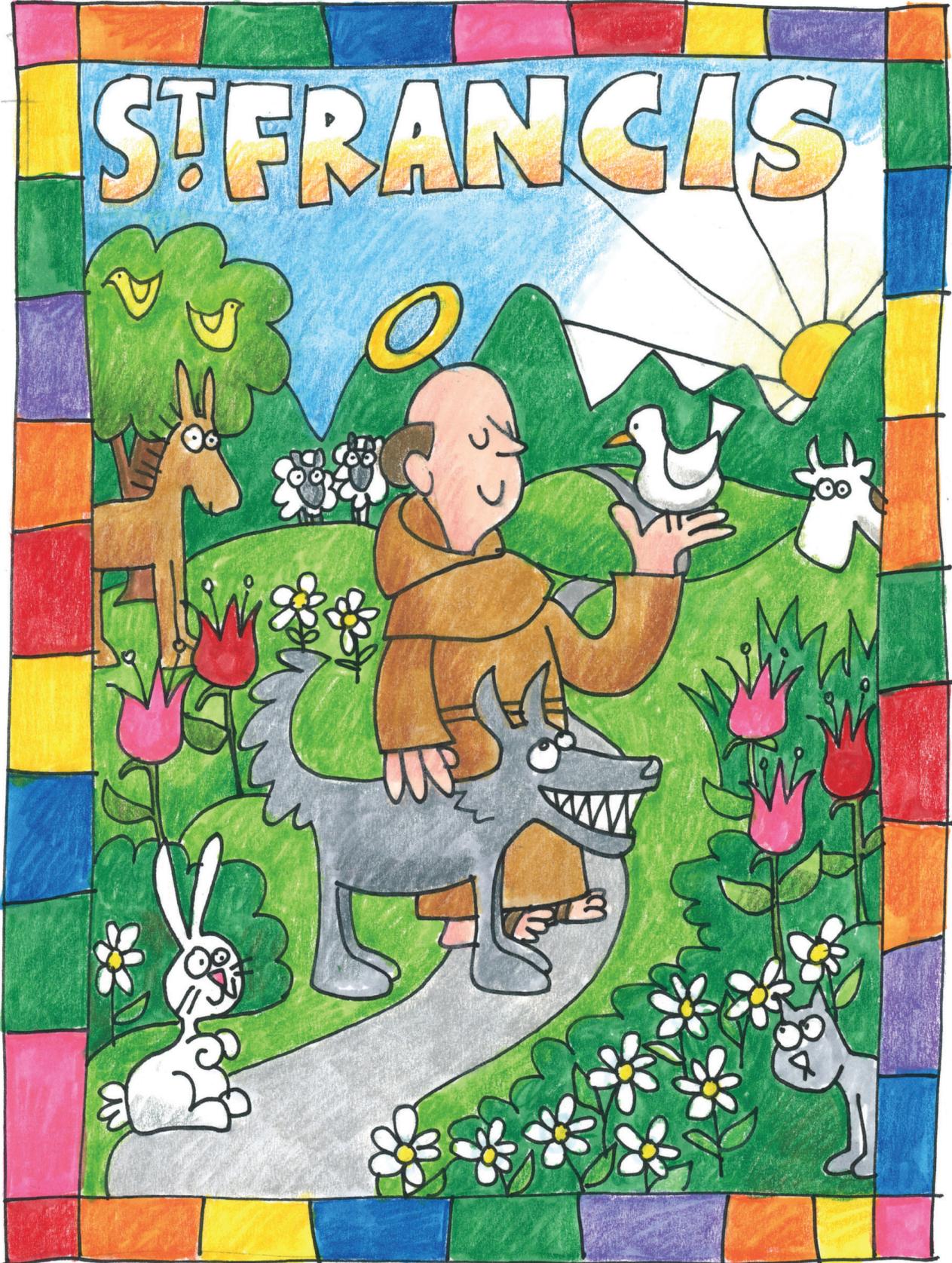


# The Abundant Life Garden Project®



**St. Francis Celebration Resources for**  
**The Abundant Life Garden Project®**  
offered by Episcopal Relief & Development

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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**The Abundant Life Garden Project®**

