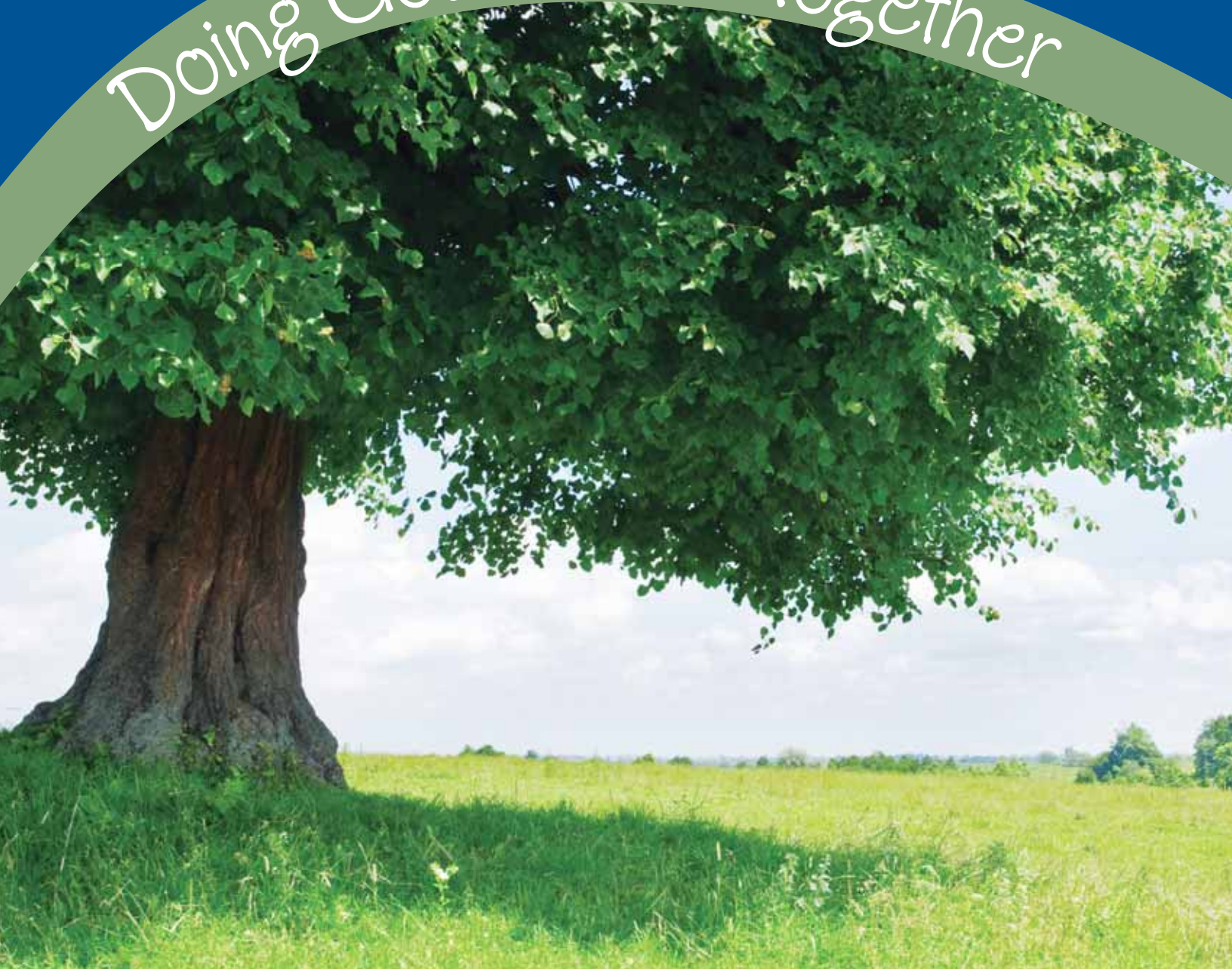


Partners in Possibility

Doing God's Work Together



A Mission Learning/Sharing Experience for Children and Youth

Linda Shaw

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the **vine**
connecting people, places and programs

The Presbyterian Church
in Canada



Partners in Possibility: Doing God's Work Together

A Mission Learning/Sharing Experience for Children and Youth

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About the Author

Linda Shaw's life is enriched by ministry with children and adults who have an intellectual disability. She is married to Ian Shaw and they live in Simcoe, Ontario, where Linda teaches at Fanshawe College and Ian serves as minister of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church. Until 2009, they served in Guyana as missionaries. Prior to that they were at Westwood Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg where they raised their triplet children. Linda's eldest son, Kris, is an economist working in Ottawa. Michael is an engineer working in Winnipeg, and Kendra is completing her Masters in Speech Pathology in Edmonton. Over the years, Linda has worked as a secondary school mathematics teacher in Canada and Lesotho, and as coordinator of our denomination's Children and Worship program.

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Introducing the Possibilities



Our partnership with God began when our world was created. We were asked to care for everything in the world: the land, the green growing plants, water, animals, people... God promised to always love and care for us. We, in turn, are asked to love God with all our heart and mind and strength, to love our neighbours as we love ourselves, and to care for the earth.

One of the ways that The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) responds to the Lord's commandments is by carrying out the mission of the church through partnerships with other churches around the world. We have international partners in Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Central America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe. This study highlights the countries of North India, Guatemala, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine, Ghana and Malawi.

Partnership works both ways. The PCC has supported these partnerships by sending missionaries from Canada, providing training for local church leaders, supplying grants for programs, and exchanging resources. Our partners have identified possibilities for ministry and our church has shared its resources to help them turn these possibilities into realities.

Just as we have in the past, we continue to learn a lot today from our international partners. Church leaders from other countries come to Canada to study. They share their rich experiences with theological students and professors and speak to congregations and church groups. Representatives from partner churches speak at General Assemblies and other gatherings. They share their experiences and bring us different perspectives, challenging us to broaden our vision of the possibilities God has for us. Some Presbyterians from Canada visit our international partners and come back to share what they have learned.

