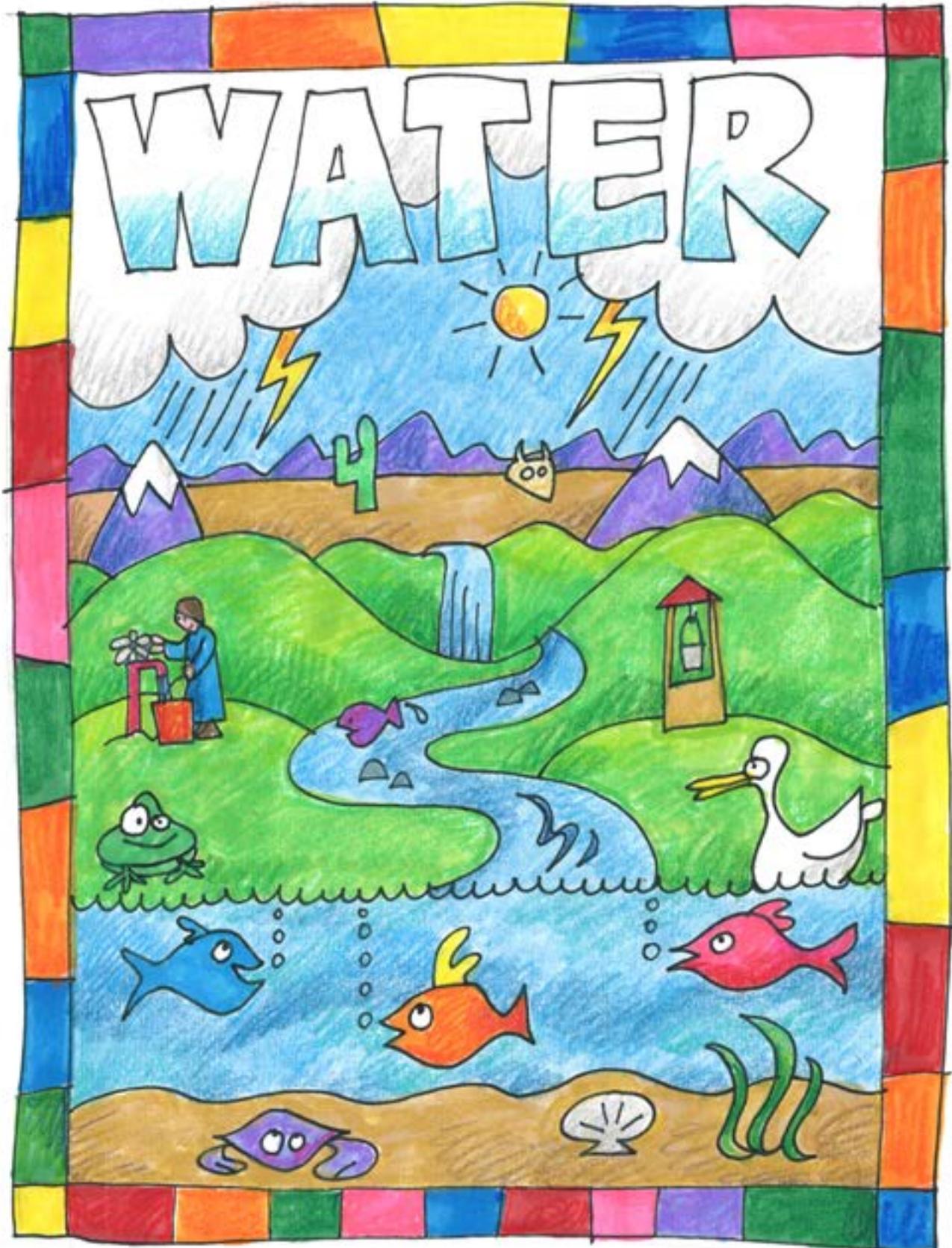




Episcopal  
Relief & Development  
Working Together for Lasting Change

**ONE THOUSAND  
DAYS OF LOVE** ♥





## VIRTUAL VBS DAY 1: WATER

The Abundant Life Garden Project® VBS offered by Episcopal Relief & Development

### Notes for Leaders

Today's interactive, Scripture-based module will introduce your VBS kids and volunteers to the work of Episcopal Relief & Development in the area of water. Episcopal Relief & Development hopes that these materials will invite you to partner with us in working towards lasting change, inform you about our work in many parts of the world we serve, and even transform you and your congregation or community. We have adjusted the directions to be compatible with a virtual VBS gathering and allowed for you, the leader, to make additional adjustments as needed.

### Understanding the Lesson

This lesson plan, Water, introduces children to the essential nature of water, both for human life – no one can live without water – and as a central element of our faith. In this lesson, children will be introduced to the continuing need for clean water among many people on earth and the use of water to grow crops, raise livestock, prevent disease and even transport crops and other goods to market.

Children also will be reminded of the many images of water in Scripture and in our sacraments: The waters of creation and the crossing of the Red Sea by the ancient Israelites in the Old Testament; the changing of water to wine at Cana and Jesus' baptism in the New Testament; and the use of water in our sacraments of baptism and Holy Eucharist. All these images are related to new life, and often to new life in community.

Even in situations where water takes on a forceful and destructive role – by way of hurricanes, floods, or tsunamis – water ultimately brings to us new life and new possibilities. It is this hope that we want to share with children: Even when times seem dark, we have faith that sorrowful situations will, in Christ, be redeemed and restored. As children explore these images of water and the Baptismal Covenant to seek and serve Christ in others, we urge you to explore with them and within yourself this concept of new life in community through the gift of water. This gift is life changing. By providing the gift of clean water for those in need and in sharing the gift of spiritual growth through this program with the children you lead and teach, you can alter the lives of others and join with us in healing a hurting world.

