies. Ask them to draw a picture of a moment when they saw or experienced injustice or unfairness. They can distill it to one moment they remember or draw it out in several frames, as in a comic book.
2. Encourage them to use color, shapes and symbols to express what happened.
3. Ask them to add to the drawing how they responded.
4. Regroup to discuss the reflection questions.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What was your unfair moment, and what bigger issue did it highlight?
- How is your unfair moment connected to the story of the Good Samaritan?
- Did your unfair moment change you? How?
- How do you think God felt about your unfair moment?
- How does this unfairness call you to be a better neighbor and advocate for others?

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God of mercy and compassion, thank you for the story of the Good Samaritan. It still feels important and true even after all these years, and it teaches us how to treat people the way you treat them. We ask that you work in our hearts and minds to build our patience and love for people who are different from us. Help us to value reconciliation and relationship above power and domination. Amen.



* Adapted from the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin
https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/2312_LOPPW_activity_Gods_Story_Our_Story.pdf

Story Time



Day 1: Afghanistan and Serbia

MAPPING THE STORY

On page 85, 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 the children see the many places in the world where God is at work.

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. Today's story involves two countries — Afghanistan and Serbia.



MAKE THE CONNECTION

Leader: Today's theme is "What Is a Story?" Earlier today you met Sandy the Seagull, learned what a story is, and traveled on the road to Emmaus. Sometimes God communicates with us through Bible stories from the past, and sometimes God uses the stories of today.

"AHMAD'S JOURNEY FROM AFGHANISTAN TO SERBIA"

Leader: Today's story involves a war raging in a country called Afghanistan. Do you know what war is?

Most school-age children will have heard something from media outlets, social media, teachers or peers. Discuss with them where the war is and reassure them that their own community is safe. Be sensitive to military families, refugee families and families with a history of loss.

In a war, there are many sad stories. Today's story is both sad and inspiring. It's about Ahmad,* a boy who had to overcome hard things to find safety.

Ahmad is 10 years old. He was born in Afghanistan during a long war. His older brother escaped to England, but Ahmad had to stay behind in a dangerous place. To find safety, Ahmad did something very brave. He decided to walk from Afghanistan to England in search of his brother. *[Point out Afghanistan and England on the map; they are over four thousand miles apart!]*

He walked. He walked and he walked and he walked. What's the furthest you've ever walked? *[Affirm all answers.]* In our Bible story today, the two people who went with Jesus from Jerusalem to Emmaus walked for eight hours to get there.

That's like walking from breakfast time until dinnertime. That's a long time to walk without stopping! But Ahmad walked for more than 101 days. What do you think he ate while he walked? *[We don't know the answers for sure, but likely not nutritious food, and not enough of it.]* Where do you think he slept at night? *[Again, we don't know the answers for sure, but probably on the hard ground.]* If he fell and got hurt, who took care of him? *[Again, we don't know the answers for sure, but not a nurse or parent.]*

Ahmad walked until he reached a country called Serbia. Now, Serbia is still many miles away from England. *[Point out Serbia on the map in relation to Afghanistan and England.]* But there, in a town called Šid, was a refugee center, a place where kids such as Ahmad could rest. Here Ahmad, along with 120 other boys with similar stories, could sleep in a real bed, pray, study, play games, do crafts and get three free meals a day.

Do you know what's amazing? Like a good neighbor, this church we are in right now helps to support that refugee center. Ahmad's journey is not over yet. Eventually he'll leave the center to reunite with his brother. But with the support of churches such as ours, Ahmad can stay there as long as he needs to, gathering strength before he moves on.

When Ahmad decided to walk from Afghanistan, he was very brave. Bravery is when we do hard things because we know they will lead to goodness. When have you been brave? Ahmad took a very, very long journey to find safety. Can you imagine going on such a journey, all alone? Where do you see God at work in Ahmad's story? *[Allow time for responses.]*

* Ahmad is a pseudonym to protect his anonymity

Day 2: Cambodia



MAPPING THE STORY

On page 85, you will find a map of the world. Help the children find Cambodia on the map.

MAKE THE CONNECTION

Leader: Today's theme is "What Is Your story?" I have a story, and you have a story. Everyone in the whole world has a story. Stories aren't just entertainment; they are part of being human. Stories connect us to each other. Right now, we're going to learn the story of Yun, a mom from a country in Asia called Cambodia.

"YUN'S UNEXPECTED LIFE CHANGE IN CAMBODIA"

Leader: Often we don't know how our stories will go. When we are sad or lonely, it is normal to wonder if God is even paying attention to our story. Has this ever happened to you?

This is a big, emotional question, so it's OK if no one responds. If they do, make sure to listen empathetically and affirm all answers.

Yun Chamroeun, a mom in Cambodia, was once in a difficult place. She and her husband lived in Cambodia's capital city, Phnom Penh, where they worked long, difficult days, making clothes in a factory. Yun and her husband worked hard to support their three daughters but couldn't make enough money to live well. Their eldest daughter dropped out of school to work at the factory with her parents, but things didn't get easier. Soon the Chamroeun family had to move to a smaller town with fewer jobs, and their lives got even harder. Yun's husband got sick and was unable to work anymore. Yun was left to raise her three children all by herself.

Let's pause for a moment. This is starting to sound like a sad story, isn't it? Are you worried for Yun and her family? *[Allow time for responses.]* Sometimes stories are difficult to hear, but we should keep listening to make sure Yun and her family are alright. *[Consider saying a quick prayer for the family.]* Let's see where their story goes.

Yun was running out of options and decided to look to her community for support. She went to a gathering of women in her neighborhood, where they shared stories and came up with a plan to help each other. A church ministry called **Lutheran Hope Cambodia Organization (ccc-cambodia.org)** (LHCO) offered to help Yun and her neighbors buy chickens so that they could support themselves. Yun and her new friends started raising and selling chickens. This was such a success that Yun became a leader in her village and inspired other women to raise their own chickens.

Our church supports LHCO so women such as Yun can achieve prosperity for themselves. Yun's chicken business enabled her to build community with her neighbors, feel less alone and provide real hope for families in her village. That's what God does too. God connects us to each other, just as stories do.



ccc-cambodia.org

Day 3: Colorado



MAPPING THE STORY

Open by telling the children that, so far, we've learned about how the ELCA works in such faraway places as Serbia, Afghanistan and Cambodia, but today we're going to hear about how the ELCA does things right here in the United States. Holding up the map, ask them to find the United States and, more specifically, Colorado.

MAKE THE CONNECTION

Leader: Today's theme is "What Are the Stories of the People You Know?" In our opening skit, Sandy the Seagull learned who Christians are and what a church is. We are also learning through the Bible what the early church looked like. In the early church, everyone had what they needed because everyone shared. In this story, we're going to learn about a group in Colorado that helps college students have what they need to graduate. Members of Lutheran Campus Ministry at Colorado State University not only listened to the stories of the people they knew but acted on them, sharing with anyone in need.

"OSCAR'S NEW SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN FORT COLLINS"

Leader: What grade are you in school? *[Affirm answers.]* Did you know that the grades go all the way up to 12th grade? What happens after 12th grade? *[Affirm answers.]* Lots of things can happen after 12th grade. That's when you graduate from high school. After high school, some people get a job right away. Some people go to trade school to learn how to do a job like being a plumber, carpenter, chef or assistant to a doctor or dentist. Some people go to college, which is another four years of school where you can prepare to be a teacher, doctor, lawyer, engineer, architect, accountant or many other things.

Here's a question you may not have thought of. What would you do if you had to go to school every day but didn't have a home to come back to? Let's imagine this. No one is at home making dinner for you. There isn't a warm bed to cozy up in on cold nights. When you need to brush your teeth, you have to find a friend to

let you use their bathroom. What would this be like? *[Affirm answers.]* How would you feel? *[Affirm answers.]* Would you be able to focus on your schoolwork? *[Affirm answers.]* It would be really hard to focus on schoolwork! How can you write and read and do math when you're worried about where you're going to sleep?

That's what happened to Oscar. Oscar Godinez-Avila is a college student at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo. He wants to be a historian, which is someone who studies the past to help people understand how humans have developed. But Oscar didn't come from a family with very much money. He grew up in a one-bedroom apartment, where his parents slept in the bedroom and he and his two sisters slept on the floor in the living room. No one in his family had money to send him to college. He worked a minimum-wage job and won a scholarship to help pay for college classes, but he had only enough money to pay for his books, clothing and food. He couldn't afford a place to live.

Oscar spent many months sleeping on the couches of his friends. Sometimes he bathed himself in the bathroom sinks at school. He often didn't eat breakfast because he had nowhere to store his food.

Oscar didn't know that he wasn't alone. A group of Lutheran churches in Fort Collins called Lutheran Campus Ministry — LuMin for short — were listening. They had heard the stories of people, such as Oscar, who really wanted to graduate college but were living out of their cars or sleeping on friends' couches. The leaders of LuMin started asking more questions to better understand stories such as Oscar's. What kind of support would help? What would help students such as Oscar to feel not only happy but

healed? What LuMin heard was that students such as Oscar needed community support. They needed places to gather and feel welcomed and restored after being tired from school and work.

LuMin knew something had to be done. Partnering with Colorado State University, it bought 20 fully furnished apartments at the edge of the university campus. But providing housing wasn't all LuMin did. It heard the fuller answers to Oscar's story, of loneliness and struggle. To provide a sense of belonging, it also offered free meals on Mondays and Wednesdays. Oscar applied to the housing program at LuMin and has been living in one of the apartments.

"It was an insane weight lifted off my shoulders," he said. "I really started to thrive. I didn't have the anxiety of feeling like nothing I was doing was ever good enough. I can love the world on another level and love myself on a level that I think I've been deprived of for a lot of my life."

Oscar can finally focus on his homework and getting a good night's sleep. He's proud of his apartment and has decorated it with houseplants and art. Having a safe and affordable place to live helped Oscar start connecting with academic opportunities, because he no longer had to work so many hours just to live. He got an internship at a local museum and applied to a master's program. He dreams of one day getting a doctorate and becoming a professor.

Oscar loves his new apartment, but his favorite part of LuMin is the meals he shares with the other students in his building.

"I like knowing that I'm in a space with other people like me," said Oscar. "We have a shared sense of perseverance, resilience and struggle."

Alejandra, one of Oscar's new friends, who also lives in LuMin student housing, agrees. "Really, just being together for supper and talking is so relaxing from all the rest of the week. I look forward to just this one hour."

Breaking bread together helps Oscar and Alejandra know that there are other people with stories like theirs. They belong. They are no longer alone.

