

# The Abundant Life Garden Project®





Vacation Bible School

# The Abundant Life Garden Project®

offered by Episcopal Relief & Development

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

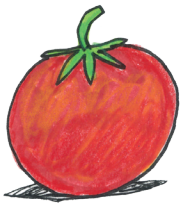
Episcopal Relief & Development would like to thank the following for their contribution to

**The Abundant Life Garden Project®**

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# HARVEST

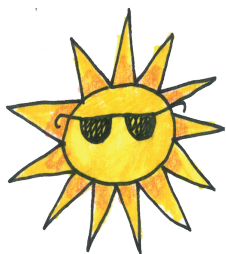
## Understanding the Lesson

### Gardening Note for Teachers

This interactive, Scripture-based module will introduce you and your class to the work of Episcopal Relief & Development in the area of Harvest.

Harvest is a time of celebration, marking the end of a growing season and a time of feasting on the fruits of our labors. As you prepare to celebrate together during Week 6, you might consider that Harvest not only celebrates food but also the cycle of life itself. Seeds fall and are buried for a time of seemingly little or no growth. Water and soil nourish and fertilize these seeds, resulting in growth mysteriously taking place unseen. Then, new growth springs forth, resulting in the plants we now feast upon. The uneaten seeds of this harvest, held back as we look toward the future, soon will be buried to start the cycle anew. Though a time of celebration, this is also when the hard work begins. Harvest is the most labor-intensive time on the farm. Produce must be picked at just the right time; crops must be stored and preserved properly and then taken to market or otherwise distributed. Many factors, particularly the weather, affect this process. In our spiritual lives, we might see harvest as the “hard work” of our own spiritual growth and maturity. We may have become new in Christ or may have grown in spirit and in our lives in Christ. But this is not just a time of kicking back and enjoying the feast. As part of our Baptismal Covenant, we are called to serve Christ in all persons and to strive for justice and peace among all people—no small tasks. Like the harvest of literal fruits and vegetables, this spiritual harvest of our own growth takes time and effort and certainly will be affected by the wind and the water of the Holy Spirit. And like the life cycle of plants, we will have cycles of sowing new seeds of growth in our lives, waiting—perhaps not so patiently—for new growth to appear, then gearing up for yet a new round of harvesting and serving others.

- Cynthia Coe & Jerusalem Jackson Greer



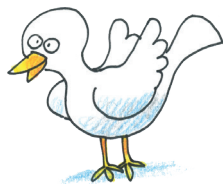
## Rhythm of Learning

The rhythm of learning for these lessons is based upon the same structure as a Eucharist service, following a simple **Gather, Listen, Do, Go** format. Two of the zones -**Gather and Do are the Large Group Zones, Listen and Do are laid out as Growing Stations** that the children will rotate through. Children are divided into Learning Pods according to whatever formula you feel is best according to the options given in the *Facilitators Guide*.



## Gather

This zone includes welcoming activities and the lessons introduction.



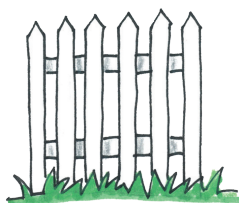
## Listen

This zone includes multiple storytelling options. Please choose one "Story from the Field" and one "Story from our Faith" to share.



## Do

This zone includes three activities to help children respond to what they have heard in the stories, and dig deeper into the lessons topic. You may want to set up each activity as a Growing Station and have children rotate through in their Learning Pods, or you may choose to do only one or two. This zone also includes an interactive Community Garden option.



## Go

This zone prepares children for taking what they have learned back into their everyday lives through prayer and a charge to action.

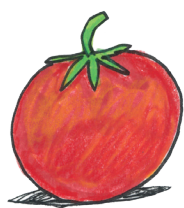


### GARDEN GOALS

Children will learn that God gives us gifts for abundant life, including the harvest of our labors. It is important that we care for and share this gift with others.

### Growing Accommodations

The theme introduction is written to include questions and answers between leaders and participants. If you are leading a large group (20 or more students) we recommend that you ask for volunteers to join you at the front to engage with you in the Q&A portion. For more group size accommodation ideas refer to the *Facilitators Guide*.



