

# Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

## Spirituality

### A Guide for Leadership Teams



All Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

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# Spirituality

Spirituality is a word used by most people today to talk about attitudes, beliefs, and practices that give people a sense of energy and inner peace. For Christians, spirituality is more than just peace of mind or satisfaction with life. It comes from and is inspired by God's revelation in Jesus Christ. There are different kinds of spirituality among Christians and there are non-Christian spiritualities also.

The purpose of studying spirituality is to help individuals understand who they are as children of God, discover ways they can develop a deeper relationship with God, and find a sense of service in their own personal lives.

## Introduction

Spirituality is one of a series of modules developed for Older Youth who are in senior high school. The curriculum is based on the promises made in the Baptismal Covenant found in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

The vision for the curriculum also includes the development of leadership skills for Christian young people. Youth need to be leaders of their own lives by following Christ's example and making choices that are best for them.

The leadership of the group will come from a team that includes youth and adults. It is recommended that leadership teams of youth and adults meet in advance, perhaps on retreat, to choose and plan for the various areas of study.

## This Guide

This guide contains nine sessions, seven of which provide maximum opportunity for choice. Two copies of the guide will be helpful in sharing responsibility for leadership. The first session, "Making Plans," is designed to help begin the process. It starts with a "Point of Contact"—the Nicene Creed—a statement of the beliefs of the Church in the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The planning session begins, as do all other sessions, begins with prayer and the study of Scripture to focus the experience on the presence of God in our lives.

The activities in **Session 1** are designed to develop the leadership skills of communication, trust, and relationship. Specific help such as Steps for Planning and the Planning Reference Guide is included to facilitate the planning effort for all members of the leadership team. Because pre-planning is not always possible, the first session can also serve as a tool for involving all participants in the choices to be made.

At this time the group will choose youth leaders and develop plans for study of the other eight sessions. In this process, adults will serve as facilitators for youth-directed planning.

**Sessions 2 - 8** examine the issues of Spirituality through these individual topics:

- What Do I Believe?**
- Who Is God?**
- Getting to Know God**
- Prayer**
- Finding God In Silence**
- Worship**
- Serving God**

Each session begins with prayer, Scripture, and a Personal Story. The Personal Stories, written from the perspective of a young person, focus on the heart of the topic for that session. The group may select from a variety of themes and activities developed from those themes the ways in which they want to interact with the materials.

A study of issues and Scripture often leads to more than just awareness of an issue. **Session 9** is designed to help youth bring together what they have learned and make decisions about the actions they will take in response. This may be done as individuals or as a group. The final activities include plans for liturgical celebrations, social action, and just plain fun.

**Other Modules in the Episcopal Curriculum for Older Youth**

<b>Diversity</b>	<b>Relationships</b>	<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>Violence</b>
<b>Peace &amp; Justice</b>	<b>Success &amp; Failure</b>	<b>Difficult Decisions</b>	<b>Treasuring Our Gifts</b>
<b>Who Is God?</b>	<b>What Am I Called to Be?</b>	<b>What Do Others Believe?</b>	<b>What Is Evil?</b>

## How to Use These Materials

### 1. DECISIONS ARE MADE BY LEADERSHIP TEAM

This curriculum is based on a model that requires a team of people to lead the sessions and the planning process. The assumption is that this team will consist of several teenagers who will take the key leadership roles and adults who will provide resources and support.

Each issue-based session develops three themes using a specific passage from the Bible as a focus for study. Suggestions for activities, discussion topics, and questions are provided for the three themes. Teams can decide to focus on one or two of the themes or take a broader look using all three.

The members of this team may change during the year as new issues are introduced or the needs of the group change. Leadership skills introduced throughout the module are for the whole group of youth and adults.

### 2. BUILDING A YOUTH-LED TEAM

The best way to function well as a team is to spend eight to ten hours together before the year begins. The team may decide to meet several times or go on retreat for this purpose. Here is a way to set up an effective team.

- Identify four to six teens who are leaders in school, church, and other settings. Choose two to four adults who are leaders but who also know how to follow.
- Spend time together getting to know each other and building community with one another. This can best be done in a retreat setting by sharing prayer time and meal times as well as planning times.
- Share faith stories in whatever way seems appropriate and comfortable.
- Review all of the materials in the chosen module and begin to make some plans about how best to use this resource. If time permits, it may also be a good time to make plans for future modules. Be aware that new leadership may emerge during the coming year.
- Decide on a plan and delegate responsibilities for planning, leading sessions, and communicating.
- Meet with the entire group, share your plans, and get their input.
- Finalize the plan and begin.
- Be prepared to revise your plan if circumstances change.

### 3. CORE COMPONENTS

Each session includes the same basic information. Optional activities and sections change as needed in response to the issue and themes. These components are:

- **Session design.** Three elements are essential for every session. 1) A beginning prayer, chosen from *The Book of Common Prayer*, is offered as a way to center the group's time together. 2) The heart of the session is the three themes and activities that help the participants to gain deeper understandings of the issue. 3) The dismissal brings everyone together as the time ends and sends them out to do God's work in the world.
- **Objective.** A learning objective is found at the top of page one of every session. The objective guides the team in determining what is to occur as a result of the time spent with this material.
- **Scripture.** With a note to "Begin here," youth are asked to look at passages from the Bible that relate to the issue. Three different pieces of Scripture provide three different views of the issue. Most sessions include both Old and New Testament references.
- **Commentary.** Each passage from the Bible is briefly explained in a paragraph following the biblical quotation. Leaders who wish to know more may explore larger works such as *The Interpreter's Bible*, a Bible commentary, or a Bible dictionary.
- **Personal Stories.** Except for the initial planning session, all of the sessions include a Personal Story. Typically it is a story of an experience that youth encounter as a part of their daily lives. In telling these stories to each other the youth will be able to examine their own experiences and be more aware of the feelings of others.
- **Questions.** Suggestions for questions to be used as discussion starters are offered throughout the sessions. An icon easily identifies the questions.
- **Skill Building.** Because a specific goal of these materials is to help youth recognize their strengths and improve their leadership skills, certain skills are emphasized in each session. These will be developed through the optional activities.

• **Optional Activities.** A goal of the *Episcopal Curriculum for Youth* is to offer a wide range of options that allow flexibility within groups and meet the needs of different types of groups. Leadership teams are invited to use their own creativity in choosing other games or activities they enjoy. The following options will be available throughout various sessions:

1. **Creative activities** to stimulate the artistic talents of teens.
2. **Games** to build trust and skills as well as explore issues.
3. **Movies, TV Shows, and Print Media** that illustrate the theme presented in today's time.
4. **Literature**, books, and short stories, that develop the theme as well as those created by the individual members of a group.
5. **Music** from *The Hymnal 1982* and from contemporary and Christian resources relevant to the topic.
6. **Field trips** to places that provide an enhancement of the theme.
7. **Service projects** that arise from the themes to carry the mission of the church beyond the walls of the classroom or the church.
8. **Posters.** A set of six posters representative of the themes within each issue are provided separately. The posters are designed to stimulate thoughts, discussion, and reflection on the various concepts.

#### 4. SAMPLE SESSION

After the leadership team has met and the planned study of the module, the group begins to meet. A model for a session might look something like this:

1. **Planning for a session.** The leadership team has selected Theme 2 as the way they wish to approach Session 2. One or two members of the group are assigned to be leaders. They prepare for the group to participate in several of the discussions and activities for Theme 2. Any necessary speakers or other outside arrangements are made in advance.

2. **Begin with Prayer.** Starting together with prayer is a way to help the group focus their attention. A prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer* is printed above Theme 1. Leaders may use this prayer, choose another, or compose one of their own. The prayer can be said by one person, or everyone can pray together. This may also be a time for sharing of any concerns of those present or for those absent.
3. **Scripture.** These materials are unique because they look at issues through specific passages in the Bible. The leaders read the designated Scripture and use the questions to talk about the relationship of the Scripture to the theme.
4. **Activities.** The group participates in one or more of the activities furnished in the guide. The choice will depend on the interests of the group and the time frame of the gathering.
5. **Preparing for Next Time.** A few minutes before the end of the time, announce any coming events and give leaders for the next session an opportunity to give a preview.
6. **Dismissal.** Just as the start of time together needs prayer for focus, so does the closing. The participants share any concerns to be held in prayer during the coming days and close with the “Dismissal,” also printed above the beginning of Theme 1.

## 5. SOME GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

A key to the effectiveness of these materials is to help the group learn how to talk with one another about the issues that affect their lives and faith.

**Sharing of individual stories.** People are given the opportunity to share the things that are important in their own lives. This will become easier as the group members grow in trust for each other. Sometimes this may be difficult or impossible for an individual. This person needs to be allowed to pass if they wish.

**Issues, themes, stories.** There are many interesting topics and stories that serve as a “launching pad” for rich and deep discussion. Choose those that will engage those who participate.

**Active learning.** There are many opportunities for trips, visits, and other activities to bring great energy into your study. Your team can decide what works best for your group and plan times for these events

to take place.

**Speakers and guests.** There are many people in your community with fascinating stories. The team can find the right people who will have an influence on your group.

**Statement to the church.** Teens have valuable things to say about and to their church. This can be incorporated into the program around any issue that the members of your group feel moved to respond to.

Here are some simple guidelines that can be used to facilitate sharing and community building. It is a good idea to discuss these guidelines with your team and add or delete suggestions from your group.

## **GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION**

- 1. Make and commitment to all sessions (continuity).**
- 2. Include everyone, even yourself, in the conversation.**
- 3. Be real—be honest.**
- 4. Send “I” messages—share feelings.**
- 5. Talk about your own experiences.**
- 6. Listen with great respect.**
- 7. Listen, understand, but do not fix.**
- 8. Be specific.**
- 9. Respect confidentiality.**
- 10. Allow the Spirit, within and beyond, to work in this group.**

## 6. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The setting where your session takes place is crucial to the success of your program. In short, the less it is like a classroom the more you will be able to facilitate learning, sharing, and growth. Pay attention to the environment you are providing, as this will have a great impact on the learning process. Consider three possibilities to create the desired environment.

- **The youth room.** One good alternative is a room at the church designated for young people and arranged with comfortable chairs, couches, etc. This provides a comfortable and inviting atmosphere.
- **Meeting in a home.** Holding meetings at someone's home near the church can be a great asset. This provides a casual, comfortable setting that usually enhances the process. This may cause some problems but it is well worth investigating. Also, people may be more open to making their homes available if it is done on a rotating basis. Don't rule out this possibility without carefully considering it.
- **Gathering in a restaurant.** A restaurant can provide a wonderful opportunity for a meal, fellowship, and learning. Often young people who wouldn't come to the church will feel comfortable in this setting. Of course, this will raise some financial considerations, but these are not impossible. You could also consider meeting at a restaurant on an occasional basis as a way of promoting outreach and for celebration.

# For Members of the Leadership Team

## A General Philosophy of a Teaching Ministry

God made all people with great intelligence, skills, talents, feelings, opinions, and ideas regardless of their age. All people are growing in their faith journey. Two key words in working with others are value and respect. Never assume that you know more than they do or that your or their experience in life gives either one more value. Instead, enter into a learning adventure, side by side. You will discover as much as you impart. You will be impacted as much as you impact others. Keep an open mind and heart to all that is said, felt, and shared; and experience God doing greater things than you could pray or ask for.

## Who are Older Youth?

Volumes have been written on the lives of teens and adolescent development. The purpose here is to give the leadership team some keys about what young people are like. Youth who are on the leadership team may agree or disagree. A lively conversation about these issues will enhance the ability of the team to work together.

## Characteristics of Older Youth:

- **THEY LIKE TO HAVE FUN**

Fun is not the opposite of learning and should not be something to avoid. On the contrary, people learn best when they are having a good time. When they are having a good time, there is often chaos. Don't be afraid of a little commotion if most of the group is on task. Encourage each other to have fun in class and see how much you can learn.

- **THEY HAVE SKILLS, TALENTS, AND ENERGY**

Teens are not empty vessels waiting to be filled up. They are people blessed with skills, talents, and intelligence. Draw upon the rich resources of the members of your group and know that there is much to offer, to share, and to teach to others. The energy of the group can deeply enhance the learning experience.

- **THEY ARE PEOPLE IN TRANSITION**

Youth are in a transition stage of life. The essential element is

change as a person moves from dependence to independence. The closer a person gets to graduation from high school, the more this reality will set in. Youth need freedom to make choices with adult support. Never underestimate the abilities of each other or the need for adult cooperation and support.

- **THEY ARE SELF-RELIANT AND ACCOUNTABLE**

Most youth want to be self-reliant. By this point they have had enough experiences to form their own opinions and be able to make their own decisions. Of course, like everyone else, they will both succeed and fail. Encourage the group to take responsibility for the choices they select and hold them accountable to the agreements they make. Remember that everyone deserves input on decisions that affect his or her life.

- **THEY LIKE MAKING CHOICES**

Youth can and do make good decisions. Our gift to others is to help them to develop their abilities to make good decisions and to treat them as capable human beings.

