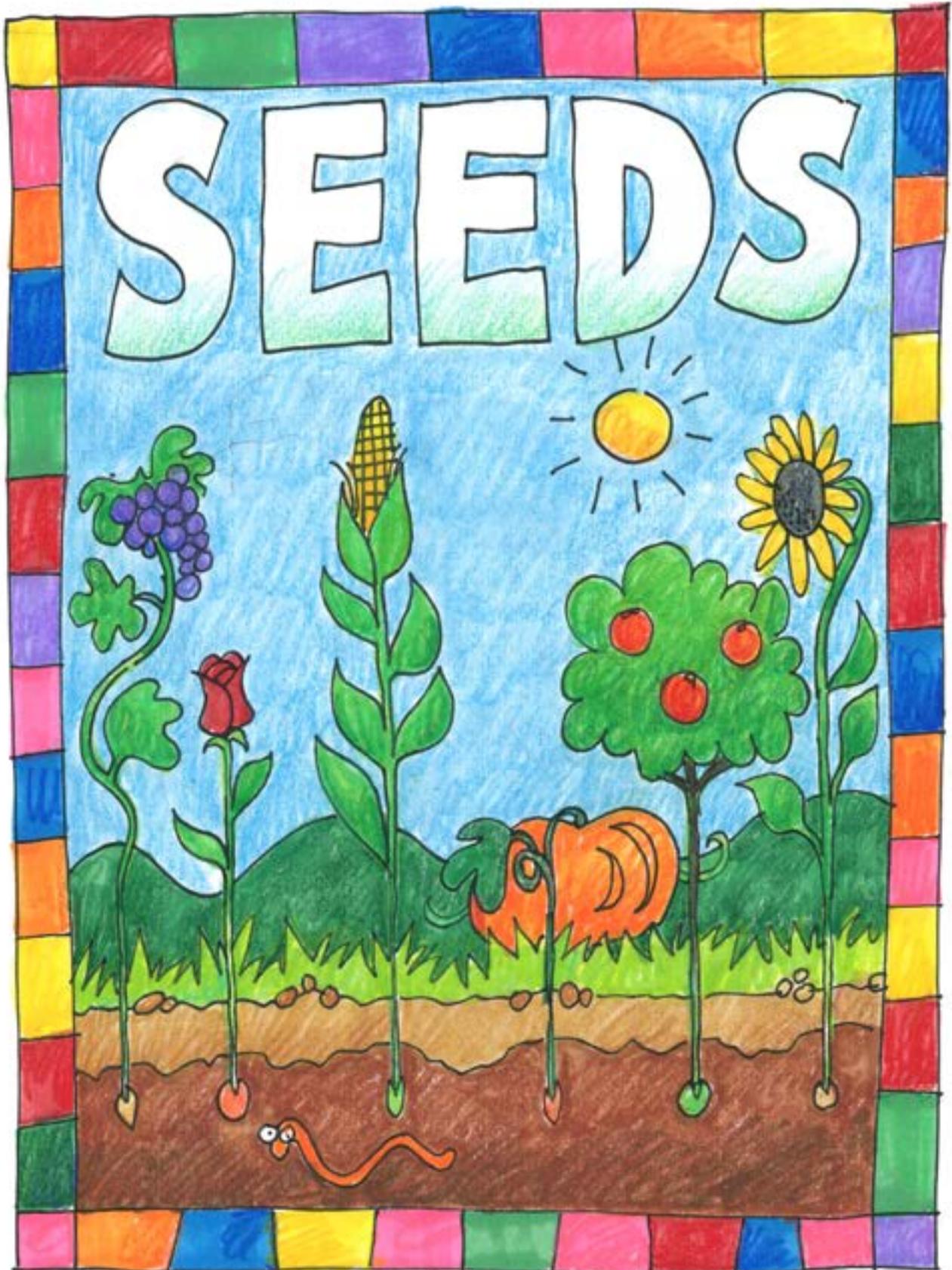
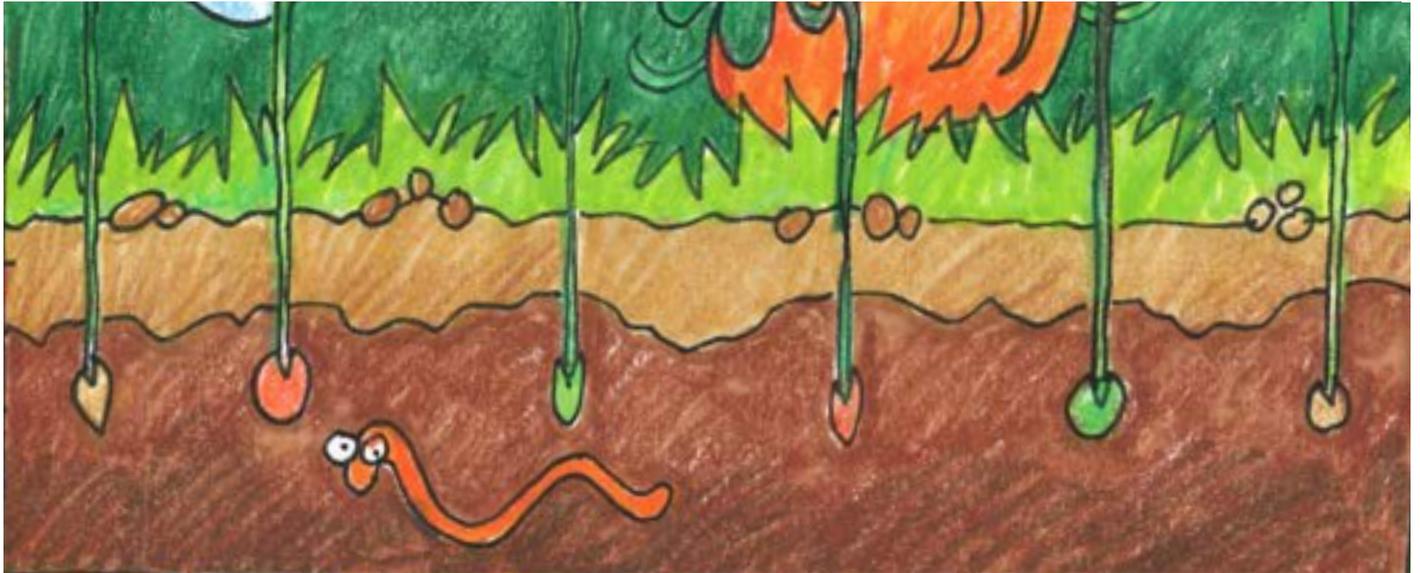