*Cynthia Coe & Jerusalem Jackson Greer*

### **Garden Goals:**

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



## **Zone #1: Gather – Large Group Welcome Activity**

### **Supplies for Leader:**

Trifold display board in white, or Garden Wall (as outlined in the Facilitators Guide); two shades of blue sticky notes; markers; large clear bowl, pitcher, or cup of water.

### **Supplies for Families:**

Drawing paper and tape or blue sticky notes; markers or crayons; bowl, and a small cup containing a small amount of water.

### **“How do we use water?”**

**Optional Gathering Activity:** As you began to gather on your digital learning platform, ask kids to draw an image on the sticky notes that represents how water is used. You can be drawing on your sticky notes as well. Each child may write or draw as many representations as time permits. Add your sticky notes to the bottom ¼ of the trifold display board or the Garden Wall. Ask them to show theirs to the group, then encourage them to begin a Garden Wall Display in their home where they can see their drawings each day.

**Preparing:** Ask the children – with the help of an adult if needed – to gather an empty bowl and a small cup or pitcher of water. Ask the children to carefully place their bowl and pitcher or cup of water in front of them.

### **Opening Prayer:**

**Leader:** (Show your empty bowl and your pitcher) *Can anyone guess what today’s lesson will be about? (Allow time for a few answers) That is right, it is going to be all about the gift of Water! Let’s begin our lesson for asking for God’s presence to be with us as we learn and explore this gift You may now carefully (and with help if needed) pour your water into your bowl. Now, gently dip your fingers into the water – doesn’t that feel good? Let’s use this water on our fingers to help us pray!*

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

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

**Leader:** Everyone, 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** (see Facilitators Guide for suggestions)



## Theme Introduction

**Leader:** *Wonderful everyone! Well, welcome to the Abundant Life Garden Project® Virtual Vacation Bible School offered by Episcopal Relief & Development. For the next few days we are going to learn what it means to have and to share the gift of abundant life and we are going to use the example of a garden as our guide to learning!*

