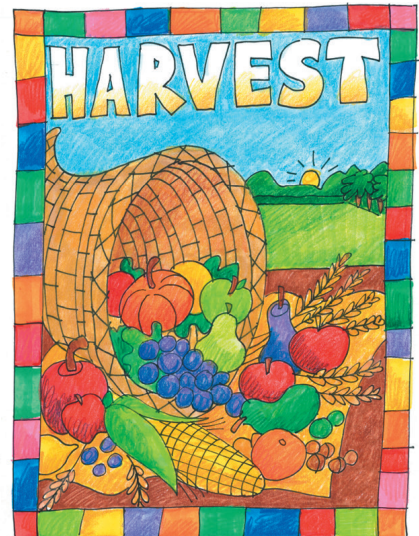
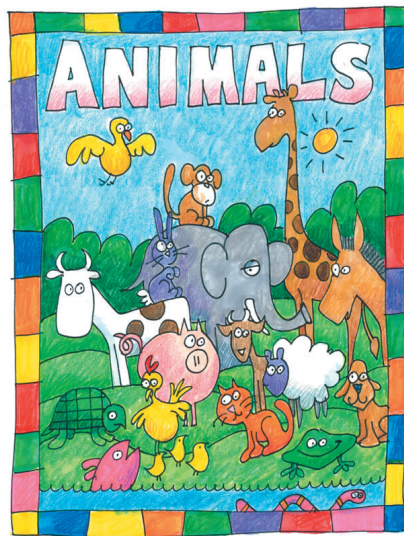
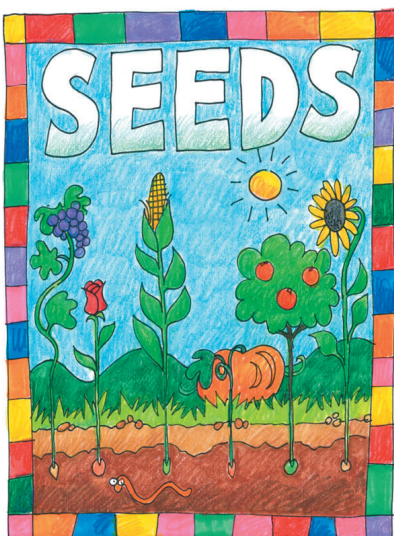
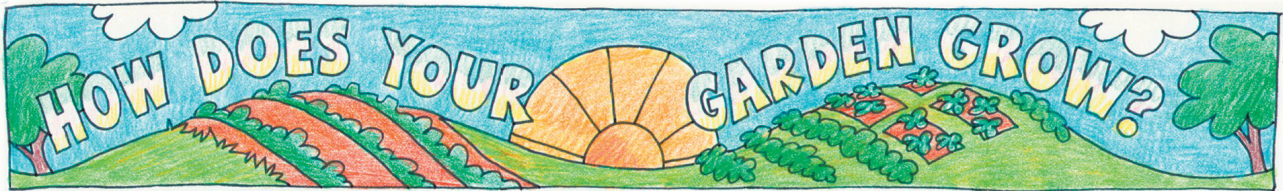
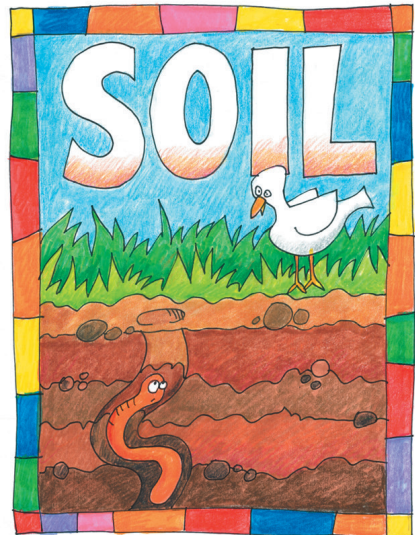
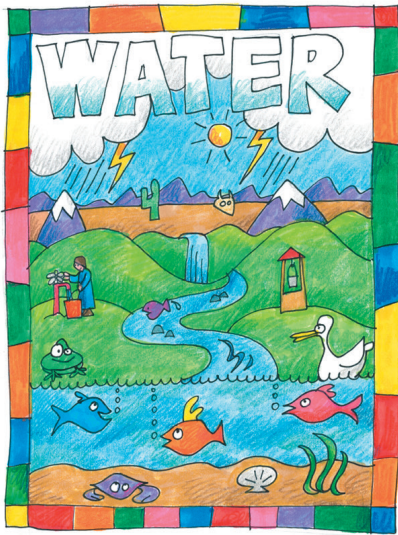