Partnerships need to be nurtured. People need to get to know and understand each other. When a person or a community is hurting or if they have special needs, others in the partnership should respond with love and support. Similarly, if one person has cause to rejoice, everyone can rejoice and celebrate.

This resource will introduce participants to some of our international partners and help them see our interconnectedness. We will see how we can be partners together and with God. This will make the world a place where God's creation is cared for and celebrated.

Through the use of this resource, we will all become more aware of the possibility that there can be "enough for all" if we are careful to follow good practices in caring for the world and the people who live in it, and if we

- use only what we need
- share our money and resources
- reduce (packaging, disposable items – stuff!)
- recycle (paper, plastics, glass, clothes, for example)
- renew (composting, letting fields rest for a season, repairing broken items, planting trees and reducing the number of trees we cut down)
- encourage fair trade
- protect our water sources and use water carefully
- buy locally when we can

Background and Preparation

This resource has been designed to be used with children and youth from six to 12 years old. With some adaptation, it can also be used with older ages and with intergenerational groups. By offering a variety of activities that appeal to a broad range of ages, the parameters of this resource can be stretched to accommodate a wide range of ages and situations.

Consider using this resource with

- church school
- Vacation Bible School
- mid-week groups for children or families
- family or intergenerational events
- retreats
- camps for children or families
- youth groups

Program sections are designed for flexibility. You can choose activities that fit your setting, the length of time available and the time of the day or week. For example, an after-school program could begin with a game and a snack, while a church school program might omit both game and snack due to time constraints.

An intergenerational family event in the evening might begin with prayer, dinner and the Bible story. A Vacation Bible School program allows time to play more games, add additional singing, and even add an off-site mission project.

Children and youth can take part in the planning and leadership for this resource. Adult and youth leaders may read the stories before the meeting and decide together which activities would be most suitable for the group. Children and youth can tell the stories or, better yet, dramatize them. They can be given responsibility for setting up and teaching the crafts and games.

Some of the activities could be assigned as homework for older children. For example, if the next session's focus is on Malawi, ask the children to use home computers or their local library to learn some basic things about Malawi that they can share with the whole group. Including children and youth won't necessarily reduce the adult leader's preparation time, but it will enrich sessions and disciple leadership skills.

You will find a bibliography of all books, videos and websites cited in this resource following the session plans of this resource. Check through your church, local and church school resource libraries to see if the resources are available for you to borrow. Ask your Women's Missionary Society or Atlantic Mission Society group for any resources they might have as well. Resources available from The Book Room are noted in the bibliography.

Partners in Possibility: Doing God's Work Together is intended for use in five sessions. Each session focuses on one international partner and is designed to help us identify ways to care for each other and God's creation in partnership. Each session encourages us to think about the possibilities for fairness and justice.

Each session includes

- an activity or discussion to **Engage** the participants
- an opportunity to **Hear** God's Story and a Partner Story about a child in an international partner church
- the **Possibility Tree**, which grows with each session as participants explore ways we can make it possible for others to live more fully and make God smile
- a time for **Songs and Prayers**
- an opportunity for **Snack and Fellowship**
- additional activities to help participants **Explore** what they have learned and relate it to their lives (activities include singing, crafts, games, research, discussion, and work projects)

As you plan each session, be sure to, at minimum, do the activity from **Engage**, present **God's Story** and the **Partner Story**, add leaves to the **Possibility Tree**, offer worship through **Song** and **Prayer**, and do at least one activity from **Explore**. Additional activities and refreshments will enhance the session, but are not necessary.

Engage

This time is an opportunity to engage the participants in the stories and issues that will be presented later in the lesson.

Hear God's Story

Each session includes a story from scripture and questions for reflection. Create a special place to gather for God's Story and for the Partner Story. Mount a map of the world at child's eye level. Place a small, low worship table with a white or green tablecloth and some of the symbols of our faith – a Bible, candle, flowers or plants – nearby to help the participants prepare for what is going to happen.

Whenever you present the Bible Story, sing at least one centring chorus such as “Be Still and Know” (*Book of Praise* #64, verse 1). If you have a candle on your worship table, light it and say, “We light this Christ candle to remind us that God is with us in a special way when we listen to God's story and talk to God.”

Use a variety of methods of presenting the Bible story

- **Children's Story Bible:** Read from *The Family Story Bible* or *The Lectionary Story Bible*, both by Ralph Milton. Each session plan indicates the story number in each of these books.
- **Drama:** Prepare the script and choose the cast ahead of time.
- **Mime:** Put children in costumes or place simple scarves around their shoulders. While an adult leader tells the story, the children mime what is happening as they listen to the story.
- **Reader's Theatre:** Rewrite the Bible story as a drama and have the participants read the characters' lines. *The Dramatised Bible* by Harper Collins is an excellent source for Reader's Theatre scripts.
- **Story Bites:** Tell the story in as few words as possible and have the children do an action to go with the story as you tell it. For example, when you say, “Mary was very sad,” the children make a sad face.
- **Young Children and Worship:** If you have someone with Young Children and Worship training, ask them to present the story with wooden figures.
- **Display:** Have a few items mentioned in the story in a basket or on the worship table. Present the items as you tell the story.

Hear a Partner Story

Each session includes a story from a partner church told from a child's perspective and includes questions for reflection. Each story is fictional. Aman, Jessica, Mileni, Tawo and Barbara are not real children, but their stories are typical of children in their countries.

Thanks go to: Pauline Brown, India
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Eastern Europe
Mary Gorombey, Hungary
Linda Inglis, Malawi

for their help in providing details of children's lives in countries where they serve as international mission staff on behalf of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Thanks also to Rachel of Regina and Adjoa and Eric of Toronto for sharing a little about what it's like to grow up in Ghana.

If you decide to tell the Partner Story immediately before or after the God's Story, plan an activity between them that involves a little movement. The children could sing a chorus with actions, do a cultural dance, or play a game.