- **THEY NEED TO BE HEARD**

One of the best tools you can provide for members of the group are opportunities to speak out and be heard, and to listen to others with respect. It is important to set the example not by what you say but by what you do. Your ability to listen to others and respond to their ideas and comments will be a model for developing good listening skills. Being heard for even a moment can be a powerful experience. This is true for people of any age.

- **THEY WANT TO BE VALUED AND SIGNIFICANT**

How you treat the people in your group is much more important than what is taught. If all members feel important and significant, they are more likely to learn something. It is also crucial to pay attention to how the members of the group treat each other. The atmosphere of the classroom can inspire or destroy the whole experience. Encouraging all members of the group to treat themselves and others with extraordinary respect is one of the most important lessons to teach.

- **THEY ARE LOOKING FOR A FAITH OF THEIR OWN**

Teenagers are seeking their own opinions, values, and faith. Identity comes from becoming your own person. Youth often reject much of their parents' faith. This is an important sign that new values and a stronger faith are being formed. Embrace the searching process and affirm the importance of the ability to question, doubt, and think. Your

response to doubts will encourage or discourage others' journeys to spiritual knowledge. You can't teach faith but you can grow together in your knowledge and love of the Lord.

- **RELATIONAL MINISTRY**

This curriculum is based on building relationships in three ways. Be constantly aware of the importance of these three dynamics of relationships.

1. The first, and most important, is the relationship between each person and God. This should be an ongoing focus in whatever is taught, discussed, or explored.
2. This second is the relationship between young people and adults. The adult's role is not that of teacher but rather one of "mature friend." One-to-one relationships take on special significance in this model.
3. The third is the peer relationship. How the members of the group treat each other enables or destroys the building of a caring community.

- **OWNERSHIP**

If youth are going to be truly involved in a program of learning, they must have a sense of ownership. The wise teen will learn how to share the program and build a sense of ownership together with the adults. This process can be improved and simplified by the formation of a team in the beginning with youth taking responsibility for leadership roles.

## **Who Are The Adults?**

Adults who work with youth are more than teachers. To foster effective teaching and learning among youth, the Church needs adult leaders who are grounded in their own faith and identity as Christians. Effective leaders are excited about growing and learning and enjoy working with youth in a team relationship. They have high energy, genuine enthusiasm, and a passionate interest in youth.

Youth can have input into which adults are selected for the leadership team. Seek out people who care about youth, have a strong faith, and are committed to the program. Adults who want to be kids or who don't keep commitments are not effective over time. The following points should be carefully considered as leadership teams are formed.

## Characteristics of Effective Adult Leaders:

- **THEY ARE ROOTED IN THEIR FAITH AND COMMITTED TO JESUS CHRIST**

Who adults are speaks loudly to teens. They don't have to be biblical scholars or perfect Christians. It also doesn't mean that they no longer have any doubts or are at the end of their own spiritual journey. Good leaders have a strong relationship with God and are comfortable with their faith.

- **THEY ARE WILLING TO BE A PART OF A TEAM**

For some adults working with teenagers as they grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord is an overwhelming task. It is essential for teens to understand the sense of responsibility that comes with this task. Wise teens know that they are only part of a teaching team and that adults are accountable to other people in the church who may or may not care about the activities of young people. Adults need to be able to let go of their need to be in charge and still have the ability to use their gifts as part of the team.

- **THEY ARE FUN AND ENJOY BEING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

Adults should be able to relax and enjoy their time with youth. Effective adults know how to have fun and to share joy with young people without giving up expectations of them. Adults must find their own balance of fun and seriousness. Affirming joy and excitement with group, however, is essential for the adults' full participation.

- **THEY ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT PEOPLE THAN FACTS**

The *Episcopal Curriculum for Youth* provides an excellent base of information to learn more about God, Scripture, and the Church. The sessions incorporate this learning with the issues that Affect young people's lives. Effective adults are aware of issues that are unique to their groups and look for ways to include these ideas in the work of the group. Adults should give priority to what youth are thinking and feeling.

- **THEY HAVE A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO THE GROUP**

Adults are committed and consistent. Steadfastness of faith and commitment to the class will make a real difference in the long run. Leaders should focus on the overall success of the program and not on any one moment, hour, or week.

## A Final Word

Remember that this is a process of growing in the knowledge and love of the Lord. There will be ups and downs, successes and failures, joys and frustrations. Often you will never know the impact you have made on another person's life. So much happens intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually in individuals' lives that they themselves are not aware of the people who have had an impact on them. Trust in each other, trust in yourself and, most of all, trust in God.

## For More Ideas

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# SPIRITUALITY

## Making Plans

### Objective

Youth will be able to chart out a study of spirituality in their lives. While they are planning the sessions, they will set boundaries for group discussions of personal feelings.

### The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the  
dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. *Amen.*

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 358-359*

## SESSION 1

### Scripture

*John 3:16-17*  
*1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27-31*

### Skill Focus

Respect  
Independence/Individuality

## Prayer

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Guidance  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 832

## Dismissal

*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*  
Thanks be to God.

## Begin Here: Study Scripture

A. [Jesus said,] “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

*John 3:16-17*

**Commentary:** The writer of *John* weaves three important themes throughout this gospel: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; all people are called to believe in Jesus; and believers have eternal life. In 3:16-17, God's universal and compassionate love for the world is made known in the gift of his only Son, Jesus Christ. We learn the purpose of Jesus's mission is not to judge or condemn the world but to save it. Salvation and eternal life becomes possible for those who believe in Jesus, God's Son.

B. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. . . . Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

*I Corinthians 12:12-13, 27-31*

**Commentary:** This letter was written to the church in Corinth which Paul helped establish. He wrote this letter at a time when they were experiencing problems. In these verses, Paul uses the human body to illustrate both the unity and variety that exists in the Church of God in Christ.

This unity is created through baptism which is the same for all members of the Church, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Every member has a role to play in the Church. In his letter, Paul demonstrates that the most important service of all is love.

## Questions

- What is the good news in the first Scripture passage?
- Are the gifts of all people respected in your church?
- Even though Paul tells us that all gifts are valuable, do people tend to put them in some kind of hierarchy?
- What kind of gifts do you have to offer to God and the church?

## Point of Contact

### Nicene Creed

Take a moment to read the Nicene Creed on the previous page or on p. 358 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Also read the two Scripture passages above. Use the questions following the Scripture passages as a way to begin to think about spirituality.

- What is spirituality?
- Does the Nicene Creed address spirituality? How?
- How would you define spirituality in your life?

## Activities

### M&M Game

Bring one large bag of M&M's to the meeting. Pass the bag around and ask everyone to take a few, but to wait to eat the candy until they are told to. After everyone has taken some M&M's, tell them that before they can eat one, they must share a fact about themselves. This fact can be their favorite color, where they go to school, a sport they play, or any fact that will help the group get to know one another.

## Storytelling

Before the meeting divide a plain sheet of paper into four sections. In each section put one of the following questions:

- Describe a time in your life when you felt close to God.
- Who is the most influential person in your life, and how have they influenced you?
- Describe a time in your life when you did not feel close to God.
- Describe a goal you have and why this goal is important to you.

Make photocopies for each member of the group. Participants can write out their responses or draw a picture. After 15 or 20 minutes, discuss each question.

## Gift Discernment

A good way to strengthen leadership is to help people identify their gifts and find a way to contribute to the group. A number of short personality and gift discernment surveys can be used in group settings. Two resources are:

- *Please Understand Me: Character and Temperament Types* by David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates
- *Spirit Gifts: One Spirit, Many Gifts* by Patricia D. Brown

## □ Steps for Planning

1. Make enough copies of the Planning Reference Guide on the following page for each person in the group. Take a few minutes to quickly describe the themes for Sessions 2 through 8 in this study of Spirituality using the chart. Distribute Sessions 2 through 8 to individuals or small groups, depending on the number of participants. Allow a few minutes for participants to review their assigned sessions and answer the questions on the Planning Reference Guide.
2. Briefly discuss the topics of greatest interest. Do you want to cover each session? Do you want to study more than one theme in any of the sessions?

3. After determining the sessions and themes the group will study, appoint a leader or team to coordinate activities for each week. Write down the session or theme on a large piece of newsprint and ask participants to volunteer for subjects they are interested in. The person or people coordinating the activities do not necessarily have to lead them.
4. Examine the posters in the poster pack and determine when and where to use them.  
Poster 1: Who Is God?  
Poster 2: Getting to Know God  
Poster 3: Prayer  
Poster 4: Finding God in Silence  
Poster 5: Worship  
Poster 6: Serving God
5. On a calendar or piece of paper with a calendar grid, write in the name of the sessions on the day you will study them and the people who will be coordinating them. Make photocopies of the calendars for coordinators to use in their planning process.
6. Discuss accountability of the group members.
  - What if someone cannot make a meeting? Do they need to find a replacement?
  - If scheduling changes need to be made, who has the authority to make them?
  - What happens when someone doesn't follow through? Do we need reminder calls?
7. If there is time, evaluate the planning process.
  - Is everyone excited about this unit?
  - Were we good listeners? Did everyone have a chance to share his or her ideas?
  - Do the coordinators feel comfortable with their leadership roles?

## Planning Reference Guide

### Spirituality

**Questions:**

- What surprises you in this session?
- What ideas do you like in this session?
- Which of the three scriptures and themes would you want to focus on?

Topic	Scripture	Theme	Notes
What Do I Believe?	<i>Proverbs 3:5-8</i> <i>Philippians 2:5-11</i> <i>John 15:14-17, 25-26</i>	God the Creator The Only Son of God Holy Spirit	
Who Is God?	<i>Psalms 139:13-18</i> <i>Colossians 1:15-20</i> <i>Romans 8:24-27</i>	Awesome God Jesus Is Lord Spirit With Us	
Getting to Know God	<i>Psalms 139:1-6</i> <i>I Samuel 3:4-10</i> <i>Matthew 16:13-18</i>	In Relationships Hearing God Who Is Jesus?	
Prayer	<i>II Chronicles 7:13-16</i> <i>Philippians 4:4-7</i> <i>Luke 11:1-4</i>	Changing Hearts All Things Through Prayer Teach Us to Pray	
Finding God In Silence	<i>I Kings 19:11-13</i> <i>Psalms 62:5-8</i> <i>Matthew 6:5-6</i>	God's Still, Small Voice My Soul in Silence Waits Praying Alone	
Worship	<i>Jeremiah 10:1-5</i> <i>Psalms 150</i> <i>I Corinthians 10:15-16</i>	Recognizing False Idols Praising God Breaking Bread	
Serving God	<i>John 13:12-15</i> <i>Isaiah 58:1-9a</i> <i>Micah 6:6-8</i>	Serving One Another Serving the Community Serving the World	

# SPIRITUALITY

## What Do I Believe?

### Objective

Youth will be able to examine creeds and compare their own statements of belief with those of the church.

### Personal Story

Our church sponsored a mission trip for the youth group in a rural town a few hours from the church. Our assignment was to work with local residents to renovate an old home built in the early nineteenth century. People skilled in carpentry, plumbing, and electrical wiring donated their time and laid out our work for us.

One of the electricians was Andy, a talkative man who lived in the community. Every day at noon we would take a break and sit outside to eat our bag lunches. Andy would join us and share stories about the area. He told us about the military parades through downtown, the owners of the soda shop—yes, the town still had a soda shop with ice cream for a quarter—and the entire history of his family. We all tried to listen patiently, but Andy could talk nonstop for hours.

On the third day of the project, Andy invited the entire youth group to join his church's youth at their weekly prayer and praise service. At the service we would sing, play games, and meet other young people. We agreed that this would be more fun than spending the evening in our one-room dorm that had no television, radio, or other form of entertainment.

On the way to the service, our youth director warned us that this church was very different from ours and that we needed to keep an open mind. We could expect the people to be very involved in the service, clapping and swaying with the music, and maybe even speaking in tongues. The preacher might also be more passionate than what we are accustomed to at home. We were also told to sit down during the invitation to be saved or healed. All of a sudden this church service didn't seem like such a great idea after all. What were we thinking!

The service began with lots of singing, followed by a hair-raising sermon. When they prayed, the minister asked everyone to turn towards our group and put their arms out in prayer. The whole church stood up and turned as one, with arms stretched out like zombies. They began to pray. At first it was a little scary, but the sincerity of their words soothed us. These people believed their prayers, and we could feel that throughout the room.

When we left the church, we all agreed that we weren't quite ready to change faiths, but we had to admit God's presence was certainly in this church. Our eyes and hearts were opened a little further by seeing a new way to worship. The beliefs of these people are powerful.

After we got back to our sleeping quarters, we talked about the service we had witnessed. It made each of us look deeper at what we believed.

## SESSION 2

### Scripture

*Proverbs 3:5-8*

*Philippians 2:5-11*

*John 14:15-17, 25-26*

### Skill Focus

Communication

Conflict

## Prayer

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Guidance  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 832

## Dismissal

*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*  
Thanks be to God.