# Gather

## Large Group in Greenhouse

### Welcome Activity:

## Celebrating the Harvest!

As children come into the learning space, have volunteers assist them as they write or draw pictures of fruits and vegetables. Have them cut them out, then glue them onto the tri-fold board. Once all children have arrived and participated in this activity, begin your lesson with the opening prayer.

Place a large clear bowl, with a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables (from your garden or a local garden or farm if possible) and other locally sourced items like honey or boiled eggs, in the center of the room, or elevated to a place where everyone can see. Ask children to gather in a circle around the bowl.

**Early Finishers:** Children who finish before the others and need their attention redirected may work on the Water coloring sheet provided in the *Printables Packet*.

**Leader:** As you may have guessed, today's lesson is going to be all about the gift of the Harvest! Let's begin our lesson for asking for God's presence to be with us as we learn and explore this gift. Everyone please take one piece of the harvest in your left hand.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Garden Trifold display board or Garden Wall with the previous layers firmly attached, scissors, markers or crayons, paper, glue sticks, a large bowl, and fresh fruits and vegetables (locally sourced if possible)

## Opening Prayer:

**Leader:** The Lord be with you!

**Children and helpers:** And also with you!

**Leader:** Please repeat this prayer and these motions after me.

**May God be in my mind** (using your right hand, touch middle of forehead)

**May Jesus be in my heart** (using your right hand touch middle of chest))

**May the Holy Spirit be by my side** (using your right hand first touch the left shoulder, then the right shoulder.)

**Amen!**

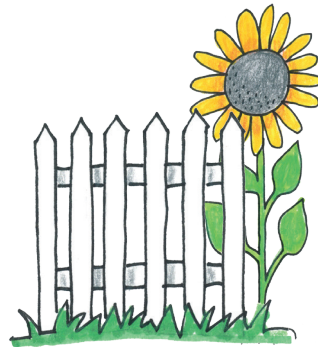


SONG(S) MAY BE SUNG HERE



# Gather

## Large Group



### Theme Introduction

## Welcome to the Abundant Life Garden Project®

**Week 5 of Vacation Bible School** offered by Episcopal Relief & Development.

Can someone remind us all what it means to have abundant life?

*Who gives us the gifts we need to live an abundant life? (God!)*

*What is one thing you remember from our lesson on Water?*

What are some examples of how water helps us and others to live abundantly?  
(Baptism, Keeps us alive, Waters crops, New life)



*What is something that you remember about how Soil helps us and others to live abundantly?*

(We can plant food in it, it helps the ecosystem and is a home to bugs and creepy crawlers, represents Growth)

*What is the spiritual soil of our lives? (Our hearts!)*

*Okay, now what do you remember about Seeds?*

(Seeds turn into plants that we can eat, seeds are also food for birds and insects)



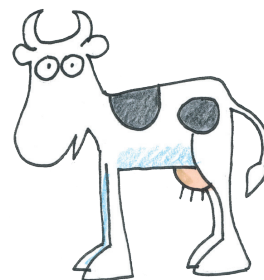
*What is something that we need to plant and tend to in our lives?*

(God's love, participating in worship, following God's instructions etc.)

Last week we talked about how Animals are also an important part of the **Abundant Life Garden Project®** offered by Episcopal Relief & Development -

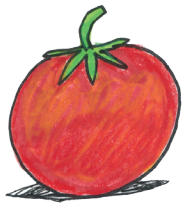
*What is something you remember from our Animal lesson?*

(Animals provide important work in the garden through things like manure for fertilizer or helping pull a plow. Episcopal Relief and Development helps provide animals and training on how to raise animals for struggling families)



Great! Well, today we are going to learn about the Harvest and it's very important role in sharing the gifts of abundant life!

**Dismiss Pods one at a time to their first Growing Station in whichever order you have decided on.**



# Listen

## Growing Zones

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

*Stories from the Field Booklet* or a way to show the digital options, pens, coloring pencils, crayons, and *Garden Journals*



### Growing Zone 1:

## Stories from the Field

As children gather in the classroom, allow them a few minutes to share their thoughts about a Harvest, share one of the Stories from the Field options, either Digital or Hard Copy.



#### Print Option:

#### ***Seeing a Way Out of Poverty***

(available in the *Stories from the Field* Booklet)  
You might have older children or youth who are good readers take turns reading the paragraphs of this brief true story.

