

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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Vacation Bible School Day 4

ANIMALS

Understanding the Lesson

Gardening Note for Teachers

This interactive, Scripture-based module will introduce you and your class to the work of Episcopal Relief & Development in the area of 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.

Many young children may be 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. Older children may bring up the topic of meat; we recommend acknowledging but not dwelling on this topic if it is brought up in your group.

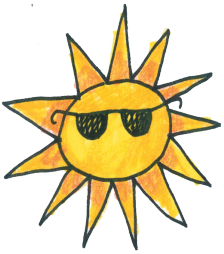
Adults using these materials might, however, consider the sacrificial element of farm animals as symbols of the sacrificial life of Christ. Images of Christ as a "sacrificial lamb" abound in the New Testament, as do the images of animals as symbols of sacrifice to God in the Old Testament. The idea of 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 project.

- 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*.



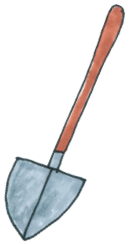
Gather

This zone includes welcoming activities and the lessons introduction.



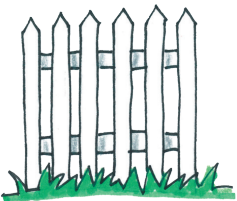
Listen

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 In this fourth lesson, children will recall or be introduced to images of animals in the Bible, in the Book of Common Prayer and on our farms and gardens. This lesson will provide children with experiential learning in receiving gifts of animals and in exploring the uses of animals in enabling families to better feed themselves and others, thereby helping to heal a hurting world. Motivate children to be a part of seeking and serving Christ in others through the gift of farm animals.

Growing Accomodations

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 accomodation ideas refer to the *Facilitators Guide*.

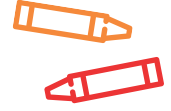


Gather

Large Opening in Greenhouse

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Garden Tri-fold display board with the water, soil, and seed layers firmly glued in place.
- Construction paper in a variety of colors.
- Markers, crayons, or coloring pencils.
- Glue sticks.
- Large bowl of animal feed.



Welcome Activity:

What animals help us live and grow?

As children arrive, have volunteers offer them their choice of writing utensils and a half sheet of construction paper. Ask them to draw pictures of their favorite farm animals. Encourage children to also create shelters, as well as feed and water containers, for their animals. Have them glue their animals and shelter items on the right and left sides of your tri-fold board or Garden Wall (you will want to leave the middle zone free for the final weeks HARVEST lesson.)

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

Leader: As you may have guessed, today's lesson is going to be all about the gift of farm Animals! 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, scooping up a small handful, then letting the feed fall back into the bowl, inviting the children to do the same.

Opening Prayer:

Leader: The Lord be with you!

Children and helpers: And also with you!

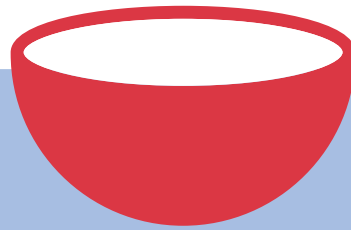
Leader: Please repeat this prayer and these motions after me.

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!





Gather

Large Opening in Greenhouse

Theme Introduction and Review:

Welcome to the Abundant Life Garden Project®

Vacation Bible School offered by Episcopal Relief & Development.



(Depending on the size of your group you can engage the entire gathering with these questions, or pose them to a few volunteers.)

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.

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, represents Growth.



What is the 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.

Today we are going to be learning about Animals and their role in the garden and how they are 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 Zone is comfortable using technology.

Print Option:

Hatching a Better Profit

Available in the ***Stories from the Field Booklet***. If you have older children who are good readers, have them take turns reading.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- ***What gifts were Rhada and Ruphard given?***
- ***How did this gift provide a gift to others, too?***
- ***What could you do to help others through the gift of animals?***

Dig Deeper: Have children write or draw their answers in their *Garden Journals*.



Digital Option:

Raising Goats in the Philippines

 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEz8iro10-A&lr=1&uid=9H4DbjpmVd3l-1e--tXDg>

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- ***What would people need to know before they cared for the animals shown in the film?***
- ***What other materials or equipment would they need to effectively care for the animals?***
- ***How did the gift of these animals benefit the whole community?***



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 2:

Stories from our Faith

You have 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.

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

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?*

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

Old Testament Study

Moses the Shepherd Exodus 3:1-10

Younger children may read Exodus 3:1-2, 7 and 10 only. Older children also may read Exodus 2:15-25 for the story of how Moses became a shepherd.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- *What did Moses do to support himself after he fled Egypt?*
- *What would he have to know to do this job?*
- *How was Moses later a shepherd of people?*
- *How are we part of a "flock"? Who are our "shepherds"?*

Book of Common Prayer Study

Lamb of God Holy Eucharist: Rite Two" (page 355)

Turning to the second page of this liturgy (page 356), 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?*

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



Do

Growing Zones

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Several copies of *Gift for Life*® catalogs
- 10-20 sheets of cardstock, (any color)
- Scissors, glue sticks



Learning Activity:

Gifts for Life®

The group work for this unit is an experiential exercise in using “gifts for life”— gifts of animals that help people live better lives. Using photos from Episcopal Relief & Development *Gifts for Life*® catalog (print copy preferred; online photos are also available for printing and use with this curriculum), children will be asked to think about what they might do with these living gifts.

