

The Abundant Life Garden Project®

offered by Episcopal Relief & Development

WEEK ONE

Water to Water

Understanding the Gift of Abundant Life Through Water

Welcome to the first week of home exploration based on the **Abundant Life Garden Project®** offered by Episcopal Relief & Development. This week's interactive, Scripture-based module focuses on water.

Our lesson this week explored 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 your children were 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 were reminded of the many images of water in Scripture and our sacraments of baptism and Holy Eucharist. Scripture indeed is full of water images—from the waters of creation and the crossing of the Red Sea and the River Jordan by the ancient Israelites in the Old Testament.

Changing of water to wine and the water of Jesus' baptism in the New Testament to the presence of water in 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 destruction 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



Purpose

The purpose of this sheet is to help you and your child connect the dots between the experiences of water in your home, the significance of water in your faith, and the work Episcopal Relief and Development is doing to bring clean water to developing areas around the world.

Bible Connection

For children age 6 and older: 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)

For children age 5 and under: The bible tells us that Jesus gives us living water!

Water Bottle Bank

Carefully, near the top of the bottle, cut a 1” x 1/4” slit with your craft knife.

Together with your child, color the label below using markers or crayons.

Finally, cut out the label and wrap it around the water bottle, securing it to the bottle with tape.

Use your new Water Bank to collect loose change to bring to you churches collection for Water provisions.

SUPPLIES

Empty bottle of water, craft knife, scissors, markers or crayons, tape



QUESTIONS

 to ponder as you work:

- **How do we use water in church?** (Baptism, mixing water with the wine during Eucharist, the washing of the Celebrant’s hands)
- **What does water symbolize?** (Birth or new life)
- **Do we have easy access to water?**
- **What things might it be hard for us to do if we didn’t have water in our home?**
- **How do families in other parts of the world get water into their home?**
- **What can we do to help the work being done by Episcopal Relief and Development to bring clean water to those with less access?** (Collecting change in your bank is a good start!)

Once you have finished creating your bank and added the first few coins, say this prayer of intention together:

Prayer

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.



WEEK TWO

Good Dirt

Understanding the Gift of Abundant Life Through Soil



The land we tread produces our food, serves as a reservoir for our water and provides a habitat for a vast diversity of organisms—ourselves included. Our use of soil determines whether our crops flourish, whether erosion washes away vital nutrients into our water sources, whether we live in polluted or clean environments and whether we have enough food, clean water and lumber to sustain our lives and those of other creatures on this earth. While seemingly a mundane topic, soil actually masks mysteries of life on earth. Ordinary soil contains a vast array of microbes we cannot see. Seeds, as part of their life cycle, germinate and grow underneath the ground—a mystery of life taking place out of sight—until the plants flourish with new growth. Soil is always changing, always subject to the elements of wind and rain and often subject to being picked up and moved somewhere else. These images might speak to our own spiritual lives as we are moved, inspired and even transplanted by the work of the Holy Spirit, working quietly like soft breezes and gentle rains, or in thunderstorms or flash floods. We might see the mystery of darkness in our lives, where growth and new life may be occurring unacknowledged or even unbeknownst to us. Like the Water module preceding it, this teaching unit addressed its topic on both literal and symbolic levels. In many parts of the world served by Episcopal Relief & Development, farmers experience wide shifts between plentiful rains and drought, famine and relative prosperity. The erosion of soil and the subsequent loss of nutrients in it often are a challenge, as is the lack of effective tools to work the land. Plots of land owned by individual farmers may be small and only effective in producing food for sustenance. Soil is indeed a gift from God. Those who live on land cultivated for crops are mindful of this gift and dependent on God for their livelihood each day. For those of us who do not live and work as farmers, we hope this teaching module will guide children and their leaders in thinking about the labor, tools, knowledge and gifts of nature required to till the soil successfully and produce crops we all need to survive. We also hope you and your children will think about how, in your own lives, you might “till” their environments to best allow the work of the Holy Spirit to sustain and maintain your lives as part of the body of Christ.

We hope the Soil unit will be enjoyable and enriching for your entire household.

Cynthia Coe

Purpose

The purpose of this sheet is to help you and your child dig deeper into the work Episcopal Relief and Development is doing to bring healthy soil practices around the world.

Bible Connection

For children age 6 and older: “When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: ‘A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.’ As he said this, he called out, ‘Let anyone with ears to hear listen!’”

(Luke 8:4-8)

For children age 5 and under: May our hearts be like good soil where God’s love can grow!

Dirt Dough

Directions:

In a large bowl, mix dry ingredients thoroughly.

Next, add in wet ingredients one at a time.

Stir until well blended.