*Can someone tell me what you think the term “abundant life” means?*

*(Take a few ideas, affirm or redirect as needed.)*

*Let’s start by thinking about the word Abundant.*

*Abundant means to have plenty, to have more than enough, more than is needed. It means having enough of something to share again and again.*

*What are some things that you can see around your home or yard that you have an abundance of? Allow children or chosen volunteers to answer here (they might say things like trees, flowers, grass, cars, chairs, crayons...)*

*What is something that we can’t always see, but through God, we always have an abundance of?*

*That’s right! We have an abundance of Love!*

*Great! Now, let’s pair the word Abundant with the word Life.*

*What do you think it means to “live an abundant life”?*

*Here is one definition that I like: “Through God’s love, we will always have enough to share!”*

*Now, can a few people tell me what are all the parts of a garden are? What might you find if you visited a garden or a farm? (Allow multiple answers here. What you are looking for specifically is: Water, Soil, Seeds, Harvest, and Animals, but all answers should be validated.)*

*These are great answers! Did you know that our life together is like a garden? Well, it is! And thankfully, God gives us all the tools we need to take care of this garden, helping it to be full of all the things we each need.*

*Today we are going to be learning about Water and its role in the garden and how it is a tool that God gives us to share abundant life with others! Are you ready to get started?*

**Note for Leader:** Here you will want to introduce the day’s activities. Go over what will you be offering digitally and what families will be doing on their own, at home. If you are offering any additional instruction, or telling one of the stories live, this will be the time to offer that lesson.



## Zone # 2: Listen

### Stories from the Field Lesson

You will have two options in this lesson: One is to read the print story; the other is to use the digital piece. The print piece is recommended if you have a great storyteller.

**Leader Supplies:** Stories from the Field booklet or a way to show the digital stories across your platform.

**Home Supplies:** pens or pencils, coloring pencils, crayons, and Garden Journals. Also, a way to watch digital stories or read print stories

### Print Option

Read: *"Building Access to Clean Water"* (available in the Stories from the Field booklet)

If you have older children or youth volunteers who are good readers, have them take turns reading the paragraphs of this brief true story.

After the story is read, take time to review together.

### Questions for Reflection:

- *What do you have to do to get water?*
- *What would your family have to do differently if you had to walk 10 minutes to a stream to get water?*
- *How would you feel about walking to get water?*
- *What could you, your family, your church, or your community do to help people who do not have easy access to clean drinking water?*

**Dig Deeper:** Have kids write or draw their answer to the last question in their Garden Journals.

### Digital Option:

[Watch Wells in Nicaragua](#) OR [Watch Water and Sanitation in Nicaragua](#)

After you have watched the video, take time to review together.

### Questions for Reflection:

- *What do you have to do to get water?*
- *What would your family have to do differently if you had to walk 10 minutes to a stream to get water?*
- *How would you feel about walking to get water?*
- *What could you, your family, your church, or your community do to help people who do not have easy access to clean drinking water?*



## Stories from our Faith:

You have three options for this zone: 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 track per day. If this will be a home-led activity, make sure to send each family their own printed copy of the *Stories from Our Faith* booklet.

**Home Supplies (depending on the track):** Bible, Book of Common Prayer, blank paper or Garden Journals, markers

## Leader:

Begin by asking children to share if they can think of any Bible Stories or Church Traditions that include water.

**Possible answers:** *Story of creation, Noah and the Flood, Jonah and the Big Fish, Moses (as a baby floating among the reeds, crossing the Red Sea, water from the rock), John baptizing Jesus, Jesus turning water into wine, Peter walking on the water, Paul in the shipwreck, Baptism, Eucharist...*

**Make this connection:** *Water is an essential aspect of our faith. These stories and traditions help teach us what it means have abundant life. Let's learn more about one of these stories/traditions now.*

## Old Testament Study – Water from the Rock

Read, or ask an older child to look up and read, Exodus 17:1-7.

