

# **Living our Faith: Caring for God's Many Gifts**

## **A Youth Mission Work Camp Reflection Guide**

### **RETREAT MODULE INTRODUCTION**

Dear Retreat Leader:

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a leader for this retreat at a camp or conference center. The hope and prayer is that this retreat module will provide an enriching experience for all participants as well as you and your leadership team.

### **Purpose**

The intent of this retreat module is for you as a congregational leader to have a tool that equips you and a team for retreat leadership. A variety of opportunities to explore and discover God's word in community abound at a camps and conference centers. Without a lot of time and effort this module provides a model for a retreat that is flexible and can be adapted to your group.

### **Why Retreat**

A retreat refreshes and revitalizes, taking us out of the daily grind of our normal lives and provides an enjoyable breathtaking experience. Retreats are important for our minds, bodies and souls. They provide a restful setting, experiences in the out-of-doors, time exploring God's Word, and activity that engages us in community - rekindling and deepening relationships with one another and with God.

### **Why Retreat at a Camp or Conference Center**

The setting of a camp or conference center enhances the experience of God spiritually, mentally, and physically. The center lets us step away and encounter a place of wonder and discovery, rest and renewal. It opens up an opportunity for individuals and groups to be outdoors connecting with one another, creation, and the Creator.

## Shared Leadership

Team leadership is ideal, spreading out the work load and sharing in the ministry. There is joy in hearing different voices and in equipping others to serve alongside one another. The community that is built can overflow into other ministries as well as into other retreats in the future. This model envisions the inclusion of members of a team with varying gifts.

## Flexibility is the Key

Be flexible throughout your retreat, giving the Holy Spirit space to enter into the retreat experience and community being built. Activities are designed for both inside and outside (weather permitting) with opportunities to spend quality time in the environment of the camp or conference center, especially outdoors.

## What You Will Find

Here is what you will find in the module to assist in planning your retreat:

- List of supplies/resources
- Sample schedule
- Song suggestions
- Additional resources
- Options like adapting for various sized groups
- Spaces of free time to just relax or participate in some of the activities provided at the camp or conference center
- Scripture readings are provided for convenience - leaders may use other biblical translations and/or invite participants to bring their own Bibles

## Planning a Retreat

1. Create a team to help plan, administer and lead the retreat:
  - Make reservations at the camp or conference center
  - Develop a registration form and process
  - Arrange travel for leadership and participants
  - Design a schedule with gatherings, activities, meals, and rest
  - Gather supplies needed
  - Consider any safety concerns especially for your group at this location
  - Invite leaders to assist before, during and after the retreat

## 2. Get the Word Out:

They say that the average person needs to hear and/or see something 7 times before it is ingrained in their memory. That means you need to share the invitation for your retreat in as many places as you can, in as many forms as you can.

- Identify your audience by determining who should be invited to participate
- Work backwards from your retreat date to calculate required deadlines for invitations, registrations, and advertisement prior to the retreat
- Use newsletters, flyers, bulletin inserts, bulletin boards to get the word out
- Include an informational flyer with the registration form
- Use email notices, social media and websites to advertise
- Follow-up as registration dates get close with reminders to register
- Confirm registrations and include a what to bring list
- Build excitement as you send a reminder closer to the retreat date

## 3. Retreat Schedule:

Begin with the provided sample schedule and adjust it to best meet the needs of your group. Don't forget to include meals and free time so there is rest in the midst of activities.

## 4. Evaluation:

Follow-up after the retreat, with a paper, electronic, or verbal evaluation. Ask what was most meaningful, least meaningful, what might be changed for a next retreat. This will provide you with an overall sense of how the retreat was received, as well as notes for any future events.

## Use of Space

- Inside & outside – take advantage of the outside space as well as the various activities provided at the camp or conference center
- Safe space for your retreat- both physically in your location as well as for the conversations, interactions and experiences
- Worship space – remember that worship is a central part of our community; keep familiar rhythms while at the same time introducing new ways of worshipping in a different setting
- Small groups – create a safe and welcoming space for sharing; invite all voices to be heard; instill respect for various opinions to be voiced and heard

- Special needs – consider what hearing, sight, mobility etc. needs exists in your group; be inclusive with all of your spaces and adapt activities as necessitated

## Gathering in Community

- Gather in circles when possible – around a table, standing or sitting, circles provide a sense of community; we can see one another's faces, listen to and hear one another better
- Music – select songs that are easy to sing, and have word sheets or music sheets available; introduce new songs by teaching them and listening to the music before singing

## Provide Hospitality

Hospitality is important for all participants to have a comfortable and grace-filled experience. Consider what simple things will make people feel welcome and comfortable.

- Hospitality area – provide water/beverages and snacks; find out whether the camp or conference center can provide this or whether you will need to bring them
- Locations – provide maps and information on where everything is located; consider a tour or scavenger hunt for your group to learn where to find locations for the retreat; good signage and clear directions can make a big difference
- Get acquainted – everyone may not know everyone else, so assume that you need name tags and activities to get to know one another
- Safety – bring first aid kits, safety equipment and instructions for any special activities
- Schedule – make copies available for those who wish to have a printed schedule of the retreat with meeting locations and times.
- Greeters – these welcoming faces are necessary for anyone who is unable to attend the entire retreat and coming for only part of it; be sure to have someone who will greet them and help them get settled in when they do arrive; also be sure to welcome them into the group and fill them in on what you are doing as they join the retreat in progress
- Participation – encourage everyone to fully participate and to share concerns with leadership if they are not comfortable with certain activities; most activities can be adapted to meet the needs of your group
- Be aware – there may need to be some adjustments made to include those with mobility, dietary, hearing, etc. concerns for your particular group; ask

the questions during planning in order to address these to the best of your ability

## **Openings & Closings**

The strength of your retreat is often determined by how you start and finish. Open strong with an organized plan for the retreat, including opportunities for everyone to get acquainted/re-acquainted and to build community.

Closing strong can wrap up the experiences of the retreat and encourage participants to take home what they have discovered to share with others. Shape your closing with a summary of the experiences you have shared and leave space for goodbyes.

Above all, have an amazing, fun-filled and God-filled experience playing in creation, exploring God's word, enjoying activities, sharing experiences and building community in the beauty of your camp or conference center.

Blessings on your retreat experience!

# ***Living our Faith: Caring for God's Many Gifts***

## **Introduction**

“Living Our Faith: Caring for God’s Many Gifts” is designed for youth leaders to use as a reflection guide for a youth mission experience for middle and high school youth over the course of a three-days held at a retreat center, camp, or conference center. Many of the activities in the curriculum focus on team building as we know that one of the gifts of a trip like this with young people is building strong relationships with one another that will last well beyond the trip itself.

The appendices offer suggestions on how to amend the schedule to fit a longer or shorter timeframe. The curriculum as it’s written is designed to serve as an accompaniment to service work that you are doing at various sites during the day. However, in the appendices, there are also several service projects that you could do on your own should you not have off-site projects planned and want to offer opportunities for your youth to engage in mission projects onsite.

## ***Younger and Older Youth in Mission Together***

Many youth groups combine their 6th-12th graders for youth ministry. There are many gifts shared when younger and older youth serve, study, pray and play together. The activities in this curriculum are written by someone with extensive experience in combined 6th-12th grade youth ministry leadership and are written with both the middle schooler and the high schooler in mind. You may choose, at times, to break your youth into middle school and high school discussion groups to allow for there to be more developmentally appropriate conversation. The reflection questions are ones that everyone can respond to authentically and from the depth of their experience. Our hope is that your youth group will grow in friendship and in faith, that the sixth graders participating in a mission experience for the first time will feel connected to the high schoolers; and that the high school youth will serve both as friends and mentors for the younger youth.