VBS Stories from Our Faith Station for

# The Abundant Life Garden Project<sup>®</sup>

offered by Episcopal Relief & Development



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### **The Abundant Life Garden Project®**

Curriculum designers: Cynthia Coe and Jerusalem Jackson Greer

Original artwork and illustration: The Rev. Jay Sidebotham

Design and layout: Bradley Wilson

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## Notes for storytellers



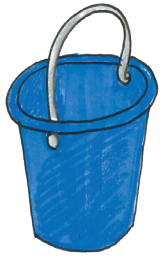
There are three options for this Zone - *Old Testament*, *New Testament*, or *Book of Common Prayer*. You can choose to stay with one track for your entire VBS program (OT, NT, or BCP) or you can choose a different per day. If you want to expand your time you can offer more than one of these of each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

Also, we have included the scripture references for each of these lessons, however if you have a children's bible or storybook that you would like to use instead of the direct scripture readings, please feel free to supplement.

The following supplies will be needed daily depending on the track and the age of the children - **Bible, Book of Common Prayer, Blank Paper or Garden Journals, Markers.**

## Preschool Modification for each lesson\*

1. Choose either the Old or New Testaments passages to share.
2. We recommend using a Children's Bible or Storybook to share these stories.
3. After you read the story, ask the children to act out the story as you read it a second time.
4. Ask them questions about the stories.
5. Have them draw one image from the story in their Garden Journal.



Day 1:

# WATER

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, 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. Ask a volunteer or older child to share one of these stories/tradition now:

## Old Testament Study – *The Birth of Moses*, Exodus 2, 1-8

### 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?
- Why was water important in this story?
- If the water hadn't been clean enough to bathe or to drink, how would this story be different?

**Dig Deeper:** 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*, 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?

**Dig Deeper:** 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*, Pages 306-307

### 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?

**Dig Deeper:** 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.



Day 2:

# SOIL

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

Possible answers: *Creation, The Parable of the Sower, Boaz and Ruth, Joseph and the Famine, Blessing of the Fields.*

**Make this connection:** The earth and its soil is actually very important about faith because of what it teaches us about growing in abundant life in God! Ask a volunteer or older child to share one of these stories/tradition now:

## Old Testament Study – *Bad Soil*, Genesis 41:1-39

### Questions for Reflection

- What is a famine?
- What did Joseph tell Pharaoh would happen?
- What was the plan to prepare for the famine?
- Have you ever seen land that was dried up, where nothing could grow?
- How can you help a community that is experiencing a famine?

**Dig Deeper:** Write about or draw about what healthy soil looks like, and what famine soil looks like in your Garden Journal or on the paper provided.

## New Testament Study

*Birds, Rocks, Thorns*, Luke 8:4-8

### Questions for Reflection

- How important is the soil for the seeds to grow?
- How can we make sure seeds have good soil in which to grow?
- What are the birds, rocks and thorns that keep seeds from growing today? How are seeds trampled and prevented from growing?

**Dig Deeper:** Draw or write about how we can provide “good soil” where seeds can grow in your Garden Journal on the paper provided.

### Additional Option for Older Children:

Read Matthew 7:24-27

### Questions for Reflection

- What does a builder need to do to keep a building from being washed or blown away? As we help others to build good shelters, what do they need?
- As we serve others, what is required of us to provide a solid foundation for our ministries?

**Dig Deeper:** Draw or write your responses in your Garden Journal or on paper provided.

## Book of Common Prayer Study

*Prayer for the Conservation of Natural Resources*, page 827

### Questions for Reflection

- How are we fellow workers in God’s creation?
- How can we make sure people in the future may enjoy the earth as we do?

**Dig Deeper:** Draw or write about how we could work the soil so that people in the future will be able to give praise for plenty of food in your Garden Journal or on the paper provided.



Day 3:

# SEEDS

**Leader:** Today we are going to make the connection between what we have seen through the work of Episcopal Relief and Development, and our faith. Begin by asking children to share if they can think of any Bible Stories or Church Traditions that include seeds.