Day 4: Ukraine



MAPPING THE STORY

Today's story focuses on Ukraine. Identify this country on the map before you start the story.

MAKE THE CONNECTION

Leader: Today's theme is "How Does It Feel to Not Have Your Story Understood?" In our opening skit, Sandy the Seagull got hurt and felt as if no one noticed. That made Sandy feel scared and mad. Through the Bible, we are also learning about Jesus turning the tables. Jesus' anger was righteous; he was angry that people were being treated badly because they were different. In this story, we're going to learn about Mariia, a woman in Ukraine who has lots of stories to share but felt as if no one cared to understand them.

"MARIIA'S UNHEARD STORY IN UKRAINE"

Leader: Remember the first day of VBS, when we met Ahmad? What did we learn from his story? *[Affirm responses.]* We learned that wars have lots of sad stories. That's how Mariia felt when Russia invaded Ukraine. *[Point to Ukraine on the map and help the group pronounce the name.]* During the war, Mariia saw a lot of other people's stories on the news, but she didn't see many stories of people who looked like she does.

Mariia is Roma. Many Romani people have brown skin because they come from places outside Ukraine. In Ukraine, white people are in the majority. Very often, people such as Mariia are treated badly because of their skin color. Mariia is 86 years old, which means she has a lot of experience and can remember a lot of history. Being treated badly for a long time can sometimes make people feel sad and hopeless, especially when there is a war happening at the same time.

Pause here to hold space for big feelings if needed.

After the war started, over 6 million people fled Ukraine to find safety in other countries. People who do this are called refugees. The people who make the laws in Ukraine did nothing to help Mariia or other Romani people escape the war, because of where they were born and the color of their skin. These lawmakers made it difficult for the Roma people to move between countries, because they couldn't get important documents, like a birth certificate or passport.

Our church has helped Roma people such as Mariia for many years. Since Russia invaded Ukraine, 90% of the Ukrainian refugees our church accompanies have been Roma. Our church delivers food, shampoo, soap, cleaning supplies and clothing to refugee centers for Roma people. But we also know that, just as food helps the body to grow, stories help the soul to grow. Stories are what make us who we are, which is why our church hosted an event for Roma people to tell their stories about war.

After a long time feeling sad and angry, Mariia spoke up at this event. She reminded everyone that for the Roma, war means not having your whole story told. "We are frightened people," she said. "I want peace, only peace, and a better future for all of us and for new generations."

Discuss the hopefulness of this statement and how it relates to Jesus flipping the tables.

Day 5: New York



MAPPING THE STORY

Today's story takes place at the United Nations Headquarters, which is located in New York City. Emphasize that the United Nations exists to maintain and achieve peace, cooperation and security for the whole world. You can also point out on the map that the four people in this story, who came together to represent the Lutheran World Federation at the United Nations, were from Hawaii, Michigan, Ohio, Georgia and the African nation of Liberia.

MAKE THE CONNECTION

Leader: In our church, there is a saying that goes, "God's work. Our hands." What do you think that saying means? *[Affirm answers.]* I love those answers. "God's work. Our hands" is a way for us to be church together. Do you remember when, a few days ago, we learned what the church is? What is it? *[Affirm answers.]* Yes, church is whenever and wherever two or more people gather to talk and think about Jesus. One way we can be church is by showing the love and concern God's people have for one another through service. Like the Good Samaritan, we can love our neighbors and improve our communities. Today's theme is "How Can We Appreciate and Share Other People's Stories?" Our story today is about four people from our church who went all the way to the United Nations because they appreciated and shared their neighbors' stories.

"WILLIE, BRIANNA, KITTY AND CALLA GO TO THE UNITED NATIONS"

Leader: Sometimes a problem falls on you like a big rock from the sky. The problem is fast and sudden, and you must deal with it right away. But often, problems show up like little pebbles, one or two at a time, gathering slowly until they build a wall. Over time, the wall becomes so big that you feel as if you may never be able to move past it.

Last summer, across the United States, there were four people in our church who felt as if the wall of problem-pebbles they faced had grown too high.

Willie was a Liberian immigrant in Georgia who worried about trees being cut down in his home country. He knew that the huge loss of trees was contributing to an increase in floods and droughts.

Brianna was a pastor in Hawaii. She had watched a Navy fuel spill destroy the watershed of the island of Oahu and worried about the availability of clean, safe water.

Kitty was a public health professional in Michigan. She worked closely with Native American people on improving their nutrition. She worried that if we keep using farm practices that damage the earth, our planet might not be able to produce enough quality food to feed everyone.

Calla lived in northeast Ohio. She saw people in her community struggling, particularly older adults and people with disabilities. She worried that in our nation's push to become richer and more powerful, some people were getting left behind.

Willie, Brianna, Kitty and Calla felt small in the face of such big problems. Deforestation. Water pollution. Hunger. Loneliness. How could just four people solve such huge issues?

But they weren't just four people. Willie, Brianna, Kitty and Calla had spent lots of time listening to their neighbors. Their neighbors' stories were part of the reason they knew so much about these problems. Each of them carried the stories of many people in their communities who were concerned about the same issues.

When Willie, Brianna, Kitty and Calla were chosen to represent our church at a big conference at the United Nations Headquarters, focusing on sustainable development goals, they said yes. They wanted to meet experts and learn more about how they could solve the problems in their communities. In addition to listening to experts, Willie, Brianna, Kitty and Calla

Continued on next page.

brought their neighbors' stories to the United Nations for a chance to be heard at an international level.

"Having all of these experts and representatives of counties all around the world talking about the same issues that we were talking about in our neighborhoods really connected for me the local with the global," said Calla.

When Willie, Brianna, Kitty and Calla got home from the conference, they were able to use what they had learned to empower their neighbors. Willie helped start the first and only religious Planet Justice Advocacy program in Liberia. Brianna went home to her congregation and preached about a Creator who makes all things new, even the atoms of our water. Kitty wrote an important article on how foraging for your own food in the forest can improve heart health. Calla worked to pair congregations in her area of Ohio with congregations in Tanzania and Serbia that were also concerned about older adults and people with disabilities.

Willie, Brianna, Kitty and Calla are great examples of how important it is to listen to and appreciate our neighbors' stories. They shared these stories with decision-makers who can change laws and policies. This is called advocacy. The problem-pebble wall begins to look less overwhelming when you're facing it with an entire community behind you. When enough of us work together, we can each carry away a pebble until the wall is gone. Slowly, one by one, these four people have faced the problem-pebble walls of their communities — deforestation, water pollution, hunger and loneliness. Their stories and advocacy are leading small-pebble brigades to carry these problem walls away in the name of a loving God.

Games



“Road to Emmaus” Obstacle Course

Age range: All ages

The purpose of this game is not to create a perfect obstacle course or to get the children through it as quickly as possible but to get the group talking to each other about creating something together, which will help them build relationships with each other.

Have the kids work together to create a “road to Emmaus.” Let them know how much time they have to create their obstacle course, then let them choose where to put the Jerusalem sign as the “start” and the Emmaus sign as the “finish line.” In between, ask them to work together to make a “road” to Emmaus with chalk, string or painter’s tape. Encourage them to place obstacles along the road.

Encourage younger children to crawl under a low net, jump over small hurdles or balance on a beam. These challenges will improve their gross motor skills, balance and coordination.

Encourage older children to add handicaps (such as wearing a blindfold for part of the course) or interactive elements (such as a station where they have to solve a puzzle or answer a riddle before they can move on to the next obstacle). These complications not only add an element of mental stimulation but also promote teamwork and cooperation.

If the weather is hot and the obstacle course is outside, consider adding a water element. You can set up a sprinkler or a small inflatable pool for kids to run through. This will add a refreshing twist to the course and allow the children to cool down while completing the challenge.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Two signs, one reading “Jerusalem” and the other “Emmaus”

A way to mark a “road”:

Painter’s tape (if indoors)

String (if in the grass, sand or dirt)

Chalk (if on a sidewalk or parking lot)

Items to be used as obstacles:

Big sticks

Old tires

Cardboard
boxes

Sprinkler

Small pool

Pool noodles

Net

Balls

Short ladder

Chairs

Blindfold

Hula hoops

or bandanas

Intergenerational Connection: When the obstacle course is built, give everyone a chance to walk “the road to Emmaus” — even adult leaders! You might even direct the children to create an obstacle course for the adults and direct the adults to create one for the children.

Tushla Bazi (Afghan marble game)

Pronounced: tush-la-baa-zee

Age range: 6 years and older

Tushla bazi is the most popular game among Afghan children. Glass marble balls are found everywhere in Afghanistan. Children’s pockets are sometimes full of nothing but marbles! In refugee centers in Serbia and Greece, Afghan children often play this game for hours at a time.

To play this game, draw a circle on the ground, with a straight line through the center. Both players line up the same number of marbles on the line. Each player shoots one of their marbles, trying to knock one of the other player’s marbles outside the circle. If successful, they collect the other player’s marble. Whoever has the greater number of their opponent’s marbles wins the game.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Marbles

Chalk (if playing outside on a sidewalk, parking lot or driveway)

Painter’s tape (if playing inside)

A stick for drawing
(if playing in the dirt or sand)



What's Your Story?

Age range: 8 years and older

DIRECTIONS

1. On the floor or a table, set out enough objects for each person to grab three.
2. Ask the group to look carefully at all the objects, because when the leader says "go," each person will have to grab three things that represent their own life story. Give them about five minutes to look silently — no touching or moving the objects, and no mentioning what they might grab or why.
3. Line up everyone behind a length of masking tape at the far end of the room, as far away from the objects as possible. Explain that there may be some items wanted by multiple people but that only the first person to touch the object gets to claim it. No one can take more or fewer than three objects. When the leader says "go," everyone in the group must run and grab the three objects that they feel best represent their life story. Be prepared to help some children adjust when they don't get their desired object.
4. Once everyone has three objects, pair up people who don't know each other very well. Because this is an intergenerational activity, it's OK to pair a child with an adult.
5. Here's the twist: Each person then trades their three objects with their new partner. Each partner has two minutes to look at the objects their partner handed them and come up with a story about them. They can't ask their partner any clarifying questions about the objects, nor can their partner volunteer information.
6. Partner A has two minutes to tell Partner B the story they invented about the three objects. Partner B isn't allowed to interject or to correct their partner. Then Partner B does the same, telling a story about the three objects Partner A handed them. During this time, Partner A can't interrupt.
 - a. For example, Partner A hands Partner B a baseball, a hymnal and a mug. Partner A might have chosen those things because they own a baseball signed by Babe Ruth, they sing in the church choir, and they love to drink tea. But Partner B doesn't know any of that — they just see a baseball, a hymnal and a mug. Partner B makes up a story that Partner A loves to watch the Chicago Cubs, that their favorite part of church is singing and that they love coffee. Partner A must listen without correcting them.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A large room

Masking tape to create a "starting line"

Random objects, at least three for each person participating. Objects should be durable and small enough for a child to carry easily. They can include:

Objects from the church — Bibles, hymnals, choir robes, etc.