## ***A word about Short-Term Mission Trips***

Reformed theology teaches us that we do mission in partnership. Knowing that God is already at work in a community prior to our arrival, we partner with the people and organizations where we engage in mission, recognizing that they have gifts, skills and insights that will benefit the needs of their community and ours. A short-term mission trip offers an opportunity for young people to learn and discover needs in communities and it also provides an opportunity for young people to learn from the mission partners and the creative ways that they are

engaging in service and care. A short-term mission trip is not a trip to ‘help the less fortunate,’ but is an opportunity to grow in understanding of the needs of a community different from your own, to form relationships with people in a variety of contexts, and to work together to make the world more like God’s kin-dom. For additional resources related to short-term mission, please visit the PC(USA) Short-Term mission tool kit: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/world-mission/short-term-mission-trips-toolkit/short-term-mission-toolkit-learn/>

## ***Learn before you go***

Prior to your trip, collect resources around the specific type of work you will be doing and the systemic issues (those that effect the whole organization, country, or culture) surrounding that work. Learn about the agency you will be working with. Plan 1-2 gatherings with your youth and adult leaders to become more familiar with the work you will be engaged in on the trip.

One way to do this is to invite several youth to explore the websites of the agency(ies) where you will serve and come prepared to share with the group what they’ve learned.

Take time before you travel to learn about the justice issues in that particular context. For example, if you will be doing disaster relief, you could collect online resources from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, <https://pda.pcusa.org/>, about the disaster’s roots and what is being done now.

If you will be serving at a food pantry or serving food at a shelter for those experiencing homelessness, collect resources from the agencies’ websites regarding who they serve, their capacity, and poverty stats for that area. You could find out what food will go in the food sack you may be packing and ask the youth to plan a meal using only what was is in that sack and consider what food is missing.

If you are at a camp doing trail work, you could collect resources about the challenges of protecting the earth, climate change, erosion, or clean water.

Another option would be to ask someone from one of the agencies to share with your youth, either virtually or in-person, about the local context and the justice issues that arise.

Plan to encourage ongoing conversation around these topics and systemic issues, on your trip.

## ***Suggested Schedule***

(Additional activities are listed in the appendices)

*Note: This schedule does not name a specific 'free time' in it, but that is a very important time in any youth trip. Be sure to find some time each day, between 1-2 hours, that is scheduled as a break or down time.*

### **DAY 1**

- Afternoon arrival
- Opening Activities and Get-to-know-you Games
- Covenant and Lectio Divina
- Art Project and Worship
- Evening Reflection Time

### **DAY 2**

- Morning Devotional
- Serve
- Lunch: Sandwiches and Sharing
- Serve
- Evening Team Building and Worship
- Evening reflection time

### **DAY 3**

- Morning Devotional
- Serve
- Lunch: Sandwiches and Sharing
- Serve
- Closing Reflection Time
- Closing Worship



# **Day 1: Caring for the Community Gathered**

## **OPENING ACTIVITIES (30-45 minutes)**

Choose between the following activities to begin the community-building process for your group.

### **Nametags**

*Supplies: nametag inserts, hanging nametags with plastic pockets, markers, stickers (if desired)*

Building community is key for a meaningful mission experience. One way to do this from the very beginning is to create nametags that allow youth and leaders to express their individual personalities.

Be sure to leave space for people to indicate their preferred pronouns if desired. Many places sell stickers with pronouns if you wish to purchase these as an option.

Have each person create their nametag and design it with their own unique flair.

### **Reflection Sheets**

*Supplies: butcher paper or flip chart paper, markers*

Reflection sheet activities allow youth to build community without having to answer lots of questions verbally. This encourages some of your quieter youth to engage in community from the very beginning of the time together. Encourage youth to write their name if they would like to but let them know that it is also appropriate to leave their comments anonymous.

- What's the farthest distance you've been from home?
- What's one thing you're looking forward to on this trip?
- What is one question you have about this experience?
- What is your favorite place to connect with God?

### **Get-to-Know-You Games**

Playing together is important for building relationships. Some youth come to the mission weekend knowing the group very well; others come with little to no knowledge of the others in the group. Play helps remove barriers and provides shared experience within the group so that everyone is on a level 'playing' field. Play games for 15-20 minutes with your group. If your group already knows one another well, consider using one of the team-building games from the appendices.

## **Balloon Fiesta**

*Supplies: inflated balloons (1/person), Sharpies (several, best if 1/person), music*

Have everyone write their name with Sharpie on a balloon and circle it. Please make sure to write big enough that people can see the name easily. When the music starts, play “keep-up” with the balloons, trying not to let them touch the ground. When the music stops, grab a balloon (not your own) and find the person whose name is listed on the balloon.

With your partner, answer a question. Write the answer to the question on the balloon. After the question has been answered, begin the music again and when it stops, find a new partner and answer another question. Go for several rounds.

### **Question ideas (or use your own)**

- What is your least favorite vegetable?
- If you could have any superpower, what would it be?
- What is a movie that you love?
- What is a show that you have recently binged and loved?
- Where would you go for your dream vacation?
- What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?
- What is the name of the city/town where you were born?
- What extracurricular activities are you involved in?
- What is a song that you love?
- If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- What is your favorite emoji?
- What is your favorite dessert?
- Who is your funniest relative?

Hold on to the last balloon and take a moment to pray for that person’s experience this week.

## **Name Juggle**

*Supplies: 2-3 balls*

Gather in a circle. First, have everyone say their name one more time. Then, say the name of someone in the circle and throw the ball to that person. That person then says the name of someone else in the circle, until everyone has had their name called and the ball returns to the group leader. Do this a couple of times with the same pattern until everyone has it down. Then, add another ball into the mix. For added fun, try it backwards. Then, try one ball going backwards and the other going forward.

## **Appointments**

*Supplies: small sheets of paper or post-it notes, pens*

Give everyone in the group a sheet of paper or post-it note and a pen. Explain that they are going to make an appointment with four people in the group. At the appointment, the leader will ask a question for the partners to respond to before it's time to move to the next appointment.

Give everybody a few minutes to make 4 appointments with people in the group for the times 12 pm, 3 pm, 6 pm and 9 pm. They will write down your appointments on your post-it note or small sheet of paper.

When they have finished creating their appointments, have everyone stand in a circle.

Then the leader calls out one of the times on the appointment sheet (12, 3, 6 or 9) and everyone finds their appointment partner. The leader will then call out 2 questions for the pairs to ask their partner.

### **Possible Questions:**

- What is your middle name?
- What school do you go to?
- Who lives in your house with you?
- Do you have any pets?
- What is your favorite sport to play?
- Have you taken any other trips this year?
- What Bible character or story is your favorite?
- How many mission/service trips have you participated in?

After a short while the leader shouts out the next time and the activity repeats, asking two new questions each time.

After everyone has gone to all of their "appointments," sit in a circle and ask each person to share one thing they learned about someone else in the group.

After you've played a couple of name/introduction games, gather the group back together.

Take a break if desired and then return for the covenant and Bible study.

## COVENANT AND BIBLE STUDY

*Supplies: large piece of paper, markers or pens, Bible, candle and lighter/matches or flameless candle*

### **Making a Group Covenant (10-15 min)**

The leader explains that throughout this week, we'll get to know one another better. It's important that we create guidelines that give us some expectations for how we will live in intentional Christian community this week. To help us do this, we're going to create a covenant together.

Allow for some discussion and make sure the following points are covered:

- A covenant is an agreement, a pledge, commitment, promise
- Examples of Covenants from the Bible
  - Noahic Covenant (with Noah; Genesis 9:8-17) I will never flood the earth again
  - Mosaic Covenant (with Moses; Exodus 19:5) You will be my descendants forever
  - Davidic Covenant (with David; 2 Samuel 7:11-13) One will come after me that will reign forever and ever
- Covenants bind us to one another. They teach us how to treat one another; they reveal our care for one another.

Explain that you are now going to make a covenant for your group to guide you as you play, serve, and share. Ask for a person to write your ideas down. The scribe will write down what people say on a piece of newsprint.

Make sure that the following things are included in some way:

- Be on time and participate with your full attention
- Be respectful of everyone whether you agree with them or not
- Be careful not to joke or tease in a way that hurts someone's feelings
- Be respectful of property
- Be respectful of the people at the sites where we serve

After the covenant is written, invite every person (youth and adults) to sign their name to it as a sign of their commitment to the covenant. Post the covenant in a prominent place so that you may return to it as needed throughout your time together.