# 1 God the Creator

## □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body.

*Proverbs 3:5-8*

**Commentary:** *Proverbs* is traditionally believed to have been written by Solomon, King David's son and heir. Today, it is believed to be the work of several anonymous writers. The book is a part of the Hebrew Scriptures called wisdom literature. This type of literature offers instruction on the ultimate goals of life and is typically poetic in style.

Chapter 3:1-12 is the third of thirteen lessons on wisdom. In this section, three qualities are praised: loyalty, faithfulness and humility. Humility, emphasized in verses 5-8, refers to dependence on God for one's life, turning away from evil to receive healing through God's loving care.

## □ Questions

- What does it mean to trust God, and not “rely on your own instincts”? Can you do that?
- Have you ever insisted on something only to find out later you were wrong? What does the Scripture say?
- What does the word “refreshment” bring to your mind? Can you imagine God providing this for you?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What would God look like through the eyes of someone different from you?
- How would you describe a worship service at your church to someone from Andy's church?

## □ Activities

### Belief Stickers

Write each of the first four lines of the Nicene Creed (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 358) on four sheets of paper. Below each line, make three columns. In the first section write “I don't believe”; in the next section write “I do believe”; and in the last section write “I'm not sure.”

Tape the four sheets of paper at different points around your meeting space. Give everyone in the group a sheet of stickers that are all the same color.

Explain that you have placed the first four lines of the Nicene Creed around the room on different sheets of paper. Under each line there are three choices for each sticker. After reading a line of the prayer, place a sticker in the column that best describes their feelings, and then go on to the next sheet of paper. Play music while the participants are circulating. Ask everyone not to talk.

After everyone has had time to add their stickers to all four statements, discuss the results with the group.

- Which lines are easiest for people to believe in?
- Do many people in our group have doubts about God as creator?
- What are some of the concerns you have with this creed?

When everyone has finished, discuss what each line means.

- What are some of the unseen things that God has created?
- Who created diseases? famines? anger?
- If God is almighty, why does God allow evil?
- Do these four lines define God for you?

Develop a group or personal creed using your own words and descriptions about who God is. Write these lines on a poster board that can be displayed in your meeting space.

### Who Is God?

Write “Who Is God?” in large letters on a chalkboard or large piece of paper. Ask a volunteer to read the first part of the Nicene Creed. Closing your eyes, think about the question at the front of the room. Try to remember images that immediately come into your mind.

Gather paper, glue, glitter, magazines, balloons, markers, clay, and other craft items. Ask the participants to depict the images they saw about God in a drawing, sculpture, poem, or song. Let them decide if they want to work individually, in small groups, or as a whole.

When all the projects are completed, discuss the image(s) the group created.

- Was God in black and white or in color?
- Is God someone you know well, or are you passing acquaintances?
- Describe God to someone from another culture?

Display the projects in the church or your meeting space.

## 2 The Only Son of God

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

*Philippians 2:5-11*

**Commentary:** Philippi, a city in Macedonia, is where Paul established the first church. In these verses, Paul describes how people are to set their mind on Christ, not necessarily with the same thoughts but rather with the “mind of Christ.” This is the expectation of all members of the Church to act in ways they know Christ behaved.

Paul quotes an early Christian hymn to illustrate the life of Jesus and how we are to imitate him. In the hymn, Christ, an equal with God, took the form of humanity became equal to humanity. Because Christ humbled himself for the sake of all, his name is above all other names.

### □ Questions

- How did Christ “empty” himself, according to the Scripture passage?
- How much of who we are is tied up in who our parents are? How do you feel when someone only knows you as your mother's son or your dad's daughter?
- How can we have “the same mind” that Jesus had?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did the young people feel when they were the recipients of the prayer instead of the mission givers?

### □ Activities

#### Be a Detective

In mystery stories the clues to the character's identity are often hidden in the events. Read the portion of the Nicene Creed about Jesus on p. 358-359 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. In the creed are “clues” about the identity of Jesus.

Describe a central characteristic or quality of Jesus in one or two words, such as love, compassion, forgiveness, or kindness. Close your eyes and think about the meaning of your “clue.”

- What color is it?
- Does your word come from personal experience or something you've heard?
- Why do you think this word came to you?

Illustrate your word by writing a poem or drawing a picture. Share your clues with the group, and put together a description of Jesus based on your “clues.” Display your creation.

#### Debate

Have Prayer Books available for each person. Read together the part of the Nicene Creed that begins “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ” and ends with the words “and his kingdom will have no end.” On a piece of paper or chalkboard list every point about Jesus you find in the creed.

Identify four to six of the points the group wants to debate. They could indicate by a show of hands the points on which there is the greatest disagreement, or you could select the points at random. Divide into two groups, and decide which one will represent the creed; the other will take the opposite view. For example, one will defend “he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,” and the other will argue against the virgin birth. Give each side time to prepare, then stage the debate. Let the group select a moderator. The group may want to invite another group to the debate.

**Hint:** *It may be helpful to have Bibles and a concordance available to help in the debate preparation.*

#### The Eyes of Christ

Mother Teresa, a nun whose order serves poor people all over the world, says that you find Christ most easily in the eyes of the poor. The order first opened homes in India to serve outcasts who had no other place to go. In the United States, the order has targeted destitute people of all races who have AIDS.

Arrange to visit and work for a day at a local homeless shelter or food kitchen. Before you go, read and discuss *Matthew 25:34-40*. Volunteer to perform a specific task such as scrubbing the walls, cleaning the bathrooms, or mopping floors. While you are there, spend time with some of the residents.

## 3 Holy Spirit

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus said,] “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. . . . I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”

*John 14:15-17, 25-26*

**Commentary:** In this passage, Jesus gives the disciples his last teachings and a series of farewell promises. Here Jesus promises to send an Advocate, more commonly known as the Holy Spirit, who will come and live within each of them. The role of the Spirit is give comfort, provide teaching and remind them of all Jesus had taught them.

### □ Questions

- Is this Scripture passage comforting? Why?
- How did the disciples feel when Jesus promised that someone would always be with them?
- Have you ever been in a situation in which you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit? Describe how you felt.

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Is the Holy Spirit felt in different ways by different people?
- How did the Holy Spirit make himself known to the young people in the story?

### □ Activities

#### Lesson Plans

Read the final portion of the Nicene Creed about the Holy Spirit on p. 359 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Reread the Scripture passage, pointing out the last verse that refers to the Holy Spirit as a teacher.

When teachers anticipate a long-term absence, they usually write out specific lesson plans. The plans include the material to be covered and the important points that should receive extra emphasis. The teacher may also include information about the students.

Imagine that Jesus is writing a lesson plan for your life to leave with the Holy Spirit. What material should be covered? What needs the most emphasis? Are there people who are destructive that you should avoid, or those whose friendships should be nurtured? Write down the “lesson plan,” and read it during the coming weeks.

The group could also discuss a lesson plan for the church. What areas need some attention? What do you think is the most important mission of your church? Write out your ideas and submit them to the vestry.

### Three in One

Give each person a lump of clay and ask them to make an image of God. Encourage them to work alone, and keep silence during the task. When they have finished, ask a volunteer to read *John 14:15-17, 25-26*. Using the image already made, ask the participants to find a way to incorporate two more images—one of Christ and one of the Holy Spirit. They cannot use additional clay, and they must maintain the integrity of the original image.

When everyone is finished, discuss the images created.

**Hint:** *Do not insist that everyone share.*

- Was it difficult to change one image into three? How did you go about it?
- Is it any easier to understand that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are one?
- How would you explain that concept to someone who isn't a Christian?

If possible, keep the clay images on display in the meeting room during the group's study of spirituality.

### Video

The movie *L.A. Story* is a comedy starring Steve Martin as a television weatherman who is disillusioned by his job and the people closest to him. He begins to get messages from a certain electric sign that change his life. Enjoy the movie and then talk about your belief in God and how God communicates with you through the Holy Spirit.

- Do you get messages from God? How do you get them?
- Has God tried to communicate with you but you just weren't listening or paying attention?
- How can you be more aware of the Holy Spirit and God?

**Hint:** *The leadership team should preview all movies before showing them to the larger group. This helps leaders to prepare discussion questions and to deal with sensitive issues that may be in the film.*

# SPIRITUALITY

## Who Is God?

### Objective

Youth will be able to use scripture and their own experiences to define who God is in their lives.

### Personal Story

Late one night, I went to the grocery store on my way home from a movie to get some milk for my mom. I got in line behind another teenager to pay the cashier. I noticed that the store was unusually busy for this time of night. The cashier, Pete, was a friend of mine. Pete began to ring up this guy's purchases of a box of cereal and a small bag of chocolate covered pretzels. The teen was watching the monitor closely, and looking a little nervous. The total with tax was \$4.59, but all the boy had was \$3 in food stamps. Pete asked if he wanted to put the pretzels back to get the cost down, and the teen agreed. The total was now \$3.56, and there was still not enough money.

By now the line had grown even longer, and a few people were grumpily looking at their watches. One man at the back told Pete to "get a move on it." But Pete remained calm, and gave his full attention to the customer before him.

Looking confused, the teen explained that he thought the cereal was on sale. A light bulb must have gone off in Pete's head because he immediately exclaimed that the guy had selected the wrong size box. Pete called over another employee to find the right box. I heard a sigh of annoyance from the people waiting behind me. But Pete never lost his cool.

The right box arrived within seconds, and Pete rang up the total. He said that the \$3 would probably be enough for the pretzels, too. The teen placed the pretzels back on the counter, and the sale was finally completed. The teen got his pretzels and an even bigger box of cereal.

Throughout the entire transaction, Pete never made that guy feel like a burden. He even went out of his way to fix the problem. The rest of us had the opportunity, for a brief moment, to be in the presence of God. That's how God acts in the world today, through the kindness and compassion of people.

## SESSION 3

### Scripture

*Psalm 139:13-18*

*Colossians 1:15-20*

*Romans 8:24-27*

### Skill Focus

Trust

Influences

## Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures: Grant that, as we probe the mysteries of your creation, we may come to know you more truly, and more surely fulfill our role in your eternal purpose; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Knowledge of God's Creation  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 827

## Dismissal

*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*  
Thanks be to God.

# 1 Awesome God

## □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.

*Psalm 139:13-18*

**Commentary:** God is the creator of humankind in this psalm. The inward parts, or literally the kidneys, were considered the center of the human emotions. Therefore, the psalmist describes God forming the emotions while knitting together the physical shape of each person. Security comes from the knowledge of the power of God, the one who creates and guides each person throughout life.

## □ Questions

- When is the first time you remember hearing about God?
- According to the Scripture passage, when is the first time God knew you?
- Is God is with you even when you are not aware of it?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Are you sometimes too busy to notice God's presence as some of the other customers might have been?

## □ Activities

### Imagining God

Ask everyone in the group to close their eyes and try to imagine what God looks like. Give everyone a piece of paper and markers, and ask them to draw their image of God. Stress that there are no right answers, and encourage creativity. When everyone has finished, let each person share the image if he or she wishes.

- What do the drawings say about our culture and how we see God?
- How has Scripture influenced our image of God?
- Is there a common theme in the images?

Display the drawings in the room. Play some music, and ask the group to think about the presence of God in their lives. Invite them to bring up one issue or problem that is troubling them and talk it over with God. After a few moments of silence, stand in a circle and close with prayer, inviting each person to say something if he or she wishes.

### Creation Story

Give everyone five minutes to find something that is worthless in or just outside the meeting space. Don't tell them what it will be used for. Sit in a circle, holding the article so that all can see it. Point to someone at random to begin a "creation story." Each person will add to the story incorporating the article he or she is holding. Use the story in *Genesis 1* as a guide or make up your own story.

- Think about God creating the world out of nothing?
- Was it easier to be one of the first storytellers or one of the last?

If the group expresses an interest in recording their story for others, get one or more volunteers to write it. Collect the articles in the order in which they were used to help the writers. The entire group can make an outline from which the story will be written. Those with artistic gifts may want to illustrate the story using the actual junk. Share the story with other groups or print it in a newsletter.

### Poetry

Read the poem titled "The Creation" by James Weldon Johnson in *God's Trombone* to the group. Discuss its meaning.

## 2 Jesus Is Lord

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

*Colossians 1:15-20*

**Commentary:** This letter was written by Paul to the church at Colossae, a city in Asia Minor, to counter-attack many of the false teachers who were commonplace at this time. These verses capture the major theme Paul's message in the letter. Christ is the agent of creation and has power over all aspects of it. Christ is also the head of the Church, and through him all creation is reconciled to God.

### □ Questions

- According to the Scripture passage, how has God revealed God's presence in the world?
- What act was necessary to reconcile God to humankind?
- How is the Church part of God's plan for reconciliation?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Have you ever been aware that God acts through you? What is that like?

### □ Activities

#### On Trial

Plan a court case with Jesus as the defense attorney. Select the offense to be tried, such as drinking and driving, using drugs, slander, fighting, or others. Decide who Jesus will represent and who will be the judge, prosecutor, defendant, and witnesses. The rest of the group can be the jury. Give everyone time to prepare, then stage a mock trial.