How did it feel to receive your gift?

What will you feed it, and where will you keep it?

How could you make money or produce food to support your family with this gift?

What additional supplies, tools or equipment might you need to make wise use of this gift?

How could you obtain these additional supplies?

If you received more than one animal, how do you feel?

If you received only one animal, tell us about how you feel?

Does this help you understand the experiences of the people from our stories today?

Why do you think it is important to God to help others be successful in raising animals?

This discussion might proceed as long as enthusiasm, energy and time constraints allow. Older children might list plans or respond to the questions on blank paper or chalk/dry erase boards. As in the previous group exercises, there are no particular “right” and “wrong” answers. The point of this exercise is to ask children to step into the roles of those who raise farm animals for their livelihood and sustenance, and to appreciate the real-world challenges of this vital work.

Directions:

1. **Have children cut-out photos of animals featured in the current *Gifts for Life*® catalog** (if you cannot get the hard copies, you can print copies using this link: www.episcopalmarketplace.org/Products/Episcopal-Relief-Development)
2. **Have children glue each individual animal onto a piece of cardstock.**
3. **Once everyone is finished, collect all the animal cards and mix them up.**
4. **Next hand out the animal cards back to the children, randomly giving some more than others.**





Do

Growing Zones

Creative Activity:

Butter Me Up

Leader: Cows are one of the gifts that you can give through Episcopal Relief and Development's Gifts for Life program. A milk-producing cow will not only supply nourishment, including much-needed protein and vitamins for families, it will enable those same families to sell surplus milk and milk based products in the marketplace and better provide for their children. One of the things you can make from milk is butter! Who likes butter? Well today, we are all going to learn how anyone with access to fresh cream and a jar can make butter!

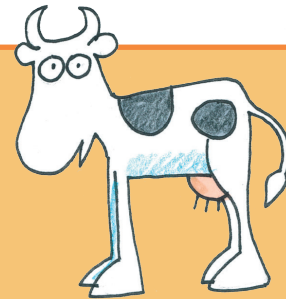
SUPPLIES NEEDED

- 16 Ounces of Heavy Cream warmed to room temperature (this is an important detail)
- 14 Marbles • 13 Pint size Mason Jars
- Several cold stainless bowls (plastic bowls are okay, but stainless is best)
- Snack size resealable plastic bag
- Butter knives (or plastic knives)
- Table Salt • Bread or Crackers



Directions:

1. Have all kids wash hands thoroughly.
2. Divide the cream between the two mason jars, filling them ideally no more than 1/3 of the way full.
3. Add two marbles to each jar.
4. Began to shake. And shake. And shake. Have kids take turns shaking. Let leaders and volunteers take turns as well.
5. Keep shaking. Eventually you will hear sloshing and feel something banging on the sides of the jar. This means you have buttermilk and a ball of butter in your jar.
6. Skim or strain off the buttermilk into the third Mason jar. (You can save it to use in baking later!) At this point the butter is actually fine to eat.
7. You can finish by having the kids add a sprinkle of salt on to each ball and spread a small amount on bread or crackers.
8. If you want to go a bit further, dump the butter balls into the chilled bowls and have kids take turns kneading the butter until all the buttermilk is out.
9. Sprinkle with salt and knead once more.
10. Let kids taste a small amount of butter.
11. Divide remaining butter into snack bags to send home and remind them to give thanks every time they eat butter for the gifts of abundant life!





Do

Growing Zones



Contemplative Activity:

Meditation

Begin by asking the children to sit “crisscross 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 a story about Jesus.

Ask the children to take a moment to reflect on the parable just read, then ask the following questions:

What does it mean to be a good shepherd?

How might we listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd?

How could we all become one flock?

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.

Listen to the word of Jesus:

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

Special note: Older children might bring up the use of animals for meat. Please be aware that young children may find this topic distasteful or even disturbing. If there are young children in your group, you might wish to acknowledge the use of animals for meat (e.g., “Yes, pigs give meat”), and then redirect the discussion to gifts of milk, eggs and feathers, manure.



Local Garden Activity

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

1

Work with your garden coordinator to determine if this is a good time to fertilize the soil. If so, see if you can find a local gardener or farmer to bring in compost, worm compost or worm "tea", or manure. Ask the farmer or garden coordinator to explain the importance of Animals in the fertilization process. Then get to work fertilizing the soil!

While you work ask the children: Sometimes we make mistakes or bad choices, but God always forgives us. Sometimes the lessons we learn from those mistakes lead to good growth in our lives. Just like the manure leads to good plants. ***What is one mistake you have made that you learned a good lesson from? How has that lesson helped you?***

Intergenerational connection: Invite members of your church who work with the incarcerated or recovery groups to join you for this activity. Ask them to share about the work they do for Christ.



