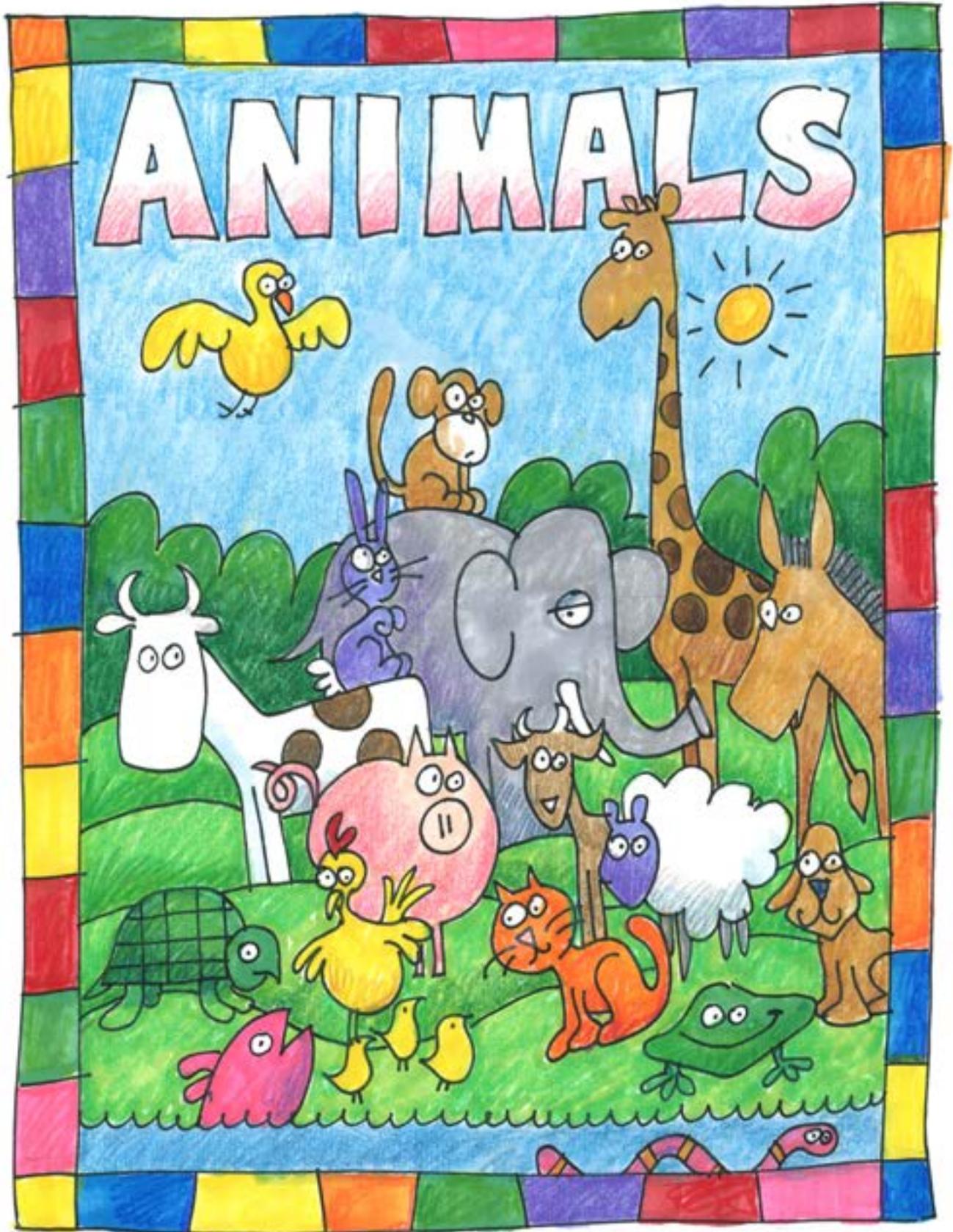




Episcopal
Relief & Development
Working Together for Lasting Change

ONE THOUSAND
DAYS OF LOVE ♥





VIRTUAL VBS DAY 4: ANIMALS

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 animals. 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