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- ***What did Solomon's children reap in order to help their parents feed their family?***
- ***How did someone else's harvest enable Solomon's family to eat better and go to school?***
- ***How will these children be able to share their harvest in the future?***

Courtesy of Harvey Wang  
for Episcopal Relief & Development



#### Digital Story Option: ***Bishops Bike Ride***



[http://www.episcopalrelief.org/bishops\\_bike\\_ride\\_video](http://www.episcopalrelief.org/bishops_bike_ride_video)

These three videos profile a group who biked from California to New York to raise funds and awareness for Episcopal Relief & Development's *NetsforLife*® program.

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- ***Why did the group of bike riders take this long ride?***
- ***What risks were involved in this bike ride?***
- ***What did the ride cost the riders? (Think about time, energy, and planning as well as money.)***
- ***How was the ride part of their own "harvest"?***
- ***How were the bike riders supported by others?***



# Listen

## Growing Zones

### Growing Zone 2:

## Stories from our Faith

You have three options for this Station - Old Testament, New Testament, or Book of Common Prayer. You can choose to stay with one track for your entire VBS program (OT, NT, or BCP) or you can choose a different per day. If you want to expand your time you can offer more than one of these of each night.

Begin by asking children if they can think of any bible stories or words from our liturgy (you might say Worship Service) that talk about a harvest.

Possible answers: *Creation story, Parable of the Sower, Ruth and Naomi*

### Old Testament Study

#### **Gleaning the Fields** Ruth 2:1-18

Note: Ruth and Boaz became great-grandparents of King David and ancestors of Jesus!  
For younger children, a children's Bible storybook such as *The Children of God Storybook Bible* by the Rt. Rev. Desmond Tutu might be used to tell this story.)

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- *How did Boaz share his harvest?*
- *How might we share our harvest in today's world?*
- *How would a woman like Ruth be fed in today's world? Who would help her?*

### New Testament Study

#### **Feeding and Sharing** Luke 9:10-17

Ask for a volunteer to look up and read

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- *Who in our world might be in a desolate place?*
- *Why can't we feed them?*
- *How could there be enough food for everyone in our world?*
- *What gift of abundant life can you share with others?*

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

**Bible, Book of Common Prayer, Blank Paper or Garden Journals, Markers**



## Book of Common Prayer Study

### **The Great Thanksgiving**

In this lesson, help think about the sacrament of Holy Communion in our worship services and its relationship to abundant life. Hand children copies of the **Book of Common Prayer**, together look up and read the first zone of **Eucharistic Prayer A** as on page 361. Even if some of your children are not reading yet, allow them to hold a copy of BCP and ask the older kids to help them locate the correct pages.

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- *What is this part of the worship service called?*
- *What does it mean to be in "communion" with other people?*
- *Why do we celebrate the "Great Thanksgiving" in our worship services?*

Next, have children turn to page 364: Ask them to look for the words in bold print on this page.

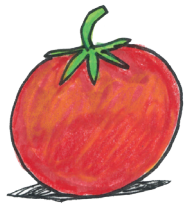
- *What is this part of the sacrament of Holy Communion called?*
- *What are we given when we go up to the altar?*
- *What do we do with what we are given?*
- *How does this help us to have abundant life?*

Finally, ask everyone to turn to page 366: Guide children reading what we are told to do as we leave the worship service (in the bottom half of this page). Consider having one or two children be the "deacon" and the rest of the class be the "people".

- *Where are we asked to go after we leave a worship service?*
- *What are we asked to do after we leave a worship service?*
- *What do we say in response?*
- *How does this help us share the gifts of abundant life?*

Have children write a poem or brief paragraph about, or draw a picture of themselves taking Communion, or of the Deacon giving the charge to the people. As you finish, remind children: These questions are not for discussion only in this lesson! Please think about them the next time you participate in a worship service!





# Do

## Growing Zones

**There are three options for Do - A learning activity, a creative activity, and a contemplation activity.** If you have time and space we suggest creating Growing Stations for all three. If not, choose two that best fit your children and volunteer capabilities. There is also a fourth option, for those who have a church or community garden.

### Learning Activity:

## Harvest Work

### Peel

Safely demonstrate the peeling, shelling, or shucking of a few of the samples you have brought. Let children work on produce that does not require a knife.