Objects that represent faraway places — seashells, postcards, flags, etc.

Objects that represent the arts — a paint brush, a musical instrument, a camera, books, dance shoes, etc.

Objects that represent the sciences — a magnifying glass, a small car or airplane, a computer mouse, etc.

Objects that represent hobbies — a hammer, a skateboard, a Rubik's Cube, dice, cards, sports equipment, fabric, yarn, etc.

Objects that represent ways to calm down — a kaleidoscope, candles, natural objects, stuffed animals, etc.

Objects that represent favorite foods — a mug, a water bottle, chopsticks, empty soda or chip containers, etc.

Intergenerational Connection: This is an intergenerational activity, so make sure you include leaders and adults in the numbers. When a group comes into the room, don't let anyone touch anything until after you've explained the activity.

7. After everyone has had a chance to tell the story of the objects their partner handed them, the leader asks:
 - a. What was it like to have to adjust if you didn't get the object you wanted? Did it feel good to know you share part of your story with someone else, or were you frustrated that you didn't get to claim that object as yours?
 - b. When your partner made up a story about your objects, was it hard to stay silent? Was your partner right? Did they understand the story behind these objects?
 - c. How does it feel to have someone not understand how much something means to you?
 - d. What questions could your partner ask that would help them understand why these objects matter to you?
 - e. Sometimes we can see that something matters to someone, but we don't know why it matters. What would be a good "why" question to ask about your partner's items?
8. Give the partners a few minutes to explain to each other why they grabbed their three objects and why those objects matter in the greater story of their lives. Encourage them to explain the "why" behind the objects. When someone says, "I grabbed this mug because I love tea," ask, "Why do you love tea?" The fuller answer would be, "I grabbed this mug because I love tea. I love drinking herbal tea before bed because it calms me down." To understand why their partner chose the object, they can ask as many questions as they want.
9. Close with some questions about how we can better tell our stories and ask others about theirs.
 - a. How can we show that we value the unique and complicated stories of our lives?
 - b. How can we show that we value the unique and complicated stories of other people's lives?
 - c. Why are listening and asking questions important for understanding someone's story?

Lot Bao (Cambodian rice bag races)

Age range: All ages

Lot Bao is a traditional sack race popular in Cambodia, because rice comes in large sacks and is a staple food. Each kid or adult steps into a rice bag and races the others by hopping along a course. You may need to divide a big group of kids into several "heats" to accommodate the number of rice bags you have.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Each participant lines up at starting line with both feet in a rice bag.
2. When the referee says "go," all participants hop or jump from the starting line to the finish line. If they fall down or accidentally lose their rice bag, they must get up, get into the rice bag again and keep going.
3. The first person to cross the finish line is the winner.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Old rice bags (ask at restaurants or food co-ops; potato sacks or flour sacks also work) or big pillow cases, enough for at least four kids

A large field or open indoor space

Something to mark a starting line and finish line

Optional: Music



Listening Game

Age range: 8 years or younger

Today's theme is listening to the stories of people you know. How can we listen better? When we don't understand, how can we ask questions to help us? While hiding the objects in a box or bag, let the children listen to the sounds and try to guess them. If they're having a hard time, tell them that they can ask you questions about the item but must listen to the answers.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Noisy items (a bag of chips, a maraca, etc.)
A box or bag to hide the items in

Four Old Cats

Age range: 5 years and older

Our story today centered on Oscar, who is from the U.S. state of Colorado. Colorado has the nickname "the Centennial State" because it became part of the United States in 1876, 100 years after the Declaration of Independence was signed. Other things that debuted at America's centennial celebration include: the typewriter, the sewing machine, the telephone, ketchup, root beer and the first professional game of baseball. The predecessor to the game we now know as baseball was a yard game called Four Old Cats.

Like baseball, Four Old Cats has a home base and three other bases in a diamond shape. A pitcher throws a ball to a batter, and if the batter hits the ball, they get to run the bases until someone else tags him or her with the ball, at which point they are out. The big difference in Four Old Cats is that, instead of playing on a team, each participant plays for themselves. And instead of the batter scoring a point when they round all four bases, each base or "cat" touched counts as one point. Whoever can get to Four Old Cats first wins. Four Old Cats can be achieved by scoring a home run or by playing enough rounds that a child touches four bases over the course of several turns.

In traditional Four Old Cats, whoever got tagged out became pitcher during the next round, but to keep the game moving, it may make sense for one adult to pitch for the entire game. Anyone who is not batting plays the outfield, trying to catch the ball and tag the batter with it.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A foam ball
A soft bat or pool noodle
Newspapers or old t-shirts to mark bases



Majority or Minority

Age range: 8 years and older

This is essentially a game of This or That, used to make a point about minority voices and unpopular opinions.

Leader: Today we're going to learn two words you may not have heard before: majority and minority. Does anyone know what those words mean? *[Affirm answers.]* The majority is the bigger part, and the minority is the smaller part. In every group of people, there are a majority and a minority. We're going to play a game where we see who is in the majority and who is in the minority on different topics. I'm going to ask a few questions, and you will vote by moving to the area I'm pointing to:

- Cheese pizza or pepperoni pizza.
- Dogs or cats.
- Ice cream in a cone or a cup.
- Keep playing this game with your own or the children's examples of opposite things.



MATERIALS NEEDED

- An open space
- A poster board or whiteboard to record results

Leader: Discuss the answers with the group, highlighting how unfair it would be for us to do only what the majority wants. For example: if we ordered only the most popular type of pizza for the group, the others would feel left out.

Rybalka (Ukrainian fishing game)

Age range: All ages

DIRECTIONS

1. Pick one kid to be the first "fisher." The rest of the kids will be the fish.
2. The fisher holds the rope, and the fish make a circle around the fisher whose diameter is about twice the length of the rope.
3. The fisher rotates, spinning the rope around themselves. The fish must jump over the rope without being caught.
4. If a fish does gets caught by the rope, they must leave the circle.
5. The last remaining fish is the winner and becomes the fisher for the next round.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- An open space
- A 6-foot-long rope (or a jump rope)

Wound-bandaging Relay

Age range: All ages

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Plastic baby dolls (at least two)
- Red masking tape
- Adhesive bandages
- A large area to run around in

Split the group into teams, one for each baby doll. Before the group arrives, place small pieces of red tape on the baby dolls to represent wounds (make sure there are enough wounds for each child on a team to bandage at least one). Give each team a bunch of bandages. Line the teams up, 10 to 20 feet away from the baby dolls, and read the following script.

Leader: The story of the Good Samaritan says that the Samaritan “went to [the robbed man] and bandaged his wounds. ... Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” We’re going to reenact this, but we’re going to see who can do it faster. Each team has a baby doll with wounds represented by these pieces of red tape. When I say “go,” one of you will run forward to bandage just one wound. You’ll put a bandage on the wound, then you’ll run back to the next person in line and tag them, and they’ll run to bandage another wound on the baby. Once all the baby’s wounds have been bandaged, the whole team will run together to get the baby, then one member of the team will become a donkey, walking on all fours with the baby on their back until they reach the starting line. The first team whose donkey crosses the starting line with all the baby’s wounds bandaged wins.

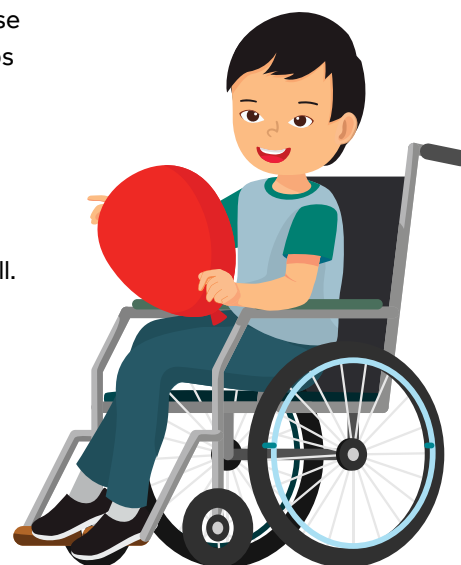
Mini-Olympics

Age range: All ages

The Olympics aren’t related to the United Nations, but they have a similar purpose — to build a peaceful world, promote human rights and foster better relationships between countries. Though the United Nations works through diplomacy, the Olympics works through sport. Have each child choose a country they want to represent, and set up a mini-Olympics with simple backyard games such as:

- Bean bag toss.
- Long jump.
- Ribbon dancing.
- Pool noodle javelin.
- Hula hoop toss.
- Balloon volleyball.

Optional: If you choose to do a mini-Olympics, invite the children’s families to participate too!



Notes

[illegible]

Snacks



AFGHANISTAN



Recipe

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

Kulche e Nowrozee

(AFGHAN NEW YEAR COOKIES)

For most of the week, we will focus on wheat-based breads, but these cookies are perfect for children or adults with gluten allergies, light and flaky but with a bit of crunch from the ground pistachios. In Afghanistan, the cookies are called Kulch e Nowrozee, which translates as “new year cookie,” and are made at the end of March, when Afghans celebrate Nowroz, the new year.

Serves 24 cookies

INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 cup butter (1-1/2 sticks), softened to room temperature
- 3/4 cup cane sugar or coconut sugar
- 2 egg whites
- 2 cups white rice flour
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped pistachios
- 1/4 cup shelled whole pistachios

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Beat butter and sugar with an electric mixer until light and creamy. Add the egg whites and mix until smooth. Gradually add the rice flour, cardamom and pistachios. Mix well.
3. Scoop up a tablespoon of dough and set it on a cookie sheet (ungreased is OK). Flatten the dough with the palm of your hand. The cookie will not rise or spread during cooking. Next, press the back of a fork into the dough, making a criss-cross with the tines of the fork (as you would with a peanut butter cookie). If the fork begins to stick, dip it in a glass of cold water from time to time. Place a pistachio in the center of the cookie.
4. Continue with the remainder of the dough, setting the cookies 1-1/2 inch apart.
5. Bake for 12-14 minutes. Let the cookies cool before eating.