Talking about animals with children can be fun. Children's art and literature are filled with cute images of piglets, ducks, fuzzy yellow chicks, lambs, and goats. This module, based on the role of animals in human life, will likewise be fun. Images from Episcopal Relief & Development's Gifts for Life catalog will undoubtedly evoke smiles and exclamations of "How cute!" Discussion of the role of animals in fertilizing soil with manure will surely evoke smirks and giggles. The role of animals in contributing to human life is nonetheless a serious one. Animals play a vital role in transferring light from the sun into food consumed by humans. Plants, through the process of photosynthesis, use the sun's energy to convert inorganic compounds to rich organic material. Animals then eat these plants and "convert" them to nutrient-rich manure. This manure provides excellent organic fertilizer to the soil and enables the soil to retain more water and nutrients. Earthworms then play their part in the creation of fertile soil by mixing organic material into the soil, breaking down rocky material into new soil and opening the soil structure for aeration and drainage.



Many other animals also play vital roles in the human food supply. Bees and other insects play a vital role in human food production through pollination of flowering and seed-producing plants, such as the fruits and vegetables we eat. Animals such as horses, donkeys and oxen work very hard in many parts of the world to plow the earth, power machinery and haul supplies to farms and produce to market. Animals provide important sources of protein to humans through milk, cheese, and eggs. Meat is also an important contribution of animals, though this curriculum will focus on non-sacrificial elements of animal life.

Many young children may be disturbed by images of butchery involved in meat production, so we highly recommend focusing on dairy products and other “vegetarian” aspects of animals’ gifts to us. Older children may bring up the topic of meat; we recommend acknowledging but not dwelling on this topic if it is brought up in your group.

Adults using these materials might, however, consider the sacrificial element of farm animals as symbols of the sacrificial life of Christ. Images of Christ as a “sacrificial lamb” abound in the New Testament, as do the images of animals as symbols of sacrifice to God in the Old Testament. The idea of taking a valuable source of life and giving it wholeheartedly to God is an ancient and enduring image in Christian theology. In our sacrament of Holy Eucharist itself, we see the image of Jesus Christ offering himself as a sacrifice to God for our sake. As well, we seek through the Baptismal Covenant to serve Christ in all persons with love, often sacrificing our own needs and desires for the benefit of others.

Many animals do give their lives to provide meat, protein and life to those of us who eat meat. As we drink milk, eat eggs, wear wool socks, snuggle under a down comforter or even eat a hamburger, we might consider the life-giving sacrifice of animals in our lives and see them as examples of energy, labor and life itself given for the benefit of others.

Though we might not be called upon to literally give our lives for others, we can nonetheless serve as vessels for the transfer of Christ’s light to others, just as animals transfer sunlight to new plant growth and new life. Like these vessels, we might take the light of Jesus’ teachings into our own lives, digest it, produce fertile soil in which the work of the Holy Spirit might flourish, seen or unseen... and ultimately produce new growth and new life, both literally and figuratively, in ourselves and others.

We hope this lesson will be enjoyable and enriching for those taking part in this project.

Cynthia Coe & Jerusalem Jackson Greer



Garden Goals:

In this fourth lesson, families will recall or be introduced to images of animals in the Bible, in the Book of Common Prayer and on our farms and gardens. This lesson will provide families with experiential learning in receiving gifts of animals and in exploring the uses of animals in enabling families to better feed themselves and others, thereby helping to heal a hurting world. Motivate children to be a part of seeking and serving Christ in others through the gift of animals.

Zone #1: Gather – Large Group Digital Gathering

Supplies Needed: Your Garden Wall, pink or orange sticky notes.

Home Supplies Needed for Families: Pink or orange sticky notes, markers and crayons, a bowl, and a small cup of animal feed (*can be dry dog or cat food, hay or fish flakes – whatever is most convenient*).