**Possible answers:** *Story of creation, Joseph and the Famine, the Psalms, Parable of the Sower, I am the Vine and you are the Branches, Faith of a Mustard Seed, Blessing of the Seeds*

**Make this connection:** Sometimes in the bible we are given examples of how we are like seeds that need to be watered and nurtured in order to grow in abundant life in God! Ask a volunteer or older child to share one of these stories/tradition now:

## Old Testament Study – *Receiving the Gift of Seeds*, Genesis 1:11-12

### Questions for Reflection

- What gifts from God are described in these two verses?
- What does the Bible say about these gifts?

**Dig Deeper:** Draw a picture of the creation of these gifts in your Garden Journals.

## New Testament Study – *Seeds of Growth*, Matthew 13:31-32

### Questions for Reflection

- Who is the Sower in this parable? How can we be like the Sower?
- How can we do something small that could make a huge difference in the life of someone in need?

**Dig Deeper:** Draw or write your response to these questions in your Garden Journals.

## Book of Common Prayer Study – *Serving Seeds as Food*, Page 305

Ask someone to read the three questions at the top of the page, followed by the responses we make every time a child, young person or adult is baptized in an Episcopal church.

Close this session with: *“Let’s think of these promises as seeds planted in us, seeds that will grow into the fruits of the Spirit such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. What would it be like to share these seeds with others?”*

Next, talk about how seeds are sent to new gardens and new soil by wind, water and animals such as birds and even humans.

### Questions for Reflection

- How might the Holy Spirit work to spread seeds of hope and nourishment to others?
- How might we spread the seeds of hope and nourishment planted in us?
- How is everything we do a “seed”?
- How is every person a “seed”?

**Dig Deeper:** Draw a picture or write a poem of how the Holy Spirit might help us to seek and serve Christ in all persons through the gift of seeds in your garden journal.



Day 4:

# ANIMALS

**Leader:** Today we are going to make the connection between what we have seen through the work of Episcopal Relief and Development, and our faith. Begin by asking children to share if they can think of any Bible Stories or Church Traditions that include animals.

**Possible answers:** *Story of creation, Noah and the Flood, Jonah and the Big Fish, Blessing of the Animals, Daniel and the Lion's Den, Jesus riding a donkey into Jerusalem, the Shepherd's*

**Make this connection:** Animals are gifts from God, and from them we can learn a lot about what it means to be loved and care for by God in order to have abundant life. Ask a volunteer or older child to share one of these stories/tradition now:

## Old Testament Study – *The Stewardship of Creation*, Genesis 1:20-31

### Questions for Reflection

- What was the first thing created in this passage?
- What was the second?
- What was the last thing that was created?
- What were the instructions given to the humans?
- If God told you that your job was to care for all the animals and for the earth how would you feel?
- What actions would you take to care for everything?
- What actions can you take now to care for animals?

**Dig Deeper:** Draw a picture or write about your responses to these questions in your Garden Journals.

## New Testament Study – *Finding Lost Sheep*, 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?

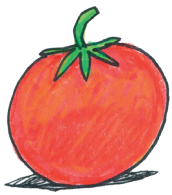
**Dig Deeper:** Draw a picture or write about your responses to these questions in your Garden Journal.

## Book of Common Prayer Study – *Lamb of God*, Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, Page 355. 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?

**Dig Deeper:** Draw a picture or write about your responses to these questions in your Garden Journal.



Day 5:

# HARVEST

**Leader:** Today we are going to make the connection between what we have seen through the work of Episcopal Relief and 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*

**Make this connection:** Animals are gifts from God, and from them we can learn a lot about what it means to be loved and care for by God in order to have abundant life. Ask a volunteer or older child to share one of these stories/tradition now:

## Old Testament Study – *Gleaning the Fields*, Ruth 2:1-18

For younger children, *The Children of God Storybook Bible* by the Rt. Rev. Desmond Tutu is recommended.

### 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?

**Note:** Ruth and Boaz became great-grandparents of King David and ancestors of Jesus!

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

## New Testament Study – *Feeding and Sharing*, 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?

**Dig Deeper:** Draw a picture or write about your responses to these questions in your Garden Journal.

## Book of Common Prayer Study

### *The Great Thanksgiving*, Page 361

Think about the sacrament of Holy Communion in our worship services and its relationship to abundant life. Hand children copies of the BCP and read the first section of *Eucharistic Prayer A* on page 361. 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.

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?

**Dig Deeper:** 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.