Episcopal
Relief & Development
Working Together for Lasting Change

**ONE THOUSAND
DAYS OF LOVE** ♥





VIRTUAL VBS DAY 3: SEEDS

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 seeds. 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

Seeds are the “babies” of the plant world, containing the embryos of new plants and coming complete with their own stored food for the journey of growth and development. Some seeds will grow to immense heights, as the mustard seed described in the New Testament parable. Others may not flourish at all. Still others grow right where we plant them and exactly as we expect, while some are blown by the wind to flourish in new and unlikely places. These seeds become fruits and vegetables to nourish us, fibers to cloth us and trees to provide wood for homes. The earth is filled with a vast variety of seeds we use for a vast variety of useful human purposes.

The Seeds lesson of the Abundant Life Garden Project® focuses on seeds in both literal and mystical senses. Some people in developing nations, like the sunflower growers in Kenya profiled in this module's Stories from the Field booklet selection, need a variety of seeds to provide for their families' nutrition and to sell crops for income. Those served by Episcopal Relief & Development also need “seed money” to enable them to start small businesses, purchase tools, install clean water systems and “grow” other projects that help them to become self-sufficient.



We all need the “seed” of the Holy Spirit to sustain us in God’s love, to help us grow in faith and to fuel us in our ministries to others. The parable of the mustard seed, found in all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), beautifully illustrates the notion of something small growing to amazing heights, offering shade and shelter to other creatures. The actual mustard seeds Jesus speaks of are so small, they appear as barely visible black specks, yet they grow as tall as a house. They are highly invasive. Like these “specks,” even small acts of kindness, small donations of cash, small words of wisdom or tiny verses of the Bible can have huge impacts in our lives and the lives of other and help us to grow to new heights.

This notion of the “seed” of God’s work within us also is reflected in the New Testament several times to illustrate basic Christian concepts. Seeds go through a period of dormancy before soaking up water, germinating and growing into a viable plant. This cycle correlates with our Christian concept of baptism and the work of the Holy Spirit (symbolized by water), with the seed’s burial and later emergence correlating with our concept of death and resurrection. The varying “dormancy” of seeds – periods of dryness, darkness within the soil and what appears to be stagnant growth – also might be seen as symbolizing periods of spiritual struggling and dryness as we wait for God’s own perfect timing to provide the conditions most favorable to our spiritual flourishing and continued ministry. Like seeds, the Gospel is meant to be “broadcast” – spread – to our own gardens, to new gardens, and perhaps to unlikely places.