Why Animals

Preparing: Ask the children – with the help of an adult if needed – to gather an empty bowl and a small cup of animal food. Ask the children to carefully place their bowl and their cup where they will be able to use them for your prayer time.

Gathering Activity

As you began to gather on your digital learning platform, ask kids to write about or draw images of their favorite animal. You can be drawing on your sticky notes as well. Each child may write or draw as many representations as there is time for. As they draw, ask them to show their work to the group. Once they finish, remind them to add their drawings to their Garden Wall, adding them above the seeds. Once all children have arrived and participated in this activity, ask them to make sure they have their bowl and cup of animal food.

Opening Prayer:

Place your clear bowl where the kids can see. Pour your feed into the bowl. Ask them to do the same.

Leader: As you may have guessed, today's lesson is going to be all about the gift of farm Animals! Let's begin our lesson for asking for God's presence to be with us as we learn and explore this gift.

The leader then dips their hands into the feed, scooping up a small handful, then letting the feed fall back into the bowl, inviting the children to do the same. Ask them to notice the texture, the smell, and the size of the feed.

Leader: The Lord be with you!

Children and adults: 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!

Theme Introduction and Review

Leader: *Welcome to the fourth day of the Abundant Life Garden Project® VBS 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 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.)

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

Note: Here you will want to introduce the day's activities. Go over what will you be offering digitally and what will they be doing on their own at home.

If you are offering one of the Listen stories or one of the Do activities 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 who is comfortable sharing the story over a digital platform.

Leader supplies needed: Stories from the Field Booklet or a way to show the digital story.

Home supplies: Pens, coloring pencils, crayons, and Garden Journals; Stories from the Field booklet or a way to view digital stories.

Print Option

Read: *Hatching a Better Profit*. (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.

Questions for Reflection

- *What gifts were Rhada and Rupchard given?*
- *How did this gift provide a gift to others, too?*
- *What could you do to help others through the gift of animals?*

Dig Deeper: Have children write or draw their answers in their Garden Journals

Digital Option: [Raising Goats in the Philippines](#)

Questions for Reflection

- *What would people need to know before they cared for the animals shown in the film?*
- *What other materials or equipment would they need to effectively care for the animals?*
- *How did the gift of these animals benefit the whole community?*

Growing Zone 2: [Stories from our Faith:](#)

You have three options for this lesson: 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.

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

Leader: We are now going to make the connection between what we have seen through the work of Episcopal Relief and Development, and our faith.



Old Testament Study – Moses the Shepherd

Look up and read Exodus 3:1-10.

(Younger children might read Exodus 3:1-2, 7 and 10 only, with the help of an adult. Older children also might read Exodus 2:15-25 for the story of how Moses became a shepherd.)

Questions for Reflection

- *What did Moses do to support himself after he fled Egypt?*
- *What would he have to know to do this job?*
- *How was Moses later a shepherd of people?*
- *How are we part of a “flock”? Who are our “shepherds”?*

In your Garden Journal, draw or write about what your own flock of sheep might look like, where the sheep might live and where they might find food and water.

New Testament Study – Finding Lost Sheep

Look up and read Luke 15:4-6.

Questions for Reflection

- *In our world today, who might Jesus see as the “lost sheep”?*
- *Who do you see as “lost sheep”?*
- *How could you rejoice with your friends and neighbors for “lost sheep” who are found?*

Draw a picture or write about your responses to these questions in your Garden Journal.

Book of Common Prayer Study – Lamb of God

Using a Book of Common Prayer, find “Holy Eucharist: Rite Two” (page 355).

Turning to the second page of this liturgy (page 356), find the words “Lamb of God.”

Questions for Reflection

- *Who is the “Lamb of God”?*
- *How might the sins of the world be taken away?*
- *In what ways does this Lamb of God receive our prayers?*

Draw a picture or write about your responses to these questions in your Garden Journal.



Zone #3: Do

There are three options for Do: A learning activity, a creative activity, and a contemplation activity. If you choose to include one of these activities, make sure to send any supply list and instructions to families ahead of time.