- What is Jesus's role in the Scripture passage?
- Who is the judge in the passage?
- Did each person stay in character throughout the trial?
- Did the person playing Jesus ever get angry during the trial? Does he get angry when things go wrong?

If the trial is successful, repeat it for another group.

#### Field Trip

Visit a museum and look at the different ways that Jesus is portrayed in art. Note the differences in how artists have seen Jesus throughout history.

**Hint:** *Since most museums are closed Sunday morning, schedule your visit during the afternoon or at another time during the week.*

After your visit, discuss the ways Christ is shown. If a museum visit is not feasible, check out art books from the library. As you look at paintings, list as many different characteristics you can find that are represented in artists' works.

- Is there one common characteristic in each picture?
- Do different pictures help you to see Jesus more clearly?
- What does the Bible say about Jesus's appearance?
- Does any particular work of art capture your image of Jesus?
- How you would represent Jesus in a painting or sculpture.

#### Jesus in the News

During the week, collect the local sections from the daily newspaper. Distribute the sections to individuals or small groups. Ask them to look through the papers and find examples of Jesus's presence in their community.

**Hint:** *Before you begin this exercise, you may want to read and discuss the Personal Story to help the group understand how Jesus is present.*

Then ask them to find examples of places or times when Jesus didn't seem to be present. Give each group or individual time to describe the examples of Jesus's presence or times he seemed absent.

- How did Jesus's presence make a difference for the people in the stories you found?
- Do you think Jesus abandons us at times? Where was he during violence or anger?
- What can we do to make Jesus's presence felt in the community?

If possible, identify one of the stories the group would like to follow up on. For example, help refurbish a soup kitchen or make a meal for a homeless shelter. The group could also pray for an individual or neighborhood during this study of spirituality.

## 3 Holy Spirit

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:24-27

**Commentary:** In this letter, Paul writes to a church in Rome. This letter is Paul's meditation on his understanding and vision of the good news—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Chapter 8 is the turning point of the letter. In these verses, Paul explains the workings of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit sustains us in our hope, supports our life as Christians, and prays for us when we are unable to find the words. The spirit's presence is part of God's plan for all people.

### □ Questions

- Have you ever had a problem you couldn't even put into words? How does God find out about issues in our lives?
- Can you think of something you hoped for with all your heart? How does the passage describe hope? Was it easy to be patient while you waited?
- Who are the “saints” mentioned in the last line of the Scripture passage?

Option: Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How was Pete's patience rewarded?
- What would have happened if Pete had been impatient?
- How did his act of kindness change other people?

### □ Activities

#### Personal Story

The Holy Spirit is working through us all the time if we let it. Think about your actions in the past week at school, at home, or in the community.

- Did you have a chance to be like Pete in the Personal Story?
- Is there a time you had a chance to show kindness or compassion, but were too impatient?

Write your own Personal Story based on something you *did* or *could have done* that showed the Holy Spirit working through you.

When everyone has completed his or her story, ask if anyone would like to share. Collect the stories in a brown paper bag and put it in the middle of the group. Pray for awareness of the Holy Spirit in your actions toward others in the coming week.

#### Kite Making

Purchase kite kits from a local craft store, or create your own out of plastic garbage bags, thin wood dowels, staples, and strings.

**Hint:** *If you make a kite without a kit, put one together before the group meets as a model.*

**Directions:** Cross two dowels and tie them in the middle making a cross shape. Each wood piece should be about a foot long. Then cut a diamond shape from a large trash bag that will fit over the dowels. Decorate the plastic with permanent markers or colored tissue paper. Attach the plastic to the dowels with a stapler. Tie a spool of string to the kite at the point the dowels cross. You are ready to fly kites.

Plan this as an intergenerational activity for Pentecost, to celebrate the coming of spring, or as an activity at a church picnic. Be sure to try your design before using it with a large group.

- What does a kite have to do with the Holy Spirit?
- What are different words and symbols associated with Holy Spirit?
- Is the freedom of a kite soaring in the wind like your relationship with God?

#### Trust Game

Ask the group to stand in a circle, everyone shoulder to shoulder with their hands up and palms facing out. Ask one person to stand in the middle with their knees locked, eyes closed, and their arms crossed across their chest. As the person in the middle says “falling,” he or she will fall backwards and the circle will begin to gently push him or her from person to person. Give everyone a chance to be in the center of the circle. If your group is not large enough to do this activity, take a trust walk in pairs with one person blindfolded.

**Hint:** *Do not force anyone to be the person falling.*

- How did it feel to depend on others you couldn't see?
- How can you depend on a God you cannot see?
- What would have happened if one or two people were distracted and didn't do their job?
- Do you ever let down your guard and really given God control of your life?

# SPIRITUALITY

## Getting to Know God

### Objective

Youth will be able to explore a variety of ways to develop a relationship with God.

### Personal Story

My grandfather has been a very important person in my life ever since I was a little. My mom tells me that when I was a baby, he took care of me. He would come and get me on Saturdays and carry me around with him everywhere he went. He would take me fishing, to the barber shop—everywhere. They say he's a very quiet man, but to me, he could talk, talk, talk. It seemed like he understood a lot of things I didn't. Even if we didn't agree, he would listen to me carefully. Those talks have always been special to me.

My grandfather talked to God, also. He was big on church, and we spent a lot of time there. But he also spent his own personal time with God. Sometimes when I would stay with him, I would get up early and hear him talking. At first I used to think he was talking to himself. No, he told me later, he was talking to God. Without any fanfare, he prayed—just like that! I asked him what he talked to God about, and he said, “Everything on my mind.”

When we moved from my old neighborhood, it was a hard time for me. I didn't want to go. I had lots of good friends, my school, sports, and everything. I was so mad at my parents. At first, it was very lonely in the new neighborhood. I just wanted to be around someone or something that was familiar.

The one thing that stayed the same was my grandfather. He would still come to take me places. We went to some of our favorite spots. I remember one really good talk. He told me about the changes in his life. Some were really hard, like when my grandmother died. He said he felt that God was with him all through it. Even when he was sad and angry, he talked to God and felt that God was with him.

Now my grandfather is very sick. He can't take me to all the places he used to. He doesn't get out much at all. Since I can drive now, I can go to see him, and sometimes I'm able to take him out. He has Alzheimer disease, and gets confused. He doesn't remember things like he used to. Sometimes he talks to me as if I were little again. Then he remembers and gets frightened. I get frightened, too.

One thing, though, that makes him feel better are his talks with God. When I hear him, it is the old granddad that I knew. I hope that no matter what changes are in store for both of us, we'll always feel God around.

## SESSION 4

### Scripture

*Psalm 139:1-6*  
*1 Samuel 3:4-10*  
*Matthew 16:13-18*

### Skill Focus

Relationships  
Responsibility

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Collect for Guidance  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 100

## Dismissal

*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*  
Thanks be to God.

# 1 In Relationships

## □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

*Psalm 139:1-6*

**Commentary:** The verses from *Psalm 139* remind us that God know each person in every detail. Relationships with God are based on God's full knowledge of people's very thoughts. God surrounds people on all sides as they make choices and develop relationships. This understanding of God is beyond all human knowledge.

## □ Questions

- How do you get to know new people? How do you get to know God?
- Have you ever had a friend who could guess what you were going to say before you said it?
- How does the psalmist describe God's knowledge about us? Do you find that comforting or disconcerting?
- What happens to a friendship if you don't communicate? What happens when we fail to talk to God?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What kind of relationship did the grandfather have with God?
- How did that relationship comfort him?

## □ Activities

### Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder...or Does It?

Ask the participants to think about a person they have not seen for a long time. This could be someone they knew in summer camp, or a friend who moved away, or someone who is no longer in their circle of friends. Write a letter to this person.

- What would you share about your life?
- What events or activities would you leave out?

Read together the Collect for Purity, a part of the introductory words of the Eucharist service on p. 355 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. What does it tell you about God and your relationship with God? Ask the group to pretend that God is the friend you haven't seen for awhile. Write the same kind of letter to God that you wrote to the person you haven't seen.

- What is different about writing this letter?
- What new things did you share about your life? What did you leave out?

Pass out envelopes, and ask the participants to put their letters inside. Suggest that they think about sending the first letter to a friend. Make a covenant that each person will reread the second letter sometime during the week to try to get to know God better.

### Interview: Up Front and Personal

Interview a relative or another adult about their relationship with God. Or, divide into pairs and interview each other. Find out when the person first knew about God.

- What did the person learn about God?
- How did that experience shape their lives?
- How does the person feel about prayer? Is it a regular part of his or her life?

Share your interviews with the group. Discuss the different ways people come to know God.

- What did you learn about God from listening to another's experience?
- What did you learn about the other person?
- What did you learn about yourself?

### A Search For God

Ask the participants to brainstorm all the ways people learn about and find God. For example, sermons in church, television, people they meet, parents, or Bible reading. List all the ideas on newsprint. After completing the list, ask the group to "evaluate" the effectiveness of each item.

- What does this entry tell you about God?
- How effective is this item in getting to know God?
- Over time will it build your relationship with God?

Select the five best methods of getting to know God, and write them on a separate piece of paper. Discuss ways that the group or individuals can use these methods in the next week. Plan to report back to the group about how effective the methods were in helping people get to know God.

## 2 Hearing God

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Then the Lord called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!” and ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, “Samuel!” Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

*1 Samuel 3:4-10*

**Commentary:** Samuel was a prophet important to the Israelite's transition from a loosely connected group of people to a monarchy under Saul. In this portion of Scripture, God calls Samuel as a young boy. As he sleeps near the altar, Samuel hears a voice and runs to Eli, a priest of the temple. Samuel is sent back to bed. The scene is repeated two more times until Eli recognizes that God is calling Samuel. The next time Samuel responds to God by being still and listening. God expects the same of all people.

### □ Questions

- Does God speak to us today? How? What are ways that you hear God?
- Are you too busy to listen to God?
- Do you need to be still and quiet to listen to God?
- How well do you listen to your friends? Could you be a better listener?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Did the grandfather listen to God?
- Have you been in a relationship in which you were always the speaker? the listener? What happened to the relationship?

### □ Activities

#### Who Is Speaking?

During the week, tape familiar voices that participants in the group would be likely to recognize. Tape live voices, such as the rector or frequent lay readers, or voices you hear on radio or television during the week, such as the president, popular personalities, musicians, or clips from movies. Play each selection twice. First, ask the group to identify the speaker. Then, ask the group to guess what the person is talking about or doing.

- What kind of emotion is being expressed?
- What makes this voice unique?

After listening and discussing the voices, reread the Scripture passage about Samuel and Eli. Talk about Samuel's first encounter with God.

- What is it like to hear God?
- What makes God's voice familiar? What makes God's voice unique?
- What keeps us from hearing God's voice?

#### Field Trip

When we talk about hearing God, we often think about actually using our ears, just as Samuel did in the Scripture passage. Stop and think about all the different ways people can communicate with each other using body language, hand signals, and written messages.

How do deaf people hear God? Visit a church, school, or home for deaf people if one is located in or near your community. Ask the director if the group can participate in some activities and share a meal.

Discuss what the group learned from the visit.

- How did you feel in that community?
- What do we really need to hear God?
- Does your church or community hear God in unique ways?

#### Speak For Your Servants Are Listening

Make a list of events or issues in your community, school, or church that are important to you. Divide into groups if possible. Ask each group to select a different event or issue and spend some time discussing it.

While the groups are in the midst of your discussion, ring a bell or play a tape of a phone ringing. Tell the groups that God is on the line. Ask them to incorporate God in their discussion.

- What is God calling to tell you?
- Is God more compassionate than the group?
- Does God want you to do more than just talk about current issues? What is God asking you to do?
- How do you respond to God?

Talk about any differences God made in your discussions with the entire group. Would we say and do the same things if we were really aware of God's presence?

### 3 Who is Jesus?

#### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”

*Matthew 16:13-18*

**Commentary:** This Scripture passage, records a crucial moment in the ministry of Jesus. The second of the two questions asked by Jesus is the most important. The disciples are called upon by Jesus to declare their belief in him as the Messiah. Peter boldly affirms that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. This is a turning point for the ministry of Jesus who must now go to Jerusalem to fulfill the prophecy. It is also a turning point for Peter, who is given a great responsibility to start the Church.

#### □ Questions

- Describe Jesus in your own words.
- Do we sometimes get confused about who Jesus is?
- Is your understanding about Jesus as clear as Peter's was?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How would the grandfather have answered Jesus' question?
- Can you describe a person you have never spent much time with?

#### □ Activities

##### Jesus Live!!

Stage an interview with Jesus based on television talk shows. Assign roles or ask for volunteers to play Jesus, the show host, and other members of the panel. Other members of the group will be the audience.

The panel can include those who came in contact with Jesus. Let panel members select their identity from the following list or other sources:

- The owner of the fig tree (*Mark 11:12-14*)
- Temple money changer (*Mark 11:15-19*)
- Mary Magdalene (*Matthew 27:55-56, 28:1*)
- Bride and bridegroom at Cana (*John 2:1-12*)
- A swine herdsman (*Matthew 8:28-34*)

Provide Bibles for panel members. Give the participants, including those who will be in the audience, time to plan their questions and responses. What questions would you ask Jesus? How would he answer?