Use a map to show where you live and where the child of the day lives. Early in the first session, paste a picture of your church on the map. In each of the following sessions, be prepared with the flag and name of the country you are studying and a picture of a child from that area to paste on the map. Share some basic facts about the country.

Enrich the stories with a basket of items from each session to add to your worship table. As you tell the story, draw attention to the items, or make a game of asking a child to pick up the item as you mention it in the story.

The Possibility Tree

Create a life-size construction paper tree trunk and branches. This is your Possibility Tree. It will grow and bear fruit over the weeks as you discuss all of the possibilities that are available for us to be partners in mission and care for God's creation.

Songs and Prayers

Each session has a few suggested songs, but you are encouraged to add to the list as you have time. Most groups will include a song or two before or after the presentation of the stories. The song “I Am a Promise,”

by Gloria Gaither, is suggested as a theme song. To find the lyrics and music for this song, use an Internet search engine (such as Google or Yahoo) and enter “I am a promise lyrics” in the search field. Have the participants create actions and choreography to go with this song.

The prayer suggested for each session should not be the only one, unless you are very limited by time. You are encouraged to include different styles of prayers and give children an opportunity to lead in prayer.

Snack and Fellowship

In each session, there are refreshment suggestions that are based on the foods mentioned in the Partner Story for that day. It is important to ask parents or caregivers about any food allergies and inform those responsible for snack preparation.

Explore

We all learn best when we use more than one of our senses, so a broad range of activities have been

suggested. In most situations, you will not have time to do all of these activities. Choose options for each session that will engage the imaginations and learning styles of all your participants. If you have children of different ages, consider having more than one activity choice for the participants.

Closing

Gather the children at the end of the session and send them out into the world with a reminder that God loves them and goes with them.

Use this time to look at the Possibility Tree and review what the children have learned. Show the children how the tree grows more beautiful as they add the leaves. Tell each other a few things we can do to make God’s world better and fairer.

Have a closing prayer that incorporates the ideas you have discussed, and then snuff out the candle and sing a farewell song of blessing. This will send everyone out to be possibilities for change, justice and love.



Photo: Paul Jeffrey, PWS&D

An Offering Project

Each year, The Presbyterian Church in Canada produces a Partners resource so children and youth in Canada can learn about mission partners. Throughout the study, the children and youth are encouraged to give money for a specific project. This year, in *Partners in Possibility: Doing God's Work Together*, the money raised will be used by International Ministries and Presbyterian World Service & Development to help children like the ones highlighted in the stories told. Funds raised will help children discover new possibilities around the world.



Photo: PWS&D

Your gift in any amount helps children and their families around the world access new opportunities and have hope for the future.

Ideas for raising funds

Choose a realistic goal from the examples listed. You don't have to

raise the full amount to support the work. Because you are fundraising with children and youth across Canada, you will accomplish the mission together.

For example, if you think your group may be able to raise \$100, you may choose to try and raise \$15 for school supplies, \$25 to plant a tree and \$60 to help build a water storage pond.

You could create a display at the front with books representing gifts of \$5 each. Make a paper tree to which you can add leaves or branches in \$5 increments. Find a small water tank and label it with 12 marks evenly distributed from top to bottom. Each mark represents a \$5 gift and you fill the tank as gifts are given. Or make different sizes of water droplets out of paper, each representing \$1, \$2 and \$5 gifts, and tape them to your display to represent the gifts. Providing visual displays in this way will help the children and youth see and understand what they have given together.

Help children around the world discover new possibilities

With your support through The Presbyterian Church in Canada, together we can help children around the world discover new possibilities by accessing nutritious food, clean water, education, housing and health care.

Giving money to support mission work around the world can be a very abstract concept. Providing strong images representing the gifts can help us visualize financial gifts and see the impact they can have. The specific examples provided below will help give the children and youth an idea of what their donation will do. The PCC will divide the funds raised through this book between partners doing the work. Actual costs and expenditures depend on local markets, the country of work and the needs at the time.

- \$15 buys a year of school supplies for an elementary school student like Barbara
- \$30 provides a family like Mileni's with seeds to diversify their crops
- \$25 plants trees in environmental programs serving communities like Aman's
- \$250 supplies a wheelchair for someone like Tawo's mother
- \$500 helps build a water storage pond in a community like Jessica's

Where do I send the funds?

All contributions should be sent by cheque to:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada
50 Wynford Drive
Toronto, ON M3C 1J7

Attention: Partners in Possibility Study 2010/11

Make the cheque payable to "The Presbyterian Church in Canada" and write in the memo line "partners in possibility."



Session I

The Possibility of Trees!

Prepare

To prepare for this session, create a life-sized tree trunk and branches to stay in your space for the duration of this Partners study. You can do this by taping two large pieces of construction paper or bristol board together. Outline and cut out a tree trunk and branches. Tape your tree trunk to a wall in your storytelling space.

You will need a large supply of pre-cut green construction paper leaves for this session and the other sessions. You will also need pre-cut construction paper fruit shapes for this session. As the days go by, the children will make the tree healthy, beautiful, strong and productive by adding these leaves and fruit to the trunk you have made. By the end of these sessions, you will have a lovely green tree with the possibility of giving shade, providing a home for squirrels, producing oxygen, and whatever other purposes and possibilities the children decide. Call it the Possibility Tree.

Gather drawing paper and markers for the Engage activity.

Print Galatians 5:22 on a chalk board or piece of chart paper: “*By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness.*” You will use this during the God’s Story time.

Create a worship table by covering a small, low table with a cloth and placing a Bible, a candle and perhaps a small potted tree or plants on the table.

Gather any of the materials you need for the Explore options you have chosen to use.

Engage

Ask the children to each draw a tree. Each child could draw a tree on a separate sheet of paper, or everyone could make a forest together by drawing trees on a big sheet of newsprint. Discuss how each of the trees they have drawn is different.

- What is similar about the trees?
- What makes them different?
- Do the children have a favourite type of tree?

Hear

God’s Story: People Are Like Fruit Trees Psalm 1:1–3 and Galatians 5:22

Read Psalm 1:1–3

Today’s scripture is short. If you have enough Bibles, encourage all the children to find the passage and read it together.

