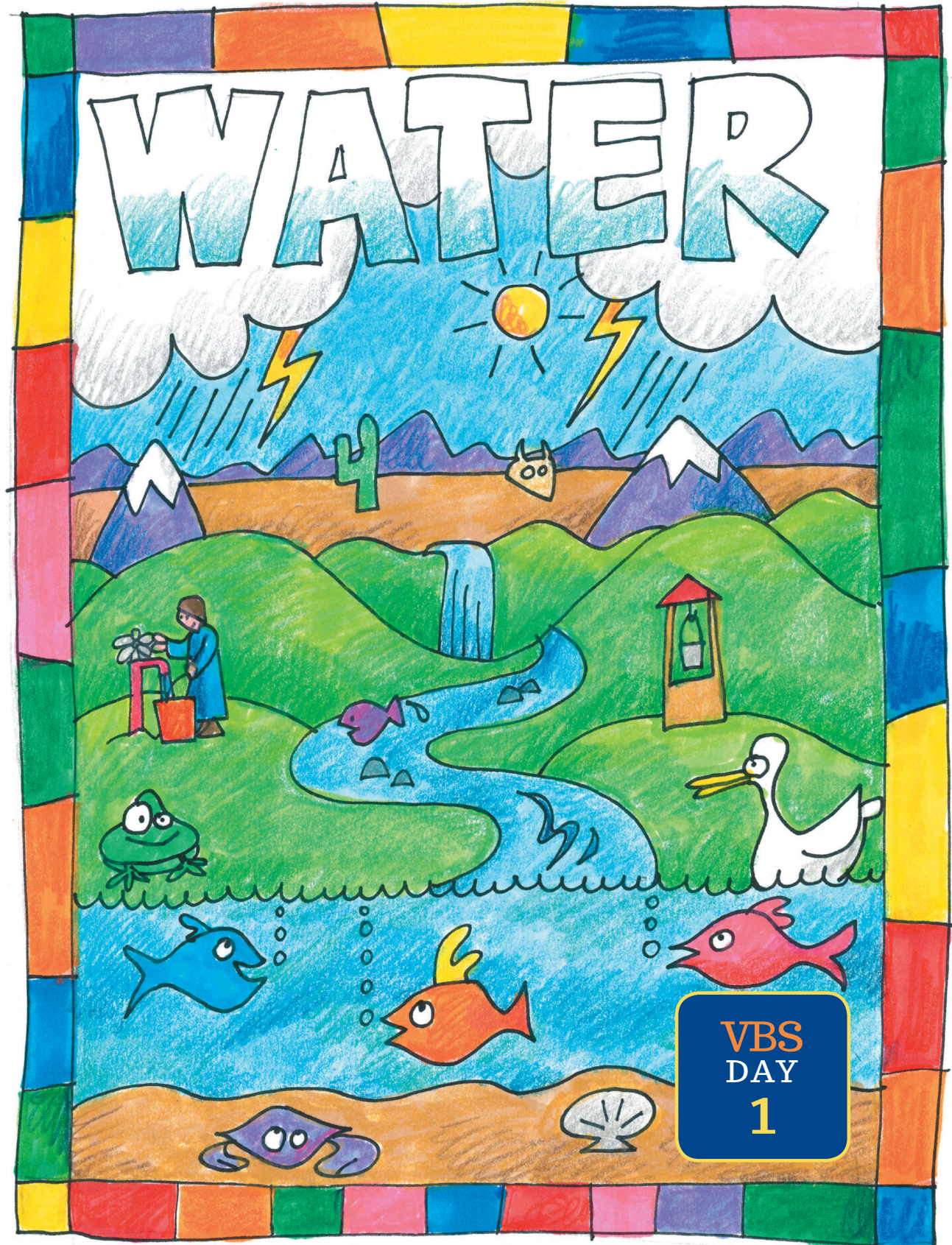


The Abundant Life Garden Project®



Vacation Bible School

The Abundant Life Garden Project®

offered by Episcopal Relief & Development

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Episcopal Relief & Development would like to thank the following for their contribution to