SOMETHING TO BUY:

NAAN OR ROTI (FLATBREADS)

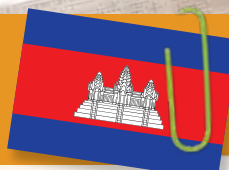
Naan is a type of bread that was first created in Persia (modern-day Iran) and spread throughout central Asia, including Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. It's a leavened flatbread, baked in a 900-degree oven.



PISTACHIOS, ALMONDS, APRICOTS OR FIGS

Nuts and fruit — including pistachios, almonds, grapes, melons, apricots, cherries, figs, mulberries and pomegranates — are among Afghanistan's most important exports.

CAMBODIA



Recipe

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

Chrouk Bunlai

(KHMER PICKLED VEGETABLE SALAD)

Both the people and the language of Cambodia are called Khmer. The Khmer people love eating this pickled salad for breakfast, but it also makes for a tangy and healthy snack.

Serves 16

INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium daikon radishes (about 1-1/4 pounds each), peeled and thinly sliced
- 4 cups shredded cabbage
- 1 large cucumber, thinly sliced
- 2 medium carrots, thinly sliced
- 1 cup cut fresh green beans (2 inches)
- 1/2 medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 inch-long piece fresh ginger root, thinly sliced
- Optional: 2 Thai chili or serrano peppers, halved lengthwise, seeded if desired
- 2 cups rice vinegar
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

DIRECTIONS

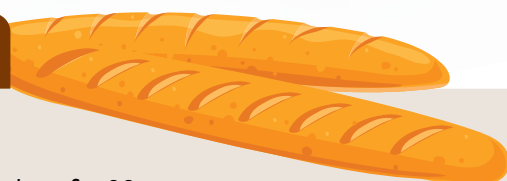
1. Chop and prepare the vegetables, ginger root and peppers. Place them all in a large, nonreactive bowl.
2. Place vinegar, sugar and salt in a 2-cup or larger glass measure; microwave until warm, 2-3 minutes. Stir until sugar is dissolved.
3. Stir the pickling solution into the vegetables. Refrigerate, covered, for at least one hour before serving.



Intergenerational Connection:

This snack can involve children and adults in preparation. Adults should take care of the chopping, but mixing and dumping is quite kid-friendly! Consider leaving this to the children early in the day and allowing them to see the results of the pickling later in the day.

SOMETHING TO BUY:



BAGUETTE

Cambodia was a French colony for 90 years, from 1863 until 1953. Much of the food Cambodians eat is influenced by French cooking, including their bread! It's not unusual in Cambodia to find roadside stands with baguettes. Cambodians call them num-bang veng, which translates as "long bread."



Idea: Bring different things to eat with the baguette, such as butter, oil, dip or cheese.

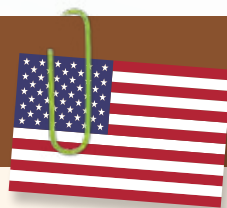
MANGOES AND BANANAS

The Cambodian climate is very tropical, which helps fruit grow. Cambodia exports 170 tons of mangos and 218 tons of bananas per year.



Idea: Make a fruit salad with these two fruits!

COLORADO



Recipe

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

Trail Mix

Colorado is known for its beautiful scenery, and its citizens love to enjoy the outdoors. Trail mix is a great snack to bring while hiking, fishing or mountain biking!

Serves 12

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups almonds
- 2 cups raisins
- 1 cup dried apricots
- 1/2 cup flaked coconut (optional)
- 1/2 cup chocolate (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Measure out the ingredients pour them into a large container.
2. Cover the container and shake until well mixed.
3. Serve in individual cups or snack bags.



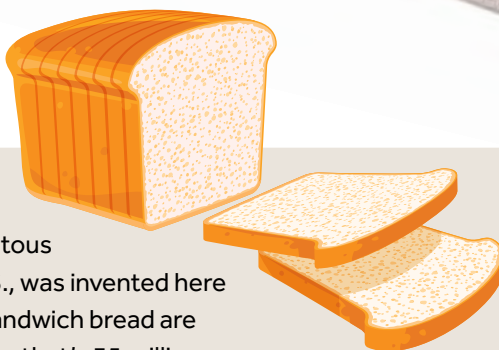
Intergenerational Connection:

This is another great snack to make together as a group. Adults can help children measure ingredients. All present might consider discussing what they like to put in trail mix and making a congregation-specific mix!

SOMETHING TO BUY:

SANDWICH LOAF

The presliced sandwich loaf, ubiquitous on grocery store shelves in the U.S., was invented here in 1927. Over 13 billion loaves of sandwich bread are sold annually in the United States — that's 35 million loaves per day.



BEEF JERKY

Colorado's number-one export is beef. Beef jerky is an affordable, shelf-stable option for snack time.

UKRAINE

Recipe

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

Burka I Yabluk

(UKRAINIAN APPLE AND BEET SALAD)

Beets are a key ingredient in borscht, a soup popular throughout the area where Roma people live. Try this cool, refreshing way to enjoy beets in the summer.

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lemon
- 4 apples
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 4 beetroots
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- salt (to taste)

DIRECTIONS

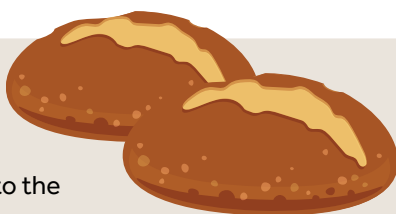
1. Peel lemon and squeeze juice into a jar. Add sugar, salt and oil.
2. Boil, peel and slice beetroots.
3. Wash and shred apples.
4. Toss the ingredients into a bowl.
5. Shake dressing jar well and then add beets and apples.
6. Stir everything carefully and let stand for 10 minutes before serving.



SOMETHING TO BUY:

ROUND WHEAT LOAF

This is the closest thing you may be able to find in the United States to the Ukrainian national bread palyanitsya. Bakeries in the United States might refer to it as a "whole-wheat levain."



SUNFLOWER SEEDS

Ukraine produces more than a third of the world's sunflowers. Teaching kids how to shell sunflower seeds can be a bonding activity.

UNITED NATIONS



Recipe

SOMETHING TO MAKE:

Summer Salsa

One of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is zero hunger. Zero hunger means that no one in the world goes to bed hungry but also that the food they eat is healthy. Eating local, seasonal, fresh food helps not only our bodies but also the planet. Here's a summertime recipe for salsa that uses plants you can grow in your backyard or buy from a local farmers market.



INGREDIENTS

- 3 green onions
- 10 sprigs cilantro
- 1 corncob
- 3 medium tomatoes
(roma tomatoes work well)
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Finely dice the green onions, cilantro, corn and tomatoes, and place them in a medium bowl.
2. Add the squeezed lime juice, olive oil and salt.
3. Stir well to combine.

SOMETHING TO BUY:

BAGELS

In our story today, the people who visited the United Nations were in New York City. They ate a lot of bagels, not only because New York City is known for bagels but also because bagels are a great "grab and go" bread. According to Calla, "Once we've listened really well to each other's stories at the table, we have to get up and go do the work!"



PULSES

The most commonly eaten form of protein around the world is pulses. Pulses are any dried legumes, including peas, beans, lentils and chickpeas. Every year, the world population eats about 40 pounds of pulses per person. Buy a few cans of beans and let the children try different kinds!

Crafts



Day 1: Point-of-view Fan

Age range: All ages

Craft Connection: In the story of the road to Emmaus, there are different points of view. The two people walking on the road think that Jesus has died and are confused about why the Son of God would die. But after the two people break bread with Jesus, they realize that the man they've been walking with is the Messiah, alive again and right there with them! When our point of view changes, we often see something differently. This craft illustrates how point of view determines what we see.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Card stock
Markers, crayons or colored pencils
Tape

DIRECTIONS

1. Tell the kids to pick two things that are very different (for example, an apple and a banana, or a cat and a dog). Draw one thing on one side of the card stock and the other thing on the other side.
2. Fold the paper accordion-style to make a fan, winding tape around the bottom to create a small handle.
3. Divide the children into groups of three. Ask one child of the trio to hold their fan straight up so that one picture faces left and the other faces right. Position the other two children on either side of the fan. Ask the child on the right what picture they see, then ask the child on the left what picture they see. They should see different pictures, even though they are talking about the same person's fan. Repeat this a few times with other children's fans.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who saw the right picture? Could you both see the right picture, even though you saw different pictures? Why?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you saw something differently from someone else but you were both right?



VS.



Day 2: Welcome Sign

Age range: All ages

Craft Connection: Abraham and Sarah were hospitable and welcoming to the three visitors, and in return they were given a life-changing big surprise - news that they would have a baby. We can show our house or room is welcoming by making a welcome sign. Maybe our welcome will invite a surprise to our lives!

DIRECTIONS

1. Tell younger children that this piece of wood will become a welcome sign, to let people know that you welcome them to your home or room. They can decorate the sign with pictures of things they find welcoming (happy faces, yummy food, comfy chairs), or an adult can help them write "welcome" on it (use a stencil or letter stickers, or pencil in the letters so that the children can trace over them with paint)
2. For older children, the signs can be more complex. They might want to paint a simple background (sunshine, rainbow, mountains, etc.), let it dry and then paint "welcome" on top of the design.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Pieces of wood, sanded, that will serve as a sign.
Prepared wooden signs can be bought in bulk online, or you can use two-by-fours cut into 6-inch segments.

Acrylic paints in multiple colors

Paintbrushes (small, one for each kid)

Optional: Aprons or paint shirts
(acrylic paints stain clothes)

Optional: Stencils or letter stickers,
to spell out the word "welcome"
(seal down stickers with Modge Podge)

Intergenerational Connection: Is there a community your congregation works hard to accompany — maybe migrants, local people who are unhoused, or the LGBTQIA+ community? Consider working together with children to create a welcome sign that tells people about your congregation and why you value this community. You might even turn this into an outreach opportunity by making small welcome signs to post around your neighborhood. This is an opportunity to do discipleship and evangelism together.



Day 3: “At the Table” Placemats

Age range: All ages

MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper measuring
13 by 19 inches

Copies of the table-setting
template (see page 64)

Embellishments (stickers,
magazine cutouts, ribbons,
scrapbook papers, etc.)