An excellent story version of this psalm can be found in the *Lectionary Story Bible: Year B*, by Ralph Milton. The story is titled, “You Will Be Happy” and is found on page 195, Proper 20 (25).

Discuss the following:

- What are some words that describe a tree?
- What does a tree need to grow strong and healthy?
- What are some of the things a tree can do?
- What things do trees make possible?
- How are people like trees?
- What do people need to grow strong and healthy?

Tell the children, “God wants you to be like a special tree.” Listen to their responses.

Read Galatians 5:22 together from the chalk board or chart paper.

Ask them to write one of the fruits of God’s Spirit on a paper fruit shape and tape their “fruit” on the Possibility Tree. The tree may look a little odd with fruit and no leaves, but you will start to add leaves later in the session.

Partner Story

Aman's Story from North India

Aman filled a pail with water. He was thankful that his family had a tap in their yard so he didn't have a long walk with the pail. Many people had to go to the public tap at the end of the street to get their water.

He was careful not to fill the pail so full that it would be too heavy for him to carry. Aman walked slowly so he wouldn't spill water on his bare legs. It was his job to water the mango tree his parents had planted when they adopted him. This tree was a reminder of the special day when their only child became part of their family. He was only a month old then, and the tree had been very small, but now it was taller than Aman – and he was pretty big for a seven-year-old boy in northern India.

Twice a year the tree gave them delicious, juicy mangos, and Aman loved to climb the branches and pick those mangos for his family and neighbours. They had also planted the tree because India needed more trees for shade, to help prevent erosion and to put oxygen back into the air. Their church, along with all the other churches of The Presbyterian Church of North India, supports the country's tree planting project.

As Aman carefully poured the precious water around the base of the tree, he felt proud to be doing something to help India and to help God. He wondered how tall the tree would grow. He wondered how tall he would grow. His father said, "Everything grows by God's design and purpose." Aman hoped that God's purpose for him was to be tall and strong, and that he would be a doctor when he grew up.

It was Sunday, not a school day, so Aman didn't have to hurry to get ready for the school bus. It was a day for worshipping God and he and his parents would walk to church after breakfast. Sunday meant eggs and thin pancakes called *paratha* for breakfast, not the usual *baliya* – plain old cream of wheat. Today Aman would go to church school and there would be so many children that he would have to arrive early to get a seat.

What Aman really wanted to do was go to youth group, but he was too young. When he turns 12, he will be old enough, and then he'll be able to play drums and sing in church every week. He will go carolling all night in the village at Christmas. This past Christmas, the youth group had come by his home on December 23 at 1:00 a.m. to sing Christmas carols. Aman had been asleep, but his parents woke him so he wouldn't miss the special event. They gave each of the carollers a piece of chocolate and put some money in their collection bag.

Some years they used the money to buy sports equipment or something else the group needed, but this year was different. This year they bought shawls for some of the poorest women in the village and distributed them on Christmas Day. The youth group celebrated every holy day in the church year by planting a tree somewhere in the village. Aman and his friends could hardly wait until they were old enough to join the youth group.



Not all of Aman's friends are Christians – he has Hindu and Muslim friends too. Once he invited them to a picnic at the church, and a couple of them came and enjoyed the games. His neighbourhood friends are the ones he plays hockey with after school and on Saturdays. Hockey is the national sport of India – not ice hockey, because India is a hot country, but ball hockey played with a curved stick.

Aman and his friends play for hours, only stopping for a drink of water. Sometimes one of the mothers invites the boys for a snack. When they are tired, they sit under the mango tree and laugh and share stories about life at their schools and what they hope to be when they grow up. They wonder if, in 20 years, a doctor, a farmer, an electrician and a teacher will be having a reunion under this mango tree.

Discuss the following:

- **Why is India planting so many trees?**
- **What do the trees do to help the people of India?**
- **Aman wants to be a doctor when he grows up. His friends want to be a farmer, an electrician and a teacher. What do you think God wants you to be when you grow up?**
- **What are Aman's jobs now? (Don't forget his main job is to go to school!)**
- **How do you think the women who received the shawls feel about the youth group?**
- **How does the youth group at Aman's church help God's creation?**
- **How can you help God's creation?**

The Possibility Tree

Discuss ways that we can love God's world and the people in it. Write each of the ideas on the pre-cut construction paper leaves and add them to the tree.

Songs and Prayers

Choose one or two songs from the following:

- ***This is the Day***, #78, *Book of Praise*
- ***Forest Trees***, #92, *Songs for Life*, CRC Publications
- ***I Am the Church***, #475, *Book of Praise*
- ***I Am a Promise***

- ***He's Got the Whole World***, adapted, for example, *He's got the trees and the flowers*, page 41, *Wee Sing Bible Songs*

Offer a prayer that includes the ideas that have been suggested by the children to be included on the Possibility Tree.

Snack and Fellowship

- Mango pieces
- A variety of fruit that grows on trees
- Mango juice

Explore

Water a Tree

Fill buckets of water at an outdoor tap and water a tree. You might also like to walk around and identify the types of trees.

Plant a Tree

Ask permission and then plant a baby tree at your church or in a local park. Take turns watering it well over the next few months as it takes root in its location. Discuss the ways that trees can help care for God's creation.

Plant a Terrarium

Place a single layer of small pieces of charcoal (available at tropical fish pet stores) on the bottom of a large, wide-mouthed mason jar. Follow with a layer of good potting soil three times the depth of the charcoal and then insert small tropical plants. You may wish to use chopsticks to help you do the planting. Water sparingly and then place the lid on the jar. With the lid on, you should not need to water your terrarium as the water will evaporate and then condense on the sides of the jar, watering the plants over and over again.

Make a Personal Possibility Tree

Give children an empty toilet tissue roll, some green tissue paper, and colored stickers to make their own possibility tree. They can write the fruits of the Spirit on the stickers and put them on the tissue paper. Stuff some of the tissue paper in the toilet paper roll and puff out the rest to make it look like a tree.