The Abundant Life Garden Project®

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Original artwork and illustration: The Rev. Jay Sidebotham

Design and layout: Bradley Wilson



Vacation Bible School Day 1

WATER

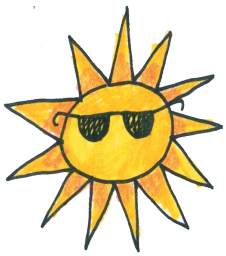
Understanding the Lesson

Gardening Note for Teachers

This week's interactive, Scripture-based module will introduce your VBS kids and volunteers to the work of Episcopal Relief & Development in the area of water. Episcopal Relief & Development hopes that these materials will invite you to partner with us in our ministry of healing a hurting world, inform you about our work in many parts of the world we serve, and even transform you and your congregation or community.

This lesson plan, Water, introduces children to 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, children will be 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 will be 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 to the 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 as we work together for lasting change.

- Cynthia Coe & Jerusalem Jackson Greer



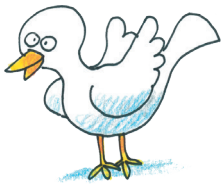
Rhythm of Learning

The rhythm of learning for these lessons is based upon the same structure as a Eucharist service, following a simple **Gather, Listen, Do, Go** format. Two of the zones - **Gather and Do are the Large Group Zones, Listen and Do are laid out as Growing Zones** that the children will rotate through. Children are divided into Learning Pods according to whatever formula you feel is best according to the options given in the *Facilitators Guide*.



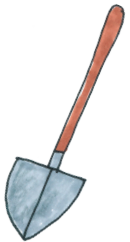
Gather

This zone includes welcoming activities and the lessons introduction.



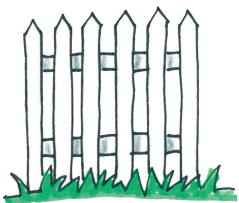
Listen

This zone includes multiple storytelling options. Please choose one "Story from the Field" and one "Story from our Faith" to share.



Do

This zone includes three activities to help children respond to what they have heard in the stories, and dig deeper into the lessons topic. You may want to set up each activity as a Growing Zone and have children rotate through in their Learning Pods, or you may choose to do only one or two. This zone also includes an interactive Community Garden option.



Go

This zone prepares children for taking what they have learned back into their everyday lives through prayer and a charge to action.



GARDEN GOALS

Children will learn that God gives us gifts for abundant life, including water. It is important that we care for and share this gift with others.

Growing Accommodations

The theme introduction is written to include questions and answers between leaders and participants. If you are leading a large group (20 or more students) we recommend that you ask for volunteers to join you at the front to engage with you in the Q&A portion. For more group size accommodation ideas refer to the *Facilitators Guide*.



Gather

Large Group

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Tri-fold display board in white or Garden Wall (as outlined in the *Facilitators Guide*)
- Two shades of blue sticky notes
- Markers
- Water activity area



Welcome Activity:

“How do we use water?”

As kids enter the learning space, have volunteers ask them to each write or draw an image that represents how water is used on the sticky notes. Each child may write or draw as many representations as there is time for. Have them add the sticky notes to the top ¼ of the tri-fold Garden Display Board or the Garden Wall.

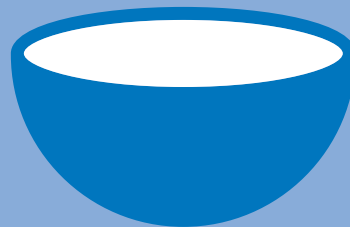
Place a large bowl of clean water in the middle of your circle. If your group is too large for everyone to participate, have the water in a large clear bowl somewhere everyone can see (on stage, in front of the altar etc.) If you are inside a Nave you may want to use the baptismal font. Select a few volunteer kids (from each age group) and an adult assistant before you begin, to help you lead this prayer.

Early Finishers: Children who finish before the others and need their attention redirected may work on the Water coloring sheet provided in the *Printables Packet*.