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# Sowing Love

## The Gifts of St. Francis

St. Francis of Assisi is the saint that speaks most clearly to me when I think of all the growing beings on our hobby farm - from our tiny bantam chickens, to my man-sized teenage boys. When I read St. Francis' words "where there is hatred, sow love" aloud I am reminded that he did not say show love, but instead he said sow love. Which grabs my attention immediately. According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, when you sow something, you plant it for the express purpose of growing more of the very thing you have planted. - to sow is to set something in motion for the express purpose of growth. This means then that to sow love is to purposely set into motion love in order to see it grow further. This means that I cannot just show love, I must sow love purposely. I must tend to it. Nurture it, feed it, water it. I must work to destroy the weeds of bitterness, apathy, and busyness, that threaten to strangle the life out of it - again and again. I must set love, faith, hope, joy in motion for the purpose of growth- my growth, my family's growth, my communities growth. As I keep reading, St. Francis continues his zingers: "it is no use walking anywhere to preach unless you're walking is preaching... Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words." he says. I - a talker of all talkers - am cut to my core. Am I walking my preaching, walking my teaching, my writing? As a mother, wife, friend? Am I walking Christ's love and mercy and grace, daily and hourly?

For someone who loves words as much as I do, walking the gospel is much harder than just telling it. Sometimes I am overwhelmed by the needs around me. I am easily irritated and short tempered with those closest to me.

*I get impatient with the progress of my Life Plan.*

*I get impatient with myself for being so impatient.*

*I feel small in my ungratefulness.*

When this happens, I try to think of St. Francis words, True progress quietly and persistently moves along without notice, and silently say a prayer that I will remember to stop and consider the sparrows. That I will stop and see the leaves twirling as they fall from branch to ground. That I will not throw myself off the melodramatic cliff of What I Can Only See Now. That I will remember to give thanks for all the progress that has occurred, all the little seeds that have sprouted, all the dreams reached, all the bounty provided. And if I manage to get that far, I will also hopefully remember to pick up another handful of seeds or bulbs, and my all too-shiny spade, plop down in the dirt, and begin to sow again.

Jerusalem Greer,  
Presevation Acres

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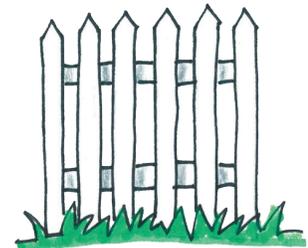
Collect  
Litany of Thanksgiving  
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## Video Links (with discussion questions)

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Cookie cutter bird feeder  
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## PREPARING THE PLOT

How to use these resources can be arranged and combined and used in the following ways:

- One room Sunday School
- Blessing of the Animals Day
- School Chapel
- Outreach event
- Youth Group

## GARDEN GOALS

How to use these resources can be arranged and combined and used in the following ways:

- To introduce children and families to the teachings of St. Francis
- To teach the spiritual practices of sowing, tending, and growing
- To teach the spiritual element of creation care

## UNDERSTANDING THIS RESOURCE

This resource is made up of a various tools that you can use in your celebration of the Feast of St. Francis.

# About St. Francis



Born Assisi, Italy 1181-82. Died October 3, 1226

Thirteenth-century saint and founder of the Franciscan order. He was born in Assisi in central Italy and named Giovanni Bernardone. His father changed his name to Francesco, "the Frenchman," after a visit to France. Francis's gradual conversion began in the spring of 1205. He gave generously to the poor and became devoted to "Lady Poverty." Francis stressed absolute simplicity of life marked by poverty, humility, and contemplation of Christ. Others gathered around him, and on Feb. 24, 1209, the Order of Friars Minor (Fratres minores), sometimes called Minorites, was founded. In England they were popularly called Grey Friars because of the color of their habit. The Second Order of St. Francis, known as the Poor Clares, was established for nuns in 1219. The Third Order for lay men and women was founded in 1221. Francis is especially remembered for his writing, "The Canticle of Brother Sun." The Hymnal 1982 includes two hymn texts written by Francis, "All creatures of our God and King" (400) and "Most High, omnipotent, good Lord" (406-407). The hymn text "Lord make us servants of your peace" (593) is based on a prayer attributed to Francis. He died in Assisi. Francis is commemorated in the Episcopal calendar of the church year on Oct. 4. There is also a legend that St. Francis was the first person to said to use live animals. One particularly famous story tells how he tamed a wolf that had been terrorizing the townspeople in the village of Gubbio, because of this St. Francis has been named the patron saint of animals and we celebrate his feast day by often hosting Blessing of the Animal's events.

# Gathering Outlines

All resources for each element can be found in this packet. Choose your songs from the list or use your own.