### Compare and Contrast

If you are using corn, shave the kernels off the cobs as children finish shucking. If you brought a frozen bag of corn, see how long it takes to shuck and shave enough corn in order to have the same amount. (This can be done with any fruit or vegetable that requires peeling, but corn works the best as the process is so tedious!) Have the kids discuss how it would change their afternoons and evenings if they had to help prepare dinner this way each night. What fun activities would they have to give up?

### Ponder

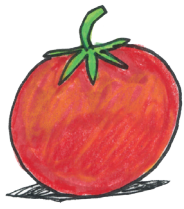
**Leader:** Did you have any idea how much effort it took to take one peice of corn (or other fruit or vegetable) from off the stalk to onto your plate? And we didn't even harvest this from the garden - that is a whole other set of steps that someone else had to do. Now, most of us have access to fruits and vegetables that have been peeled and packaged and are sold in grocery stores. And a large part of that peeling and packing was done by machines. But in many parts of the world where our Episcopal Relief and Development workers go, they don't have big grocery stores like we do. In fact, the majority of the people in the world don't even have access to refrigerators. They either grow their food themselves or they purchase it at a marketplace which is similar to our farmers market. And because they don't have refrigeration they have to eat what they purchase either right away or within a few days. This means that they have to peel, or shuck, or shell, their food, which you can tell is hard work and takes a lot of time. For a large part of the world, just getting food from the fields to ready to cook or eat, takes a lot of effort and time. Have the children wonder together how they can cultivate an attitude of gratefulness for the ease of access that they have to food. Ask for ideas about what can they do to help others access food more easily?

**Ideas:** supporting the work of Episcopal Relief and Development agricultural work, helping to harvest and prep food from a local garden that can then be donated to a Food Pantry or Soup Kitchen.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

**Fruit and Vegetables that must be peeled or shucked or snapped.**

Ideas: Corn (in the husk), Purple Hull or Black Eye Peas (in shell), Oranges, Fresh Coconut, Watermelon, Tree Nuts such as Pecans or Walnuts in the shell, Avocados. A few corresponding pre-peeled and packaged Vegetables and Fruits. (The best ones is corn or peas if you can get them.) Pairing knife. Bowls to place shelled/peeled produce in, paper bags to collect the shells, rinds and husk.)



# Do

## Growing Zones

### Creative Activity:

### Fruit and Vegetable Painting

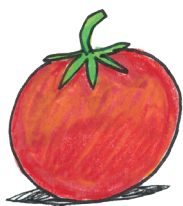
This activity will help demonstrate the uniqueness of creation. The craft, as laid out calls for each child to create their own piece of artwork, however if you are going to have a Celebration Feast and/or Eucharist, you might consider having the children stamp a prewashed cotton dropcloth (easily found in the painting zone of most hardware stores) that you can use as a tablecloth or frontal for your celebration.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

- **Fruits and vegetables of different shapes and textures, all cut\* in half.** Ideas include: Lemons, Apples, Potatoes, Onions, Green Peppers, Carrots and Cucumbers. A note about cutting: Think about the shape you want to stamp - some will work better if cut in half vertically, and some will stamp better if they are cut horizontally. Also, the stems on apples and peppers make wonderful handles. Advanced Method - You can cut out shapes, such as squares, hearts, letters, and stars, into the center of potatoes.
- **Craft paint**
- **Disposable or plastic plates for painting palettes**
- **Paint brushes**
- **Large sheets of construction or heavy duty paper or cotton painting dropcloth (make sure to pre-wash it)**
- **Painting smocks (if needed)**
- **Cups of water**