Share your “production” with another group. Use it as a way to talk about who Jesus is and the role he plays in our lives.

#### Looking For the Man From Galilee

Think of all the stories that you have heard about Jesus. Include personal stories, pictures from museums, stained glass windows, the media, the Gospels, the Nicene Creed (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 358) and the Baptismal Covenant (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 304-305). Include comments from individuals in the group.

Break into pairs or small groups to discuss who Jesus is for each of you. When you finish your discussion, imagine that “your” Jesus has suddenly appeared in the room and you have to introduce him to the group.

- How did he get there?
  - What will you say about him?
  - What do you want the group to know about him?
- Be creative!

#### Hunting For Jesus

Ask the group to make a list of every characteristic they can think of to describe Jesus. Ask each person to make a copy of the list, and then go on a “scavenger hunt” for Jesus in the immediate area. Each person should find one or more objects that express the characteristics of Jesus or what Jesus means to them.

For example, someone may bring back a candle signifying light. Another may pick up a rock to show that Jesus is steadfast. Depending on the location of your church, the group can use the buildings, grounds, or immediate vicinity. Encourage them to try to find objects that we do not normally use to define Jesus.

Set a time for the group to return and talk about how a particular object was found and why it was selected. Compare the objects of other group members and see how different objects express similar qualities. Do these things help you to feel closer to God?

# SPIRITUALITY

## Prayer

### Objective

Youth will be able to identify the forms of prayer in the Catechism and define prayer for themselves.

### Personal Story

When I first met Azziza, she was new to our school. I thought she had such a pretty name. She seemed very different from the rest of us. She was tall, wore very colorful clothes, and spoke out with confidence. She didn't seem to worry too much about what other people thought. At first I thought she didn't care about other people. But I learned what a special person she really is. She is creative and imaginative. Her whole family is made up of artists, musicians, and dancers. There is art everywhere in her house, and someone is always playing music. At any time there is some interesting person visiting or an interesting project underway.

Azziza is an artist and dancer. She has been taking dance lessons since she could walk. She really loves color and music. Since she was very young, she has made up stories, songs, and art to express her feelings. She says that color and music are a part of who she is. Even at school she uses art and dance to express her many moods and ideas.

When a teacher took a leave of absence to have her baby, Azziza created a dance that we performed just before the teacher left. The movements of the dance expressed many things we felt. The teacher is fun and has lots of energy and we were sad to see her leave. The dance showed those feelings. We were happy about the new baby and thankful for having the teacher in our lives. Because our teacher's faith is important to her, we called our skit a prayer dance. Mostly we were thanking God for her.

When our music teacher died suddenly, we had a hard time accepting his loss. He was here yelling at us one day and gone the next. I remember most his empty chair. Since teaching was his whole life, his family asked the music classes to perform something for his memorial service. Most of us were reluctant, but Azziza knew just what to do. She helped us think about how we felt about him and to put those feelings into music. Although we were sad, the performance turned out well. We were able to say goodbye and wish his family well. It felt good to be able to do something.

Through her art and music, Azziza is able to express her deep feelings. She says that helps her talk to God. She has also made a lot of friends because of the way she has responded to difficult situations. She always adds special touches to whatever is going on. Now that we all know her better, she has become our good friend.

I have learned a lot from Azziza. She has taught me that my whole life, everything that happens and what I feel is important to express. I have also discovered that I can pray using thoughts, feelings, and events in beautiful ways.

## SESSION 5

### Scripture

*II Chronicles 7:13-16*

*Philippians 4:4-7*

*Luke 11:1-4*

### Skill Focus

Forgiveness

Compassion

## Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Proper 22

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 234

## Dismissal

*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*  
Thanks be to God.

# 1 Changing Hearts

## □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house so that my name may be there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time.

*II Chronicles 7:13-16*

**Commentary:** First and Second Chronicles tell the story of Israel's history from the creation of the world to the beginning of the Persian empire. This part of II Chronicles tells about the dedication of the Temple built by King Solomon. In the passage, God comes to Solomon and affirms that he will hear the prayers of the people. God asks all people to seek God and turn from wrong doings.

## □ Questions

- How does God want people to change?
- What causes change for you?
- Do you have much control over big changes in your life?
- Have you ever tried to change the way you are?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did Azziza adapt to changes in her life?
- What changes happened to the narrator?

## □ Activities

### Kids Like That

Read the Personal Story and discuss the situations described by the narrator. How Azziza is different from you and your friends. Do you know anyone like her?

Discuss the traits or stereotypes used to “put people in their place.” Ask the group if they have ever taken people at face value or by what other people had to say about them.

- Were you quick to judge someone else?
- How do you think the other person felt?
- What if we treat God like that?

Make a covenant to pray each day for those who are different from you.

### Who Is “Them”?

Write the word “them” on a chalkboard or piece of paper. Make a list of people the group describes as “them.” Now write the word “us” on the board or paper. Make a similar list of the type of people “us” describes.

Divide into two groups. The first group will take the “them” list and specify ways to turn “them” into “us.” The second group takes the “us” words and decides how to make people who are “us” into “them.”

- Can we make people who are on the outside like us?
- Can we turn people like us into outsiders?
- Can we only bring people together by making them alike?

Pray for insight to appreciate the people you think of as “them.”

### Prayer for Our Enemies

Read the prayer For Our Enemies on p. 816 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Discuss this praying for your enemies.

An example of how a life can be changed in this way is incorporated in the words of “Amazing Grace! how sweet the sound” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 671).

Read the words of the hymn and discuss what it means. Share the story of its author, John Newton, captain of a slave ship, a drunkard, and gambler. His crew was sure that his drinking and cursing would bring the wrath of God. One night a violent storm almost tore the ship apart.

This confrontation with God and death caused Newton to write “Amazing Grace.” Later, after several spiritual setbacks, he became a preacher.

- Has God ever caused a change of heart in your life? •Were you ever surprised by a change in your life? Did you see God's hand in that change?

As a group or individually write new words to the tune of “Amazing Grace” that describe an experience you have had. Perform the song for others.

## 2 All Things Through Prayer

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

*Philippians 4:4-7*

**Commentary:** Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians while in prison in Rome. In these verses, Paul confirms his belief that people should always rejoice in the Lord. Paul even repeats his statement to encourage those who doubt that joy can come with hard times. Anxiety and worries cease to exist when life is centered in constant prayer. Living prayerfully will bring God's peace through Jesus Christ.

### □ Questions

- Are Paul's words in the Scripture passage comforting?
- Have you ever turned over a problem to God that you were worried about? How did you do that?
- Does God really expect us not to worry?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did Azziza face problems?
- What did she teach others about prayer?
- What would you like to learn about prayer?

### □ Activities

#### Life Is Prayer

What is prayerful living? Find pictures in magazines of people of all ages engaged in any activity that has to do with life. Pass out the pictures, making sure each person has at least one. Tell the group that in every picture these people are praying. Ask the participants to study their pictures carefully, and then share with the group their answers to the following questions.

- What is happening in the picture?
- What do you imagine the people are feeling?
- What are they praying about?
- What does this discussion suggest about prayerful living?

When everyone has had a chance to talk about his or her picture, put the pictures together in a collage called "Prayerful Living." Display the collage in the meeting space or another place in the church.

#### *The Book of Common Prayer*

A description of prayer is in the Catechism at the back of *The Book of Common Prayer* on p. 856. The Catechism is a series of questions and answers that define the Episcopal faith. In the section on "Prayer and Worship" there are seven kinds of prayer: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, penitence, oblation, intercession, and petition. Print the names of each type of prayer on separate sheets of paper and post them around the room. Ask the participants to write definitions for each type of prayer on the paper.

When everyone has had a chance to write the definitions, ask the group to look up descriptions in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Compare these definitions with the group's.

- How does the Prayer Book define prayer?
- What would you tell a friend about each of these forms of prayer?
- Define these types of prayer in your own words.

As a group or working in pairs, write a one sentence prayer for each of the forms listed in the Catechism. Put the prayers together for a closing prayer or print them in a church newsletter. Encourage members of the group to try out these kinds of prayer in the coming week.

#### Art As Prayer

In the Personal Story, Azziza used her gifts for art and music to express her feelings. Many artists see their work as communication with God or prayer. Some use "found" things—odds and ends from everyday life to create expressive artwork. During the week, look around your home or neighborhood for discarded items to make a sculpture, such as styrofoam, small toys, utensils, bits of plastic, wood, pottery, feathers, shells, and stones. Or gather items outside or around the church. You will need paint and quick drying glue or a glue gun.

Place all the items on a table in the middle of the room. In silence, look at all the things the group has assembled. Write the seven types of prayer on small slips of paper and place them in a paper bag in the middle of the room. Working in groups or individually, select a type of prayer from the bag. What does this type of prayer make you think of? What moods, emotions, colors does it elicit? Using the discarded items, construct a sculpture that expresses your prayer type. When all have finished, share the creations and discuss the prayers they represent.

- Was it difficult expressing your prayer as a sculpture?
- How did you translate an idea into art?
- What have you learned about prayer?

Label the sculptures with the prayer type, and display your creations. Use them to teach others about prayer.

## 3 Teach Us to Pray

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

*Luke 11:1-4*

**Commentary:** This prayer from *Luke* is what we know as the Lord's Prayer. Both *Luke* and *Matthew* record it with slight variations. Jesus addresses God as Father. The Aramaic word is *Abba*, probably close to our word daddy, a name children use for their own father. Jesus encourages us through this prayer to speak to God as intimately as we can.

### □ Questions

- What does this prayer tell us about prayer?
- What does it say about your relationship with Jesus and God?
- What is a time of trial? Are there events in your life that you would describe a time of trial? How did you get through them?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What would Jesus say about the way Azziza prays?
- What is the most powerful expression of prayer for you?

### □ Activities

#### What Would You Say?

Bring in the front pages of a newspaper for the past week. As a group identify stories you find interesting. Divide into smaller groups, and let each subgroup select the story they want to present and how it will be presented. For example, they could use pantomimes, skits, newscasts, movie scenes, or stories told by a storyteller. Include every person in the scenario.

After each presentation, ask the groups to stay “on stage.” Randomly select one of the actors or participants in the scenario to say a prayer.

- What would the words be?
- How did you decide what to say?
- Do you remember to pray when you are caught up in an event?

**Hint:** *Some people are uncomfortable saying spontaneous prayers. Respect a person's right to defer to someone else.*

### Living Prayers of Oblation

The Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer* says that a prayer of oblation is “an offering of ourselves, our lives and labors, in union with Christ, for the purposes of God.” Each of us can offer something to God. What do you have to offer?

Develop an ongoing project as a group or individually in your neighborhood, church, or school as a prayer of oblation. Identify skills and interests of people in the group. Consider such things as transportation and cost of supplies. Use the following ideas to help you identify a project that is uniquely appropriate for your group.

- Annual spring cleaning for elderly or other members of the church
- After school tutoring program for younger children
- Ongoing visits with elderly or shut-ins
- “Parents' morning out” child care one Saturday a month
- Once a term work day around the church or community
- Plant and maintain a flower bed at your church or in your neighborhood

### Lifting Our Life and Times to God

Prayer is an offering that we give to God or to one another. As a group, compile your own prayer book to be used throughout the year. Divide into small groups to work on different sections or work together as a group. Decide what types of prayer you want to include and different formats.

Be creative as possible by using art, drama, movement, music, poetry, and colors. Include a ritual of prayer to begin or end your time together each week. You can also incorporate prayers to celebrate birthdays, losses, achievements, and special events, such as getting a driver's license or living through finals.

Take turns beginning and ending your time together with the prayers that you have created. Make your prayer book available to other groups in the church, especially younger youth.

# SPIRITUALITY

## Finding God in Silence

### Objective

Youth will be able to explore several types of meditation. They will discuss the importance of silence in relationships with God.

### Personal Story

#### Eli

When I get home from school, I love to head straight for my room; I throw my backpack and coat down, and I land on my bed. My room is far away from all the noise and kids rushing around at school. My room is far from the sounds of my brother and sister fighting and my parents talking. Sometimes after school, there are a million things running around in my head. I need the quiet. I don't play my music or anything. I love to just lay on my bed and think. I look at my room and all my things. I think about my teachers and my family sometimes, or what I'm going to do tomorrow. The quiet helps to clear my head.

#### Camilla

When I heard my father was going to have an operation, I didn't know how it would affect me. I didn't know that I would take it so hard. But I did. The day he went to the hospital the house seemed so empty. I remember I woke up early and just sat in a big chair for a long time. I don't know if I was worried about the worst or what. I thought about my dad and what he is like. I thought about how much he means to me—to all of us. I asked God to take care of him, and it felt like God was there.

#### Nicole

Soccer is my favorite sport. I love to play on the team, and we are doing well this year. Every game is important to keep up our record. The strength of the team is that we play well together. It's great! Sometimes when we're on the field, it's almost like I know what the girls on my team are thinking or which way they're going to move. My coach has this thing she does during practice. We take time to "center" ourselves, as she calls it. We sit really still and get really quiet. We imagine the coming game, the other players on our team, and how we'll play together to win. We also begin each game with a time of silence.