Engage in imaginary play with your dirt dough by making garden beds (you can use dried beans and rice grains as your seeds), rocks, and mountains.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups All-purpose cups flour

1 cup salt

1/2 cup of coffee grounds

1/4 tsp Brown Food Coloring

2 teaspoons Cream of Tartar

1 cup hot water

2 Tablespoons vegetable oil

QUESTIONS

to ponder as you work:

- **How important is good soil to growing healthy plants? Very!**
- **Does everyone who wants to grow food have access to healthy soil? No**
- **What are some things that destroy healthy soil?**
Weather erosion, overpopulation, cutting down too many trees.
- **How can we help people around the world have better soil?**
Take care of our soil, save our change in our Water Bank to give to Episcopal Relief and Development to help aid their efforts at curbing soil damage.

Once you have finished playing with your dough, say this prayer of intention together:

Prayer

**Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil. Help us to know how best to use the gifts of land given us, and bless those who work the land to grow food. Help us use our land generously and to be mindful of those in need of land. Help us to always use our land in peace, and to remember You who gave it to us. Please guide us in preparing our hearts for your love to grow within us.
In Christ’s name, Amen.**



WEEK THREE

Seeds of Faith

Understanding the Gift of Abundant Life Through Seeds

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 focuses on seeds in both literal and mystical senses. People in need in developing nations, like the sunflower growers in Kenya profiled in this module’s Story from the Field, need a variety of seeds to provide for their own 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. Before germination and growth into a viable plant, seeds must soak up water and go through a period of dormancy, followed by a time of “emergence.” 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 might 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



Purpose

The purpose of this sheet is to help you and your child dig deeper into the work Episcopal Relief and Development is doing to bring healthy seed practices around the world.

Bible Connection

For children age 6 and older: “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)

For children age 5 and under: There is no seed or person that is too small to help share God’s abundant life with others!

Cookie Cutter Birdseed Feeders

Directions:

1. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper
2. Let children choose the cookie cutters they want to use and place them on the parchment paper
3. Dissolve gelatin in a pot of simmering water (about 3 cups.) Stir until completely dissolved.
4. Add birdseed to a large bowl.
5. Pour gelatin water over the birdseed.
6. Mix together, stir until the birdseed is completely coated. (Add more birdseed if needed. It needs to be a thick mixture, not runny.)
7. Using small spoons, scoop the birdseed into the cookie cutters, filling them all the way.
8. Pack the birdseed tightly into the cookie cutters so that there are no air pockets.
9. Using your toothpicks poke holes all the way through where you want the top of the feeder to be. This is where you will thread the string after they dry.
10. Let the seed mixture dry for a few hours, then turn them over to dry on the other side.
11. Once they have dried completely (this might take overnight depending on humidity) run your string through the holes and hang your feeders in your trees!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 envelopes of gelatin
- 2 cups water
- 3 cups of birdseed appropriate for the birds in your area
- Hollow cookie cutters, no handles
- String
- Parchment paper lined baking sheet
- Toothpicks
- Sauce pan
- Water
- Large bowl for mixing
- Spoons

QUESTIONS to ponder as you work:

- **How important are seeds? Very!**
- **Who benefits from seeds?** People who grow food to eat, us because we eat food from seeds, birds and insects who eat seeds, farmers who can sell their produce.
- **How can we help people around the world who need access to good seeds?** Save our change in our Water Bank to give to Episcopal Relief and Development to help aid their efforts in providing seeds for struggling farmers.
- **What are the “seeds” of love that we grow in our hearts?** Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Once you have finished your activity say this prayer of intention together:

Prayer

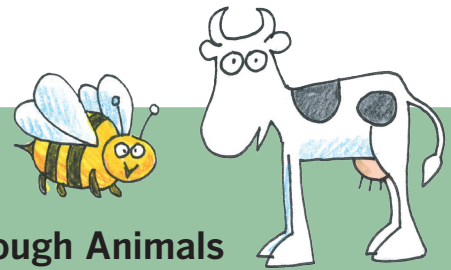
We thank you, Lord, for the gift of Seeds. In our hearts you plant seeds of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, and in the physical world you provide seeds that provide life for creations of land, sea, and air. Help us we pray, to help share the gift of seeds -physical and spiritual and to help us to do our part in serving others through this gift. In Christ’s name, Amen.



WEEK FOUR

All Creature Great and Small

Understanding the Gift of Abundant Life Through Animals



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 provided in 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, run 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.

If your family is 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.

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 program.

Cynthia Coe

Purpose

The purpose of this sheet is to help you and your child dig deeper into the work Episcopal Relief and Development is doing to bring healthy and sustainable Animal practices around the world.

Bible Connection

For children age 6 and older: “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

For children age 5 and under: Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we are his sheep. He cares for us always!