Learning Activity: Gifts for Life

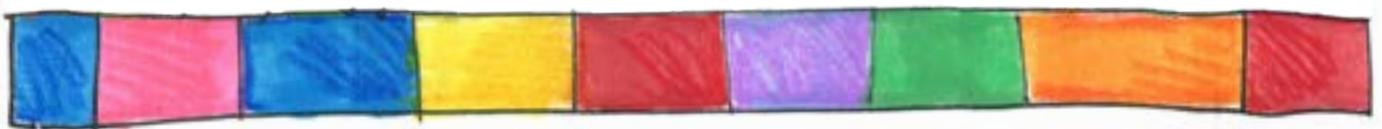
Home Supplies: Several copies of Gift for Life catalogs; 5-10 pieces of cardstock per household, cut into fourths, or a stack of 20 large index cards (any color); scissors, glue sticks

The group work for this unit is an experiential exercise in using “gifts for life” – gifts of animals that help people live better lives. Using photos from Episcopal Relief & Development Gifts for Life catalog (print copy preferred; online photos are also available for printing and use with this curriculum), children will be asked to think about what they might do with these living gifts.

Directions

1. Cut out photos of animals featured in the current Gifts for Life catalog (if you cannot get the hard copies, you can print them online at www.episcopalrelief.org/GiftsforLife or in print copies using this link: www.forwardmovement.org/episcopalrelief)
2. Glue each individual animal onto its own piece of cardstock or index card.
3. Once everyone is finished, collect all the animal cards and mix them up.
4. Next hand out the animal cards back to each family member, randomly giving some more than others.
5. After each person has received their “gifts” of animals, ask the following questions:
 - *How did it feel to receive your gift?*
 - *What will you feed it, and where will you keep it?*
 - *How could you make money or produce food to support your family with this gift?*
 - *What additional supplies, tools or equipment might you need to make wise use of this gift?*
 - *How could you obtain these additional supplies?*
 - *If you received more than one animal, how do you feel?*
 - *If you received only one animal, tell us about how you feel?*
 - *Does this help you understand the experiences of the people from our stories today?*
 - *Why do you think it is important to God to help others be successful in raising animals?*

This discussion might proceed as long as enthusiasm, energy and time constraints allow. Older children might list plans or respond to the questions on blank paper or chalk/dry erase boards. As in the previous group exercises, there are no particular “right” and “wrong” answers. The point of this exercise is to step into the roles of those who raise farm animals for their livelihood and sustenance, and to appreciate the real-world challenges of this vital work.



Creative Activity - Butter Me Up

Leader: Cows are one of the gifts that you can give through Episcopal Relief and Development's Gifts for Life program. A milk-producing cow will not only supply nourishment, including much-needed protein and vitamins for families, it will enable those same families to sell surplus milk and milk-based products in the marketplace and better provide for their children. One of the things you can make from milk is butter! Who likes butter? Well today, we are all going to learn how anyone with access to fresh cream and a jar can make butter!

Supplies:

- 16 ounces of heavy cream warmed to room temperature (this is an important detail)
- 4 marbles
- 3 pint-size Mason jars
- Several cold stainless bowls (plastic bowls are okay, but stainless is best)
- Snack size resealable plastic bags.
- Table salt
- Butter knives (or plastic knives)
- Bread or crackers

Directions:

1. Wash hands thoroughly.
2. Divide the cream between the two mason jars, filling them ideally no more than 1/3 of the way full.
3. Add two marbles to each jar.
4. Began to shake. And shake. And shake. Have kids take turns shaking. Let leaders and volunteers take turns as well.
5. Keep shaking. Eventually you will hear sloshing and feel something banging on the sides of the jar. This means you have buttermilk and a ball of butter in your jar.
6. Skim or strain off the buttermilk into the third Mason jar. (You can save it to use in baking later!) At this point the butter is actually fine to eat.
7. You can finish by having the kids add a sprinkle of salt on to each ball and spread a small amount on bread or crackers.
8. If you want to go a bit further, dump the butter balls into the chilled bowls and have kids take turns kneading the butter until all the buttermilk is out.
9. Sprinkle with salt and knead once more.
10. Let kids taste a small amount of butter.
11. Keep and use till gone – remember to give thanks for the gifts of animals each time you enjoy the butter!



