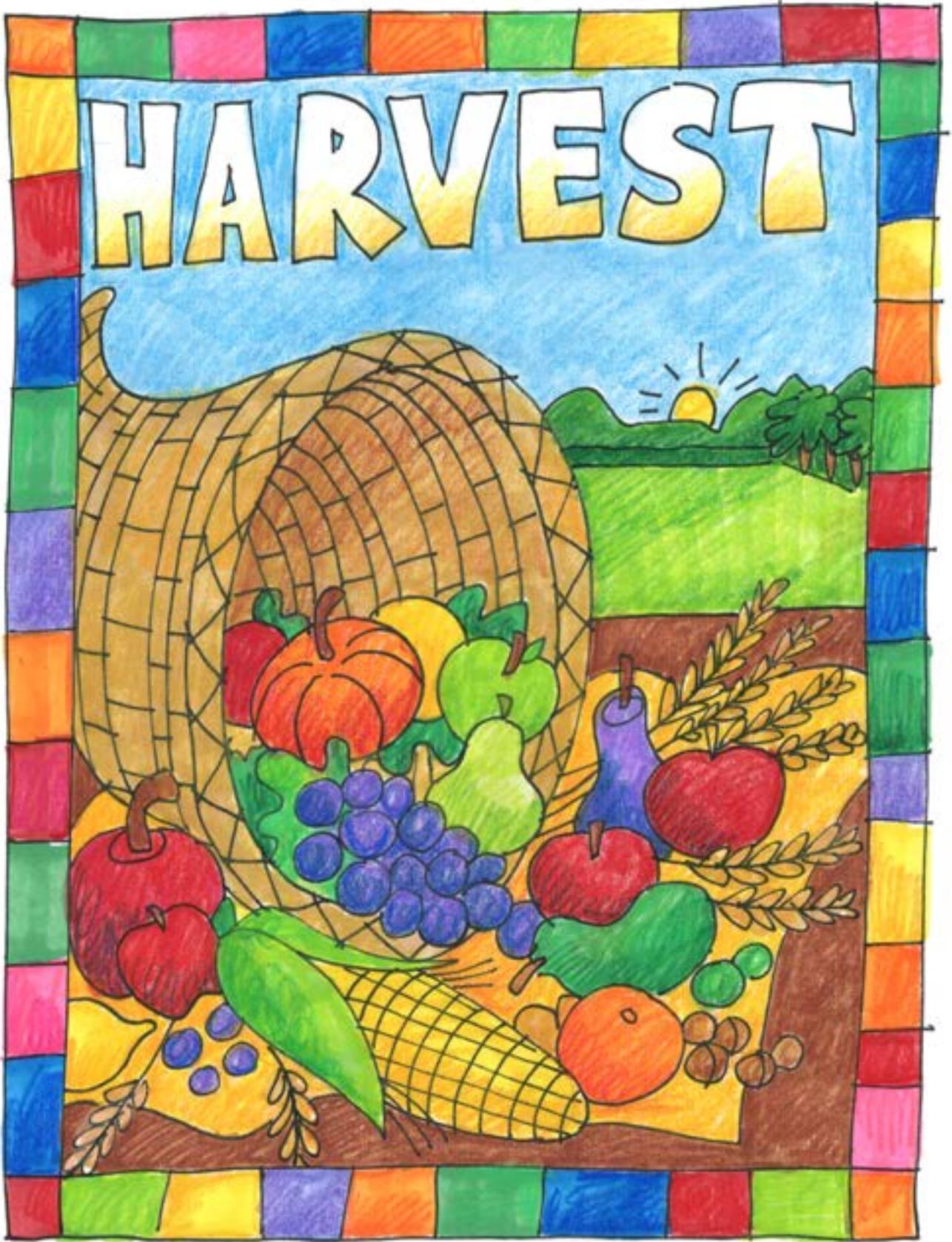
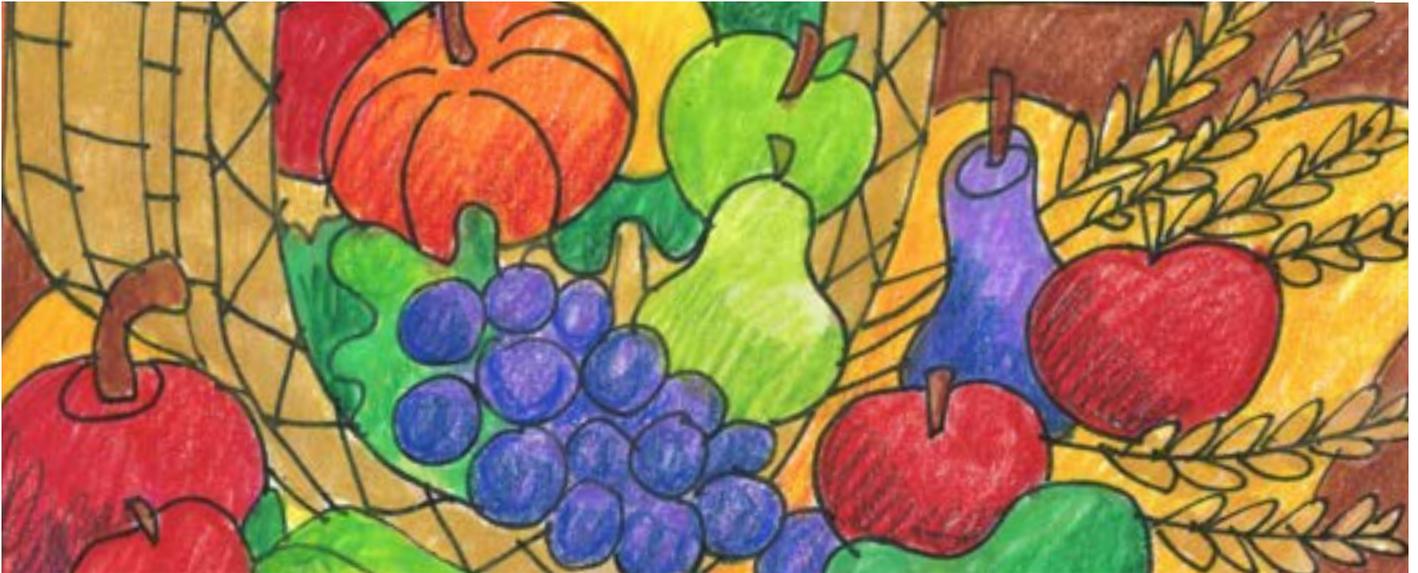