Research

Ask the children to investigate on the Internet and learn more about trees. The following two websites are designed for students in grades three to five.

The Secret Life of Trees at urbanext.illinois.edu/trees2
or

Trees are Terrific at urbanext.illinois.edu/trees1



Session 2

The Possibility of Food!

Prepare

Create a worship table by covering a small, low table with a cloth and placing a Bible, a candle, a plate of manna (small pitas with honey), and a bowl of sand on the table to use during the telling of the story.

Have candy or pennies ready to play the scramble game in the Engage section of the session.

Have a map of the world ready to point out the Sinai desert during God's Story.

Have pre-cut construction paper leaves ready to add more ideas to the Possibility Tree.

Gather any of the materials you need for the Explore options you have chosen to use.

Engage

Play a game of *candy scramble* or *penny scramble* to help the children reflect on an experience of inequity. Ensure that you have at least two or three pieces of individually wrapped candy or pennies per child. Gather the children around and freely toss the items in the air, inviting them to grab what they can. Some children will grab plenty; others will get little. Allow them a little time to process what will feel quite unjust and "un-church-like" before discussing the following:

- How much did each person get?
- Ask someone who grabbed a lot, "How do you feel?"
- Ask someone who caught little, "How do you feel?"
- Why did some collect plenty and some collect only a little?
- Is that fair?
- How could we make it fair?

After discussing ways to make it fair, follow through on the group's chosen solution to rectify the situation.

Hear

God's Story: Don't Take More Than You Need

Exodus 16:1–5, 13b–15

Ask the children questions like these:

- How would you feel if there was no food in your house?
- What do you do if you are hungry?
- What is a desert?

Today's story is about a time when God's people were in the desert, and there was nothing to eat.

Show the children where the Sinai desert is on the map.

Tell the story of God giving manna to the people in desert, Exodus 16:1–5, 13b–15.

This story is in *The Family Story Bible*, by Ralph Milton. It is entitled "Special Food" and can be found on page 86. Read only the first half of the story, which tells about the manna. You will complete the story in the next session.

This story is also in the *Lectionary Story Bible: Year A*, by Ralph Milton. It is entitled "I'm So Hungry" and can be found on page 206, Proper 20 (25). This story can be read in its entirety.

Alternatively, use one of the other ways of presenting a Bible story suggested in the Background and Preparation section of this resource (page 6).

Discuss the following:

- How do you think the manna tasted to the people in the desert?
- Do you think they thanked God for the manna?
- Do you think there was enough manna for everybody?
- God said, "Gather just enough for one day. Don't take too much." What do you think might happen if the people decided to take too much?
- Do you think anyone has too little to eat today?
- Do you think anyone has too much to eat today?

(Note: If the children do not respond verbally, just let them think about it.)

Partner Story

Mileni's story from Guatemala

It is only 4:00 in the morning and still dark, but 10-year-old Mileni can hear her mother working in the kitchen preparing tortillas for breakfast. She stays on her mat for a few minutes, listening to the tap of the rain on the zinc roof of the little house. In Guatemala it rains every day for half the year.

Mileni's sister, Alicia, is 16 years old and her brother, Raul, is 14. What they like best is staying in bed until they really have to get up. But Mileni doesn't wait for her mother's call to get ready for school. She jumps out of bed so she can be the first to get the umbrella and hurry to the latrine outside in the courtyard.

At breakfast Mileni asks, "Can we take the bus to school today?"

Mama shakes her head and says, "No, I am sorry. I need the money to buy food for the chickens and milk for you."

Since Dad died seven years ago, Mama has had to work really hard to look after us and send us to school, thinks Mileni, and the school is always asking for extra money.

"Oh good, the sun is coming out, so we won't get wet walking to school," Mileni tells the others.

Mileni is wearing her traditional Mayan blouse and wraparound skirt, but her brother and sister are wearing their jeans. The children are glad they live in the country and not the city. In the city, you have to wear a uniform to school, and that would cost Mama a lot of extra money.

They leave home at 6:45 a.m. so they can arrive in time for school at 7:30 a.m. They don't want to be late for school. Mileni likes school and she wants to be an *educadora* (teacher) when she grows up. She learns most of her subjects in Spanish even though almost all the students are Mayan and speak *Quiche* at home. Mileni has also started English lessons. Her favourite subject is geography, and someday she hopes to visit some of the wonderful countries she is learning about.

At noon Mileni says a prayer of thanks, "Thank you, God, for the sun that is shining, and that the school is warm today. Thank you, too, for my snack of banana and tortilla."

The last class ends at 1:30 p.m., but today only Mileni and Alicia walk home after school. It's Raul's class's turn to stay late and clean the school. The school doesn't have enough money to pay janitors, so the students have to do the cleaning.

Mileni tells her sister, "I don't mind the sweeping and taking out the garbage, but I sure don't like the job of cleaning the latrines. YUK!"

Alicia laughs and says, "No one likes cleaning the latrines! But now we need to hurry home, because I have to cook lunch."

"What's for lunch?" asks Mileni.



Alicia tells her she's going to cook cauliflower and fry any eggs Mileni finds in the chicken coop.

"Hope I can find enough eggs for all of us!" Mileni says.

When they get home for lunch, Mama is at her job in a factory, where she sews clothes. Mileni collects eight eggs and Alicia tells Mileni to take two of the eggs to their neighbour who is sick and alone.

"Good afternoon, Auntie Albertina, I have brought you some eggs. We have more than we need. How are you feeling?"

Auntie Albertina looks ill, but her eyes light up when she sees Mileni. She asks about church. She hasn't been well enough to attend Gethsemane Presbyterian Church for the past few weeks.

Mileni tells her that they have started church school in the middle of the two-hour service.

"Last Sunday we learned the story about God raining manna onto the desert, and then when we came back to the service, the pastor had us sing a song for everyone."

Auntie Albertina asks Mileni to sing the song for her and even though Mileni doesn't think she can sing well, she does her best. Auntie says, "Mileni, you sound like an angel to me."