## Intergenerational

This gathering can be hosted in one large multi-purpose space or can move between your nave and classrooms and/or a Parish Hall. Invite lay leaders to lead the prayers and activities, and encourage adults and children to work together on the activities.

- Activity 1: Welcoming Collect**
- Activity 2: Song**
- Activity 3: Prayer**
- Activity 4: African Bible Study**
- Activity 5: Activity**
- Activity 6: Prayers of the People**
- Activity 7: Song**
- Activity 8: Benediction**

## Song Recommendations

- God's Got the Whole World in his Hands**
- As the Deer**
- This is My Father's World**
- This Pretty Planet**
- For the Beauty of the Earth**
- Peace Like a River**
- Doxology**
- All Things Bright and Beautiful**
- They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love**
- Come You Sinners Poor and Needy**

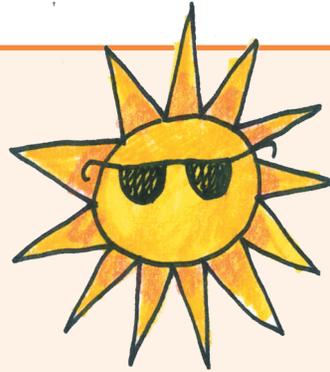
## Children's Gathering

- Activity 1: Welcoming Collect**
- Activity 2: Song**
- Activity 3: Video**
- Activity 4: Bird Feeder Coloring sheet**
- Activity 5: Benediction**



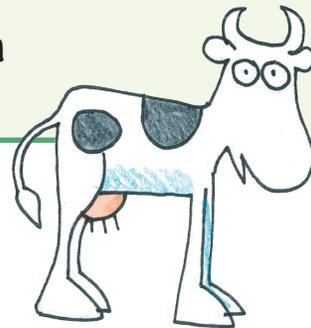
## Youth Gathering

- Activity 1: Welcoming Collect**
- Activity 2: About St. Francis**
- Activity 3: Video**
- Activity 4: African Bible Study**
- Activity 5: Care Bag Activity**
- Activity 6: Canticle of the Sun**
- Activity 7: Benediction**



## School Chapel

- Activity 1: Song**
- Activity 2: Welcoming Collect**
- Activity 3: Psalm 104**
- Activity 4: Matthew 11:25-30**
- Activity 5: About St. Francis**
- Activity 6: Litany of Thanks or Prayers of the People**
- Activity 7: Song**
- Activity 8: Benediction**



# Prayers

## Welcome Collect

Creator God, who lights up the day with the sun, the night with the moon, and our hearts with your love, grant us the grace to see the earth and all who inhabit it, through your eyes, and the wisdom to care through your strength. **Amen.**

## Litany of Thanksgiving

### for Animals in the Life Cycle of Earth

**Leader:** The Lord be with you!

**Children and helpers:** *And also with you!*

**Leader:** We thank you, Lord, for the gift of your creation. We thank you for plants, for water, for soil and seeds, for rocks and air, and for all animals. We thank you for all these gifts and ask you to help us be good and wise caretakers of this beautiful earth. **In Christ's name, Amen.**

**Leader:** Now, I will read several prayers about animals. Since all kinds of animals are important gifts in the cycle of life, please respond to each of these prayers with, **"We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals."**

Before continuing, the leader might ask children to practice saying:  
**"We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals,"**

**Leader:** We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals in our lives. We thank you for animals that comfort us, delight us and give us companionship. We thank you for dogs and cats, birds and hamsters, guinea pigs and fish.

**Children and helpers:** *We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals.*

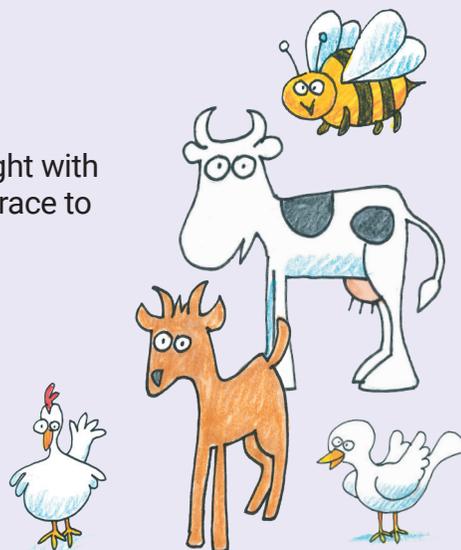
**Leader:** We also thank you, Lord, for animals that give us wool and feathers to keep us warm. We thank you for animals that give us milk, cheese and eggs to help us grow and to keep us healthy. We thank you for horses, donkeys and oxen that work hard on farms around the world.