## ***Bible Study: Lectio Divina on Hebrews 10:24-25 (15 min)***

*Supplies: Bible (or printed handout of the scripture passage Hebrews 10:24-25), candle and lighter or flameless candle*

Before you begin, ask for 3 volunteers (preferably different genders and ages) to be scripture readers.

Say:

*Lectio divina is a way of reading scripture that invites us to listen for a particular word that God may be sharing with us. We will listen to the Bible passage be read by 3 different voices and in between there will be a moment of silence for reflection.*

Light a candle or ask people to take three deep breaths and prepare for the reading of scripture.

Invite people to sit quietly and give them the first set of instructions.

Say:

*LISTEN for a word or phrase that speaks to you as you hear the scripture read. [first volunteer reads Hebrews 10:24-25 aloud]*

After the passage is read, invite a moment of silent reflection. You may ask people if they wish to share, without explanation, the word or phrase that came to them. Remind people they may always choose to pass.

Say:

*LISTEN for what this word or phrase that speaks to you as you hear the scripture read. [second volunteer reads Hebrews 10:24-25 aloud]*

After the passage is read, invite a moment of silent reflection. You may ask people if they wish to share briefly. Remind people they may always choose to pass.

Say:

*ASK God: What are you calling me to do having heard this? [third volunteer reads Hebrew 10:24-25 aloud]*

After the passage is read, invite a moment of silent reflection. You may ask people if they wish to share briefly. Remind people they may always choose to pass.

To close, invite the group to take 3 cleansing breaths and to keep these thoughts with them during your time serving.

You may use this web resource to provide additional information to your youth or to better familiarize yourself with the process of lectio divina:

<https://www.communitiesofcalling.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Lectio-Divina-Guide.pdf>

## **OPENING WORSHIP**

### ***Opening Prayer***

Loving God, you have called us into community to care for and to serve one another. Tonight, we thank you especially for the gift of the community gathered here. May we learn from one another and from you, and may our love reflect Your love for all humanity. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

### ***Hymn or Worship Song***

Suggestions of Hymns from *Glory To God Hymnal*

- *Come, All you People (Uyai Mose)* - 388
- *Sanctuary* - 701
- *Santo, Santo, Santo* - 595

### ***Scripture Readings (have two volunteers read scriptures)***

- Deuteronomy 6:5
- Matthew 22:36-39

### ***Prayer Stations (3 stations available)***

Have the leader introduce the three prayer stations. If possible, play recorded instrumental music during the prayer station time and encourage people to remain silent or to use very quiet voices if speaking is necessary.

#### 1. Scrabble Prayer

*Supplies: Scrabble board, table for board, and Scrabble letters*

Use the Scrabble board to write one-word prayers. Place this somewhere, if possible, where it can stay out the whole time.

## 2. World Map Prayer

*Supplies: small smooth river stones and world map*

Place stones on the map where you would like to lift prayers.

## 3. Prayers for Community Helpers (soldiers, farmers, doctors, nurses etc.)

*Supplies: figurines that reflect helpers*

People may come hold a figurine and say a prayer for that kind of helper.

After the prayer station time, gather the group back together in a circle. If desired, hold hands.

## **Lord's Prayer**

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.*

## **Closing Hymn or Worship Song**

Suggestions from *Glory To God Hymnal*

- *I'm Gonna Live so God Can Use Me* - 700
- *When We are Living (Pues si vivimos)* - 822
- *Will You Come and Follow Me? (The Summons)* - 726

## **Benediction**

As the community stands in a circle, have them turn to the person on their right and offer this blessing: You are a beloved and gifted child of God. Go in peace.

## **EVENING REFLECTIONS**

Evening reflections allow the youth to process their day and share with one another what they're discovering as they serve and learn together. Tonight, you'll spend time with your group talking about what they can expect to do for their mission projects each day as well as de-briefing the experience so far.

## ***Rose, Bud and Thorn Check-in***

*Supplies: none*

Have the group sit in a circle. Introduce the definitions below of rose, bud, and thorn. Invite people to share their rose, bud, and thorn with the group from the day. Remind people that they are always welcome to share, but never forced to do so. They may always choose to pass.

**Rose** = A highlight, success, small win, or something positive that happened.

**Bud** = New ideas that have blossomed or something you are looking forward to knowing more about or experiencing.

**Thorn** = A challenge you experienced or something you can use more support with.

## ***What to Expect During our Trip***

*Supplies: schedule of mission projects*

Spend 5-10 minutes sharing with the youth what their mission projects will be over the next few days. If available, share information about the agency/group they will be working with and as much detail as possible about the type of work they will be engaged in. Let them know if the work will be 'behind-the-scenes' or work they will do with people in the community.

Encourage the youth to think back to the pre-conversations you had when you learned about the agencies and their work. What were some of the systemic issues (factors that cause the issue or are the reason for it continuing) you learned about related to this topic? If possible, find a video that relates to the topic/work done by your agency to share with the youth and discuss it.

Make sure to talk about how our Reformed theology leads us to do mission in partnership. This means that we trust that God's Spirit is at work in the lives of the people with whom we serve and that this short-term trip gives us the opportunity to witness what God is already doing in the lives of God's people in this place. The work that we will be doing is a small part of the ongoing work of justice and mercy. Sometimes, the work we will do during this trip will feel small, like a drop in the bucket for the bigger, systemic issues at work. We will also be thinking about how we as a youth group and a congregation can work on the more systemic issues, such as injustice, racism, unequal access to resources and more. Encourage the youth over the course of the trip to be thinking about what they might do differently when they get home because of what they experience and learn on this trip.



Ask questions such as these:

- What are you most looking forward to?
- What kinds of questions do you have about the work we will be doing?
- What does it mean to do mission in partnership?

## ***Prayer Post-Its***

*Supplies: a wall, post-it notes, pens or markers*

Dedicate a space on one of the walls in your gathering space to be a prayer wall. Provide pens and post-its and let the youth know that at any point over the weekend, when they have an “aha! moment” or when they have something they want to pray for, that they may go and write a prayer request and add it to the prayer wall. These may be related to the justice issues you are learning about, the particular people you are serving alongside, a hope, a prayer for change, etc. Keep the post-it note wall up for the entirety of the trip and allow the youth to add to it at any point.

## ***Close with Popcorn Prayer***

Close your evening reflection time with reminders about the morning and then with a popcorn prayer, where one person begins the prayer and then others lift up brief prayers like popcorn popping, until a leader notices a pause and says “Amen.”

## ***Day 2: Loving God, Caring for the Gifts of the World***

### **Morning Devotion**

This can be used during breakfast or just before the group departs for serving for the day.

**Sing:** *Spirit of the Living God, Fall Afresh on Me - #288, Glory to God Hymnal*

**Read:** Psalm 104:24-25

**Thought for the day:** As you go through the day, pay attention to the ways that God cares for the gifts of creation (humanity, our world etc.)

Note: If you are not doing service work at a site today, consider the activities listed in the appendices on page 30 as your service projects for the day.

## Sharing and Sandwiches: Lunchtime Conversation

This is to take place during the lunch hour. It could be done at your serving site or back at your housing, depending on the structure of your day.

Have the youth discuss these questions in groups of 3-4 or at their lunch tables. You may want to write up the questions and place them on each table for the groups to use.

Depending on the ages of the people in your group, you may wish to split people into Middle School/High School groups or allow them to select their own groups. Ask an adult or an older youth to be the facilitator of each group to keep the conversation moving.

1. What is one thing you learned this morning?
2. How did you experience God's love this morning?
3. How did you share God's love this morning?
4. What good work is happening where we served this morning?

## Evening Reflections, Sharing, and Art Project

Choose at least one team-building activity from this section. You may use additional options found in the appendices.

### ***That's Me! (10-15 min.)***

*Supplies needed: index cards (one/player), pen or pencil (one /player), butcher paper and markers or whiteboard and dry-erase markers*

Write the following questions and a sample response on butcher paper or the whiteboard.