Seeds, by their very nature, are designed by God to be carried elsewhere: by wind, by water, by humans and by animals. The seeds we plant by teaching this concept may result in spiritual growth in our own children, in support for local community gardens or food banks, or in help so that strangers thousands of miles away receive the boost needed to diversify crops or buy supplies to start a new business. We don’t know – and that is both the beauty and the mystery of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Cynthia Coe & Jerusalem Jackson Greer

Garden Goals:

In this third session, families will learn that God gives us the tools needed to have and share abundant life – including the gift of seeds, a gift which teaches us many lessons related to patience, potential, and nourishment.

Zone #1: Gather – Large Group Digital Gathering

Supplies Needed

Your Garden Wall, pale yellow sticky notes, markers and crayons, a large clear bowl, and a cup of seeds (*can be grass seed, sunflower seeds, or bird seed*)

Home Supplies Needed for Families

Pale yellow sticky notes, markers and crayons, a bowl, and a small cup of seeds (*can be grass seed, sunflower seeds, or bird seed if needed.*)



Why Seeds Matter

Preparing: Ask the children – with the help of an adult if needed – to gather an empty bowl and a small cup of seeds. 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 how seeds are used, or to draw images of seeds on their sticky notes. 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 soil. Once all children have arrived and participated in this activity, ask them to make sure they have their bowl and cup of seeds.

Opening Prayer:

Place your clear bowl where the kids can see. Pour your seeds 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 Seeds! 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 seeds, letting the seeds fall through their fingers, back into the bowl, and invites the children to do so as well. Encourage children to notice the size and texture of the seeds.

Leader: *The Lord be with you!*

Children and adults: *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 Facilitator's Guide for song ideas)



Theme Introduction and Review

Leader: Welcome to the Abundant Life Garden Project® offered by Episcopal Relief & Development. Can someone tell me what our first lesson was about? (Pause, then continue)

Yes! We learned all about the gift of abundant life and water!

Do you remember 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)

Next, we learned about the gift of Soil!

Can someone tell me something we learned about Soil? (Pause, then continue)

And does anyone remember some ways we can help prepare the soil for growing?

What part of our lives is like soil? (Our hearts!)

What do you think today's lesson is about? (Pause, then continue)

Yes, you guessed it! Seeds! Today we are going to learn the very important role in the garden that seeds have and how they are a tool that God gives us to share abundant life with others.

SONG(S) MAY BE SUNG HERE

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 if one of the stories is read 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 story.

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

Print Option

Read "Sowing Seeds of Stability,"

(Available in the Stories from the Field Booklet from the work of Episcopal Relief & Development.)



You might have older children or youth who are good readers take turns reading the paragraphs of this brief true story.

After the story is read, take time to review together

- *What gifts were Beatrice and her grandchildren given?*
- *Was the money given to her a kind of seed?*
- *Was the training to learn about sunflowers and beehives a kind of seed?*

Digital Option:

Watch: ["Beekeeping in Kenya"](#)

Questions for Reflection:

- *How did the small business loans described in the film serve as "seeds" in this community?*
- *How could these "seeds" grow and provide food and shelter to people in this community?*
- *What could you do to provide "seeds" to others?*

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 track per day. If you want to expand your time you can offer more than one of these of each session.

Home Supplies needed depending on the track: Bible, 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 & Development, and our faith.

Old Testament Study – Receiving the Gifts of Seeds

Ask for a volunteer to read Genesis 1:11-12.

This is one of the creation stories of the Bible.



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 their Garden Journals.

New Testament Study – Seeds of Growth

Read 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 Journal

Book of Common Prayer Study – Serving Seeds as Food

Turn to page 305 of the Book of Common Prayer.

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: In your Garden Journal, 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.

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 them in your VBS-in-a-Box kit.

Learning Activity – What Shall We Do with Seeds Given Us?

Home Supplies – *Seeds, and the printable page “What Shall We Do with Seeds”*

Form a circle, standing. Pass the bowl of seeds around the circle. Each person should take some seeds. Some may get more than others: that is okay.



Next, work together to fill out the *"What Shall We Do with Seeds"* printable page.

The point of this exercise is not to reinvent the global economy, but to get children thinking about the needs of the world and especially those who have very few resources.

When you have finished, talk about what you have learned through this activity. What surprised you?

Creative Activity – Bird Feeder

Supplies needed:

- One pinecone or empty toilet paper roll per child (believe it or not you can buy empty toilet paper rolls online.)
- One sticky substance such as peanut butter, almond butter, cookie butter, or shortening.
- Paper plates, plastic knives and small plastic cups.
- Bird seed.
- Yarn and scissors.
- Cornmeal.

Begin by sharing with the children the first three questions and answers from the Catechism on page 846 of The Book of Common Prayer. Talk about what it means to be a good caretaker of creation.

Ask "How is taking care of creation a way that we can spread the seed of God's love to others?" (When we care for creation, we care for each other by making sure that everyone has enough to eat, drink etc.)