Episcopal
Relief & Development
Working Together for Lasting Change

**ONE THOUSAND
DAYS OF LOVE** ♥





VIRTUAL VBS DAY 5: HARVEST CELEBRATION

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

Notes for Leaders

Today's last interactive, Scripture-based module will introduce your VBS kids and volunteers to the work of Episcopal Relief & Development in the area of Harvest. 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

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 following this lesson, 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

Garden Goals:

The goal of this gathering is to help families celebrate all they have learned during the week and to commit to working towards living abundant life – in the garden, in their community, and in the world.

Zone #1: Gather

Welcome Activity

Supplies Needed: Garden trifold display board or Garden Wall with the previous layers firmly attached; another color of sticky notes, markers and crayons; a large clear bowl, and fresh fruits and vegetables (locally sourced if possible).

Home Supplies Needed for Families: Garden Wall; another color of sticky notes, markers and crayons; a bowl and some fresh fruit or vegetables.

Why the Harvest Matters...

Preparing:

Ask kids, with the help of an adult if needed, to gather an empty bowl and some fruits and vegetables. Ask the children to carefully place their bowl and produce where they will be able to use them for your prayer time.

Opening Activity - Celebrating the Harvest!

As you began to gather on your digital learning platform, ask kids to write about or images that their favorite fruit and vegetables. Allow them to draw as many as there is time for. Once all children have arrived and participated in this activity, begin your lesson with the opening prayer.

Opening Prayer:

Place your clear bowl where the kids can see. Place your produce in 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 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.*



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!

(Following the prayer ask children to return items to the bowl.)

Theme Introduction and Review

Leader: *Welcome to the fifth 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, it 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.)

In our last meeting, 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 & 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 its very important role in sharing the gifts of abundant life.



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: 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: "Seeing a Way Out of Poverty," (from the Stories from the Field Booklet (make sure families have a copy.)

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?*

Digital Option

Passion Fruit Farming

Questions for Reflection

- *What is the popular crop that grows well in Kenya?*
- *How are the women helping with the farming program?*
- *How did this program start? (The man who worked for the government decided to go back to his hometown to teach people how to farm better.)*
- *To what lengths would you go if you had to grow and sell food in order to provide for your family?*
- *What can you do to help those in your community gain access to healthy food?*



Stories from Our Faith Lesson

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 one 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 leaders' booklet.

Home Supplies (depending on the track): *Bible, Book of Common Prayer, blank paper or Garden Journals, markers, and printed copy of the Stories from Our Faith booklet.*

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

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

Ask for a volunteer to look up and read Ruth 2:1-18.

(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?*

Draw a picture or write a short poem or story about someone sharing their harvest with another person.

(Note: Ruth and Boaz became the great-grandparents of King David and ancestors of Jesus.)

New Testament Study—Feeding and Sharing

Ask for a volunteer to look up and read Luke 9:10-17.

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?*

Draw a picture or write your responses to these questions OR draw a picture or write what you think this story looked like and how the events took place.

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 part of Eucharistic Prayer A 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.

Questions for Reflection

- *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”.

Questions for Reflection

- *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.

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 or include them in your VBS-in-a-Box.

Learning Activity – Harvest Work

Supplies Needed: Fruit and vegetables that must be peeled, shucked or snapped. Ideas: Corn (in the husk), Purple Hull or black-eyed peas (in shell), oranges, fresh coconut (in shell), 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 are corn or peas if you can get them.) Paring knife. Bowls to place shelled/peeled produce in, paper bags to collect the shells, rinds and husk.

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 (corn, peas, oranges).