### Directions:

1. Distribute one piece of art paper, one plate, one paint brush, and one cup of water to each child
2. Have children pick a few pieces of the pre-cut produce "stamps"
3. Help children squirt about 2 tsp of paint onto their plate "palette."
4. Demonstrate how to either gently press their produce into the paint, or how to "paint" the flat surface of their stamp using their paint brush.
5. Once their stamp is coated with paint, demonstrate how to gently, yet firmly, press the stamp onto their paper.
6. Notice the different shapes and patterns the different pieces of produce leave on the paper.
7. As the children continue painting and creating, wonder aloud about how people - just like the produce - are all different. Engage the children in a discussion while they work, about how just like different types of fruits and vegetables need different things in order to thrive and grow (some need a lot of sun, some need a lot of water while others don't need much at all, some need cool temperatures, some need sandy soil, and some need a lot of pruning). Help them make the connection between this idea and how different people need different things in order to experience abundant life (some people need to spend a lot of one-on-one time with people they love, some people need to find meaningful work fighting injustices, some people need time and space to create art, some people need to get their hands dirty and work in the dirt). Ask them to share how they experience abundant life? How do they feel God's love and how do they best like to share God's love with others? To help get them started, share your answers to this question.
8. Make sure that each child writes their name on their paper. If you are having a Celebration Feast and/or Eucharist, save the artwork to display at that gathering.



# Do

## Growing Zones

### Contemplative Activity:

### Meditation



Begin by asking the children to sit “criss-cross applesauce” or to lie flat on their backs, next, ask them to take three deep breaths and then, if they comfortable, to rest their hands on their stomachs and to close their eyes. The leader should close their eyes and take deep breaths, in order to model silent meditation for the children.

Next, ask them to listen closely with their imaginations as you read: *Listen to the words of Jesus.*

### Listen to the Words of Jesus:

***Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison, and you visited me.”***

Matthew 25:34-36

After a moment for children to reflect on the parable just read, ask the following questions.

*When were we ourselves hungry and someone fed us?*

*When did someone give us clothing, welcome us or visit us?*

*When can we give these gifts to others?*

**Repeat the first two steps.** Have the children assume their meditation position, and ask them to listen once again to the passage of scripture. After a minute or more, the leader might ask children to share any thoughts they have. Some of these thoughts will be quite profound. Others might be silly. Some children might not want to share their thoughts at all. All these reactions are perfectly okay, and children should not be forced or pushed to say anything.

Finish this time by having asking the children to open their hands, palms facing up, and to repeat this prayer after you:

*May I know the love of Jesus in my heart.*

*May I plant the love of Jesus in the world.*

*May I grow the love of Jesus in my home.*

*Amen.*

**For tips and information** on the importance of silent time with God and how to lead children in meditation, please see **Abundant Life Garden Project® Facilitators Guide** as offered by Episcopal Relief & Development.

# Local Garden Activity

If you have a local garden in your church or neighborhood, here are three interactive and intergenerational activity options:



## 1

Work with your garden coordinator to help harvest produce, eggs, or honey from your local garden. Have your garden coordinator talk about what happens to this harvest - does it go to a co-op, a restaurant, a food pantry, soup kitchen, or farmer's market? What needs to be done in order for the food to be ready to sell/giveaway? Have children write or sketch the items they gathered in their Garden Journals.

**As you wrap up your time, ask the children these question:**

Is there a way that you can help share the gift of food with others? (donate to a food pantry, host a lemonade stand to raise funds for a food pantry, volunteer in a soup kitchen) How can we help each other make these ideas happen?

## 2

If you have older children (fourth grade and up) consider making a short video commercial about your local garden or what they have learned during the **Abundant Life Garden Project®**. Have the kids write, produce, and film the commercial (using a mobile phone would be fine.) Make sure to send your film to [churchengagement@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:churchengagement@episcopalrelief.org) so that we can share about it on our blog!

**Intergenerational Connection** - Invite tech-minded members, teens, and college students to join in this project. Help make the connection for your kids that all gifts come from and can be used to the glory of God!

## 3

Host a Garden-to-Table taste comparison (if your garden isn't producing a harvest yet, consider sourcing other locally grown items.) Cut up similar items from the grocery store. Have children compare and contrast the flavors, textures, and appearance of the two groups of food. Have them write their findings in their Garden Journals.

**As you wrap up your time ask your class to discuss their findings with each other.** Discuss the reason some people might buy food at the grocery store, some people at the farmers market or through a co-op, while others try to grow their food, each according to their own need and budget. Remind them that not everyone has the same options - especially in certain places off the world - which is why the work of Episcopal Relief & Development is so important.

**Intergenerational Connection** - Are there people in your congregation who have been on mission trips and can speak to food in other cultures. Ask them to join in your taste test and to share stories about the selection and availability of food during their adventures.