Once all the children have arrived gather together in a circle for the opening prayer.

Leader: As you may have guessed, today’s lesson is going to be all about the gift of Water! Let’s begin our lesson for asking for God’s presence to be with us as we learn and explore this gift. Can I get three or four volunteers to help me lead today’s prayer? The leader then dips their hands into the water, and invites the volunteer children to do so as well.

Opening Prayer:



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!

SONG(S) MAY BE SUNG HERE - *River of Life* is recommended.



Gather

Large Group



Theme Introduction

Welcome to the Abundant Life Garden Project®

Vacation Bible School offered by Episcopal Relief & Development. For the next few days we are going to learn what it means to have and to share the gift of abundant life and we are going to use the example of a garden as our guide to learning!

Can someone tell me what you think the term "abundant life" means?

(take a few ideas, affirm or redirect as needed.)

Let's start by thinking about the word Abundant. Abundant means to have plenty, to have more than enough, more than is needed. It means having enough of something to share again and again.

What are some things that you can see around our space that we have an abundance of?

Allow children to answer here (they might say things like trees, flowers, grass, cars, chairs, crayons...)

What is something that we can't always see, but through God, we always have an abundance of?

That's right! We have an abundance of Love!

Great! Now, let's pair the word Abundant with the word Life.

What do you think it means to "live an abundant life"?

Here is one definition that I like:

"Through God's love, we will always have enough to share!"

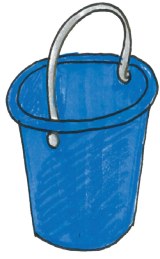
Now, can a few people tell me what are all the parts of a garden are?

What might you find if you visited a garden or a farm?

Allow multiple answers here (What you are looking for specifically is: Water, Soil, Seeds, Harvest, and Animals, but all answers should be validated.)

These are great answers! Did you know that our life together is like a garden? Well, it is! And thankfully, God gives us all the tools we need to take care of this garden, helping it to be full of all the things we each need. Today we are going to be learning about Water and its role in the garden and how it is a tool that God gives us to share abundant life with others! Are you ready to get started?

Dismiss Pods one at a time to their first Growing Zone in whichever order you have decided on.



Listen

Growing Zones

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Stories from the Field Booklet or a way to show the digital options, pens, coloring pencils, crayons, and Garden Journals



Growing Zone 1:

Stories from the Field

You will have two options in this zone, 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. If you choose the digital option make sure that your volunteer assigned to this Growing Station is comfortable using technology.

Print Option:

Building Access to Clean Water



(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. After the story is read, take time to review together.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- *What do you have to do to get water?*
- *What would your family have to do differently if you had to walk 10 minutes to a stream to get water?*
- *How would you feel about walking to get water?*
- *What could you, your family, your church, or your community do to help people who do not have easy access to clean drinking water?*

Dig Deeper: Have kids write or draw their answer to the last question in their *Garden Journals*.

Digital Options:

Wells in Nicaragua



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0NjSvtKQhY&lr=1&uid=9H4DbjpmVd3l-1e--txDg>

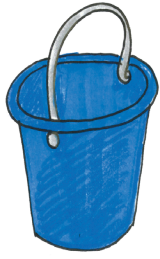
Water and Sanitation in Nicaragua



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9riTPKTfT4&lr=1&uid=9H4DbjpmVd3l-1e--txDg>

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- *What do you have to do to get water?*
- *What would your family have to do differently if you had to walk 10 minutes to a stream to get water?*
- *How would you feel about walking to get water?*
- *What could you, your family, your church, or your community do to help people who do not have easy access to clean drinking water?*



Listen

Growing Zones

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bible, Book of Common Prayer, Blank Paper or Garden Journals, Markers



Growing Zone 2:

Stories from our Faith

You have three options for this Station - 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.

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. Let's learn more about one of these stories/tradition now.

After these readings: 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.