1. What do you have in common with most people in the group? (Sample answer: I walk on two legs)
2. What do you have in common with some people in the group? (Sample answer: I was born in a big city.)
3. What is something you have in common with a few people in the group? (Sample answer: I wear contact lenses.)
4. What is something unique to you? (Sample answer: I have a fishing-hook scar on my left ankle.)

**Instructions:**

1. Give each player an index card and a writing utensil and ask them to answer the questions on the whiteboard or butcher paper. After everyone has written their responses down, collect the cards and ask the group to stand up. Select one card.
2. Read the first question and ask who shares the answer given on the card selected. Players sit down (and remain seated) if the answer does not apply to them.
3. Continue reading aloud the answers on the same card to the second and third questions. As each response is read, more and more people will likely sit down.
4. The game usually narrows by the fourth question to the one person whose trait is unique in the group.
5. Invite everyone to stand and repeat with another person's card. Play as many rounds as you'd like.
6. Questions to ask after the game:
  - How often do you take time to look for similarities between yourself and your community?
  - Why is it important for us to consider our commonalities during this trip?

***Introduce Your Shoes***

*Supplies: shoes (Keep on their feet! Youth feet are stinky after a day of work.)*

Tell the players that they are going to introduce their shoes. They may share where their shoes have taken them or what they've learned while wearing these shoes, but they may not share where they bought their shoes or how much they cost. If desired, they can give their shoes a name as well. Have each person say their name and then introduce their shoes, sharing something about where their shoes have taken them.

***Reflections from the Day (pair-share)***

Have the group break into pairs. If necessary, divide into groups of 3. Have the groups talk about the following questions:

- What did you notice today?
- What's one thing you learned that you'll take home with you from today?
- Where/ how/ in whom did you see God at work today?

If the pairs wish to share with the larger group they may, but do not force anyone to share. They may choose to pass.

If possible, find a short video that relates to the work being done where you served today and discuss it as a group.

Incorporate the Prayer Post-Its again if there is time (see page 17).

### **Group Art Project: Tablecloth for worship**

*Supplies: white twin flat sheet or fabric large enough to cover your table, a plastic disposable tablecloth, and fabric markers*

*Say: This tablecloth will be used for our closing worship and we will bring it home to the congregation for them to use during communion as a reminder of the work we did on this mission trip.*

Encourage every person to participate; some may be artists, some may be planners, but ensure that everyone has a part in the creation of the project.

1. Place the plastic tablecloth under the fabric to protect the surface from colors bleeding through.
2. Have one or two people write in large letters in the middle of the tablecloth: "Caring for God's Many Gifts: Youth Mission Trip, [Name of the Church], [Year of the Trip]"
3. Using fabric markers have each youth write or draw something that represents the mission work that they did that day. It could be a symbol (Such as helping hands), it could be names of people they met, or a word they associate with the trip. Encourage each person to write their name along with their symbol/word(s).
4. While the group draws and creates, allow conversation about the day and what youth learned/wonder about. Encourage conversations about their work and learning together, guiding it if necessary.

**Close with prayer.**

### **Evening Worship**

This worship service should be the very last thing the group does before lights-out.

*Supplies: blankets, outdoor space, starry skies*

If possible, go outside into creation and lie down on blankets to look up at the stars during worship. If it's not possible to go outside, you may use this liturgy

in an indoor space and encourage people to lie down and dim the lights in your indoor space.

## **Invitation to Worship**

Say:

*Welcome to this time of worship tonight. Tonight's worship will be quiet and meditative, allowing you the opportunity to reflect with God on the day. You are invited to join your voice in song, but you may also choose to listen quietly as the songs are sung. We will sing each song 3 times so that everyone has an opportunity to become familiar with the lyrics and join in if desired. You are invited to lie down on your back or to sit in a comfortable position. Enjoy the view of the starry night (if outside), and please keep your voice quiet so that we may maintain a worshipful space this evening.*

## **Opening Song:**

*Sanctuary - #722, Glory to God Hymnal*

Sing through the song 3xs so that everyone has time to become familiar with the lyrics. If possible, have the song leader lead the song through once and then invite the community to join.

## **Silence**

Allow at least 1 minute of silence before the next portion of worship.

## **Opening Psalm: Psalm 8**

### **Silence:**

Allow for at least 1 minute of silence before the next portion of worship.

## **Prayer**

**(You may use this one as written or adapt it for use with your youth):**

*God of all creation, we praise you for the beauty that surrounds us. You made us in your image to reflect your love, in our care for your creation. We reaffirm our calling to be your stewards of the earth, whose bounty provides us life.*

*We thank you for your creation, this wonderful handiwork of yours, which You entrusted to our care. As the Psalmist said: "O Lord, our Lord, how*

*majestic is Your name in all the earth!” Forgive us for the ways we fall short in caring for the gifts of your creation, for our waste and our misuse of precious resources. Help us by the power of your redeeming grace to care for the gifts of creation as you care for them, loving and gracious God.*

*And now, O God, hear us as we offer up these prayers from our hearts, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts... \_\_\_\_\_.*

*In Christ’s holy name. Amen.*

## **Song**

Play the song *God of Wonders*, by Chris Tomlin. A YouTube link of the song can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2scxkUPICk4>

## **Silence**

Allow for at least one minute of silence after the song.

If desired, sing another short song that the group is familiar with before the blessing.

## **Blessing**

As you go in quiet to prepare to rest, hear these words of blessing:

*May the LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26, NRSV)*

# **Day 3: Living Our Faith: Caring for The Gift of Our Neighbors**

## **Morning Devotion**

This can be done during breakfast, by having the youth turn to those sitting near them at breakfast to respond to these questions.

**Read:** 1 Peter 4:10 (NRSV)

After you have read the scripture, point out that in this context, the author is not talking about a material gift, but rather a skill, talent or contribution that each person makes to community life. A gift may be ‘encouragement,’ ‘kindness,’ ‘friendship,’ or a particular skill you have that helps the community during our service work.

**Ask:** What gift do you have to share? How will you be a good steward of this gift today as you serve?

**Observation for the day:** Notice the gifts that others bring to our community, both those of our own group as well as the gifts of those with whom we serve today.

## **Sharing and Sandwiches: Lunchtime Conversation**

Leader may suggest particular groupings or allow youth to choose their own groupings of 3-4 for these conversations.

Include questions such as:

- What gifts have you seen at work in yourself today?
- What gifts have you seen at work in others today?
- How have you experienced God's love today?
- What have you learned that you want to share with our congregation when we return home?

## **Evening Reflections and Team-Building**

### **Back-to-Back Art**

*Supplies: paper and pens, a few simple drawings (such as a lamp, a house, a flower, a smiley face, a sun)*

1. Break the group into two parallel lines (minimum of 4 people in a line).
2. Players face forward. Give a sheet of paper and pen to the person at the head of the line. Explain that this game is an artistic version of "telephone."
3. Show the last person in each line the same simple drawing (don't let others see it!) and ask them to silently trace the picture with their fingers on the back of the person in front of them. Each person in turn traces the same picture on the back of the next person in line. The person at the front of the line draws the design on the paper provided that they felt drawn on their back.
4. Compare the drawings to the original to see which team best communicated the original design.
5. After the first round, if time, allow new people to move to the front and back of each line and play again. Continue as time allows.
6. Questions for after the game:
  - How well do you feel like you communicated with the next person in line?
  - What are the strengths and weaknesses of non-verbal communication?
  - What are the strengths and weaknesses of verbal communication?

- How can you make sure you communicate well with others?
- Why is effective communication so important in a community like this one?

## **Reflections on the Trip**

*Optional Supplies: Pens and postcards (to send to your congregation)*

Provide some space for the youth to think about what they have experienced on this trip. It is recommended that you start with some individual time, followed by some small group sharing. You can use a few of these questions or your own.

1. What have you learned during our time of service?
2. Where/how have you seen God at work? In yourself? In others?
3. How has this trip been a partnership between our group and the groups we served? In what ways did the communities we were serving serve US?
4. How can you be a part of making systemic change related to the service we did this week?
5. What would you like our congregation to do differently because of what you've learned and experienced this week?
6. What would you like to do differently because of what you've learned and experienced this week?
7. What did you learn today about caring for the gifts of your neighbors?
8. How did you see the people with whom we worked today caring for their neighbors?
9. What will you do when you return home to care for your neighbors?
10. How do you think the life of the people you have met will be different because of this experience?