### Questions for Reflection

- *What happens in this story?*
- *How would you feel if you saw this happening in person?*
- *Are there people in the world today who may feel like the people in this story?*
- *Draw a picture or write words on blank paper or in your Garden Journal to describe how God uses water as a gift in this story.*

## New Testament Study—The Baptism of Jesus

Read, or an ask an older child to look up and read Mark 1: 4-13.

### Questions for Reflection

- *What happens in this story?*
- *How would you feel if you saw John baptizing Jesus and others?*
- *How do you think the angels waited on Jesus in the wilderness? What would he need?*
- *Draw a picture or write words on blank paper or in your Garden Journal to describe how water was used in these scenes from the Bible.*

## Book of Common Prayer Study— Thanksgiving Over the Water

Find “Thanksgiving Over the Water” on pages 306-307 of the Book of Common Prayer. Share these words with the children, then discuss.



## Questions for Reflection

- *What Bible stories do you recognize in these words?*
- *What words are used as prayers in this passage?*
- *What will the water be used for after these words are said?*
- *Draw a picture or write words on blank paper or in your Garden Journal to show how this water is a gift to the person about to be baptized.*

## Zone #3: Do

There are four options for Do: A learning activity, a creative activity, a contemplation activity, and a garden activity. If you choose to include one of these activities, make sure to send any supply list and instructions to families ahead of time or include these things in your VBS-in-a-Box kit.

### Learning Activity – The Water Walk

*The group work for this unit is an experiential exercise in learning the difficulties of walking up to 15 minutes in order to get water for drinking, cooking and cleaning.*

*Your field trip will be determined by your physical location, safety considerations, weather, neighborhood, climate and terrain.*

*We also recommend you consider the physical abilities and limitations of participants. If some in your group are unable to make the journey, ask them to serve as timekeepers or prayer partners for the rest of the group, or they might help finish up lessons.*

*Have a plan for the water that is brought back – perhaps you could water a garden, provide water for a pet, or mop a floor. The goal is to not waste it!*

*Remind children that while this can be a fun activity, this is actually real life for many people in the world.*

### Directions

1. *Carry an empty bucket (one for each child or ask children to take turns with what is available) to a water source that is about 5-7 minutes away (this could be a pond, a faucet at house nearby, a spring, a well, a creek, a water hose)*
2. *Fill the buckets with water (make sure to consider each child's ability when filling their bucket. You want it to be challenging but not impossible.)*
3. *Haul the buckets back to a place where it could be used.*

When your journey is complete, take a few minutes to ask the children:

- *What was it like to have to walk to get water?*
- *What was it like knowing that if you didn't make this walk, you wouldn't get water?*
- *Did you treat the water differently, knowing that if you spilled it, you would have to walk back for more?*
- *What will you think about the next time you need water?*



## **Creative Activity – Cleaning Water**

**Leader:** *Our access to water and our traditions in church are some of the ways that we are able to live lives of abundant life. And yet access to clean water and proper sanitation remains one of the hardest challenges for millions of people in the world. Let's take a closer look at what it takes to create clean water.*

### **Water Filter Experiment**

#### **Supplies Needed**

- *1 cup of gravel*
- *1 cup of sand*
- *Handful of grass clippings and other green matter*
- *Dirt*
- *12-16 coffee filters*
- *Clean flowerpot with hole in the bottom*
- *Transparent jug or empty 2-liter bottle with the top cut off*
- *Large measuring cup or pouring jug*

Have small groups of children take turns making a water filter (or if necessary, the class can sit in a circle and watch as you do it).