Thermal lamination paper
or clear contact paper

Scissors

Glue sticks

Markers
or crayons



Craft Connection: Today’s theme is the stories of people we break bread with. To emphasize that everyone has a place at the table, we’re making placemats. One side of the placemat will have a template of how to set a table, and the other side will be for a child’s own creativity. The catch is that they are making the placements not for themselves but for someone they eat meals with, remembering them and their story. For instance, if a child is making a placemat for their brother, they want to think about what their brother might like on the placemat — a soccer theme to celebrate their love of soccer? Their favorite color? This activity is about honoring the stories of people we know.

DIRECTIONS

1. Give each child a placemat-sized paper and explain the directions.
2. On one side of the paper, allow them to cut out the fork, knife, spoon and plate from the template and glue them onto the paper. On the other side, they can honor the story of the person they like to eat meals with, embellishing it however they like.
3. When the children are done, laminate the placemats so that they are waterproof. Because the sheets are so big, you won’t be able to use a home laminator, but you can take the placemats to print shops to be laminated on bigger machines or use contact paper to laminate them with volunteer help.

Day 4: Handprint Doves

Age range: 8 years and younger

MATERIALS NEEDED

White paper	Scissors
Colored construction paper	Glue
	Black marker

Craft Connection: In the Bible story today, Jesus set free the doves from the dove seller. Doves are a symbol of peace, which also apply to our global story today, of Mariia wanting peace for her people. Make your own doves to send a message of peace.

DIRECTIONS

1. Outline each child’s hand on white paper. Depending on their age, either let the child cut out the outline of their hand or cut it out for them.
2. On a piece of colored construction paper, glue down the handprint. With the thumb as the head of the dove, glue down a small triangle of yellow paper as the beak and make a marker dot for the eye.
3. If there is extra time and the children are interested, help them write the word “peace” or “dove.”



Day 5: Paper Plate Advocacy Project

Age range: All ages

Craft Connection: Just as Willie, Brianna, Kitty, Calla and the Good Samaritan helped their neighbors, our church wants to support our community members who are farmers, people who use community gardens, and kids who eat meals at school.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper plates

Crayons

Markers

DIRECTIONS

1. Ask the children to decorate a paper plate by drawing their favorite healthy foods or a picture of themselves enjoying a meal at the table with family or friends.
2. Ask the kids to write their name, city, state and congregation on the back of the plate. Younger children will need help with this.
3. Collect the plates.
4. Send the plates to the ELCA Advocacy office in Washington, D.C. The office will hand- deliver the plates to legislators in Congress with a message that supporting farmers, community gardens and access to school meals are all important to growing, healthy children.

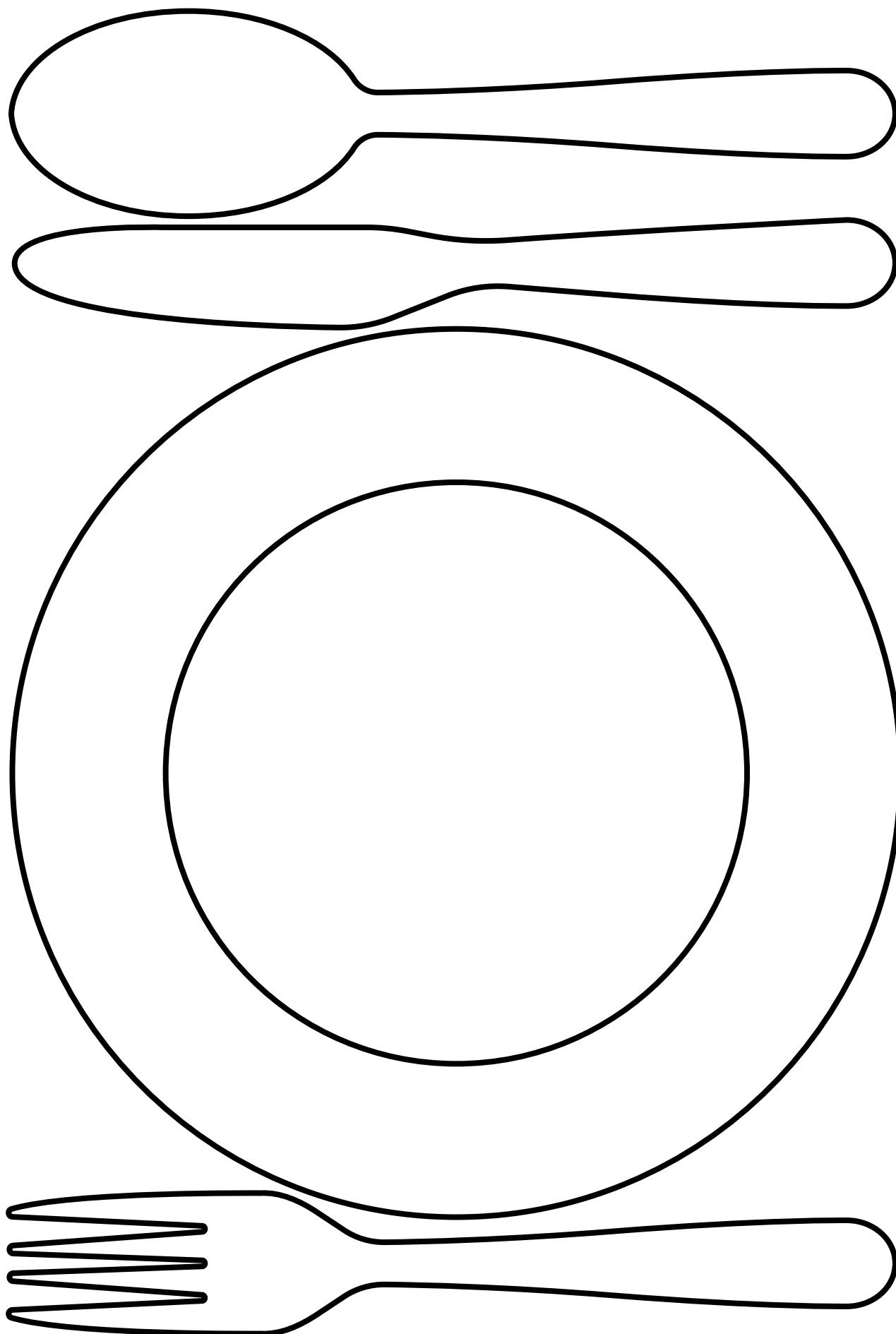
MAIL PAPER PLATES TO:

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

10 G Street NE, Suite 490

Washington, D.C. 20002





Simulation Station



Day 1: How to Grow Wheat

Intergenerational Connection: The relationships that form during VBS need not end there! You can grow food around your church, whether you have a large property or not. In addition to planting wheat (see the Simulation Station activities below), this is an opportunity to tend to gardens in your church space. God's investment in bread, seen in references to bread and wheat, is also an investment in the agricultural life that sustains all humans. Agriculture is also a way for adults and children to work together. If one of your adult or youth leaders has a green thumb, consider drawing them into these simulation stations.

Leader: This week's theme is about breaking bread together at the table. Bread shows up a lot in the Bible. Can you think of some times in the Bible or at church when we talk about bread? [*The unleavened bread or manna in the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt, the Lord's Prayer, communion, when Jesus says, "I am the Bread of Life" (John 6:35), when Jesus multiplies the loaves and fishes, etc.*]

In the time of the Bible and today, bread is an important and daily food all around the world. But way back in Bible times, people didn't have the bread-making machines that we have now. Most people couldn't go to the grocery store and buy bread; they had to make their own bread, starting at the very, very beginning. Does anyone know what plant makes bread? [*Most breads are wheat-based, but it's OK if they mention other grains.*]

This week, during our Simulation Station, we're going to learn how to make bread, starting today with how to grow wheat. Throughout the week, we're going to learn how these little seeds can turn into the bread we eat.

THE STORY OF THE LITTLE RED HEN

Age range: 6 years and younger

For younger children, the classic story of the little red hen is a great primer in the steps required to make bread. You can get a copy of this book from the local library or buy it to add to your church's collection. We recommend the Little Golden Book version by Diane Muldrow, published in 2001. When reading the story, ask the children to do hand motions when they hear certain words.

"A grain of wheat" = Index finger and thumb pinched together as if holding a grain of wheat.

"Reap the wheat" = Both hands together, swinging from shoulder to opposite hip as if using a sickle to cut down tall wheat.

"Carry the wheat to the mill" = Squat and mime trying to pick up a big, heavy bag.

"Flour into dough" = Push the heels of your hands ahead of you, as if kneading dough.

"Bake the bread" = Mime opening an oven and putting something in it.

"Eat the bread" = Move hands to mouth, as if putting a piece of bread in your mouth.

At the end of the story, ask questions about the book. Suggested questions:

- Did you know it took so many steps to make bread?
- Why didn't the duck, goose, cat and pig want to help the little red hen make the bread?
- At the end of the book, the little red hen doesn't share her bread with the duck, goose, cat or pig. Is that fair?

TYPES OF WHEAT

Older children likely know the story of the little red hen. Start their education on how a wheat seed becomes bread by introducing types of wheat and the importance of wheat as a crop worldwide. This is a hands-on activity, letting children touch and feel the different stages of wheat, from seed to food.

Age range: 7 years and older

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Wheat seeds
- Wheat stalks (can be found on Amazon)
- A bag of flour
- A type of wheat-based product from each of the categories below, to illustrate the different uses of wheat
- U.S. map to illustrate where wheat is grown

WORLDWIDE WHEAT FACTS:

- Wheat was one of the first plants humans began growing themselves for food.
- For eight thousand years, wheat has been the main food source for Europe, West Asia and North Africa.
- Wheat is grown on more land area than any other crop — more than rice, corn or potatoes!
- Wheat provides more nourishment for humans than any other food source (20% of the calories humans consume on earth come from wheat!).
- Not all countries can grow their own wheat. Some countries rely on importing wheat, which means they buy wheat from the countries that grow it.

Leader: Did you know there are six kinds of wheat grown around the world? Think of wheat as a library. When you walk into a library there are thousands of books, but the books are divided by what they are about. Over here you might have story books, over there you might have mystery books, and over here you might have cookbooks. Wheat is a little like that. Each kind of wheat falls into a category of what it's good at. Some wheats are really good at growing in cold places, whereas other wheats need an easy winter. Some wheat makes great pasta, whereas other kinds are better for cookies.

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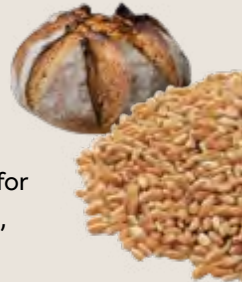
HARD RED WINTER WHEAT:

- Where is it grown in the United States?
[In the Great Plains states: Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado and Nebraska.]
- Hard red winter wheat is great for all-purpose flour. People often use this kind of wheat to make dinner rolls, flatbreads or cereal.