Mileni tells Auntie that her Grandma, the coordinator of the Women's Pastoral Program of Fraternidad of Maya Presbyterians, will be visiting this weekend. She will be teaching the church members how they can practice good habits to protect the environment.



Auntie Albertina remembers how last time Grandma came, she told everyone how plastic bags are not good for the environment. Auntie says, “Ask your Grandma to come and visit me if she has time. I love to hear her talk about how our traditional Mayan ways of doing things can help Guatemala and care for God’s creation. It makes me proud to be Mayan and thankful for being a part of God’s family. I wonder what she’ll teach us this time.”

On her way back home, Mileni picks up an empty bottle that someone has thrown on the ground. She smiles because she knows she is doing something good, and she knows Grandma, Auntie and God would be pleased too!

When Mileni gets back from her visit, lunch is ready and Mama and Raul are home. After lunch, she does her

homework, and then her job of emptying the compost bucket beside the garden. Then she helps Raul pick tomatoes and corn. After her chores, there is time to play ball with Raul and some friends.

After a supper of porridge and fruit, the family watches television. *Scooby Doo* is Mileni’s favourite show, but tonight they watch Raul’s favourite: a cricket match! Mama and the girls work on their weaving looms and listen to the game. After the game, it is time to give thanks to God for a good day. There was rain and sun. There was work and play. It was an ordinary day, but a very good day.

Discuss the following:

- **How did Mileni “not take too much” just as God instructed the Israelites?**
- **What things did Mileni do in the story that you think pleased God?**
- **What did Mileni share with her neighbour?**
- **Who could we share with? What could we share?**
- **What do you think Grandma will teach the people this time when she visits?**

The Possibility Tree

Discuss together different ways that we can share food with others. Write the ideas on the construction paper leaves and tape them on the tree. Make sure that you have included the things Mileni did in the story to care for God's world.

Songs and Prayers

Choose one or two songs from the following:

- **Buenos Días**, sung to the tune of *Frère Jacques*.
(Translation: *Good morning/Good day. How are you? Very well, thank you. And you?*)
Buenos días, Buenos días.
Como estas? Como estas?
Muy bien, gracias. Muy bien, gracias.
Y usted? Y usted?
- **Amigos de Cristo/Friends of the Lord**, #476, *Book of Praise*
- **This Is My Commandment**, #694, *Book of Praise*

Ask the children for prayer ideas.

- "What could we thank God for today?"
- Invite each child to say something in your prayer together. Tell them when it is their turn to pray, they can say, "Thank you, God, for _____." Tell them it is all right to say the same thing as someone else. If a child cannot think of anything to say, you can help by suggesting something.

- "Do you know anyone who is sick? sad? lonely?"
- Tell them that when it is time to share prayers for other people, they can say, "God, please help _____."

The leader can begin with the following:

Dear God,
we would like to thank you for
the way you care for us.
Hear our prayers of thanks.

Allow time for the children to say a prayer of thanks.

God, we know people who need your help.
Hear us as we pray for them.

Allow time for children to say a prayer for someone else.

Thank you, God, for hearing our prayers
and thank you for loving us.
Help us to please you in everything we do.
In Jesus name,
Amen

Snack and Fellowship

- Tortillas (corn tortillas if you can find them) and a vegetable or bean dip
- Pita bread and honey
- Dried banana or plantain chips (available in bulk food stores)
- Bananas or pineapple
- Tropical fruit juice

Explore

Market Race Relay

Materials: two long, bright pieces of fabric to use as shawls, two aprons, two baskets, plastic fruit to put in basket.

Instructions: Divide the class into two teams. Mark out two race tracks on the floor. Place one set of clothing at the starting line for each team. When you say "go," the first child on each team puts on the apron, wraps the cloth around their shoulders like a shawl, puts the basket of fruit on their head and walks or runs around the track. When they get back to the start, they take off the apron, shawl and basket and the second person dresses and repeats the process. As each person finishes the task, they sit on the floor. The team whose players are all sitting first wins the game.

Variations: Rolling hoops (hula-hoops) is a popular relay race in Guatemala. Kicking a soccer ball through a course of obstacles is also a popular relay race. (Soccer is the national sport of Guatemala.)

Bat and Ball

Many families in Guatemala are poor, so children must be creative in making their own toys. Baseball is a fun game in any country! You can make balls and bats using recycled newspaper. This bat and ball will be much softer for your group to play with indoors.

Materials: newspaper, small paper or plastic bag, masking tape

Instructions: To make the ball, tear a sheet of newspaper into pieces, stuff the pieces into a bag and wrap tape around it, forming it into a ball. To make the bat, lay about 12 sheets of newspaper together and fold in half. Starting at the folded edge, tightly roll the newspaper and tape the roll together.

Option: Learn the basic rules of cricket and play cricket with your “bat and ball.”

Guatemalan Ball Game

This is a common game in Guatemala. Make a nail-sized hole in the bottom of a paper cup. Knot the end of a 12 inch long string and push the string through the hole so that it stops with the knot preventing it from falling through the hole. Tie another knot on the outside of the bottom of the cup to secure the string in place. Make a ball of paper and tape it together. Attach the ball to the tail end of the string.

To play, hold the cup and swing it, trying to catch the ball inside. For young children, you may need to shorten the string. You could also make the game easier by tying something heavier than a paper ball to the end of the string, like a screw or washer.

The Rain Game

Guatemala, like other Central American countries, experiences a rainy season each year from May to November. Simulate a rainstorm with this clapping game.

Actions: **Thunder** – stomp feet or hit hands on the floor

Wind – blow air out of mouth as if blowing through a straw

Rain – rub palms of hands together

Raindrops – snap fingers

The leader asks the class to follow his or her instructions.

First, make the thunder sound. Now add the wind sound.

The thunder and wind stop and it starts to rain.

It's raining harder and the thunder starts.

The thunder stops. The rain slows down and now there are little rain drops.

The storm is over.