#### **Directions**

- *Put 3 or 4 coffee filters, then ¼ cup of sand, and ¼ cup of gravel in a clean flowerpot*
- *Place the flowerpot in a larger transparent container so the filtered water can drip through and the children can observe it*
- *In a large measuring cup, place dirt, bits of plant matter and water*
- *Mix it up to make muddy water*
- *Pour the muddy water into the flowerpot*
- *Have children observe the color of the water dripping out the bottom of the pot into the transparent container*
- *Ask questions – Where did the dirt go? Why did cleaner water come out?*
- *Take the filter apart and try to find the dirt and bits of plant matter*

**Keep Learning:** Try arranging the layers in a different order and compare the color of the filtered water.



## Contemplative Activity – Meditation

**Leader:** Begin by asking family members to sit “crisscross 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 a story told about Jesus....*

Jesus met a Samaritan woman at a city well and told her about Living Water. The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.” (John 4:7-15)

Let’s think about this precious gift of water. Please close your eyes, take three deep breaths, and think about the words I have just read.

- *What pictures of water come into your mind?*
- *Which pictures of this story give you joy?*
- *What do you think Jesus means by Living Water?*
- *What might God be saying to you through these words?*

Repeat the first two steps. Have the others 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 everyone 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 asking everyone 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

For those who have a local garden in your church or neighborhood, or for those families who have gardens at home, here are three interactive activity options. For home gardens the “garden coordinator” would be an adult in the home. If you have a church or community garden option and you need to practice social distancing, consider creating a schedule where each family could visit the garden at a different time.

1. Have the garden coordinator lead a watering exercise: Spend some time watering any house or outdoor plants, trees, or a home garden or a neighbor’s garden (with permission of course). Gather enough watering cans and containers, or hoses and nozzles so that each child has a chance to water. Talk to the kids about how different plants need to be watered in different ways (Tomato plants need water at their roots, for instance, while trees need to be watered around their canopy.)  
**Talk a bit about this:** Just like God has created plants to be different, God also created people to be different – which is why people, just like plants, need different things in order to grow. As you water the garden ask the kids to each share one thing that makes them feel loved – notice aloud how diverse their answers are and model celebrating those differences.
2. Consider making a rain barrel with the help of your garden coordinator or a handy person. This can be a great hands-on project for the kids. If you have younger children, have them participate by painting the container that you will use. Remind the children that by collecting rainwater to use during dry seasons, you are being good stewards of creation. **As you work, discuss with the children** the ways in which God waters our “soil” – through the love of others, through the encouragement of art, of music, of playing outside, through kind words, hugs ... see if the children can add to this list!
3. Under the leadership of your garden coordinator, help install an irrigation system in the garden. **As you work, talk with the children** about how sometimes growth requires a lot of work and effort. Talk about what it means to grow our hearts and souls – what sort of work needs to be done in order to make sure these things are healthy and growing? (Attending worship, prayer, Eucharist, confession, forgiveness, meditation, honesty...)

## Nutrients (Snack) Activity

Apple Boats and Ocean Water

**Apple Boats:** Cut cored apples into four quarters, then add a sail using a paper triangle and toothpicks. Stick sail into the core portion of the fruit. The skin should be the bottom and outside body of the boat.

**Ocean Water:** Mix equal parts white grape juice and sparkling water with a dash of blue food coloring.



## Zone #4: Go – Closing the Day

**Connect the Lesson:** You might consider sending the following paragraphs to families by email or text to help them wrap up the day with intention.

**Dear Families,** At the end of today you will have learned a lot about what it means to have and share gifts of abundant life. We have also learned the importance of water – in our physical lives and in our spiritual lives. We encourage you to use the Water to Water Home Sheet to further your discussion about the gift of water, and to use this prayer to close your day together.

**We thank you, Lord, for the gift of water. Through this gift of water, you quench our thirst, feed our hunger, help us to be clean and healthy, and give us the ability to live, to grow, and to serve and be served by others. Give all people in this world, we pray, the gift of clean water, and help us to do our part in serving others through this gift. In Christ's name, Amen.**

### **Additional Home Activity:**

Send the Abundant Home & Hearth handout Water to Water to each family – either printed in the VBS-in-a-Box kit or digitally.