Contemplation Activity - Meditation

Begin by asking everyone to sit “crisscross applesauce” or to lie flat on their backs. Next, ask them to take three deep breaths. Then if they are comfortable, ask them 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:

Leader: Listen to the words of Jesus....

“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” John 10:14-16

Ask everyone to take a moment to reflect on the parable just read, then ask the following questions:

- *What does it mean to be a good shepherd?*
- *How might we listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd?*
- *How could we all become one flock?*

Repeat the first two steps. Have family members 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 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.)

Special note:

Older children might bring up the use of animals for meat. Please be aware that young children may find this topic distasteful or even disturbing. If there are young children in your group, you might wish to acknowledge the use of animals for meat (e.g., “Yes, pigs give meat”), and then redirect the discussion to gifts of milk, eggs, feathers, and manure.



Local Garden Activity

If you have a local garden in your church or neighborhood, or if families have gardens at home here are three interactive (optional) 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. Work with your garden coordinator to determine if this is a good time to fertilize the soil. If so, see if you can find a local gardener or farmer to bring in compost, worm compost or worm “tea,” or manure. If not, purchase some fertilizer from your local garden store. Ask the farmer or garden coordinator to explain the importance of animals in the fertilization process. Then get to work fertilizing the soil!

While you work discuss:

Sometimes we make mistakes or bad choices, but God always forgives us. Sometimes the lessons we learn from those mistakes lead to good growth in our lives. Just like the manure leads to good plants. What is one mistake you have made that you learned a good lesson from? How has that lesson helped you?

2. Invite some furry and feathered friends for a visit. Are there members of your church or community who have chickens who could make house calls for a safe show-and-tell? Or, perhaps you have someone who could do a virtual show-and-tell of their animals or farm. Have their owner’s share how they care for and feed their animals. If they have chickens or milk goats, do their share their eggs or milk with others?

Pray this prayer over the animals:

Thank you, God, for the gift of animals and the happiness they give us. Help us to protect them from harm as Noah did and care for them with love like St. Francis. Everytime we see an animal that you have created, help us to give thanks for your holy creative nature. In the name of God (who thought up the giraffe and the zebra) and of the Son (who was named after the beautiful white Lamb) and the Holy Spirit (who came to us as a Dove). Amen.

3. Bees also benefit the garden. Contact your local beekeeping association to host a virtual lesson about beekeeping and the importance of bees in the garden. Additionally you might consider making a mason bee habitat out of bamboo for your community garden similar to [the one found here](#).

While you work discuss:

Bees are very busy, always working to make sure that they are doing their job of pollination. What work has Christ called us to do? (Love others, care for creation, share)

What is one thing you can do this week to spread Christ’s love like the bees spread pollen?



Nutrients (Snack) Activity

Animal Crackers Safari

In a small clear punch cup layer the following: yogurt, sliced bananas, and granola.

Top each cup with a few animal crackers standing up. If you have a small group, you might invite the kids to help make their own.

Zone #4: Go – Closing the Day

Connect the Lesson: You might consider sending the following 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 animals in our physical lives and in our spiritual lives. We encourage you to use the Home to Hearth Sheet to continue your discussion about the gifts of animals and to use this prayer to close your day together.

Closing Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals in our world. We thank you for the role of animals in fertilizing our soil, in pollinating our plants, and in providing food and drink for us. We pray for those who raise animals to support themselves and their families, and we pray to help give others gifts for life. We ask for all of these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Home Activity:

Send the Abundant Home Life handout, *Creatures Great and Small*, either printed in the VBS-in-a-Box kit or digitally in order for them to continue learning about animals.