Option: The children can take turns leading the next “storm.”

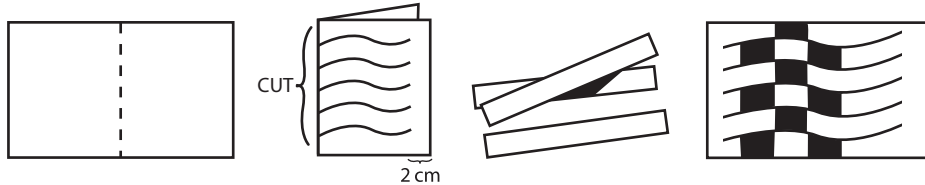
Watch a DVD

Hola from Guatemala is a five minute long DVD that can be purchased from The Book Room of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for \$5.00.

Learn to Weave

The Mayan people have a tradition of weaving with cotton and wool. Some weavers attribute meanings to the colours they use. Red represents the love of Jesus, purple and black mean sadness, green is for hope, and white is for purity. Give the children materials to make a weaving project in these colours.

For younger children: Make a placemat by weaving strips of craft foam or construction paper width-wise through a piece of white foam or construction paper that has been prepared with length-wise slits cut a few centimetres apart from each other. Leave a two centimetre uncut edge all around. *Variation:* make the slits wavy.



For older children: Make a manna-collecting basket in the colours listed above. You will need balls of colourful yarn, seven pipe cleaners, a ruler, scissors, and a round fruit such as an orange or grapefruit.

To make the basket, take three pipe cleaners in each hand and cross one bunch over the other. Tie them together in the middle with yarn. Do not cut the yarn off the ball because you are going to continue to work with it.

Separate the pipe cleaners to look like spokes of a wheel. Wind the yarn over and under the spokes to form a six centimetre diameter base. Put the fruit on the base and bend the spokes up around it to shape the basket.

Keeping the fruit in place, continue weaving until you are four centimetres from the end of the spokes. Leaving two spokes up to attach the handle, bend the rest of the spokes down through the weaving.

Trim the yarn, leaving a five centimetre tail. Tuck the tail under the nearest spoke. Twist the seventh pipe cleaner to the two ends you left pointing up to make a handle.

When you have finished creating the basket, set it on your kitchen table as a reminder of how God fed the Israelites manna in the desert.

Sharing Food with Others

Talk about why you have a local food bank. If your church has a place designated for collecting items for the food bank, show the children where it is located.

Together, make a list of healthy food items that a food bank could share with people who do not have enough food. Use grocery store flyers to help the children make their choices. Encourage them to bring non-perishable items with them for the food bank when you meet again.

The children could also be given a small budget to go shopping for the food bank. They could plan their shopping list together, go to the store to make their purchases, and then deliver the items to the food bank.

Ask the children if they know of ways they could help share food with people in other countries.

If the discussion leads to an action plan, help the children follow through on their plan, and celebrate their initiative.



Session 3

The Possibility of Water!

Prepare

Create a worship table by covering a small, low table with a cloth and placing a Bible, a candle, a pitcher of water, a rock and a stick on the table to help illustrate the story.

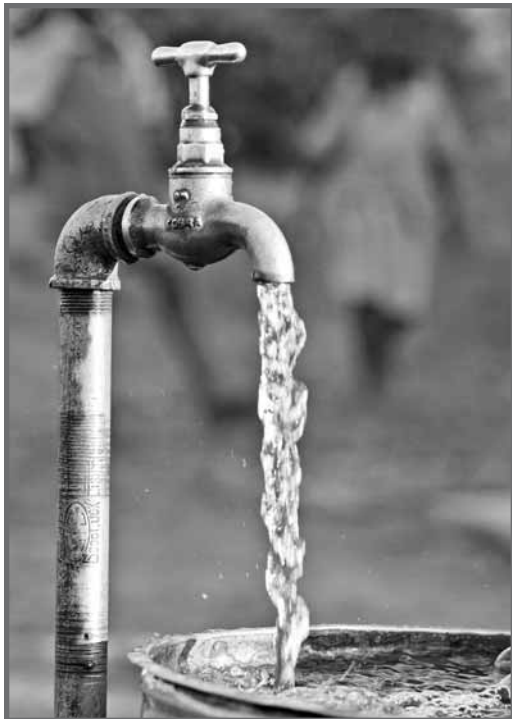
Have pre-cut construction paper leaves ready to add more ideas to the Possibility Tree.

Gather any of the materials you need for the Explore options you have chosen to use.

Engage

Begin by asking the children questions such as these:

- Where do we go to find water?
- What do we do with water?
- Is all water safe to drink? Why or why not?
- Do you think there was dirty water when God made the world?



Photos: Carl Hiebert, PWS&D

Hear

God's Story: Water from a Rock

Exodus 17:1-7

Tell the story of God giving water to the people in the desert, Exodus 17:1-7.

This story is in *The Family Story Bible*, by Ralph Milton. In this session, we complete the story we began in Session Two, entitled "Special Food," which can be found on page 87. Read only the second half of this story, which tells about the water God gave in the desert.

This story is also in the *Lectionary Story Bible: Year A*, by Ralph Milton. It is entitled "We Want a Drink" and can be found on page 209, Proper 21 (26). This story can be read in its entirety.

For this session, the story could also be presented as a drama or mime.

Ask the participants questions such as these:

- What would have happened to the people if they did not get water?
- Now that they have water, what do you think the people will do?
- God has given us clean water too. What can we do to show that we understand water is a very precious gift from God?

Partner Story

Barbara's Story from Ukraine

The Roma people who appear in this story are the people formerly referred to as gypsies or travellers. The word "gypsy" is considered an uncomplimentary one and so we use the term Roma, as this is the term that the Roma people prefer.

“The sun’s out! Thank you, God!” said Barbara.

Her mother smiled as the whole family raised their hands in praise to God before they finished their porridge. It was a school holiday for 13-year-old Barbara and her brother, David, who was eight.