If possible, find a short video that relates to the work being done by that particular agency and discuss it as a group.

Postcards (optional): After the conversation, and if desired, have youth write a postcard or notecard to your church's session with something they have learned together during their time on the mission trip.

## **Prayer Post-Its**

Continue this activity as described on page 17.

## **Tablecloth (15 minutes)**

If you have not completed the tablecloth yet, spend some time completing it ensuring that each person in the group has an opportunity to add a symbol or



words describing their experiences on the trip. When the tablecloth is complete, let the group know that it will be a part of worship this evening as well.

## **Affirmation Web**

*Supplies: ball of yarn*

Gather youth in a circle. You will toss the yarn to someone in the circle and share an affirmation (a way that you have seen God at work in that person, a way that they have contributed positively to the group's work and life together). Then, someone else will toss the yarn to someone else, etc. Make sure everyone has had a chance to contribute before the yarn runs out. At the end, notice how interconnected we are and how each of us needs the gifts of the others in this group to serve as the body of Christ.

## **Closing Worship**

Note: You may choose to have your youth prepare the elements of worship for this closing service. There are written prayers that you may use, or you could have a time earlier in the week where the youth prepare in groups the different elements of worship and lead them together.

## **Call to Worship**

*This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!*  
(Psalm 118:24, NRSV)

## **Opening Prayer**

From *The Book of Common Worship* (You may use this prayer as written, or adapt it for use with your youth)

*Mighty and merciful God, lover of justice and equity,  
You call us to support the weak, to help those who suffer,  
And to honor all people. By the power of your Holy Spirit,  
Make us advocates for your justice and instruments of your peace,  
So that all may be reconciled in your beloved community through Jesus  
Christ our Savior. Amen.*

## **Hymn**

*Send Me, Jesus - #746 Glory to God Hymnal*

## **Call to Confession**

*The proof of God's amazing love is this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Because we have faith in Christ, we dare to approach God with confidence. Let us confess our sins before God and one another.*

## **Prayer of Confession**

*Creative and loving God, you have searched us out and known us, all that we are is open to you. We confess that we have sinned; we have put up walls between ourselves and you, closing our hearts to your many gifts. We have failed to respect the gifts you have given us in creation, earth and all living things. We have sinned against each other. We have put up walls between ourselves and our neighbors, giving into fear, ignorance and arrogance. Forgive us for what we've done to hurt others and the ways we have hurt your earth. Give us your blessing and help. Let us walk in your great love, through the peacemaker, your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **Assurance of God's Forgiveness**

*The mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace.*

## **Scripture Reading**

Matthew 25:31-46 and/or Micah 6:6-8

## **Sharing Testimonies (optional)**

Choose a leader or one of the older youth share a brief reflection on how they have experienced the love and mercy of God this week during the mission camp.

This could also be structured as a group reflection time, offering people the opportunity to respond briefly (1-2 sentences) to one of these guiding questions.

- How have you felt God's faithful love this week?
- What will you bring home with you from this experience?
- How has God opened your heart this week?

## **Prayers of the People: Prayer Stations**

During prayer station time, it is helpful to have instrumental music playing as people pray and move about the worship space. Remind the community to keep

their voices low or silent during this prayer time so that all may listen to and speak with God in prayer.

### **Scrabble prayer station from Day 1 Worship (p. 14)**

### **World Map prayer station from Day 1 Worship (p. 15)**

#### **Prayer Beads**

This project was first created by Rev. Dr. Krystal Leedy for use at Mo Ranch's Youth Celebration.

*Supplies: colored glass beads or colored pony beads in corresponding colors to the groups represented on your list, jewelry string or lanyard small enough to fit through the beads chosen, scissors, a copy of the prayer cards (appendices page 34-35)*

#### **Instructions:**

People may choose a bead to add to their prayer beads representing the different communities/issues listed here. You may choose to create additional issues/communities as well based upon your service work during the week.

People select the prayer beads and then spend time in prayer for the different communities/issues they represent. You may make your beads into a bracelet or a keychain as a tangible symbol of your prayers.

There are prayer cards for each of the communities and issues to print out or you can create your own. You will want to write down or name aloud which color represents which community or issue.

Note: People may choose to use some or all of these beads.

#### **Topics and Colors for Prayer Beads:**

- Those affected by gun violence (orange)
- LGBTQIA + persons (rainbow)
- Skin color discrimination (multi-colored brown bead)
- Hunger in our nation and world (dark green)
- Families struggling with divorce and parental separation (blue)
- People with chronic illness (red)
- Ourselves (clear)

This time of prayer can be a 'heavy' time for youth, so adult leaders will want to be pastorally attentive to the needs of their group.

## **Book Station**

*Supplies: children's picture books for people to read as prayers*

Suggested titles include:

- *The Runaway Bunny*, Margaret Wise Brown
- *Old Turtle*, Douglas Wood
- *Maybe God is Like that Too*, Jennifer Grant
- *Mama, Do You Love Me?*, Barbara M. Joosse
- *Can You Say Peace?*, Karen Katz
- *Who is My Neighbor?*, Amy Jill-Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
- *God's Big Plan*, Elizabeth Caldwell
- *The Peace Book*, Todd Parr
- *Refuge*, Ann Booth
- *What is God Like?*, Matthew Paul Turner and Rachel Held Evans
- *Where are You From?*, Yamile Saied Mendez

After prayer stations have concluded, have the group return to the worship space and close that time with group prayer.

## **Prayer**

*Loving God, hear the prayers that we've lifted for your world. Help us to see the world and each other with eyes of faith and give us courage and strength to respond to the needs around us. In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen.*

## **Hymn**

- Suggestions from the *Glory to God Hymnal*
- *For Everyone Born* - 769
- *Amazing Grace* - 649
- *Live into Hope* - 772

## **Blessing of the Communion Cloth**

As time of offering, present the tablecloth and share a blessing for its use as a communion tablecloth in worship when the group returns.

Say:

*May the table this cloth clothes be a table that leads us to feed the hungry and to quench the thirst of our neighbors. May this tablecloth remind us of Christ's call to care for the gifts of creation, the gifts of our neighbors, and the gifts of the community gathered in his name.*

## **Charge: From Romans 12:9-18 (NRSV)**

*Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers.*

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

## **Benediction: A Franciscan Blessing, author unknown**

MAY GOD BLESS YOU with discomfort,

at easy answers, half-truths,  
and superficial relationships  
so that you may live  
deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger  
at injustice, oppression,  
and exploitation of people,  
so that you may work for  
justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears,  
to shed for those who suffer pain,  
rejection, hunger, and war,  
so that you may reach out your hand  
to comfort them and  
to turn their pain to joy.

And may God bless you  
with enough foolishness  
to believe that you can  
make a difference in the world,  
so that you can do  
what others claim cannot be done,  
to bring justice and kindness  
to all our children and the poor.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Additional Service Project Ideas**

If your group has a longer time together than 3 days, these activities may be added to extend your mission experience. You may also choose to do these activities if you don't have a work site to travel to while you are on your mission trip. There are multiple options provided; you may choose to do one or two of these projects as a large group, or make these options like 'service project stations' and have several of them set up at a time for small groups to participate in. A group may also choose to use some of these projects upon their return from the mission trip in order to extend their experience and learning.

#### ***"I was hungry and you gave me food"/ Making Survival Biscuits***

*Supplies: oven, 9x12 cookie sheet, mixing bowl, mixing spoon, measuring cups*

##### **Survival Biscuit Recipe (from Church World Service)**

Ingredients:

1/2 cup sweetened condensed milk (can substitute 1/3 cup of brown sugar and 1/2 cup of milk)

1 cup wheat flour or soy flour

1/4 cup margarine or shortening

1/4 cup water

1 tablespoon of cornmeal

Scatter a small amount of cornmeal on a 9 inch x 12 inch cookie sheet. Mix all the ingredients together in a mixing bowl, and pat it out onto your prepared cookie sheet. Bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes. After they have cooled, cut them into wafers, about 2 inches x 2.5 inches.