2

Invite some furry and feathered friends for a visit. ***Is there a member of your church who has chickens or ducks that they can bring for a show-and-tell? Maybe someone with pygmy goats?***

See if you can coordinate a visit of these creatures to your class. Have their owner's share how they care for and feed their animals. If they have chickens or milk goats, do they share their eggs or milk with others? Allow the children to ask questions of the owners.

Pray this prayer over the animals:



Thank you God for the gift of animals and the happiness they give us. Help us to protect them from harm as Noah did and care for them with love like St. Francis. Everytime we see an animal that you have created, help us to give thanks for your holy creative nature. In the name of the Father (who thought up the giraffe and the zebra) and of the Son (who was named after the beautiful white Lamb) and the Holy Spirit (who came to us as a Dove) Amen

Intergenerational connection: Invite members of the congregation who work with animals - veterinarians, vet assistance, ranches, farmers, animal groomers, and animal shelter workers. Ask them to share with the kids why they do their work, and how they see their work as part of caring for creation.

3

Bees are another great animal that benefit the garden. Contact your local Beekeeping Association about having a local beekeeper come and teach the children about the importance of bees in the garden. Additionally you might consider making a Mason Bee Habitat out of bamboo for your community garden similar to the one found here:

<https://www.naturalbeachiving.com/mason-bee-habitat/>

While you work ask the children: Bees are very busy, always working to make sure that they are doing their job of pollination.

What work has Christ called us to do? (love others, care for creation, share)

Intergenerational connection: This would be a great time to invite some of your older seniors to join in the learning fun. Ask them to share stories of their encounters with bees.

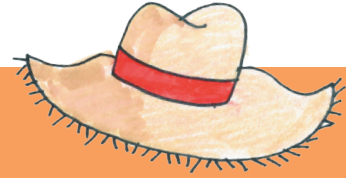


Nutrients - Snack Activity: **Animal Cracker Safari**

In a small clear punch cup layer - yogurt, sliced bananas, and granola. Top each cup with a few Animal Crackers standing up. If you have a small group you might invite the kids to help make their own. For more snack ideas visit our Pinterest Board - **Abundant Life Garden VBS Snack Ideas**



GO



Closing Zone Gathering

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

God's Got the Whole World in God's Hands

(insert different types of farm animals at each verse)

All Creatures Great and Small

Old Saint Isidore Had a Farm (to the tune of Old Macdonald) *St. Isidore is one of the patron saint of farmers.

Arky Arky

Connecting the Lesson

Leader: All farmers have certain practices that they must follow in order to help raise and care for their livestock, fowl, bees, or worms. This is part of what Episcopal Relief and Development does - they help farmers learn new and sustainable ways to care for their animals in order that they can provide milk, eggs, cheese, honey, compost, and meat for their families and the marketplace.



I wonder what practices we can do to make sure that we are caring for creation the same way that farmers care for their animals?

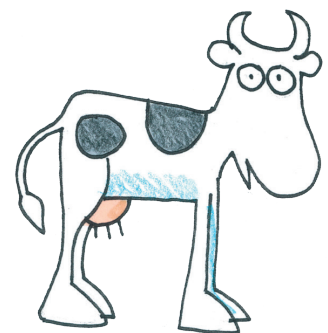
What choices can we make to help care for the environment and all of creation?

Ideas: recycle, eat locally grown or raised food, don't litter, make sure animals in our homes and neighborhoods are well cared for, compost, watch our water and electricity use - turn off lights when you leave the room, don't leave the water running when brushing your teeth.

What are some of the practices we learn at church that can help us care for creation?

Ideas: we pray for farmers, for the earth, for creation. We give offerings to groups like Episcopal Relief & Development who are providing animals to families in need.

Ask kids (or a few volunteers) to choose one way that they are going to take care of creation in the coming months. Next, have them write or draw their plans for making their goal a reality. If you would like to go a little deeper, ask them to work together to write a prayer of thanksgiving for the gifts that animals provide for humans.





Go

Closing Reflection

Ask children and adult or youth helpers and leaders to form a circle again around the bowl of animal feed. If your group is larger than 20, have kids gather into their Pods. Pass out one animal card to each child. Ask your group(s) to take a few deep breaths, hold the photos of animals given them, 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 to answer these questions:

What did you learn during our time together?

Do you think about anything differently now?

What might change in your life as a result of this time together?

How will you share the gift of abundant life this week?

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals in our world. We thank you for the role of animals in fertilizing our soil, in pollinating our plants, and in providing food and drink for us. We pray for those who raise animals to support themselves and their families, and we pray to help give others gifts for life. In Christ's name, Amen

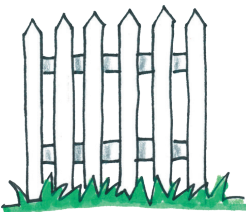
Charge:

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!



Closing Song: *Doxology*



Home Activity

Send the **Abundant Life Garden Project® Handout Great and Small** home with the children, either by hardcopy, or by sending the project home digitally.