#### Cameron

I've got a couple of good friends. We do everything together—school, relaxing, everything. I spend most of my time with them. We walk around the neighborhood or play basketball. We talk, listen to music, or go to the mall. But sometimes I get in one of my quiet moods. I just want to be by myself. When I'm in one of those moods and don't get away from people, it's bad news for everyone. I'm not fit for anything or anyone. There's a place I go, the roof room of our apartment building. It is like being on a mountain up there. I can look out and see across the city. It's quiet except for the birds and the wind. After I spend time there, I'm ready to rejoin my friends.

## SESSION 6

### Scripture

*1 Kings 19:11-13*

*Psalms 62:5-8*

*Matthew 6:5-6*

### Skill Focus

Influences

Communication

## Prayer

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Proper 10

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 231*

## Dismissal

*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*  
Thanks be to God.

## 1 God's Still, Small Voice

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[The angel] said [to Elijah], “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

*1 Kings 19:11-13*

**Commentary:** In this passage, the prophet Elijah had recently destroyed the prophets of Baal, a pagan god. His enemy swore to kill him. Elijah, afraid for his life, flees to the desert. An angel comes and feeds him, giving him strength to travel for forty days to Mt. Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments.

In a cave near the mountain, Elijah experiences several frightening events: an earthquake, a wind storm, and a fire. God does not appear in any of these but instead speaks to Elijah in the silence that follows.

### □ Questions

- Do you often think of God in the images from the Scripture passage?
- Which is more frightening—the noise of the elements or the voice in the silence?
- Do we sometimes miss God's voice because our lives are so filled with commotion?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Do you need time as Eli does to “clear your head”?
- When you are frightened, do you talk to God as Camilla did?

### □ Activities

#### Noisy Lives

In the Scripture reading about Elijah there is lots of noise—wind raging, rocks cracking, earthquakes breaking open the earth, and fire crackling. But God was not there. Find a place, such as your meeting room, outdoors, or a little used part of the church, where noise won't bother anyone. Bring in noise makers, including pots and pans, horns, tambourines, or anything that creates a ruckus.

Make as much noise as loud and as long as you can, keeping track of how much time has lapsed. When the noise completely stops, sit in silence for the same length of time.

- What was it like to be in the midst of all the noise?
- What was the silence like?

Ask each participant to list of all the noises in his or her life, such as a radio, traffic, airplanes, machinery, or people. Now list the time and places when there is complete silence.

Discuss the two lists as a group.

- What do the lists tell you about your life?
- How often do you have a chance to encounter the still, small voice of God?

#### The Color of Silence

Discuss the qualities of strong wind (wind storms, tornadoes, blustery days, blistering hot wind, and objects flying), earthquakes (jagged earth split open, dust, toppling trees and buildings), fire (glowing coals, scorched earth and rocks, smoke), and silence (clear, still, unbroken, hovering). Write down ideas on a chalkboard or large piece of paper.

With these images in mind, imagine colors and textures that would suggest strong wind, earthquake, fire, and silence. Silently, in groups or individually, use strips of colored paper to create a color collage representing wind, earthquakes, fire, and silence. Discuss the collages. Find a place in the church to display your artwork. Make a reference to the Scripture passage somewhere in the display.

#### The Sounds of Silence

Find the words to the Simon and Garfunkel song “The Sound of Silence.” Read the lyrics. Play the song, followed by a period of silence.

- What images in the song speak powerfully to you?
- What kind of silence is this song talking about?
- Compare the silence in this song to the silence of God.
- How does this song relate to current events?
- Where is God in this song?
- Where are you?

## 2 My Soul in Silence Waits

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

*Psalm 62:5-8*

**Commentary:** This Psalm reflects the importance of relying on God in times of great difficulty. The images used are ones of strength and permanence. God will always be present and provide the strength to face whatever problems may come, if only people can put their trust in him.

### □ Questions

- When are some times in your life that you have been shaken? What did you do?
- Is silence always a good thing?
- How do you know when to be silent and when to speak?
- Have you ever trusted someone who has let you down? Have you ever felt that God let you down?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did Camilla find strength in silence?
- How did “centering” in silence help Nicole's team find inner strength?

### □ Activities

#### What Are You Waiting For?

Ask the participants to list things that they are waiting for in the next six months. Make a second list for things they are waiting for a year or more from now. For example, they may be waiting for graduation, a driver's license, college, a job promotion, a prom, or a sport event. Make some kind of notation about things on the list that they anticipate with pleasure, are anxious about, or are in no hurry for.

- What would it feel like for your soul to wait for these things in silence?
- Is it always best to wait in silence?

Go back over the lists, and ask each person to identify one thing that they could use some help in accomplishing or preparing for and one thing they need to approach in silence. Help each other identify resources, such as people, driving school, or tutors, that will enable them to reach goals they are waiting for. Spend the last few minutes of the session in silence, seeking God's guidance and presence in your waiting.

### We All Wait

Bring in different kinds of magazines, and ask participants to find and cut out pictures of various scenes of waiting.

- What feelings and memories does this bring up?
- Which ones reflect the words and mood of the psalmist in the Scripture passage?

Ask the group to describe their own examples of waiting, such as waiting to be born, for a bus, on a loose tooth, for seeds to grow, water to boil, bread to rise, waiting to die, pets anticipating their families' return, for a letter, for Christmas.

- Do you usually wait in silence?
- When are times that others can help you wait?

### Guided Meditation

One way of waiting for God is through various types of meditation. As a group, explore different forms of meditation, using the list below as a guide. Decide which forms work best for you.

- **Nature:** Go outdoors and sit quietly near the church or visit a nearby park. Listen to the sounds of nature. See how many distinct sounds you can hear.
- **Guided:** A volunteer guides the rest of the group in relaxing their bodies and visualizing relaxing and healing scenes or situations. For example, after everyone is relaxed, the meditation leader may describe a scene at the seashore or near a mountain stream. Insure that there are no interruptions during the process by posting a sign at the door.
- **Walking:** Walk in a slow and comfortable way in silence, following a smooth path. Concentrate on listening to your own breathing.
- **Centering:** Sit quietly focusing on breathing. Simply notice the thoughts that rise and fall away.

Invite the participants to try one of these forms of meditation at least once during the week. As a group, agree to use silence as part of your prayers together.

**Hint:** *Don't be dismayed if you are easily distracted. Those distractions are a part of the process of meditation and prayer.*

### Yoga

If someone in your group or church takes yoga classes, invite them to lead the class in simple yoga exercises.

**Hint:** *Everyone may not wish to participate.*

## 3 Praying Alone

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

[Jesus said,] “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by other. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

*Matthew 6:5-6*

**Commentary:** The rules for prayer and fasting were very specific for Jews during the time of Jesus. In this passage, Jesus asks his followers to obey the rules but without all the excesses that some Jews have been practicing. In other words, prayer does not need to be a public display of devotion to God.

### □ Questions

- Does this Scripture passage refer to prayers we say publicly at church? Why?
- Are you more likely to be honest about your feelings in public or in private?
- What kind of rewards can God give us in secret?
- What is the difference between praying alone and praying with others?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Why did Cameron need to get away from people in his “quiet moods”?
- Do you have a place like Cameron's where you can “get away from things”? What is it like?

### □ Activities

#### Thinking About Your Day

Journaling is a good way to spend time thinking about yourself and your day. Make a journal that participants can use for the rest of their study on spirituality. Bring in lined or blank paper and different colored construction paper. Use the construction paper as book covers, and bind the books with staples or by punching holes and tying string or ribbon to hold the pages together. On the covers, draw a something that helps you think about God. Participants could also make designs with colored tissue, or they could print a word or phrase that is meaningful to them.

Allow some time at the beginning or end of each session for individuals to make entries in their journals. Write down experiences, poems, thoughts, and feelings. Artists could draw pictures; musicians could write a song.

The journals could also be used each day at home when participants have some time to be alone and review the events of their day. Record thoughts, feelings, hopes, and dreams in prose, poetry, or art.

- How does journaling work for you?
- How is journaling like prayer?
- Do you like spending time alone?
- What is the difference between being lonely and being alone?

### Masks We Wear

In many cultures masks play an important role in the prayer and worship life. The mask reflects various qualities of God or the wearer in prayer. Sometimes masks reflect the qualities that we want to offer to God. Thinking about these qualities and making a “prayer mask” can be a meditation in itself.

At a craft store, buy enough face plaster for the group to each make a mask of his or her face. Follow the directions carefully. Bring paint, glitter, and other materials to decorate the masks when they are dry. Divide into pairs for the initial step of making the face mold. Notice what it feels like to have material applied. Think about praying in silence as your mask is being cast. Use these thoughts, colors and images as you decorate your mask. Display the masks at your church, and use them some way during a worship service.

**Hint:** *Some participants may not want to put the plaster on their faces. As an alternative, bring supplies to make paper mache masks.*

### Prayer Positions

Prayer involves the whole body, mind and soul. The physical position of the body affects prayer in different ways. Various religious traditions, cultures, and individuals use different positions for prayer. Using the list below or ways you have seen or create yourselves, try out different prayer positions. Identify which ones you are comfortable doing as a group, or ones you want to explore in private. Discuss or write about how they effect your prayer.

- Movement: Create movements that illustrate a prayer.
  - Stand: Stand with your arms outward or over your face.
  - Sit: Sit on the floor with legs folded, or in a chair with feet flat, and hands resting on thighs.
  - Prone: Lie flat on your stomach with arms outstretched.
  - Kneel: Kneel on a kneeler, on the floor, or next to a chair.
- Decide which position is best for different types of prayer. (For a list of prayer types, see p. 856 in *The Book of Common Prayer*.)

# SPIRITUALITY

## Worship

### Objective

Youth will be able to discuss different ways to worship God in community and identify aspects that are meaningful to them.

### Personal Story

My parents have taken me to church for as long as I can remember. I say that they took me because I never went of my own accord. For the most part, I didn't like going to church. I had to wear uncomfortable clothes, sit still for long periods of time on uncomfortable pews, and listen to something that I didn't understand.

One Sunday a month, though, things were different. Instead of the regular church service, there was a children's Eucharist in the church hall, a big room with no pews where we had freedom to move. Father Thomas, one of the two priests at the church, led the service. What I liked most about the service was that it meant something to me with stories that were told and explained, and questions asked and answered.

In the regular church service, communion was snack time and a chance to get up and stretch my legs. That was it. In the children's Eucharist, Father Thomas explained that communion was a meal, and that it was based on what Jesus did with his disciples. Just as Jesus gave the bread and wine to his disciples, he would give himself to the world.

That was how I came to understand what went on at the regular service in our church and came to have a better appreciation for the ways Christians worship. I have also found that there is no one set way to worship God. I have been to a lot of different churches since I went to the children's Eucharist. I've been to churches where the preacher does all the talking and services where the congregation speaks freely. I have been to churches where everyone is solemn and quiet and to churches where people get up and dance. I have been to silent services and to services with an eight-piece jazz ensemble.

I have discovered that church doesn't have to be an uncomfortable place. You don't have to dress up for it. God doesn't care what you wear to church, even if the people in church don't like the way you're dressed. You don't have to read prayers from a book. God doesn't listen to just one kind of worship. You don't even have to be in church to worship. For that matter, you don't even have to be praying to show love for God. Every time we do something kind for someone else, no matter how small the act, we honor God's commandments and do God's work.

## SESSION 7

### Scripture

*Jeremiah 10:1-5*

*Psalms 150*

*1 Corinthians 10:15-16*

### Skill Focus

Relationships

Responsibility

## Prayer

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Collect for Purity, Holy Eucharist II

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 355

## Dismissal

*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*

Thanks be to God.

# 1 Recognizing False Idols

## □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Hear the word that the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel. Thus says the Lord: Do not learn the way of the nations, or be dismayed at the signs of the heavens; for the nations are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are false: a tree from the forest is cut down, and worked with an ax by the hands of an artisan; people deck it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move. Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor is it in them to do good.

*Jeremiah 10:1-5*

**Commentary:** This passage may have been written during or after the exile of the Jews in Babylon. The ideas expressed in Jeremiah's words are typical Jewish arguments against the worship of idols. Here the words are spoken with biting sarcasm. Clearly the author wanted to condemn worship of other gods.

## □ Questions

- Which signs from the heavens—eclipses, comets, astronomical observations—"dismay" people today?
- If Jeremiah were living today, how would he describe this nation's false idols?
- Do you pay homage to false idols that do that do not have "it in them to do good"?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- Are you tempted to find excuses to avoid God? What idols—late nights, delayed study, or other reasons—keep you from worshipping God?

## □ Activities

### Identifying Idols

Collect objects that represent pressures in our lives, such as a clock, high school banner, college brochures, sports equipment, and money. Set these on a small table with a white cloth. Ask the participants to spend a few minutes looking at the things we "worship," and then write answers to the following questions on paper or in a journal.