After you've tried the biscuits, ask:

- What would it be like to only have these biscuits to eat for several days?
- How do you think your body would feel?

#### ***"I was sick and you took care of me" /Writing Notes to the Homebound and Ill in our Congregation***

*Supplies: list of homebound or ill members, notecards or construction paper, markers or pens, stamps (optional)*

Get a list from your congregation of home-bound or ill members. Have the group create pictures and write notes to them, sending them as written prayers. The group can either send these from trip's location or the leader may take them and give them/send them upon returning home.

### ***Writing Notes for People in the Hospital***

*Supplies: notecards or construction paper, markers or pens, stickers*

Write notes and/or draw pictures for a chaplain or social worker to give to people who are experiencing illness and in the hospital.

These notes are intended as 'thinking of you', 'praying for you' cards. Chaplains and social workers can then bring these to patients in the hospital as they make their rounds.

Be attentive to the need for inclusive language as well as the need to avoid phrases such as 'feel better soon' as some in the hospital may not feel better but will feel a sense of community in a card that says people are thinking of them and wishing them well.

### ***Build a "Gifts from the Heart Kit"***

Using the supplies on the PC(USA) website linked below, create a "Gifts from the Heart Kit" to welcome refugees and asylum-seekers or to care for those experiencing homelessness. Directions and supplies needed for building Welcome Backpacks and Hygiene Kits from PC(USA)'s Presbyterian Disaster Assistance may be found here: <https://pda.pcusa.org/page/kits/>

Note: Some of the choices below require access to the Internet. When that's the case, there is also an alternative activity. If a group will be on the trip longer than 3 days, these choices could be broken down into several days, doing one theme each day.

### ***Water Scarcity: Calculate your Water Footprint***

Calculate your water footprint. Water scarcity is a global problem. People around the world do not have access to the water they need to drink, cook, nurture their animals, and clean. You probably have no idea how many gallons of water a day you use to take a shower, brush your teeth, wash your clothes, or water your plants. Some of us don't—but it is likely that we are using more than we need. Using a water calculator determine how much water is used daily and discuss the questions that follow. You can use the calculator found here: [watercalculator.org/](http://watercalculator.org/)

**Debriefing questions:**

- Why might our community need to practice water conservation?
- How is conserving water a way of loving our neighbors?
- How can we rethink our water consumption habits to create a more sustainable future?
- How can we inspire members of our faith community to adopt more sustainable water consumption habits?

***Water Scarcity Visualization Activity***

From *World Thinking Day Activities* by the Girl Scouts. This activity is particularly good for younger youth.

*Supplies: world map, empty one-liter bottle, measuring cup, teaspoon, tablespoon, 3 smaller cups,*

The activity will show how water is a very limited resource and youth can visualize how little water is usable for human consumption/use even with so much water on our planet.

1. Fill an empty one-liter bottle with four cups of water. This bottle represents all the water on Earth.
2. Remove two tablespoons of water from the bottle and place it in a cup. This cup represents all the freshwater on Earth. What's left in the bottle is saltwater, which people can't drink.
3. Take two teaspoons of water from the cup and put it into a second cup. This is freshwater on Earth that isn't frozen.
4. Take one teaspoon from the second cup and put it into a third cup. The second cup is all the clean freshwater on Earth that is directly available for our use. The third cup is freshwater trapped underground and water that is frozen or polluted.

**De-briefing conversation:**

- Are you surprised by how little water is available for human use?
- What does our faith teach us about conserving water?
- What can we teach our congregations related to conserving water and working towards access to clean water for our neighbors?



## Additional Worship Resources

### ***The Book of Common Worship of the PC(USA)***

This has a wonderful collection of hymns/songs from the *Glory to God Hymnal* that relate to the themes of Justice and Reconciliation. These can be found on pages 602-604 in the most recent edition. While this resource is not available for free in its entirety, some hymns that relate to Justice and Reconciliation can be found online here: <https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/item/41776/>

There is a searchable hymnal online at [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org). It includes many hymnals, including *Glory to God*, and is searchable by hymn title or theme.

## Prayer Cards for Prayer Beads Activity

Print the prayers on the following pages and cut them out along the dotted line, making several copies of each one so that youth may pick up one of the prayers to read and take with them.

### ***Debriefing Questions for Prayer Bead Activity***

- What did you learn through your prayer time today?
- What issue/group/prayer bead felt most meaningful to you during prayer time today? Why do you think that is?
- How do you sense God at work in the issues and with the people we prayed for this morning?
- How will you continue to be prayerfully present with these issues/people in the coming days? As you return home?
- What else do you want to note about this experience?

***A Prayer for Those Affected by Gun Violence (Orange Bead)***

Gracious and Holy God, the news of gun violence continues to rip our hearts and tear our souls. In the depths of pain and anger, we gather before you. Hear our cries of despair, heed our calls for justice and do not let us lose hope. Let us lay down our weapons and instead pick up paintbrushes and gardening tools; tools that bring forth creativity and joy into your world. Transform our hearts and our lives that we may follow your son who is the great Peacemaker. Amen.

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***A Prayer for LGBTQIA + persons (Rainbow Bead)***

Triune God, you exist beyond categorization and beyond the limits of our understanding. Your redemptive love is for all of your people. End all oppression and indignities that your LGBTQIA+ children endure daily because of fear and ignorance. May we live out the greatest commandment, to love you with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Let us affirm the God-given gifts present in every one of your beloved children of all genders and sexual orientations. In Christ who breaks down every barrier. Amen.

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***A Prayer about Skin Color Discrimination,  
adapted from a prayer written by Rev. Dr. Krystal Leedy  
(Shades of Brown bead)***

Great God over us all, destroy prejudice that turns us against one another. Teach us that we are all children of your love, whether we are red, brown, yellow, black, or white. Encourage us to live together, loving one another in peace, so that someday all races of people may have an equal share in the world, giving praise to Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

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***A Prayer For Families Facing Divorce or Separation (Blue bead)***

Holy God, Giver of all life, we give you thanks that even when we cannot keep covenant with each other, you are always faithful to your covenant with us. Where hearts are broken, grant your healing. Where trust is eroded, restore good faith. Uphold families in a time of divorce or separation with your grace and strengthen them by your loving spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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***A Prayer for Those with Chronic Illness,  
from the Book of Common Worship (Red bead)***

O God, your compassion is unbounded, and your mercy is endless. You understand our anxieties and fears. Reassure those experiencing chronic illness of your love that never ends. When they are troubled, calm their minds and renew their hope. Help them to rely upon your strength. Grant wisdom and compassion to doctors and nurses that attend to their needs. Give their family and friends assurance of your abiding presence and power. Amen.

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***A Prayer for Those Experiencing Hunger in our Communities  
and World (Dark Green bead)***

God of all good gifts, we thank you for making room for all of us at your table of welcome. We pray that all who are hungry will find enough to eat and clean water to drink as we share and live more responsibly. Make us true servants of yours for the sake of the world. Teach us to love as you love for the sake of the world. Transform our habits of consumption so that everyone may enjoy the fruits of your creation. In Christ's holy name we pray. Amen.

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***A Prayer for Ourselves, by Howard Thurman (Clear bead)***

Open unto me- light for my darkness.  
Open unto me- courage for my fear.  
Open unto me- hope for my despair.  
Open unto me- peace for my turmoil.  
Open unto me- joy for my sorrow.  
Open unto me- strength for my weakness.  
Open unto me- wisdom for my confusion.  
Open unto me- forgiveness for my sins.  
Open unto me- love for my hates.  
Open unto me- yourself for myself.  
Lord, Lord, Open unto me.

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## Games Library

### **Name Games**

#### **Alphabet Order**

Have participants line up by the first letter of their last names in alphabetical order. Pair up with the next person in line. If the group is large (16+), then divide into three groups (A–G, H–M, N–Z). Have each group or pair learn names by sharing the pros and cons of being at the front, middle, or end of the alphabet. You can also change this up by asking the group to get in order alphabetically by first name without talking out loud. They will find new and creative ways to communicate!