**Children and helpers:** *We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals.*

**Leader:** We thank you, Lord, for animals that eat plants and fertilize the soil, making it richer and more fertile for new growth and new life. We thank you, Lord, for the gift of insects, and especially bees, to pollinate fruit and vegetable plants for us to eat and flowers to give us joy.

**Children and helpers:** *We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals.*

We thank you, Lord, for being our Good Shepherd, for seeking us when we are lost, for showing us water to quench our thirst, and for leading us to green pastures. Help us to share our blessings with others and to help others have clean water and green pastures to feed and nourish their families, too. **In Christ's name, Amen.**



# Prayers of the People

**Leader:** Now, we will pray to seek and serve others through the gifts and abundance we enjoy. Please respond to each of these prayers with the words, *"We pray to share your peace, dear Lord."*

Before continuing, the leader might ask children to practice saying:  
*"We pray to share your peace, dear Lord,"*

**Leader:** The Lord be with you!

**Children and helpers:** And also with you!

**Leader:** Help us to remember the example of Francis of Assisi, and help us to remember that we are the hands and feet of Christ.

**Children and helpers:** *We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.*

**Leader:** Help us to bring healing to this hurting world. Help us to act as Jesus to those in need.

**Children and helpers:** *We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.*

**Leader:** Help us to appreciate our many blessings. Help us to share what we have with others.

**Children and helpers:** *We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.*

**Leader:** Help us especially to share your hope, your care of each and every person in this world, and your Kingdom of Heaven, so that all will have abundant life in you.

**Children and helpers:** *We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.*

**Leader:** We also pray for those in need in our own community.

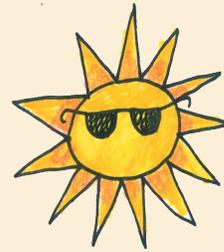
(You may name them or pray for them silently, if you wish. Please pause so that children and leaders may freely make their own intercessions.)



**Leader:** We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals in our world. We thank you for the role of animals in serving as our companions, 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.*



# Canticle of the Sun



*Most high, all-powerful, all good, Lord!*

*All praise is yours, all glory, all honour And all blessing.*

*To you alone, Most High, do they belong. No mortal lips are worthy To pronounce your name.*

*All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made, And first my lord Brother Sun,*

*Who brings the day; and light you give to us through him.*

*How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendour! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.*

*All praise be yours my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, And fair and stormy, all the weather's moods, By which you cherish all that you have made.*

*All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water, So useful, lowly, precious and pure.*

*All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire, Through whom you brighten up the night.*

*How beautiful is he! Full of power and strength.*

*All praise be yours my Lord, through Sister Earth, our mother Who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces Various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

*All praise be yours, my Lord, through those who grant pardon. For love of you; through those who endure Sickness and trial.*

*Happy those who endure in peace, By you, Most High, they will be crowned.*

*All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, From whose embrace no mortal can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Happy those She finds doing your will! The second death can do no harm to them.*

*Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks, And serve him with great humility.*

## Benediction

*May we go forth into the world, loving and serving in the spirit of St. Francis!*

# Video links



## **Raising Goats in the Philippines**

 <https://youtu.be/EEz8iro10-A>

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

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

## **Donkey, Plow and Cart**

 <https://youtu.be/01WCy6oNseM>

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- *How did the donkeys in this video help provide gifts for abundant life?*
- *How did Episcopal Relief & Development contribute to the women's lives? There are 27 bible verses that instruct us to care for widows.*
- *What are some ways that you, your family, or your church could help women like the widows in the video?*

# Activities

Use these activities for children, youth, and during intergenerational gatherings.