One way we care for creation is by making sure that all God's creatures are fed – including the birds of the air! Which is why, today, we are making bird feeders.

As it turns out, seeds are good for many things – not just growing plants! Seeds are an important food source for many animals, like birds and insects. Just like we were created to share God's abundant life in many different ways (with our words, our actions, and our attitudes), seeds were created to benefit many living creatures in many different ways. Today we are going to make bird feeders in order to be good caretakers of the birds around around our church and homes.

Directions

1. Give each family member a paper plate and plastic knife.
2. On their plate place a large scoop of the sticky substance, a pinecone or empty toilet paper roll, and a piece of yarn.
3. Have everyone tie their yarn to their pinecone or through the hollow part of their toilet paper roll (string the yarn through the roll, then tie the ends together forming a triangle shape).
4. Next, have them spread their sticky substance all over their pinecone or roll.
5. Hand each person a small plastic cup of bird seed and a new plate.
6. Have them pour their seeds over their pinecone or roll. Keep working until all of the sticky substance has been covered.
7. Weather permitting, hang the bird feeders around your neighborhood or yard. Say a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of seeds as you hang them.



Contemplation Activity – Meditation

Begin by asking family members to sit “crisscross applesauce” or by 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: *Close your eyes and listen to a story told by Jesus....*

“The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” (Matthew 13:31-32)

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

- *How are you like the mustard seed?*
- *In what ways could you grow to provide homes and shelter to others?*
- *In what ways could you help to do something that seems small but could grow into something huge?*

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 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 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

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.

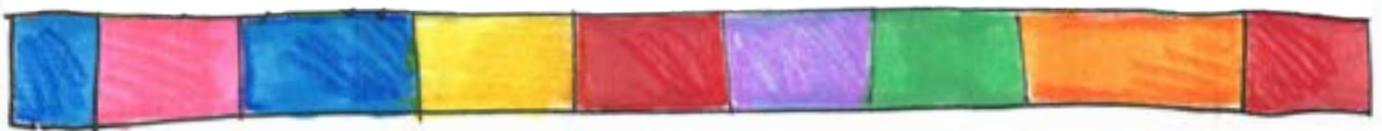
1. Work with your garden coordinator to determine what sort of seeds need to be started indoors or planted directly in the garden. Have those supplies on hand (seeds, potting soil, starter pots, water, spades, etc.) Once you are finished planting, close your time at the garden by praying Prayer 29 For Agriculture on page 824 in The Book of Common Prayer.
2. If there is no planting to be done, show the kids sample seeds for each plant currently growing in your garden. Let them tape or glue one of each seed into their Garden Journal. Next, have them draw a replica of each seed underneath. Finally ask them to make a notation under the drawing of the seeds name and location in the garden. (Example: northwest corner of far-right tomato bed.)

Close your time together by discussing what area or skill in their life they would like to see grow (a talent, an attitude, their faith.) Ask them to make a note about this “seed” desire of theirs in their journals, and to write one thing they would like help with as they grow. Ask them to share with the group if they feel comfortable doing so.

Do you have a local artist, biologist, or natural scientist in your parish or community? Consider inviting them to help host a video teaching how to draw seeds or plants.

3. If the garden bed has been freshly planted, have kids create Garden Markers for each plant. Use inexpensive wooden spoons, craft paint and permanent markers to create your signs. Coat the top half of the spoons with the paint, allow to dry. Once the paint has dried, you can use the permanent markers to write and draw the names and shapes of the plant they will be marking.

While you are working, engage the children in a discussion about that the ways we mark our growth (birthdays, graduations, new belts in martial arts, advancement on teams, etc.) Talk about how we mark our growth at church as well through the sacrament of Confirmation. Discuss the importance of Confirmation and build excitement for the process among the kids.



Nutrients (Snack) Activity

Nuts and Seed Dippers

- Apples Slices
- Dips such as chocolate, hazelnut spread, cream cheese spread
- Seeds such as sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, poppy seeds.

Allow kids to dip apple slices into the dips, then top with a sprinkle of the seeds.

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 of the seeds – 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 seeds and to use this prayer to close your day together.

Closing Prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for the gift of seeds. Through the gift of the amazing variety of seeds on earth, you feed our hunger, give us shelter and clothing, help us to wisely use our soil and give us beauty and pleasure. Through these gifts, you 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 seeds of hope and nourishment, and help us to do our part in serving others through this gift. In Christ's name, Amen

Home Activity:

Send the Abundant Home & Hearth handout *Seeds of Faith* to each family – either printed in the VBS-in-a-Box kit or digitally in order for them to continue learning about Seeds.