#### **Call by Name**

This can be done as a nametag activity and/or as an activity to decorate cabins or specific gathering spaces. Have each participant write her or his name on either a nametag or piece of paper. Have them decorate the letters of their name and write descriptive words that tell something about them for each letter in their name. Then post them around the space to decorate it.

#### **Awful Animal**

This is a variation of the name game, in which, going around a circle, each person introduces him or herself, and then says the names of the others who have been introduced. Don't penalize people who miss a name. Instead, have the group help each person get through the list. This sets a cooperative, noncompetitive tone for later in the week.

Ask each player to think of an animal that begins with the first letter of his or her last name. Then ask for an adjective (descriptive word) for the animal (or the person) that begins with the first letter of their first name. For younger children, you may want some suggestions available if they can't think of an appropriate animal. Have your own "awful animal" name chosen in advance to use as an example.

"Hi. I'm Laura, the lovely aardvark."

"I'm Bob, the bouncy tiger and this is Laura, the lovely aardvark."

"I'm Cal, the cool jaguar, and this is Bob, the bouncy tiger, and Laura, the lovely aardvark."

#### **Sheet Drop**

*Materials: sheet or blanket*

Divide group into 2 groups. Have 2 volunteers hold the top corners of the sheet to create a "wall" between the two groups. Each group should sit behind their side of the sheet and pick one person to scoot up to the sheet. On the count of 3, the

sheet is dropped, and the 2 different team players try to say the other person's name first. Whoever loses goes to the winner's side until one side acquires all the players.

### **Connect a Name**

*Supplies: One large piece of paper, markers*

As a group, try to connect everyone's first name in one crossword puzzle. Make sure that some letter of each name is connected to some letter of another name. This can be posted in the group space to remind the group that even though we are individuals, we are one.

### **Name in Rhythm and Rhyme**

Have players sit in a circle and face the center. Start a slow beat by tapping hands on thighs two times, clapping hands two times, and snapping one time with the right hand and one time with the left hand. Repeat until everyone in the circle has the motions and beat going. Divide your name in syllables (i.e., Ro-bert, Pa-tri-cia, Ma-ry, Bill), and begin by saying a syllable for each snap. Snap for each syllable, so there may be more than two snaps. Go around the circle, keep the beat going, and have everyone say his or her first name in rhythm as they snap. Repeat until everyone gets it.

Start again and this time say your name on the claps and the name of the person next to you on the snaps. Continue around the circle in this way. Next, start with your name on the claps, and then say any other name on the snaps. Continue "tossing" names back and forth in the circle until everyone's name has been spoken several times.

Another option: Come up with a word or phrase that rhymes with your name, such as: "Abraham-Hologram" Remind them that these are not to be insulting or inappropriate. Go around the circle until everyone has shared their names with a rhyme. Encourage them to help anyone who gets stuck.

### **Alter Ego**

Ask each person to introduce themselves and tell the group who they would most like to be other than themselves. They may name fictional characters or actual people, either living or dead.

Alternative: You may choose a theme for these identities such as: Cartoon characters, biblical characters, etc. Be mindful of inclusivity in race and gender when choosing your themes.

Players should not explain their choices. Allow them to enjoy the mystery of the “why” behind each other’s choices. You might want to also try to have the group introduce themselves as the characters or persons they’d like to be and tell their names later in the meeting or event.

### **Identity**

*Supplies: Stick-on name tags, markers, basket*

Have each person fill out a name tag and drop it into a basket. After everyone has arrived, have them stand in a circle. Pass the basket around and have each person take a name tag (not their own) without letting everyone else see the name.

Then have everyone turn to the left and place the name tag they are holding on the back or the forehead of the person standing in front of them. The object of the game is to discover the name printed on the name tag stuck to you. Identify the name by asking questions that can be answered “yes” or “no” – questions such as, “Do I have red hair?” or “Am I wearing jeans?” Each participant can ask only two questions to each person they meet, before they must move to another.

When a person discovers whose name he has, he goes to that person, places his hands on that person’s shoulders, and proceeds to follow him around the room. As more people discover their identity, the lines of people with hands on shoulders will lengthen until the last person finds his identity.

### **Zip Zap Zoom**

Have group members sit in a circle with one person standing in the middle. Players must first learn the positions of the persons sitting on their left and right and the person in the middle. To everyone’s left is “Zip,” to everyone’s right is “Zap,” and the person in the middle is “Zoom.” The person in the middle points to someone seated in the circle and says “Zip” (or “Zap” or “Zoom”) and then counts aloud to five quickly. The person pointed to must shout the name of the person to his or her left (right or in the middle) before the center person counts to five – otherwise the center person takes the player’s seat, and the player goes to the center.

Addition: At any time, the player in the center can shout, “Zip, Zap, Zoom” and all members must change seats. The person left without a seat becomes the new center person.

### **Name Quilt**

Provide each person with a piece of construction paper, markers, and crayons of a variety of colors. Have them write or draw their name on the papers so that it

takes up almost the entire piece of paper. Once they have finished their name, give them about ten minutes to decorate their name by including pictures or words that describe themselves. Once they have completed their name squares collect them so that you can assemble the name quilt. Explain to everyone that the “squares” of this quilt fit together to represent the entire group. Punch two to three holes along each side of the name squares and attach the pieces of construction paper using the yarn. If a hole punch and yarn are not available, a stapler or tape will work. Attach the pieces of paper to each other so that they form a square or rectangular quilt. Be sure to include a name square for each leader as well. Once the quilt is finished, hang it on a wall or door where the group meets. If you need an extra square or two, in order to make the quilt sides even, add ones with the group’s name, their hometown, or theme of the trip.

### **Circle Introductions**

Stand in a circle. The first person starts by turning to the person on his/her right and says, “Hi, my name is Jessie. What is your name?” The person on the right says, “Hi, Jessie. My name is John.” John turns to the person on his right and says, “Hi, my name is John. What is your name?” That person says, “Hi, John. My name is Tom.” Tom turns to the person on his right and says, “My name is Tom. What is your name?” Continue on around the circle. It is easy to get tongue-tied and mixed up with the introductions, but laughter will help the group bond.

### **Ball Toss Name Game**

Everyone (except you) sits or stands in a circle to learn each other’s names. Begin by tossing a ball to the person who is to start. Have everyone raise their hand. When the ball is tossed to them, they put their hand down. Tell them to remember who tosses to the ball to whom as they establish a pattern. The first person tosses the ball to someone else in the group, calling out that person’s name (ex: Jane). Jane then tosses the ball across the circle to George. George tosses it across to John, etc. until every person’s hand is down, they received the ball, and had their name called out. The last person tosses it back to the one who began the pattern. Have them repeat the pattern, paying attention to the names. At some point, add another ball to the tossing so that two balls are in the rotation. Then add a third and then a fourth ball.

### **Handshake Pass**

This is similar to “Ball Toss,” but with more movement. Have the group stand in a circle. Instead of tossing a ball to someone in the circle and saying their name, a designated person is to walk across the circle and greet the person with, “Hi, Beth. My name is Sam” while shaking that person’s hand. Sam takes Beth’s place in the circle and Beth continues to establish the pattern by crossing the circle to

greet someone new. Continue like this until all members of the circle are now part of the pattern. Play the game several times through until the groups know their established pattern.

Once the pattern is established, you can shorten the game by just saying “Beth” and the partner replies “Sam” and keep going. Add to the challenge by calling out “Reverse” and see if they can change the direction of the pattern by going backwards.

## **GET-ACQUAINTED ACTIVITIES**

### **What’s Your Favorite?**

Ask everyone to pick their favorite of the choices given and go to stand in the corner of the room that you designate for that choice. After the choices are made, ask them to find a partner and tell why they made the choice they did. Allow about 2-3 minutes for the visiting. If only one person goes to a corner, you visit with them or send them to another group to visit.

Example: Is your favorite vacation to go to the mountains (one corner), the beach (a 2nd corner), tour a large city (3rd corner), or take a cruise (4th corner)?