- Where do you spend the most time, the most money, and the greatest energy or emotion? Why?
- Are these your choices or are they forced on you by parents, friends, or the culture?
- How can these things become false idols that get in the way of our relationship with God?

Together make a list of false idols on one side of a piece of newsprint. Next ask the group to brainstorm ways to displace these idols.

- What kind of support do you need to let go of a false idol? Where can you get it? What role do worship and prayer have in facing our idols?
- What is one idol that we can help each other displace?

### World of Images

Make a video tape of clips from MTV or other station that show the "good life." Or bring in magazines and find advertisements that define the "good life" for us. Discuss the messages in the media.

- What is life like in the media world?
- What is valued, and what is not? How realistic is this world? Is it hopeful?
- What is missing?

Make a poster to show the world you want to live in. Think of ways your group can show this world to others.

### Field Trip

Visit a shopping mall. With a partner, make a list of the what is being "sold" as the ideal life—what people are supposed to want. Identify how these products are marketed, including the architecture, store layouts, and displays. Later discuss your finding and talk about ways you can counter some of the messages you are bombarded with.

Some participants may be interested in designing a marketing campaign for the Christian life that would include billboards, radio "jingles," and TV commercials. What would you include to pique the interest of people that are saturated with high-priced messages from designers and merchandisers?

## 2 Praising God

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

*Psalm 150*

**Commentary:** *Psalm 150* is the final hymn of the *Book of Psalms*. It is a hymn of praise that may have been used to begin temple worship at the time of the retelling of the story of the Exodus. The rich combination of musical instruments with the Hallelujahs! (Praise the Lord!) is joyful indeed.

### □ Questions

- Why do we praise God?
- How does worship of God involve our whole body?
- What senses are involved? How could you help the church make this happen?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How many different kinds of worship have you experienced?
- Are traditional worship services uninspiring?

### □ Activities

#### New Ways to Praise

After reading the Scripture passage together, talk about the reasons to praise God. Think about what you have read in scripture and learned in history and arts classes. How has God been praised through the centuries?

Ask the participants to name different ways to praise God, such as being loud, quiet, or still; through movement, dance, music, art, or work. With a partner, share different worship experiences you have had. Come up with a unique way to praise God other than the traditional forms you normally experience in church. Share your praise ideas with the group.

After everyone has described their ideas, select one or more that you find interesting or innovative.

- Did any of the praise ideas make you feel uncomfortable?
- Would you enjoy church more if services included innovative ways to praise God?

### Praise Service

Design a praise service for your own group or invite others. Decide who the praising community will be—children, teens, older people, differently abled, or the entire congregation. Think about why your group would praise God, including what have they received from God, what are they thankful for, and how God brings them joy.

Discuss how group can praise God that is different from traditional worship. Think about the limitations on those who will participate in the service. Try to involve different senses, levels of sound, and types of movement. It may be helpful to decide on an overall format for the service and then break into smaller groups which will work on a specific part. Appoint someone to oversee the project and find an appropriate space and time.

- Was difficult to break out of traditional forms of worship?
- Does praising God make you feel self-conscious? Why?

### Creating Sacred Space

Meet in the church sanctuary if possible. Ask each person to list five things that make this room different from other rooms. Then, ask them to spend a few minutes thinking about where they feel the presence of God—it may not be in a church. If the sanctuary is not available, ask the participants to close their eyes and imagine a place where they have felt the presence of God. As a group, talk about your sacred spaces and list the characteristics of those spaces.

- How do they feel? What do they sound like?
- Are the spaces familiar or exotic?
- What surprises you about the spaces other find sacred?
- Were you surprised that some of the spaces seem to be in conflict?

One part of the Christian tradition, the Eastern Orthodox community, uses images of Christ called “icons” to create sacred space both in communal worship spaces and in homes. Icons are “windows on eternity” that help us see God. They are the opposite of idols which displace God. If you have time, give everyone an opportunity to go through the church and its grounds to find something that reminds them of God. Or ask participants to draw something that reminds of them of God. Invite them to share their selections or drawings. The group may want to choose one of the presentations as an “icon” for its own community worship.

## 3 Breaking Bread

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

*1 Corinthians 10:15-16*

**Commentary:** Although Paul appeals to reason in this *Letter to the Corinthians*, the underlying principle is faith in Christ. The Corinthians participated in a Eucharistic feast of bread and wine and believed that the sharing of this meal produced a communion between Christ and the believers. By sharing one loaf of bread, the many become one. Diverse believers are brought together in unity as the body of Christ.

### □ Questions

- What does the Eucharist mean to believers?
- How does sharing the Eucharist bring Christians closer together?
- Why did Jesus use bread and wine for this sacrament?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What does the Eucharist mean to you?
- Is it an important part of your faith, or is it a chance to stretch your legs?

### □ Activities

#### Sharing Communion

Bring in party decorations such as streamers, hats, invitations, confetti, and balloons. Ask the group to name reasons people have parties and what they celebrate at parties, such as birthdays, anniversaries, or graduations.

Make a list of everything you would need for a dinner party, including invitations, guests, food, and decorations. Look at the Catechism about the Eucharist on p. 859 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Discuss the similarities and differences between the Eucharist and a dinner party.

- How is the Eucharist like a dinner party? How is it different?
- When do we usually celebrate the Eucharist? What are we “celebrating”?

- What are some other times we have Eucharist?
- What are some things that you as a group would like to celebrate? Would you include Eucharist as part of your celebration?

Plan a celebration for your group or with other groups using the party decorations. Include a joyful celebration of the Eucharist that uses balloons, streamers, and confetti.

#### Instructed Eucharist

Early Christians were often accused of being cannibals by people who heard that they gathered to share the body and blood of their executed leader. Imagine that you have never been to church before and are invited to a worship service that includes Holy Communion.

- What misconceptions could you have about the words in the service?
- What questions would you have?

Divide the Eucharistic service your church uses most often into parts. Assign groups of no more than two to three people or individuals to write a brief description of what is happening in that part. As a group, go through the service and share the descriptions that people have written about the different sections.

- Did you learn anything new?
- Did anything surprise you?
- How does knowing more about what is going on in a service affect your ability to worship?

Collate the descriptions into a booklet that could be used by other groups in the church who are learning about the Eucharist.

#### Bakery Field Trip

As a group, visit a bakery or some place where you can buy bread. After a tour of the facility, buy a loaf and find a place to sit down with the loaf in the center of the group. Be still for a few moments with only the bread as a focal point.

Then ask the group to work backwards from this store to identify the steps involved in creating the bread you have before you, such as shelving, packaging, baking, kneading, grinding the flour, harvesting, fertilizing/weeding, planting, preparing the soil. List the people involved with each step, including the cashier, baker, trucker, and farmer.

- How does this loaf of bread remind us of our interdependence on one another?
- How much more are we offering to God in the Eucharist than simply the bread we see before us?
- If Jesus came today, what do you think he would use for the Eucharist? Pizza and soda? Coffee and doughnuts?

Open the loaf of bread and give each person a slice. Eat the bread and give thanks for all of the many hands that prepared it. Remember to pray for those who do not have enough to eat.

# SPIRITUALITY

## Serving God

### Objective

Youth will be able to name ways they can serve God in their lives and communities.

### Personal Story

Last summer I wanted to go to a work camp to try something new. No one from my church had gone before, and my friends at school thought it would be boring called it “boot camp.” To me it sounded like fun, and I knew I wouldn’t be alone because there were others going from my youth group.

When I arrived, I was scared. There were all these new people, and I didn’t see how I could really be much help building a porch and painting the house we had been assigned. The first few hours of work camp were the longest. I only knew six people out of 350 who were in the building. I didn’t know much about painting or carpentry, and I was afraid that I might mess up this person’s home. It didn’t seem like a week was enough to paint a house and build a porch. By the end of the first night, I met my work crew, but I still didn’t feel comfortable around any of them. And I was still afraid that we wouldn’t get our job done.

By the end of the week, however, we got it all done. I can only tell you that by all of us working together, we shared what we knew and we got it done. The man who owned the house loved it. He gave us each a stuffed animal from his collection and told us stories about what the town used to be like. He was really impressed that kids would come out to work on a house of a person they didn’t even know.

Being at work camp taught me a lot. It was nice to stop and think about others. By the end of the week, I let my crew know more about myself than I had ever told anybody before. I had never talked about my personal feelings with my friends at home. But after a week of midday prayer sessions and general talk around the work site, I felt comfortable enough to tell the four people in my work crew anything. In just five days, I made friends I know I will keep for life.

At work camp, I also felt a lot closer to God. Helping one of God’s children helped me get to know God better. I was a prayer leader and had to keep my mind focused on the discussion. During the week I started to see God in everyone, especially when we were working hard in the oppressive heat. I think it has made me more patient and even tempered because I understand better the way people feel.

I also really discovered for myself something that I had been told a lot—that giving is better than getting. Now I know in my heart that helping others gives you a great feeling, better than any gift. Now I want to try some more new things, but I want to do more things for other people instead of just for myself. I learned that it is possible to make a difference even if there aren’t a lot of people or you don’t have a lot of time.

## SESSION 8

### Scripture

*John 13:12-15*  
*Isaiah 58:1-9a*  
*Micah 6:6-8*

### Skill Focus

Ethics  
Fairness

## Prayer

O God, your unfailing providence sustains the world we live in and the life we live: Watch over those, both night and day, who work while others sleep, and grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other's toil through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

From Compline  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 134

## Dismissal

*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*  
Thanks be to God.

# 1 Serving One Another

## □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

After Jesus had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.”

*John 13:12-15*

**Commentary:** John's Gospel has no account of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Instead, Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. In a reversal of the normal practice of the greatest being served by the least, Jesus tells his disciples that the greatest will serve, just as he has. He challenges his disciples to serve one another in his name.

## □ Questions

- Which is easier, to give help or to be given help?
- Why is it so difficult to receive?
- How could we help each other learn to gracefully receive from one another?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- How did the homeowner help the young people feel good about their work?

## □ Activities

### Washing Feet

Bring in a bucket or plastic basin of warm water and several towels. Read a portion of John's account of the meal before Jesus's crucifixion in *John 13:1-17*. Announce to the group that you or a volunteer you have recruited is going to wash their feet. Make no other comments to the group, but make note of their reactions. After you finish, discuss what happened. Talk about who resisted, who refused, what was said about your decision to wash their feet. Look at the Gospel story again.

**Hint:** *Some participants may be reluctant, be as persuasive as possible.*

- How are we like Peter in our interactions with one another?
- Why did Jesus insist that we serve one another?
- What is at stake for a community whose members have difficulty giving or receiving from each other?

Try to think of ways participants in the group can help one another. For example, some may offer tutoring services, while others help with transportation. Make a covenant to ask for and offer help when it is needed.

### At Your Service

Bring in items that symbolize the service industry, such as a mop, broom, or water pitcher. Make a list of all the different people whose work often goes unnoticed, but who help us get through our lives each day, including the school janitors, sanitation engineers, and postal workers. What would life be like if we had to do everything ourselves?

Ask the participants to share with a partner a time that someone helped them.

- What did it feel like to have to ask for help?
- What did they learn about themselves or the other person?

Invite the participants to share with the group a time they received something from their partner, from someone else in the group, or from the group as a whole. Remind them that we have to be willing to be served if we are to offer service. Challenge

### Fix it

Take a walk through your church building. Look for small things that need to be fixed, cleaned, straightened, or repaired. Select several projects that your group could reasonably accomplish and plan a time to meet together to do them. Make a list of supplies that you would need to correct the problem. As an ongoing activity, your group might identify a continuing need in the parish and volunteer to take it on as a project. For example, there might be an outdoor area where trash seems to accumulate or the group might volunteer to clean up after a children's worship service on a regular basis.

## 2 Serving the Community

### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. “Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

*Isaiah 58:1-9a*

**Commentary:** In this passage, the prophet Isaiah reminds the people of God about their behavior. The people approach God as if they were righteous, but in fact they oppress their neighbors. They use fasting as an excuse to be even harsher. For their fasting to be acceptable, God requires that their behavior be reversed. They must care for the poor, those who are victimized by the powerful. Out of that kind of action, God will lead them and will answer their prayers.

### □ Questions

- Have the people angered God in the Scripture passage?
- What does Isaiah tell the people to do?
- This Scripture passage is read on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, traditionally a time of penance? Why?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What did the person discover when he or she put others first?

### □ Activities

#### Walking the Talk

In England, parishes are geographical entities. To keep clergy in touch with their parishioners, they are encouraged to “walk the boundaries” of the parish. Get to know your parish beyond the church walls and grounds. Bring in a detailed map of your community, if one is available. Locate your church building. If you are the only Episcopal church in the community, the boundaries of the community are your parish. If there are other churches, locate them on your map, draw a line approximately half way between your church and the others in the community. Use major roads and geographical features such as bodies of water or mountains to determine the parish boundaries.

After you have completed the map, ask someone familiar with the area to guide the group on a walk around the boundaries. If you need to go on private property, get prior permission. Make notes about what you find.