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

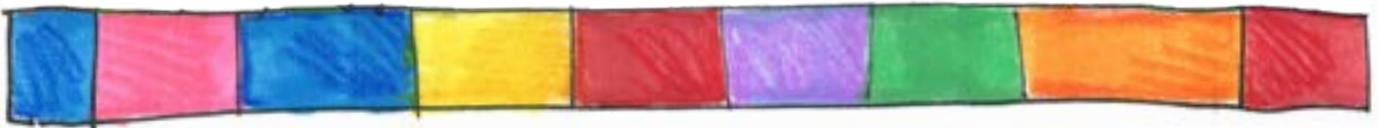
Leader: Did you have any idea how much effort it took to take one cob of corn (or other fruit or vegetable) from off the stalk to onto your plate? And we didn't even harvest this from the garden – that is a whole other set of steps that someone else had to do. Now, most of us have access to fruits and 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 & 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 & 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, or ...)

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 cotton dropcloth (found in the painting area of most hardware stores) that you can use as a tablecloth or frontal for your celebration.

Supplies

- 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. The stems on apples and peppers make wonderful handles for little hands. Advanced Method - You can cut out shapes, such as squares, hearts, letters, and stars, into the center of potatoes.
- Craft paint
- Disposable plates for painting palettes
- Paint brushes
- Large sheets of construction or heavy-duty paper or cotton painting dropcloth (make sure it has been washed first)
- 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 out a few of the produce “stamps”
3. Help children squirt about 2 teaspoons 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 do 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.

Contemplative Activity – Meditation

Begin by asking family members 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:

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 everyone 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 family members 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 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, offered by Episcopal Relief & Development.)

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 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 questions:

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 so that we can share it on our blog!



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 other parts of the world – which is why the work of Episcopal Relief & Development is so important.

Nutrients (Snack) Activity

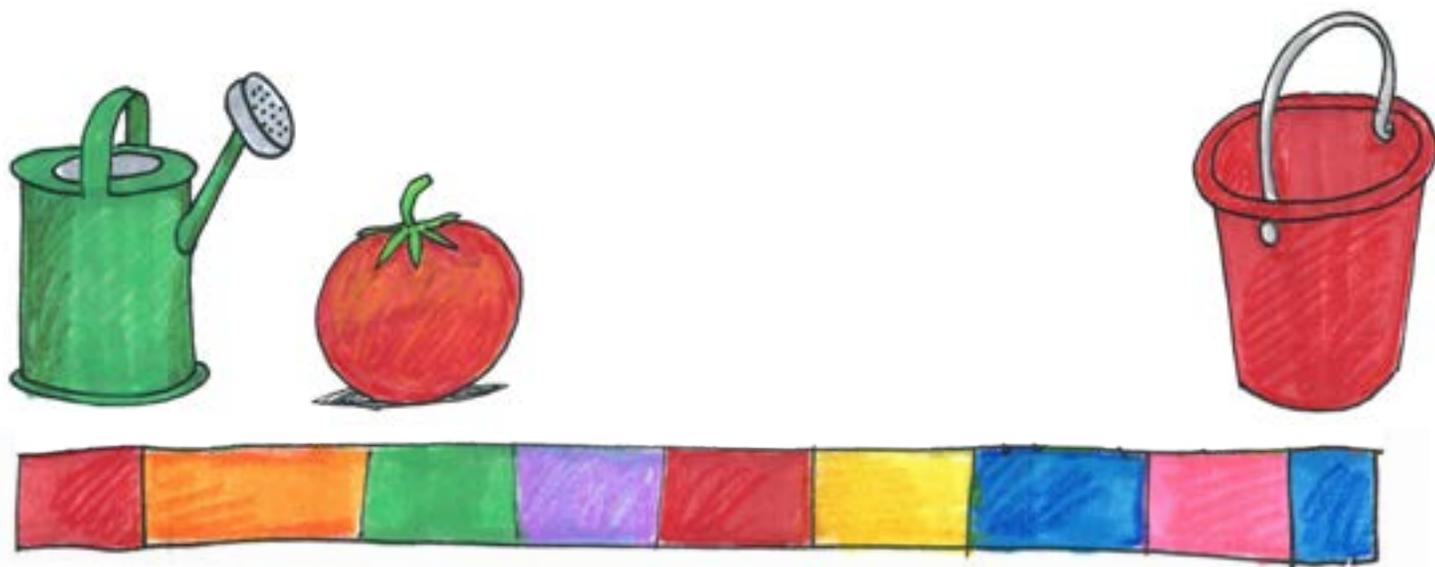
Veggie Pizza (this one will need to be prepared a day ahead.)

Ingredients:

- 2 cans refrigerated crescent rolls
- 8 ounces softened cream cheese
- 16 ounces 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 degrees F.
- Unroll both cans of crescent rolls and press dough into bottom and sides of an 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.



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 the soil- 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 the harvest and to use this prayer to close your day together:

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.

Home Activity:

Send the Abundant Home Life handout *Harvest Time* to the families digitally or by mail.