We are His Sheep

Directions:

1. Trace your hands on the black paper - younger children may need help with this.
2. Cut the hands out.
3. Turn the hand prints upside down, so that the “fingers” are pointing down - this is your sheep body.
4. Next, glue the cotton balls OR use white paint on thumbs, to create the fluffy part of the sheep. Fill in the palm portion of each hand cut-out with the white thumbprints or cotton balls.
5. Using the white chalk draw an eye and a smile on the thumb portion of your hand cut-out.

Let dry, then hang over your beds as a reminder that the Good Shepherd is always caring for you.

SUPPLIES

Black paper

Pencils

Glue or Glue Sticks

Cotton Balls or White craft paint

White chalk

Scissors



QUESTIONS

 to ponder as you work:

- **How important are Animals? Very!**
- **Who benefits from healthy Animals? Everyone!**
- **How can we help people around the world who want to raise healthy animals?** Save our change in our Water Bank to give to Episcopal Relief and Development to help aid their efforts in providing animal and animal care training.
- **Jesus is the Good Shepherd that cares for us, his sheep. How can we be like Christ and care for others with the same love?** Be kind, be gentle, share what we have, take care of creation.

Say this prayer of intention as you close your time together:

Prayer

We thank you, Lord, for the gift of Animals. Thank you for the comfort that they provide, through their presence and their gifts. Help us we pray, to care for and enjoy our animals with fairness, respect and a grateful heart. Please bless our attempts to help others gain access and training to raise their own animals, and our attempts at sharing the gifts of abundant life our neighbors. In Christ's name, Amen.



WEEK FIVE



Harvest Time

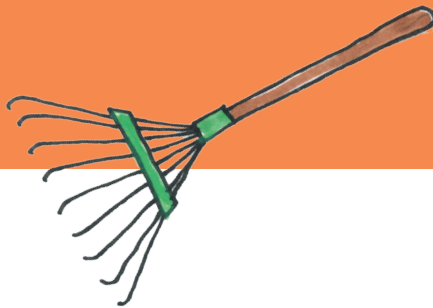
Understanding the Gift of Abundant Life Through the Harvest

Harvest is a time of celebration, marking the end of a growing season and a time of feasting on the fruits of our labors. This next-to-last module of program materials likewise celebrates our Abundant Life Garden Project program as the end of a “growing season” among our children.

As you celebrate together, 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.

We hope that you are able to celebrate with your children’s class and perhaps your church, the end of this program and your harvest in some way, whether by a special a farm-to-table meal, a church-family potluck dinner, or an intergenerational celebration of Holy Eucharist within your group or church family. But even after the celebration is over, we also hope you and your family will continue to do the hard work of serving Christ in all persons, striving for justice and peace among people all over the world and remembering those who hunger, those who thirst, children who are orphaned and those in need of medical care.

Cynthia Coe



Purpose

The purpose of this sheet is to help you and your child dig deeper into the work Episcopal Relief and Development is doing to bring healthy and sustainable Harvest practices around the world.

Bible Connection

For children age 6 and older: “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

For children age 5 and under: Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we are his sheep. He cares for us always!

Grateful Mobiles

Directions:

1. Gather your supplies.
2. Cut-out fruit and vegetable shapes from construction paper: ideas include - Corn, Apples, Oranges, Green Beans, Tomatoes (many patterns can be found online if needed)
3. Write things you are thankful for on each piece of produce.
4. Punch hole near the top of each cut-out.
5. Using yarn, tie the cut-outs to your stick at various lengths.
6. Also using yarn, tie your additional treasures to the stick
7. Tie one piece of yarn on each end of the stick, then tie together, forming a triangle “handle”.
8. Hang on a wall in your home where everyone will see it often!

SUPPLIES

A long stick from outside or a dow rod

Construction Paper in a variety of colors

Markers or crayons

Scissors

Hole Punch

Yarn, string or twine

Other treasures such as acorns, small pinecones, empty seed packets



QUESTIONS to ponder as you work:

- **How important is the harvest? Very!**
- **Who benefits from healthy Harvest?** We do, farmers and gardeners do, people animals do.
- **How can we help people around the world have healthy harvest?**
Save our change in our Water Bank to give to Episcopal Relief and Development to help aid their efforts in providing growing education and funding.
- **How can we also have a healthy harvest in our spiritual lives?**
Loving God, attending worship, sharing Christ love with others.

Say this prayer of intention as you close your time together:

Prayer

We thank you, Lord, for the gifts of the Harvest. Thank you nourishing us with healthy food, for those who do the labor of harvesting, and for those who prepare the fruits and vegetables before they reach our table. Please bless our attempts to harvest and share the fruits of the spirit from our own hearts and bless our efforts in supporting the work for harvesters around the world. In Christ's name, Amen.