Old Testament Study

Water from the Rock Exodus 17:1-7

Read, or ask an older child to look up and read

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?*

New Testament Study

The Baptism of Jesus Mark 1: 4-13

Read, or an ask an older child to look up and read

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?*

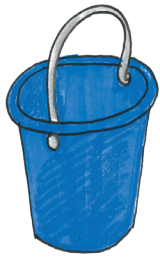
Book of Common Prayer Study

Thanksgiving Over the Water

Find "Thanksgiving Over the Water" on pages 306-307 of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

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?*



Do

Growing Zones

There are three options for Do - A learning activity, a creative activity, and a contemplation activity. If you have time and space we suggest creating Growing Zones for all three. If not, choose two that best fit your children and volunteer capabilities. There is also a fourth option, for those who have a church or community garden.

Learning Activity:

The Water Walk

The group work for this unit is an experiential exercise in learning the difficulties of walking up to 15 minutes in order to get water for drinking, cooking and cleaning.

Your field trip will be determined by your physical location, safety considerations, weather and other parameters of your church, neighborhood, climate and terrain.

However, we recommend you include these elements in your trip: Consider physical abilities and limitations of participants. If some in your group are unable to make the journey, ask them to serve as timekeepers or prayer partners for the rest of the group, or they might help finish up lessons. (Make sure to not leave children alone—leave them with responsible adults.)

Have a plan for the water that is brought back: Perhaps you could fill the Baptismal font of your church, water a garden, clean your workspace, or simply water a patch of ground when you return. The goal is to not waste it!

Remind children that while this can be a fun activity, this is actually real life for many people in the world. Consider beginning and ending your journey at the Baptismal font, to emphasize the spiritual nature of this exercise.



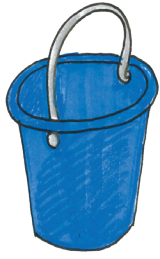
Directions:

1. **Carry an empty bucket** (one for each child or ask children to take turns with what is available) to a water source that is about 5-7 minutes away (this could be a pond, a faucet at house nearby, a spring, a well, a creek, a water hose)
2. **Fill the buckets with water** (make sure to consider each child's ability when filling their bucket. You want it to be challenging but not impossible.)
3. **Haul the buckets** back to a place where it could be used.

When your journey is complete, take a few minutes to ask the children.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- *What was it like to have to walk to get water?*
- *What was it like knowing that if you didn't make this walk, you wouldn't get water?*
- *Did you treat the water differently, knowing that if you spilled it, you would have to walk back for more?*
- *What will you think about the next time you need water?*



Do

Growing Zones

Creative Activity:

Cleaning Water

Our access to water and our traditions in church, are some of the ways that we are able to live lives of abundant life. And yet access to clean water and proper sanitation remains one of the hardest challenges for millions of people in the world.

Let's take a closer look at what it takes to create clean water. Have small groups of children take turns making a water filter (or if necessary the class can sit in a circle and watch as you do it).

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- 1 cup of gravel
- 1 cup of sand
- Handful of grass clippings and other green matter
- 12-16 coffee filters
- Clean flower pot with hole in the bottom
- Transparent jug or empty 2 liter bottle with the top cut off
- Large measuring cup or pouring jug

Water Filter Experiment Directions:

1. Put 3 or 4 coffee filters, then 1/4 cup of sand, and 1/4 cup of gravel in a clean flower pot
2. Place the flower pot in a larger transparent container so the filtered water can drip through and the children can observe it
3. In a large measuring cup, place dirt, bits of plant matter and water
4. Mix it up to make muddy water
5. Place the flower pot over empty jug or liter bottle.
6. Pour the muddy water into the flower pot
7. Have children observe the color of the water dripping out the bottom of the pot into the transparent container
8. Ask questions – Where did the dirt go? Why did cleaner water come out?
9. Take the filter apart and try to find the dirt and bits of plant matter

Keep Learning:

Try arranging the layers in a different order and compare the color of the filtered water.



Do

Growing Zones

Contemplative Activity:

Meditation



Begin by asking the children to sit “criss-cross applesauce” or to lie flat on their backs, next, ask them to take three deep breaths and then, if they comfortable, 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 a story about Jesus.*

Let’s think about this precious gift of water. Please close your eyes, take three deep breaths, and think about the words I have just read.