HARD RED SPRING WHEAT:

- Where is it grown in the United States?
[Northern states: Montana, South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota.]
- This is “fancy wheat” and is used by bakers for more complicated foods such as croissants, bagels and hearth breads.



SOFT RED WINTER WHEAT:

- Where is it grown in the United States?
[East of the Mississippi River.]
- This wheat is lower in gluten proteins than other wheats, which makes it easy to mill. Milling is when you turn wheat seeds into flour. This kind of wheat makes really good cookies and pretzels.



HARD WHITE WHEAT:

- Where is it grown in the United States?
[The Pacific Northwest states: Washington, Oregon and Idaho.]
- This low-moisture wheat creates a whiter product, which makes it ideal for cakes, pastries, Asian-style noodles and Middle Eastern flatbreads.



SOFT WHITE WHEAT:

- Where is it grown in the United States?
[The Great Plains states: Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado and Nebraska.]
- This is the newest class of wheat to be introduced to the United States. This type of wheat is great for Asian noodles such as ramen, and for tortillas.



DURUM:

- Where is it grown in the United States?
[Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Arizona, California.]
- This wheat has a high gluten content that is perfect for pasta and couscous. Durum is the hardest of all wheats and has a rich, amber color.



WHEAT PLANTING

Age range: All ages

MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper cups

Markers or stickers for decorations

Potting soil

Wheat seeds (Note: Gardening and agricultural stores will carry large quantities of wheat seeds, 25-50 pounds. You can buy smaller quantities from heritage and heirloom seed suppliers.)

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. Sprinkle a large pinch of wheat seeds across the top layer of soil, following the directions on the seed package for how deep to bury your particular seed.

Note: Wheat seeds take five days to visibly germinate. You may want to keep the seed cups at the church for a week and let the children take them home when the seeds start to show growth.



Day 2: Make it Ready to Turn Into Flour

Leader: This week, we're learning about how to make bread, because bread is an important part of feeding people around the world as well as an important symbol of our Christian faith. We started yesterday by talking about the types of wheat and planting a wheat seed. Today we're going to talk about what farmers do after the wheat is done growing to make it ready to turn into flour.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A yardstick or measuring tape

Green and yellow crayons

A few decorative wheat stalks for illustration purposes

Wheat berries (These can be bought online or from a health food store. Family-owned flour mills such as Hayden Flour Mills in Arizona, Janie's Mill in Illinois, 4 Generations Organic Farms in Oklahoma, and Sunrise Flour Mill in Minnesota also sell wheat berries.)

A winnowing fork (a pitchfork, manure fork, hay fork or garden compost fork)

Optional: A computer, phone or internet-connected TV to show a 30-second video

Optional: Farm equipment that applies to wheat harvesting and winnowing

FROM SEED TO WHEAT BERRY

Age range: All ages

Leader: Yesterday we talked a lot about wheat and what kinds of wheat can make bread or other yummy things such as cookies, cakes, pretzels and noodles. We also planted a wheat seed. In this activity, we're going to learn what happens after that seed begins to turn into a plant. While wheat is growing, it looks like very tall grass, because it is a part of the grass family.

The farmer will know if the wheat is fully grown because it starts to flower on top. Wheat takes about four months to grow to its full height, which is between 2 feet and 4 feet. Is anyone here that height?

Use a yardstick or tape measure on a few kids. Ask the ones who are between 2 and 4 feet tall to stand in front of the group and pretend to be stalks of wheat. Give each of them a green crayon and a yellow crayon and ask them to hold up the green crayon until you give them more directions.

Once the wheat reaches the same height as these kids, the farmer waits until the wheat turns from green to a golden yellow. Wheat *[look at children]*, are you ready to turn yellow? Put down the green crayon and hold up the yellow crayon. We have to be patient during this part because not every stalk turns yellow at the same time. *[Let each child decide when to switch from green crayon to yellow crayon, within reason. It makes for some silliness and laughter.]*

Continued on next page.



Do you know what the farmer does after the wheat turns yellow? *[Wait for answers.]* The farmer reaps the wheat! Does anyone know what the word “reap” means? *[Wait for answers.]* “Reap” means to cut and gather. Can anyone help me cut down and gather this wheat?

Pick a volunteer to help mime “cutting down” the children who are pretending to be wheat. Make this silly, to keep the children engaged. Let them fall over dramatically, and try to gather them up into a bunch.

OK, now we have this big pile of wheat. We’re ready to eat it, right? *[Wait for answers.]* No, you’re right — we’re not. There are a few more steps before this dry plant can turn into flour. We’ll talk about those next. *[Thank the children who volunteered to be wheat and send them back to their spots.]*

Once the wheat plant is reaped, or harvested, the farmer has to figure out how to get these wheat stalks to turn into these wheat berries. *[Hold up wheat stalks and wheat berries as examples.]* This process is called separating the wheat from the chaff. In the Bible, separating the wheat from the chaff is mentioned a few times. Back then everyone would have known what that meant, because most people made their own bread straight from the wheat plant. They didn’t buy it already baked at the store as we do today. I’m going to show you a few things to explain how this happens.

1. This is a wheat stalk. *[Pass around some wheat stalks so kids can see them well.]* The part we can eat is called the wheat; the part we can’t eat is called the chaff. Which part do you think is the part we can eat? *[Listen to answers.]* This papery, protective coating and the stem of this stalk are called the chaff. It’s just these little hard kernels inside the wheat flower that are the wheat berry. The wheat berry is the part we can eat.
2. This is a winnowing fork. *[Hold up the large garden fork and let children touch it.]* What do you think this is used for? *[Listen to and affirm responses.]* A winnowing fork is used to toss dried wheat into the air. Why would a farmer toss wheat into the air? *[Listen to and affirm responses.]* Farmers in Bible times tossed wheat into the air because that separated the wheat from the chaff. The chaff is light and blows away in the wind. The wheat is heavy and falls to the ground. For hours and hours, farmers would throw their cut wheat plants into the air, until the chaff had blown away and nothing was left but the wheat berries.

Optional: Today, in the United States and much of the developed world, there are winnowing machines that separate the wheat from the chaff. But in many parts of the world, farmers still separate the wheat from the chaff by throwing it into the air on a windy day. Here’s a video from Peru, a country in South America, where they still do this:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_gfgxkZryM



The wheat berries left over after separating the wheat from the chaff can be replanted and turned into more wheat or can be ground into flour, which is what we need to make bread. Tomorrow we’ll learn more about how wheat berries become flour.

THRESHING AND WINNOWING BY HAND

Age range: All ages

Intergenerational Connection: This will be fun for all generations! You might also work in some story time if any member of your congregation has lived on a farm. They might be able to speak to life at harvest time, even if their farm did not grow wheat.

Older children may enjoy the physical, hands-on work of separating the wheat from the chaff. The agricultural terms for this are “threshing” (pounding the sheaves to loosen the grain from the stalk) and “winnowing” (separating the husk from the food). Doing this activity by hand will give kids and adults alike a lived experience to understand the many Bible verses that mention threshing, winnowing and chaff.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A large outdoor space

Wheat stalks (These can be found in large quantities from common online retailers. Depending on the number of kids, you want between 100 and 600 stalks. The most affordable options will not be food-grade; they will be sprayed with preservatives for decoration. That’s OK! This is mainly for demonstration. If the dried wheat is not food-grade, remember not to eat the final product.)

Old pillowcases (one for each child or pair of children)

Stakes or pieces of spare plywood

5-gallon buckets (at least two)

A box fan

Leader: Before we start this activity, it's important to know that threshing and winnowing wheat are chores that people around the world have done for thousands of years to make bread. In the Bible, threshing, winnowing and separating the wheat from the chaff are mentioned over 100 times. This activity will not only show us how a wheat plant becomes bread but also give us a way to understand some Bible verses that maybe didn't make sense to us before. I'm going to read a few of these verses now and then read them again after the activity to see if they make more sense:

- "I will scatter you like chaff driven by the wind from the desert" (Jeremiah 13:24).
- "O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind" (Psalm 83:13).
- "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12).

Optional: This short video shows how wheat is threshed and winnowed by hand. It may help both children and volunteers understand what they are going to do.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjLCqahK2XY

DIRECTIONS

1. Give each child (or pair of children) a pillowcase and about 20 stalks of wheat.
2. The first part is threshing. Put the wheat stalks into the pillowcase and do whatever you can to separate the wheat berries from the chaff — shake the pillowcase around, pound it on the ground or swing it against a wall. You can also use an old garden stake or piece of plywood to pound on the pillowcase. Do this for at least 10 minutes.
3. When the children are done threshing, ask them to empty the contents of their pillowcase into one 5-gallon bucket.
4. Outdoors, facing a large field or parking lot, turn on a box fan.
5. The second part is winnowing. Slowly pour the threshed wheat from the full 5-gallon bucket into an empty 5-gallon bucket directly in front of the box fan. The chaff should blow away, and the wheat berries should drop into the bucket below. You may need to repeat this process several times. (Tip: Don't let kids stand in front of the box fan; getting chaff stuck in your eyes is unpleasant.)
6. If the wheat berries are food-grade, keep them for tomorrow's activity.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- *Reread the Bible verses from above.* Do these verses make more sense now? What has changed for you?
- In the Bible, chaff is often compared to things that don't matter, whereas wheat is compared to things that do. In our world today, what is wheat and what is chaff? What are the important things that remain, and what are the things that blow away? What is useful, and what is not useful?
- Now that you've experienced threshing and winnowing to separate the wheat from the chaff, how do the hardships in your own story seem like threshing and winnowing?
- How do you think we're going to turn these wheat berries into bread? *[Leave this as a cliffhanger for tomorrow's activity.]*

Day 3: How Wheat Berries Become the Flour

Leader: This week, we're learning how to make bread, because bread is an important part of feeding people around the world and an important symbol of our Christian faith. On the first day, we started by talking about types of wheat and planting a wheat seed. On the second day, we talked about what farmers do after the wheat is done growing to separate the wheat from the chaff. Today we're going to talk about how wheat berries become the flour that we use when we bake bread, cookies or cakes.

WHEAT SENSORY BOX

Age range: 8 years and younger

MATERIALS NEEDED

Two large, shallow plastic storage boxes
Large quantities of wheat berries (use the ones harvested on Day 2 or buy a 25-pound bag at an agricultural store)
2-4 pounds of flour
Spoons, scoopers, funnels and measuring cups
Small, farm-themed toys (tractor, farmer, etc.)