- Is the community homogeneous or are there many different types of people living here?
- Do people live in houses, town houses, apartments, or mobile homes?
- How do people get around—walk, take a bus, bike, drive?
- Where do people buy or get their food?

After the walk, look at the notes and discuss your findings.

- What did you learn about your community?
- What needs did you identify?

Select one service project you discovered to investigate further. Talk about how you could address the need you identified.

#### In My Backyard

Invite someone who works with community outreach to speak to your group, such as a social worker, shelter supervisor, or low-income housing manager. Post a map of your community, and ask the speaker to help the group identify areas of need in the community from his or her perspective. Find out how the services this person is involved with are distributed, where the gaps are, and what inequities they observe. Find out if the group could be involved in addressing shortages and inequities of services in the community

#### Putting Your Money Where Your Mouth Is

Get a copy of your church's outreach budget and yearly activities and ask a representative from the outreach committee to join the group. Study the budget entries and discuss the priorities of outreach monies at your church.

- Where is your church reaching out to meet the needs of the community.
- What can you celebrate?
- Where is there still work to be done?
- What can your group do to help the outreach mission of your church?

### 3 Serving the World

#### □ Begin Here: Study Scripture

“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

*Micah 6:6-8*

**Commentary:** The author is responding to a question from an unknown person. This person is asking what sacrifices God desires. In Temple worship, animals were sacrificed, and year-old calves were highly valued. A thousand rivers of oil was more than a King could provide. Dedicating the first born child totally to God was a great sacrifice.

The prophet answers by recognizing that every offering, no matter how great, is not what God wants. We are called to offer ourselves.

#### □ Questions

- What does Micah say that God wants from us?
- Do the people who do justice and love kindness get rewarded for their efforts? Who rewards them?

**Option:** Read and discuss the Personal Story.

- What happened to the person's ability to share personal feelings during the work camp?
- What helped him or her open up to people who were almost strangers?

#### □ Activities

##### Dream A World

Bring in a globe. Ask participants to take about ten minutes to write down their ideal vision of the world. Tell them to be as specific as possible. For example, the wealthy would share with the poor, or wars would be banned.

In groups of three, ask each person to share what they have written. The small group must then agree on the characteristics of their ideal world. Pick a spokesperson and share the characteristics with the large group. Record the responses on newsprint. Ask participants to take a few minutes, in silence, to just look at what has been written. As a group, select one thing that you can actually do to help make your ideal world a reality. Decide how you will accomplish this task and who will be responsible for seeing that it is done.

#### Seeing is Believing

The world is full of double messages. People say one thing and do another: athletes endorse cigarettes or liquor; your parents insist you never cheat but they brag about “fooling” the IRS. As a group, make a list of the double messages that really make you crazy.

Read the Nicene Creed on p. 358 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. The creed is our common statement of belief.

- How are we doing?
- Where are we as Christians sending double messages?
- What do we need to be doing differently?
- How can we live with integrity?

Write the following statement on a chalkboard or make individual copies for each person: Because I believe \_\_\_\_\_, I will (not) \_\_\_\_\_. (For example, because I believe that we are all created in the image of God, I will not gossip.) After five minutes, ask participants to share what they have written if they are comfortable doing so.

If there is time, ask the group to write a collective statement, such as “Because we believe \_\_\_\_\_ we will (not) \_\_\_\_\_.” Post this where everyone can see it.

#### Video

Watch part or all of the movie *At Play in The Fields of the Lord*. Afterwards discuss its meaning in light of the Scripture passage.

- How are the missionaries living out what they believe?
- Are any of their actions in conflict with what you understand of Christianity?

Many dioceses have a companion diocese relationship with another part of the Anglican communion while some churches have “sister” church relationships. How can your group participate in those relationships? According to the movie, what are some things you should be aware of in those relationships?

# SPIRITUALITY

## Reaching Out

### Objective

Youth will be able to list ways to develop their own spirituality. As a group they will write a statement about how the community can help individuals develop a closer relationship with God.

### Personal Story

When I was in eighth grade, I took a confirmation class through my church. I read the assignments, completed the workbook, and memorized the Nicene Creed. Upon completion of the class, I was told that I was ready to be confirmed. But on the day the bishop came and my friends walked to the altar to present themselves as candidates for confirmation, I sat with the rest of the congregation and watched. The classes that I took not only told me that I was eligible to be confirmed, they told me that I wasn't ready.

I left that class with more questions than when I began it. What exactly did it mean to be a Christian? What did it mean to accept Jesus as my savior? Was Mary really a virgin, or was that just part of the Christian mythology? Questions like these made me feel uneasy about standing before the church and declaring that I believed it all. I wondered if I could promise to be a Christian for the rest of my life. I decided I could not. I did not know what my relationship with God was. Although I did not doubt that I had one, I didn't know the nature of it. That was the first step in my spiritual development—recognizing that I still had many unanswered questions.

Spirituality doesn't come from going to church every Sunday or from receiving communion. It doesn't come from reading the words in the Prayer Book or even reciting them from memory. These are the things that come *from* spirituality, an expression of a relationship with God, much like reading the Torah or praying to Mecca. Spirituality is a very personal experience that comes from asking questions and finding answers, much as Jesus did as a young man in Jerusalem.

When people are comfortable with a religion and know that it is right for them, then they should make a commitment. Two things should be understood about this kind of decision. First, it should not be made lightly, and it should come from an individual, not from friends or parents. Second, it is not the end of a person's spiritual development. Becoming confirmed, or making the equivalent commitment in another religion, is a landmark in his or her spiritual journey. It is an act that deepens a person's commitment to God on a continuing journey, in which the relationship with God only grows stronger.

The fact that I was not confirmed left me with no direct power in the church. I can't vote on anything, and I can't be elected to vestry, but I am still active in the church. Now I go to church for myself. I go to find answers to my questions. I am trying to understand myself and how I should serve God. I will continue to explore my personal spirituality and what it means to me.

## SESSION 9

### Scripture

*John 3:16-17*

*1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27-31*

### Skill Focus

Respect

Independence/Individuality

## Prayer

Lord God, the light of the minds that know you, the life of the souls that love you, and the strength of the hearts that serve you: Help us, . . . so to know you that we may truly love you, and so to love you that we may fully serve you, whom to serve is perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Prayer for Augustine  
*Lesser Feasts and Fasts, August 28*

## Dismissal

*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*  
Thanks be to God.

## □ Begin Here: Remembering Scripture

A. [Jesus said,] “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

*John 3:16-17*

B. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. . . . Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

*1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27-31*

## Connect with the Personal Story

Read the Personal Story for Session 9. Write your own personal story that expresses your feelings, relationship, or questions about God. Think about an experience, in or out of church, that changed, expanded, or sharpened your understanding of God.

## □ Questions

- Does the way we worship reflect who we understand God to be?
- Are youth visible and valued in the public worship of your church? How can we contribute to worship services?
- What do we need to do to make our voices heard?
- Do we live out what we say we believe in our actions toward one another?
- How has your understanding of God changed?
- What do we need to do as a group to improve our relationships to God?

## RESPONDING ACTIVITIES

### □ Individually

Individually or as a group think about ways each person could respond to the issues raised in the Spirituality module. Share your ideas, and write them on a piece of newspaper.

Possible responses include:

- Create your own creed that states your beliefs, or rewrite the Nicene Creed in your own words.
- Keep a prayer journal. Write down prayer requests, keep track of prayers that are answered, and give thanks to God.
- Practice a prayer or meditation technique that you found helpful.
- Create your own sacred space at home (see Session 7, Theme 2).
- Challenge yourself to speak out about what you believe in a place where you usually remain silent. At the same time, invite others to share what they believe.
- Make attendance at worship services a priority. When you think about missing them because of a conflict, ask if you would miss school or work for the same reason.

### □ As a Group

Brainstorm ideas about how this group can respond to issues raised in the Spirituality module. Record your ideas on a piece of newspaper. Possible responses:

- Write a creed that expresses your beliefs as a group.
- Make a “Joy Sheet.” Put up a large sheet of butcher paper on the wall and set out different colors of markers. Invite each person to draw or write a response to God or to each other. Use the Joy Sheet as the altar “cloth” for a group worship.
- Make an altar for group worship. Invite each participant to select an “icon” for the altar (see Session 7, Theme 2).
- Write a prayer to open and close each group meeting.

- Write a statement for the rector and vestry about the unique contributions of young people to the spirituality of the church.
- Select one or more of the Outreach Activities listed in the chart on the next page of this session to complete.
- Write prayers for different occasions in the life of your parish, and submit them for publication in the newsletter.
- Write a “Prayers of the People” following the guidelines in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 383.

## ☐ Celebrate!

Celebrate the completion of the study of Spirituality. Ask the group to think of appropriate activities or use one of the following options:

### Art

- Create an icon for your own personal worship. Find one or more books from the library illustrated with icons for inspiration.
- Make stoles (worn by priests or deacons) or an altar cloth for your church. Create and execute the design, then find someone to do the sewing and finish work.

### Liturgy

- Use the masks created in Session 6, Theme 3 for a prayer celebration.
- Ask each person in the group to write a prayer of praise for all that God has done. Say the prayers aloud as the group prays in a circle.
- Use the Order for Eucharist (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 400) to create a Celebration Eucharist for your group.

### Community

- Invite your church to join in a service of praise (see Session 7, Theme 2).
- Offer an instructed Eucharist for the children in your church (see Session 7, Theme 3).
- Post the images of God created during Session 2, Theme 1 around the church buildings.

### Fun

- Fly the kites you made in Session 4.
- Gather materials to blow bubbles, either big or small. See how many your group can make, watch them blow in the wind, and marvel at the joy in transitory things.
- Have a party. Display artwork, poetry, or other creations made during this study. Invite the congregation to experience your new insights into spirituality through the display.

## FOLLOW THROUGH

**Individual Response:** Make a covenant with God to do the best that you can to remain open to God throughout your daily life. Write down at least one thing you plan to do to make spirituality more than something to talk about at church. Think about the steps you need to take to accomplish your goal. Write down your covenant and whatever steps you intend to follow in order to keep it. Seal it in a self-addressed stamped envelope; ask someone to mail it in six weeks.

- Do you need help to accomplish your goals?
- Can you identify someone in the church or community that can help you?

**Group Response:** Look at the list of responses the group has made. Decide which of the actions the group would like to accomplish. The group may decide only one is feasible or to work on several. On a separate piece of newsprint write down the idea(s) at the top of the page. List the actions that must be taken to complete the task. Next to each action, estimate the time it will take, and ask the participants to designate someone to be responsible for getting it done. Appoint someone to oversee the activity who can make sure each component has been completed.

- How did you determine which action to take?
- Can every one in the group participate?
- Can you identify people in the church or community who can help the group complete its tasks?

**Celebrate:** Ask for volunteers to plan an appropriate liturgical response for your study of Spirituality. The activity selected can be a service that includes other people, or be as simple as a group prayer. If you decide to have a party or make an art project, divide up the tasks so that everyone in the group can participate in the planning and preparation.

- Does the celebration include everyone in the group?
- Do you want to open your celebration to the entire congregation? Another group in the church? Those who participated in some way in your study of Spirituality?

# LOOKING BACK AND GOING FORWARD

## Outreach Activities for Sessions 2-8

### Spirituality

Session	Theme	Suggested Outreach Activity
What Do I Believe?	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display the group or personal creed based on the Nicene Creed.</li> <li>• Find a place in the church or community to display the images of God.</li> </ul>
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean a homeless shelter or food kitchen as you look for Christ.</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share your “lesson plan” from Jesus with others in the church.</li> </ul>
Who Is God?	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share your creation story with another group in the church.</li> </ul>
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up on a news story where you felt Jesus was present with an activity or through prayer.</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan an intergenerational activity to make and fly kites.</li> </ul>
Getting to Know God	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a letter to someone that has moved away.</li> </ul>
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in activities at a community center for the deaf.</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share your “interview” with Jesus with a younger group.</li> </ul>
Prayer	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform your version of “Amazing Grace” at a youth worship service.</li> </ul>
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display the collage of “Prayerful Living” in the church.</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit your written prayers to the church newsletter for publication.</li> <li>• Develop an ongoing project as a “prayer of oblation.”</li> <li>• Write a prayer book that can be used by other groups in the church.</li> </ul>
Finding God in Silence	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display the collage showing the “color of silence.”</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the masks made by the group in a worship service.</li> </ul>
Worship	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design a marketing campaign for the Christian life.</li> </ul>
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the icons that remind participants of God in a worship service.</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan a joyful celebration of the Eucharist.</li> <li>• Prepare a booklet for people learning about the Eucharist.</li> <li>• Pray for those who do not have enough to eat.</li> </ul>
Serving God	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find ways to serve each other.</li> <li>• Write a thank you note to people who serve others in your church.</li> <li>• Identify an area at your church that needs to be fixed or cleaned.</li> </ul>
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select a service project from “walking the boundaries.”</li> <li>• Address a service need that is not being met in your community.</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find a way to make an ideal vision of the world into a reality.</li> <li>• Participate in a “sister” relationship with a church in another part of the Anglican Communion.</li> </ul>