## Cookie Cutter Bird Feeders

### SUPPLIES

- 2 envelopes of gelatine
- 2 cups water
- 3 cups birdseed
- Cookie cutters (circles, hearts, animal shapes)
- String or yarn
- Parchment paper lined baking sheet
- Toothpicks

### Directions:

1. Place cookie cutters onto a parchment paper lined baking sheet – set aside.
2. Dissolve gelatine in a pot of simmering water. Stir until completely the gelatin has dissolved.
3. Pour gelatine water into a large bowl with the birdseed.
4. Stir until the birdseed is completely coated and wet. You may need to add a little more birdseed, depending on how absorbent your birdseed blend is.
5. Using a small spoon to scoop the birdseed into the cookie cutters. Be sure to press the birdseed firmly into the cookie cutter, so there won't be any air spaces.
6. Poke a hole in the birdseed cookie with the toothpick – this hole is where the string will go.
7. Leave the birdseed cookies to dry for a few hours, then turn them over and let them dry for a few more hours. Preferably overnight.
8. Once dried, gently slide the birdseed cookie out of the cookie cutter and feed the string through the hole. I used a large cross stitch needle to feed the string through...feel free to simply poke the string through.
9. Hang the birdseed cookie outside in a tree or bush in your yard, or in the trees if your church, local library, park, or school yard.

# Activities (continued)

## Care Kits

St. Francis took a vow of poverty and worked hard to care for the poor in his community. While we are not all called to take a vow of poverty, we are all called to help care for the most vulnerable in our communities. Here is an activity that can aid in your efforts. Care Kits are a wonderful thing to keep in your car in order to hand out to the homeless in your community.

### SUPPLIES

Fill one large Gallon plastic resealable or muslin bag with each of the following:

- Water bottle
- Socks
- Tuna and cracker packs
- Granola Bar or cereal bar
- Fruit snack or applesauce cup
- Crackers with peanut butter or cheese
- Gift card to fast food
- Hand wipes
- Pack of Kleenex
- Maxi pads
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Nail clippers
- Band Aids
- Chapstick
- Comb or small brush
- Mints, cough drops or gum
- Small solar flashlight and batteries

*Include notes of encouragement or uplifting Bible verses*

**Don't be in a hurry.** It's okay to slip it out your window to someone on a street corner or freeway ramp. But consider taking time to park the car and hand-deliver it if the situation seems safe.

**Smile.** This person probably gets ignored by hundreds of people every day.

**Make eye contact.** It shows that the person matters.

**Be available to have a conversation.** Some people won't want to talk, so be sensitive. Others will be delighted to tell you their story.

**Pray.** Before you go, while you go, for the people you encounter. Ask the person if they would like you to pray for them right there.

**A List of Resources.** If your faith community offers any aid or resources, include a card with the information in the pack. You can also list other resources in your community.

## Gifts for Life®

### Fundraising Event - Tasting Event

Episcopal Relief and Development works with **Equal Exchange** to offer high-quality coffee, tea and cocoa products – always paying farmers fairly. You can host a fundraiser for *Gifts for Life* by offering a tasting of these products, then selling the items to parishioners and your community.

To learn more about how to host a tasting and sale visit:

<http://equalexchange.coop/episcopalrelief>

# Bible Study



## Scripture Study

A great way to study scripture in a group is to practice a method that is often called “*African Bible Study*” because it was introduced by the African bishops at the Lambeth Conference\* in 1998.

Below is the outline of the practice, and two options for the scripture based on St. Francis. This practice can be done with children (who can read) through adults.

### How to Practice: (20 mins)

Divide your group into smaller groups of 4 or 6 people. Ask for one person to volunteer to be the “leader” of each small group. Hand each group the following instruction sheet provided at the end of this lesson (you can take a screenshot on your phone and share it that way.) Ask the groups to divide up as best they can within the space allowed.

\* The Lambeth Conference is a decennial assembly of bishops of the Anglican Communion convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The first such conference took place in 1867.

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/francis-assisi>

## African Bible Study

### Leader: Opening Prayer

O Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

1. One female person reads Psalm 104 or Matthew 11: 25-30 slowly.
2. Silently, each person identifies the word or phrase that catches their attention (1min).
3. Each person now shares the word or phrase around the group (3-5 minutes, NO DISCUSSION or COMMENTARY).
4. A man reads the same passage slowly from a different translation if possible.
5. Silently, each person identifies where this passage touches their life today (1 minute).
6. Each shares (3-5 minutes, NO DISCUSSION or COMMENTARY).
7. Passage is read a third time by a third reader and in another translation.
8. Silently, each person names or writes “*From what I’ve heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me to do or be? Is God inviting me to change in any way?*” (5 minutes)
9. Each person shares their answer (5-10 minutes, NO DISCUSSION)
10. Each person offers prayers for the person on their right aloud, naming what was shared in the other steps (5 minutes).

**Leader:** Let us close with the *Lord’s Prayer*  
Remain in SILENCE for 1 minute.