Touch, sound, smell and sight can help young children comprehend wheat and flour as they test the limits of materials and build imaginary worlds through pouring, filling and building. Fill one bin with wheat berries and another with flour. Place the toys and scoopers in the bins. Let the children play freely but also monitor them to reinforce the day's other theme — sharing and making sure everyone has enough.

MILLING: FROM WHEAT BERRY TO FLOUR

Age range: 8 years and older

MATERIALS NEEDED

Wheat berries (use the ones harvested on Day 2 or buy food-grade berries from the dry-bean aisle of a supermarket or health food store)
Various grinding mechanisms:
Two big stones
Mortar and pestle/molcajete
Coffee grinder
Blender or food processor
Electric grain mill or grain mill attachment for a stand mixer

Optional: A functioning stone mill close enough for a field trip
Optional: A computer or cell phone to watch a video

Leader: We're going to start today's lesson by reading a poem called "Back of the Bread" by Maltbie D. Babcock, a Presbyterian minister from Syracuse, New York. Babcock is most famous for writing the hymn "This Is My Father's Will," but also, in 1909, he wrote a poem that became a popular hymn for young kids. Guess what? The hymn teaches how bread is made! Let's read it.

Read the poem with hand gestures to help the children remember it.

"BACK OF THE BREAD" By M.D. Babcock

Back of the bread is the snowy flour;

[Move one hand behind the other, then cup them as if holding flour.]

And back of the flour is the mill.

[Move one hand behind the other, then move them as if you're grinding.]

And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,

[Move one hand behind the other, then sway side to side like a stalk of wheat.]

And the sun and the Father's will.

[Stretch both arms overhead, then place both hands on your heart.]

Optional: If you have a confident pianist in your congregation, try to teach the children the old hymn, titled "Back of the Loaf," from a 1912 hymnal called "Sunday School Hymns No. 2."

Leader: Do you hear that line “Back of the mill is the wheat”? What does that mean? This poem was written over 100 years ago! That was before we made bread with big machines. Back then, everyone knew what a mill was.

Do you know what a mill is? *[Affirm all answers.]* A mill is a machine that grinds grain into flour. Remember yesterday, when we saw the difference between wheat and chaff? *[Affirm all answers.]* A mill turns those wheat berries into the flour you bake with at home. Grinding wheat berries into flour began over 32,000 years ago!

Archeologists have found evidence of people using this tool *[show mortar and pestle]* to make flour in southern Italy. Does anyone know what this tool is called? *[Affirm all answers.]* It's called a mortar and pestle or, in Spanish, a molcajete. Many countries around the world still use this tool. Today we're going to play with some different ways of milling wheat berries into flour, to learn how it's been done over the years.

DIRECTIONS

1. Create stations around the room with the different tools that the children can use to experiment with turning wheat berries into flour: mortar and pestle, coffee grinder, blender, two big stones, etc. Ideally, have an adult supervise each station.
2. Either break the children into small groups that will rotate between the stations or allow them to explore the stations individually.
3. The goal of this activity is not to create a lot of flour; it's to give children the hands-on experience of milling in various ways.

4. Optional: Show videos of other types of mills around the world.

Millstone milling in the Czech Republic:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WbYu9XHQPw



Water-milling in England:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=nY06Bw5zh-k



Windmilling in Holland:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHtguGxR3iM



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Which of the milling tools was the easiest to use? Which was the hardest?
- Did you know it takes this much work to get the flour that you use to bake?
- How much wheat do you think it would take to make enough flour to bake a loaf of bread? *[Answer: 20 square feet of wheat makes enough flour for one loaf of bread.]*
- Can you imagine grinding all your wheat by hand, as people would have done in Jesus' time? Are you glad you get to buy your flour at the grocery store? Or would you want to do all the work of growing wheat and grinding it into flour yourself?

158 **BACK OF THE LOAF.**
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MALTBIE D. BABCOCK.



Back of the loaf the snow - y flour, Back of the flour the mill;

Back of the mill the wheat and the show'r, The sun and the Fa - ther's will.

Hymn #158,
 Back of the Loaf
 reproduced from the
 1912 hymnal called
 "Sunday School
 Hymns No. 2."

Day 4: Making Bread

Leader: We're already on Day 4 of learning how to make bread! We started by talking about the types of wheat and planting a wheat seed. On the second day, we learned about threshing and winnowing. On the third day, we learned about milling. Today we're finally going to use what we've learned about wheat to make some bread.

BAKING BREAD

Age range: All ages

Note: Bread needs time to rise, which is difficult given the VBS rotation and the limited patience of children. You may want to explain to the kids that you'll be mixing your own bread dough but baking another group's loaf of bread. For the early groups, come prepared with a loaf that has already risen and can go into the oven without having to wait. Be prepared with activities to keep kids entertained while the bread is baking.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bowl	Oven
Large wooden spoon or plastic spatula	Cutting board
Loaf pan	Measuring cups
	Teaspoon

INGREDIENTS

3 cups all-purpose flour
(separated into 1 cup and 2 cups)
1/4 cup sugar
1 packet active dry yeast (or 2-1/4 teaspoons)
1 cup warm water
1/4 cup butter, melted
1 teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS

1. In a bowl, combine 1 cup of flour with all the sugar and yeast.
2. Add warm water. (It should be about the temperature of bathwater — 100-110 degrees Fahrenheit.)
3. Set the bowl on a warm counter for 10 minutes and use this time to make sure everyone's hands are washed. Before moving on to the next step, ask the children how the yeast mixture looks and smells. This will be important if you're doing the next activity.
4. When the yeast mixture looks puffy, stir in 1 cup of flour plus the salt and melted butter.
5. Add the last cup of flour and stir again.
6. Your dough will be VERY STICKY. Pour 1/4 cup of flour on a cutting board or clean countertop, then place the dough on top.
7. Let the children knead the dough with their hands for 10 minutes. Press down with the heel of the hand, then fold the dough in half. Repeat.
8. When the dough changes from sticky to silky, place it in a greased loaf pan.
9. Lay a clean towel over the loaf pan and set it in a warm spot. Allow the dough 45 minutes to rise.
10. Punch the dough down and let it rise for 10 more minutes. While it's rising again, preheat the oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.
11. Bake for 25 minutes.

YEAST BALLOONS

Age range: 5 years and older

Note: If your VBS program doesn't have access to a kitchen, this activity is a good alternative to baking bread. The script refers back to the bread-baking activity, but you can do your own yeast experiment by mixing a teaspoon of baker's yeast and 3 teaspoons of sugar into a cup of warm water. Leave the cup somewhere warm and ventilated to see the yeast bubbles.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- A latex balloon for each child
- A bun or a small loaf of bread to cut open
- A box big enough to hold all the inflated balloons

Leader: One important ingredient we added to our bread dough today was yeast. Does anyone know what yeast is? *[Affirm answers.]* Yeast is actually a microbe, which is a scientific way of saying it's a germ. Sometimes germs can make us sick, but other times they can help us. Yeast is a germ like this. Do you remember when we mixed the warm water with the sugar, flour and yeast, and let it sit for a few minutes? Before we mixed more flour into the dough, I asked you to describe what the yeast mixture looked and smelled like. What was it like? *[Affirm answers.]* It was bubbly, and it smelled a little different. That's because the yeast was fermenting, which means the yeast was changing the sugar in the mixture into carbon dioxide and alcohol. Let's see what I mean.

Cut open the bun or loaf of bread, ask the following questions and listen to their responses:

- What do you see inside?
[Bubbles — the bread looks like a sponge.]
- How did those bubbles get in there?
- Can you make a link between the bubbles we saw when we mixed the yeast with the warm water and sugar, and the bubbles in the bread?
- What happened to the bubbles we saw when we mixed the yeast with the warm water and sugar?
[They eventually popped.]
- Why don't the bubbles in the bread pop?
[Because they're trapped inside the bread.]
- Which ingredients seal the bubbles in?
[Flour mixed with water.]

Now we're going to imagine that each of us is a little dot of yeast that's fermenting. Let's blow out carbon dioxide. *[Let children exhale.]* Where did our carbon dioxide go? *[Into the air.]* Let's try that again. *[Give each child a balloon.]* OK, we're still yeast, and we're still blowing out carbon dioxide, but this time, we're going to blow it into these balloons. *[Let the children inflate their balloons.]* What's the difference in terms of where the air goes? *[Help the children to understand the difference by putting all the inflated balloons into a box to simulate the carbon dioxide in a loaf of bread.]*

Day 5: Share Our Bread

Leader: This is our last day of learning how to make bread! Let's review what we've done so far. On Day 1, we discussed the types of wheat and planting a wheat seed. On Day 2, we learned about threshing and winnowing. On Day 3, we learned about milling. On Day 4, we learned about yeast and finally made some bread! Today, we're going to share our bread with others.

BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER

Age range: All ages

For many reasons — from family schedules to food scarcity — not all children experience family meals at home together. This activity gives each child a role in creating a meaningful fellowship meal.

MATERIALS NEEDED

The bread baked the previous day	Napkins
A table	Plates
Decorations for the table	Cups

DIRECTIONS

1. Assign each child a role: napkin folder, water filler, plate setter, name card maker, prayer writer, conversation starter, etc.
2. Make sure there's a place at the table for everyone participating — including adults — and that everyone washes their hands before sitting down.
3. Once the table is set and everyone is ready, begin the meal by holding hands and saying a prayer written by one of the kids. While passing the bread and eating, allow one child to ask conversation-starting questions.
4. When the meal is over, involve all children in cleaning up. They may need roles assigned for this as well: dish collector, cup collector, dishwasher, table wiper, trash collector, etc.

Note: This is a great activity for parents and other congregational members to attend, to discover what you've learned this week.

SHARING STORIES AND BREAD

Age range: All ages

Invite someone from your local public school system's nutrition department, your closest ELCA Advocacy group, or a food-based nonprofit or ministry to talk to your group about how your church can participate in sharing our stories about the importance of quality food for children. Explain to the children that, for public-health reasons, most food banks won't accept home-baked bread, so we can't share the bread we made. But we can share our stories and learn ways to speak up for and help ourselves and our neighbors.

Optional: Go on a field trip to a local food bank or soup kitchen.

Note: If your church doesn't already have a relationship with a local food bank or soup kitchen, this activity may need to be done in cooperation with the church's pastoral team. Take care not to burden nonprofit or ministry employees with unpaid work. Offer a donation on behalf of the church for their staff's time.