- Favorite room in your house: family room, kitchen, bathroom, bedroom
- Favorite sport to play or watch: football, basketball, baseball, soccer
- Favorite type of movie: spy/mystery, drama, comedy, action
- Favorite free time activity: online surfing, reading, crafting, electronic gaming

### **Speed Relating**

Get into two concentric circles with the same number of people. Have the inside circle of people turn to face the outside circle. Each person will introduce themselves to the person they are facing and answer a question. Then they will move one person to the right and answer another question. Conclude after one rotation of speaking to everyone opposite them.

Each time you move share your name and the answer to the question presented.

Questions to ask in the first session (use about 12):

1. Where are you from and how long did it take to get here?
2. What grade are you entering?
3. How many siblings do you have?
4. What is the most recent movie you have seen?
5. Do you have any pets and what are their names?
6. What would you be doing if you were home right now?
7. What did you eat for lunch?



8. What is your favorite time of day and why?
9. Name a place you would like to go to with friends?
10. What chore at home is your least favorite?
11. Do you play any instrument or sing?
12. Rank your week from 1-10, 10 being the best, and say why you chose that number.
13. Do you play a sport? If so, which?
14. What would your dream car be?
15. What is your favorite snack?
16. What is something that really frustrates you?
17. What is one thing that makes you happy?
18. What is your favorite holiday and why?
19. What is one thing you are thankful for?

Questions for later in the week if you play this again:

1. If you could visit any place in the world on vacation, where would you go and why?
2. What do you like about school? Not like about school?
3. What is your favorite thing to do with your friends?
4. If you could have dinner with two famous people, who would they be?
5. Where would you like to live, other than your present hometown?
6. What is a quality that you greatly admire in your mom or dad?
7. What is your favorite TV show?
8. What do you usually eat for breakfast?
9. What is your most prized possession?

### **Two Truths and a Lie**

Have the participants think of three statements to make about themselves that no one in the circle will know. Two statements must be true and one statement must be false. Each person will tell their three statements to the group. After one person shares all three statements, the rest of the group must guess which one is the lie.

### **Whose secret is it?**

Give each group member a 3x5 card and pen to write one thing about themselves that is different or odd that no one would know. For example: I won a perfect attendance certificate in second grade or my favorite sandwich is bananas and pickles. Pass the cards to the group leader who will mix them up. Use a scribe to write the items on newsprint. Go down the list, letting the group have 3 guesses as to who it is. If time, go back through the list and keep guessing. If there is not much time left, go back down the list and let people identify their own if it was not guessed.

## **Grab Bag Insights**

*Supplies: Fill a bag/sack with a variety of items (such as: an orange, small bottle of water, old magazine, candy, gum, an old shoe, two pennies in a ziplock bag, a note saying "I love you," a Christmas card, a rubber band, an eraser, a staple remover, etc.). There needs to be at least one item for each group member; music*

Start playing background music. Pass the bag around while the music plays. When the music stops, whoever has the bag must pull an item out of the bag and show it to the group. That person then must complete the sentence: "This item is like or unlike me because...." Let the group members hang onto the items until the game is over. Continue until each member has had a chance to choose from the bag.

The items could be used to pursue a more faith-oriented response with older youth: "This item is like or unlike my faith journey because...."

## **TEAM BUILDING GAMES**

### **Ways to Divide the Youth into Smaller Groups/Teams**

#### **Candy Color**

*Supplies: assorted hard candy, you need one color per team*

Select four colors (or one color per team that you need) of hard candy. Pass them out, giving each person one piece, making sure to distribute equal numbers of each color. Each color will designate a team.

#### **Line Them Up**

After lining up by a category below, choose the first 3, 4, or 5 (depending on your group size) to be team one. Ways to line up, by:

- Birth month (beginning with January)
- Initial of first name (alphabetically)
- Number of buttons on clothing (fewest to most)
- Initial of last name (alphabetically)
- Hair length (shortest to longest)
- Number of letters in first name (fewest to most)
- Telephone number (in numerical order)
- Tallest to shortest
- Number of holes in shoes (lace or buckle)

### **Get to Know You Games**

#### **Toss the Towel**

Have everyone sit in a circle. Choose a leader to stand in the middle of the circle

and hold a dishtowel. The leader tosses the towel to anyone in the group while naming a category (cars, states, people in this room, movies, books, dogs, etc.). Then the leader counts quickly to ten. The person who has caught the towel must name an item that fits the category before the leader reaches the number ten. If the person with the dishtowel fails to think of an appropriate item, he or she takes the leader's place in the center of the circle. For instance, if Susan caught the towel from Gary after he said "dogs," she would have to name a breed of dog (such as poodle, bulldog, or mutt) before Gary counted to ten or she would have to take his place.

### **Chain Race**

Form teams of 6 or fewer. Say: When I say "go," create the longest chain you can, using only items you brought with you into the room. You can use shoes, jackets, watches, anything within reason - as long as the chain can be lifted from end to end without falling apart. Ready? Go!

Give the teams about 3 minutes to complete their chains. Once you have tested the chains for sturdiness, compare their lengths, and declare the winner.

### **I've Never**

Gather in a circle of chairs. Have one less chair than the members of the group. One person stands in the middle of the circle and tells the group one thing he/she has never done. For example: "I have never ridden a horse." Or "I've never been to Canada." If a person in the circle has done the thing that the center person had not done, he or she must get up and find a different seat. People who have never done the activity remain seated. The person in the center meanwhile also tries to find a seat. (Players may not take the seat directly next to where they were last sitting.) The last person standing becomes the new center person and now tells the group what he/she has never done.

### **Drop the Keys**

*Supplies: keys*

Everybody but one person ("it") sits in a chair. The chairs are scattered all over the room. The person standing has a set of keys in his/her hand. With the other hand, he/she grabs someone's hand. That person gets up and follows the leader who weaves in and out of the chairs in the room. The one whose hand is grabbed now grabs someone else's hand who is sitting down, and so on. The line continues to weave through the chairs being led by "it" who can go under arms and between people. When "it" chooses, "it" drops the set of keys and runs to an empty chair and everyone standing runs to sit in a chair. Whoever is left standing without a chair is the new "It." That person takes the keys and starts over.

### **Tall Stories**

The leader starts a story with a sentence that ends in SUDDENLY. The next person then has to add to the story with his own sentence that ends in SUDDENLY.

Continue the story until everyone has contributed. The story becomes crazier as each young person adds their sentence.

Here is your prompt: “Yesterday I got a letter in the mail that said I had just inherited 2.5 million dollars and then SUDDENLY...”

### **Go Through Grandmother’s Trunk**

Everyone should be sitting in a circle. Someone starts by completing this sentence with an object that begins with the letter A. “My grandmother keeps \_\_\_\_\_ in her trunk.” The next person completes the sentence repeating the A word and adding a word that starts with B. This continues around the circle, each person repeating what the others said and adding another with the next letter of the alphabet.

### **Hear the Call**

*Supplies: Cloth blindfolds, sports cones, other soft/safe “obstacles”*

Have participants line up by birthdates. Then bend this line to form a circle. Participants pair up with the person next to them whose birthday is closest to theirs. Ask them to talk with each other about the best birthday they ever had and why. While they are talking with each other, randomly arrange an assortment of obstacles that are not harmful (crumpled paper, hats, paper cups, etc.) within a space in the area where you are gathered. Have one from each pair line up across the area, opposite from his or her partner, and blindfold them. The other partners who can see begin to call out directions to their partners, verbally leading them across the area scattered with obstacles. Encourage players to speak clearly and slowly. Rearrange the obstacles. Repeat the activity, switching the blindfolds to the other partners. The objective is to get the partner safely through the obstacle course and to do this just by talking. After everyone has had a turn for being blindfolded, gather everyone together and encourage them to talk about the experience.

Questions:

- What was most difficult?
- Which was more difficult, being blindfolded or giving instructions and why?
- What did you learn about listening?

## ***About the Author***

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PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CAMP  
AND CONFERENCE ASSOCIATION



**Campfire  
Collective**



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**Office of Christian  
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