## Nutrients - Snack Activity:

### Veggie Pizza

Prepare this a day ahead

#### Ingredients:

2 cans Refrigerated Crescent Rolls  
8 oz softened Cream Cheese  
16 oz Sour Cream  
1 packet (1/3 cup) dry Ranch Dressing mix  
1/2 cup Broccoli florets  
1/3 cup Cucumber slices (cut in quarters)  
8 chopped Cherry Tomatoes  
1/4 cup shredded Carrots

#### Directions:

Heat oven to 375.  
Unroll both cans of crescent rolls and press dough into bottom and sides of ungreased raised edge baking sheet or jelly roll pan, Bake 10-15 minutes until lightly browned and cool completely. Next, mix together cream cheese, sour cream and dressing mix until blended. Spread mixture over crust. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Slice into child size portions, and allow kids to decorate with vegetables.





## Closing Zone Gathering



All pods should re-assemble at this time in the large space. Open this time with a song. Suggestions include:

***For the Fruit of All Creation:***

***God's Got the Whole World in God's Hands***

## Connect the Lesson

**Leader:** Harvesting is incredibly important work. Without the harvest process delicious fruits, vegetables and nuts would simply be ornamental, like flowers. And they would die and root in the fields and the gardens, without ever being useful to anyone or anything. The same is true for the harvest of God's love. It must be harvested and shared in order to help us all grow.

Do you remember how in our Soil lesson we talked about the spiritual soil of our lives being our hearts? And then do you remember the sorts of seeds that we talked about planting in that spiritual soil during our Seeds lesson?

*Can anyone remember what those seeds were?*

(love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control)

What do you think it would be like to harvest those things we have been growing in our hearts?

*How can we harvest and then share the gift of abundant life through love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?*

(we can harvest these things by first shucking or peeling off things like selfishness, shame, blame, anger, fear... and then we can share the Fruits of the Spirit through our attitudes and actions at home, at school, in our neighborhoods... ask kids to give examples of a time when their shared peace, or had patiences, or were gentle with someone. Or when they showed self-control by not losing their temper.)

I wonder what practices we need to be working on to make sure that we are sharing the harvest of God's love with the world?

*What ideas do you have?*

(Meditation can help shuck off anger, prayer can help peel away selfishness, Worship helps us to feel joyful.)

*What are some of the practices we learn at church that can help share the harvest?*

(We pass the peace, we share bread and wine with each other, we learn patience when we sit and listen to the lessons or sermon, we pray prayers of confession in order to better be ready to love our neighbors) Ask kids to think about what a Harvest Celebration would be like if the Fruits of the Spirit were represented by literal fruits and vegetables. Next, using their **Garden Journals**, have them write or draw what they have imagined.

*Who would they invite to the Feast?*



## Closing Reflections

For the closing reflections and prayer, ask children and adult or youth helpers and leaders to once again form a circle again around the bowl of fresh produce, or get where they can view the bowl. Ask your group to take a few deep breaths, look at the bounty and think about what they saw, heard or experienced during their time today. Going around the circle so that each person (children and helpers or leaders) has a turn, ask:

*What did you learn during our time together*

*Do you think about anything differently now?*

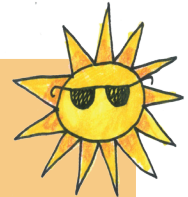
*What might change in your life as a result of this time together?*

*How will you share the gift of abundant life this week?*

**Closing Song:** Doxology

**Closing Prayer:** (to be read by the leader or by one or more children, if you have access to a large screen we recommend projecting it)

### Closing Prayer:



***We thank you, Lord, for the many, many gifts you have given us. We thank you for water, for seeds of all kinds, for the many varieties of soil, for all the animals that enrich our lives and for times of harvest. We pray to always seek and serve Christ in others by sharing and making wise use of our harvests. Let us be the hands and feet of Christ in serving the hungry, the thirsty, the lonely and the lost. In Christ's name, Amen.***

### Charge:

**Leader:** Let us go into the world with grateful hearts, sharing the gifts of abundant life with everyone we meet!

**Children:** Praise be to God!

## Home Activity

Send **The Abundant Life Garden Project® Handout Harvest Time** home with the children, either by hardcopy, or by sending the project home digitally.