Dinner Table Talk



[illegible]

Day 2: Recap

Note to leaders: Please print copies of this page and send one home with each child.

TODAY, WITH THE HELP OF SANDY THE SEAGULL, WE LEARNED THAT OUR STORIES MATTER TO GOD AND THAT ALL LIFE STORIES ARE UNIQUE.

TWO IMPORTANT ONES ARE:

1. "The Three Visitors" (Genesis 18:1-15), about the big surprise Sarah and Abraham receive from God that changes their lives.
2. "Yun's Unexpected Life Change in Cambodia," about a Cambodian woman who — to her surprise, after many years of hardship — finds a way to sustain her family with a chicken business. ELCA World Hunger supports the partner who supplied the chickens to Yun.

We also learned about wheat — specifically, separating the wheat berries from the chaff and why that is so important to farmers as well as to God.

DINNER TABLE QUESTION

As your family breaks bread over the dinner table tonight, we encourage you to reread and discuss "The Three Visitors." Suggested dinner table question:

What event in your life surprised you and changed your life for the better?



Sandy the Seagull

Day 3: Recap

Note to leaders: Please print copies of this page and send one home with each child.

TODAY, WITH THE HELP OF SANDY THE SEAGULL, WE LEARNED THAT SHARING MEALS AND TELLING STORIES WERE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT TO OUR CHURCH TODAY.

TWO IMPORTANT ONES ARE:

1. "The Fellowship of Believers" (Acts 2:42-46), about the disciples' care for one another and their shared identity.
2. "Oscar's New Sense of Community in Fort Collins," about a Colorado college student who is able to focus on studying because Lutheran Campus Ministries provides affordable housing and free meals to students without generational wealth.

Both these stories are about sharing and making sure that everyone has enough.



DINNER TABLE QUESTION

As your family breaks bread over the dinner table tonight, we encourage you to reread and discuss “The Fellowship of Believers.” Suggested dinner table question:

Was there a time when you felt as if you didn't have enough and someone shared with you?

[illegible]

Day 4: Recap

Note to leaders: Please print copies of this page and send one home with each child.

TODAY, WITH THE HELP OF SANDY THE SEAGULL, WE LEARNED THAT SOMETIMES IT'S OK TO GET ANGRY, ESPECIALLY WHEN IMPORTANT STORIES AREN'T BEING RESPECTED OR HEARD.

TWO IMPORTANT ONES ARE:

1. "The Turning of the Tables" (Mark 11:15-17), in which Jesus turns over the tables in the temple because he is angry that people are not respecting God's sacred space.
2. "Mariia's Unheard Story in Ukraine," about a Romani refugee who isn't being treated fairly during the war in Ukraine.

Both these stories are about poor travelers not having their stories heard. In "The Turning of the Tables," Jesus says, "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17) to remind us that God wants us to honor all people's stories.



Sandy the Seagull

DINNER TABLE QUESTION

As your family breaks bread over the dinner table tonight, we encourage you to reread and discuss "The Turning of the Tables." Suggested dinner table question:

When was the last time you felt unheard? How did that make you feel?

Day 5: Recap

Note to leaders: Please print copies of this page and send one home with each child.

TODAY, WITH THE HELP OF SANDY THE SEAGULL, WE LEARNED HOW WE CAN APPRECIATE AND SHARE OTHER PEOPLE'S STORIES.

TWO IMPORTANT STORIES WE DISCUSSED ARE:

1. "The Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37), about the person who is least likely to help a robbed man yet does.
2. "Willie, Brianna, Kitty and Calla Go to the United Nations," about four people from our church who travel to the U.N. Headquarters to advocate for their neighbors.

Both stories are about small and big ways we can care for our neighbors.



DINNER TABLE QUESTION

As your family breaks bread over the dinner table tonight, we encourage you to reread and discuss “The Good Samaritan.” Suggested dinner table question:

In what ways have you loved your neighbor as yourself?

[illegible]

INCLUDING EVERYONE

When we prepare to invite people into our home to join us “At the Table,” we think about who will be coming and how we can welcome and prepare for all guests. The same is true for this VBS. How can your church welcome and prepare for all the children who may come through your door?

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

1. Don't assume what someone is capable of doing.
Be brave and discuss with the child and their parents/guardians how to adjust your activities so that the child can not only participate but be successful and feel joyful. The goal isn't to remove all challenges from games or activities but to remove unrealistic expectations for that child.
2. Plan ahead. Talk with parents/guardians about any special equipment that might be needed before an activity begins so that the child can participate from the very beginning. Some children may benefit from a one-on-one relationship through the week.
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. Consider invisible disabilities such as learning disorders, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and mental health challenges. Discuss with these families what accommodations would allow their child to enjoy the day.
5. If a child has specific dietary restrictions, do your best to make adjustments that help the child feel included rather than singled out.
6. If your church uses registration forms for VBS, consider putting space on the registration form for parents to explain any additional needs and what works best for their child. This is a good starting point for a deeper conversation.

RESOURCES FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Because ELCA World Hunger deals with real-world issues that impact hunger all over the world, this curriculum includes some difficult stories. The stories to be read aloud to the children are appropriate for their age and development but be sensitive to the questions children may have after hearing them.

Studies have shown that having difficult conversations with children builds their understanding of the world and their empathy for people who experience hard things. However, not just any conversation will have this impact; it must be a conversation the child can understand but not so detailed that it traumatizes them. Phrases such as “everybody is equal” or “peace on earth” are too vague, because some children may not understand big concepts such as “equality” and “peace.” From as young as 6 months, children make assumptions and categorize people. The conclusions they reach without guidance almost always give preference to people who are like them. To be effective, researchers have found, conversations about difficult subjects must be in unmistakable terms that children understand.

To help your congregation extend these conversations across generations, we've provided the resources below.

TALKING ABOUT WAR

Resources for discussing war and conflict with children:

UNICEF: “How to Talk to Your Children About Conflict and War,”

www.unicef.org/parenting/how-talk-your-children-about-conflict-and-war



National Child Traumatic Stress Network: “Talking to Children About War,”

www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/talking-to-children-about-war.pdf



Sesame Workshop:

Displacement and Resettlement,
sesameworkshop.org/topics/displacement-resettlement/



SONGS

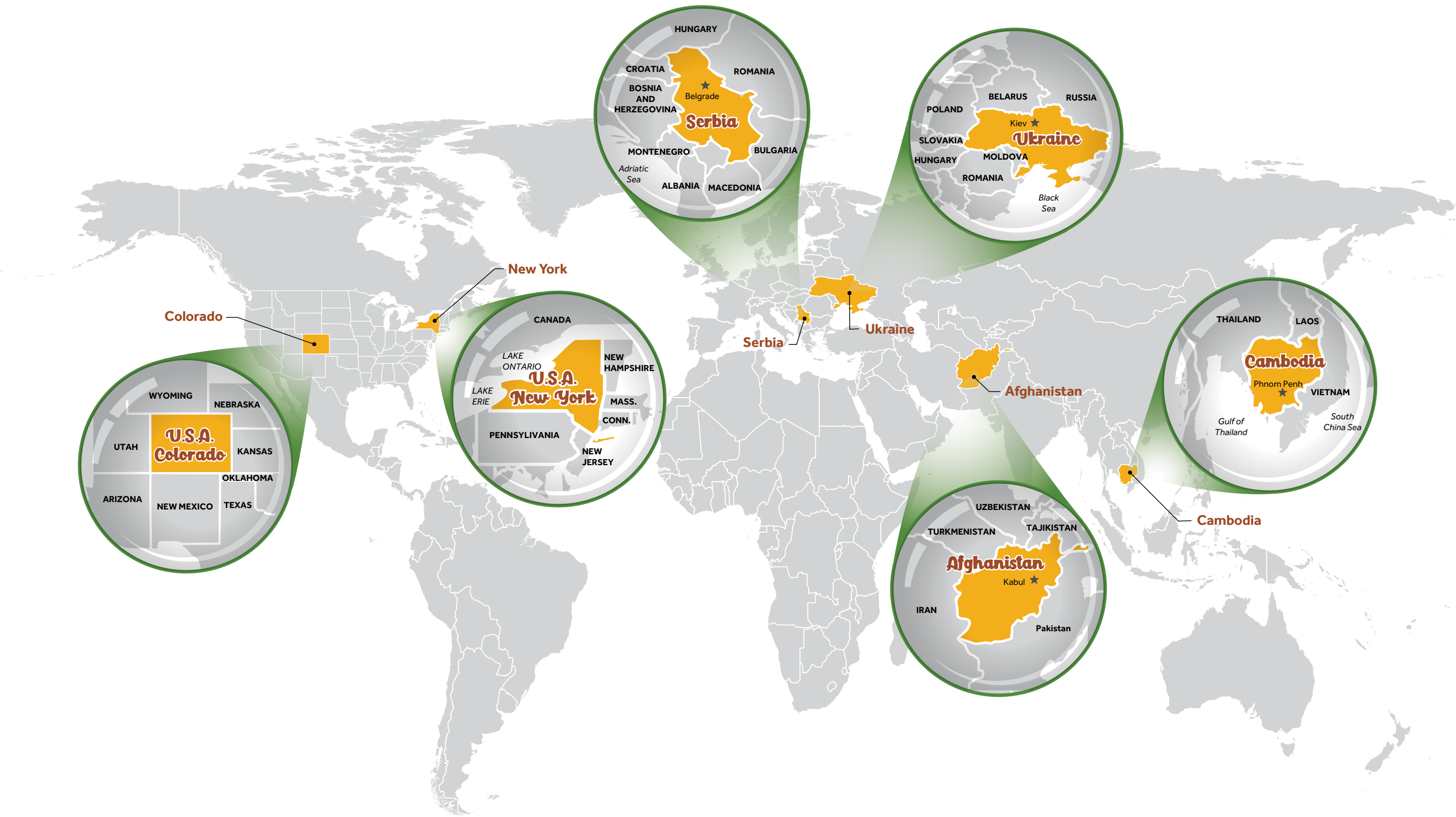
Recommended songs for this VBS can be found in the “At the Table” Supplemental Resources document, found on the ELCA.org/resources portal.



Notes

[illegible]

STORYTIME LOCATIONS MAP





Stay Connected!

Thank you for using ELCA World Hunger's
“**God's New Creation**” Vacation Bible School!
We'd love to stay connected with you.

Email us

Questions, stories or photos of your
VBS experience to share?

Email them to **hunger@elca.org**.

Follow @ELCAWorldHunger on social media:



THANK YOU FOR JOINING US

“At the Table”

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



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