Listen to a story about Jesus:

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

What pictures of water come into your mind?

Which pictures of this story give you joy?

What do you think Jesus means by Living Water?

What might God be saying to you through these words?

Repeat the first two steps. Have the children 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 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 having 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** as offered by Episcopal Relief & Development.

Local Garden Activity

If you have a local garden in your church or neighborhood, here are three interactive and intergenerational activity options:



1

Ask your garden coordinator if you could water the garden. Gather enough watering cans and containers, or hoses and nozzles to give multiple children at a time, a chance to water. You may have your coordinator talk to the kids about how different plants need to be watered in different ways (Tomato plants need water at their roots for instance.)

Talk a bit about just like God has created plants to be different, God also created people to be different - which is why people, just like plants need different things in order to grow. As you water the garden ask the kids to each share one thing that makes them feel loved - notice aloud how diverse their answers are and model celebrating those differences.

Intergenerational connection: Invite parishioners who love to garden to come and help model how to water.

2

Consider making a Rain Barrel with the help of your garden coordinator or a handy person. This can be a great hands-on project for the kids. If you have younger children, have them participate by painting the container that you will use. Remind the children that by collecting rainwater, to use during dry seasons, you are being good stewards of creation.

As you are working, discuss with the children the ways in which God waters our soil - through the love of others, through the encouragement of art, of music, of playing outside, through kind words, hugs ... see if the children can add to this list!

Intergenerational connection: Invite college students or young adults to come and help lead the painting portion of this activity.

3

Under the leadership of your garden coordinator, help install an irrigation system in the garden.

As you work talk with the children about how sometimes growth requires a lot of work and effort. Talk about what it means to grow our hearts and souls - what sort of work needs to be done in order to make sure these things are healthy and growing? (Attending worship, prayer, Eucharist, confession, forgiveness, meditation, honesty...)

Intergenerational connection: Invite pastoral care group, Adult Sunday School class, or the choir to come and help install the system. Ask them to talk to the kids about how they water their hearts.

Nutrients - Snack Activity:

Apple Boats and Ocean Water

Apple Boats: slice apples into 1/4ths, next add a sail using a paper triangle and toothpicks. Stick sail into the meat portion of the fruit. The skin should be the bottom and outside body of the boat.

Ocean Water: Mix equal parts white grape juice and sparkling water with a dash of blue food coloring.



Go



Closing Zone Gathering

All pods should re-assemble at this time in the large space. Open this time with a song. Suggestions include:

Deep and Wide, River of Life, Peace Like a River

Connect the Lesson

Leader: Today we have learned a lot about what it means to have and share gifts of abundant life. We have also learned the importance of water - in our physical lives and in our spiritual lives.

Can someone remind us of the ways in which water is used to help farmers and gardeners?

What about water in our spiritual lives - water at church for instance, who can share about that?

What practices can we do to help share abundant life through water?

(collect and give money to the work of Episcopal Relief, practice water conservation at home, help with Clean Water projects)

How can we experience the gifts of water at church?



Closing Reflection

Ask children and adult or youth helpers and leaders to form a circle again around the bowl of water. If your group is larger than 20, have kids gather into their Pods. Ask your group(s) to take a few deep breaths, to look at the water and think about what they saw, heard or experienced during their time today.

Going around the circle so that each person (children and helpers or leaders) has a turn, ask each person how they might seek and serve others in Christ through the gift of water. (If someone wants to take a "pass" and remain silent, that's okay.)



Go

Closing Prayer

Prayer to be read by the leader or by one or more children, if you have access to a large screen we recommend projecting the following:

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.

Closing Song: ***The Doxology***

Leader: Let us go into the world with grateful hearts, sharing the gifts of abundant life with everyone we meet!

Children: Praise be to God!

Home Activity

Send **The Abundant Life Garden Project® Handout Water to Water** home with the children, either by hardcopy, or by sending the project home digitally.