Barbara’s mother, who worked at a factory, and her father, who drove a farm tractor, also had a vacation day. There were not many days in the year when they all had the same day off and an opportunity to go to the lake. An elder in the church and his family had invited them on a picnic. Barbara’s family didn’t have a car, but the elder had a van and everyone, including Grandma, could all fit in.

Barbara had her bathing suit and towel already packed in a bag. Mother packed the picnic lunch – her homemade sausage and cheese went in the basket and a big loaf of bread too.

Barbara’s mother said, “Please go and pick some carrots and cucumbers from the garden, Barbara. Make sure you pick the biggest ones.”

It didn’t take Barbara long to choose the vegetables and wash them off at the outdoor tap. On the way back to the house, she stopped to pet the rabbits.

“Only one more thing to do,” Barbara said as she filled the water bottles from the kitchen tap and packed some ice around them. Then she announced, “We are ready to go.”

It wasn’t long until the van arrived. “They’re here! They’re here!” Barbara squealed in delight. The elder’s daughter, Kati, was just a year older than Barbara, but Kati was in secondary school now. The girls didn’t see each other except at church and on special days like today. Barbara jumped in the back to sit beside her best friend. They sang silly songs and laughed all the way.

Along the road, they stopped for some Roma people whose donkey cart had broken down. The people had been transporting jugs of drinking water to their homes. The Roma lived beside the river, and river water can only be used for bathing and washing. The men and the older boys helped push the donkey cart to the side of the road so it could be repaired. Barbara and Kati smiled shyly at the children and they smiled back. Even with the stop, it only took an hour to reach the lake, and then everyone helped to unload the picnic baskets, the chair for Grandma, and blankets to sit on.



It was a day of swimming, splashing, laughing and having fun.

“Look at me. I can tread water! Barbara taught me the scissor kick!” shouted David.

Even the moms and dads joined the children to play in the water until it was time to put out the lunch.

When lunch was ready, they all dried off and Barbara’s mother suggested that they sing a prayer of thanks to God. They sang the doxology in Hungarian. Even though they lived in Ukraine, they were a Hungarian family and members of the Sub-Hungarian Reformed Church in the Sub-Carpathian Ukraine. They shared a feast of salami, cheese, boiled eggs, bread, pickles, cucumbers, tomatoes, cabbage salad, watermelon and Kati’s mother’s famous cake. The children also took turns cracking fresh walnuts for everyone to enjoy with their cake. They washed everything down with the cool water that Barbara had packed in ice.

When everyone had finished eating, the mothers packed away the lunch, and the fathers packed away the dishes for washing at home. The children collected a bag of vegetable and fruit peels for their composter at home and a bag for the garbage.

After lunch, Barbara and Kati huddled together at the edge of the lake and wiggled their toes in the water.

Barbara said, “I can’t wait to go to secondary school, but I’m a little scared too. I’m working really hard to get good marks, and my parents are saving money so I can go next year.”

Kati told her not to worry, because it was their church’s school and the church helps students who can’t afford the full cost. She also told her, “the Presbyterians in Canada have been sending money to help us buy books and school supplies.”

“Do you mean that people who have never even been to Ukraine, people who can’t even speak Hungarian, send money to help us get an education?” asked Barbara.

Kati explained that God’s people help one another and are partners with God to care for each other.

“At school we are learning to be God’s partners too,” said Kati. “We visit the Roma people where they live and teach the children Bible stories. We also clean our school and its grounds, so we have one of the most beautiful gardens in this part of Ukraine.”

“The school is beautiful,” agreed Barbara, “and the trees and flowers make the school yard look like a park.”

“Last chance for a swim before we start for home!” called out Kati’s Dad.

All the children ran into the water. The water felt good and everyone felt good on the inside too. No one wanted the day to end, but soon they were piling back into the van.

When they reached Barbara’s house, Barbara hugged Kati and said, “Thanks for a special day. See you at Sunday school.”

Barbara’s mother gave Kati’s mother the sausage left over from the picnic. Her specialty was sausage making and sausage sharing.

Barbara wondered what she could share. Barbara shared a great, big smile with Kati’s parents and said, “Thanks for taking us to the lake. It was a wonderful wet day.”

Discuss the following:

- **Where is your favourite water place?**
- **What did Barbara share?**
- **When in the story did Barbara and her family show they were God’s partners?**
- **When in the story did Kati and her family show they were God’s partners?**

The Possibility Tree

Discuss ways that we can respect the water God has given us. Put these ideas on the tree using the construction paper leaves.

Songs and Prayers

Choose a song from the following:

- **Deep and Wide**, page 13, *Wee Sing Bible Songs*
- **He's Got the Whole World**, adapted, for example, *He's got the lakes and the rivers*, page 41, *Wee Sing Bible Songs*

Use this prayer litany written by the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson:

For flowers that bloom about our feet,
Father, we thank Thee.
For tender grass so fresh, so sweet,
Father, we thank Thee.
For the song of bird and hum of bee,
For all things fair we hear or see,
Father in heaven, we thank Thee.

For this new morning with its light,
Father, we thank Thee.
For rest and shelter of the night,
Father, we thank Thee.
For health and food, for love and friends,
For everything Thy goodness sends,
Father in heaven, we thank Thee.

Option: After the prayer, ask the children to name all the things mentioned in the prayer that depend on water to survive.

Option: Ask the children to add another verse to the poem to thank God for some of the ways people enjoy water. Don't worry about making the lines rhyme.

Snack and Fellowship

- Cucumbers
- Crackers, salami and cheese
- Watermelon
- Water

Explore

Make a Walnut Critter

For each critter, you will need:

- pencil
- half a walnut shell
- 4" x 4" piece of craft foam
- scissors
- poster paint and brushes (optional)
- low temperature glue gun
- two small googly eyes
- two 2" lengths of pipe cleaner
- 1" pompom
- ¼" pompom

To make a critter:

- Trace the walnut shell outline onto the craft foam. Draw legs on the outside of your foam shell shape. Cut out this base for your critter.
- Paint the upper walnut shell with a few coats of poster paint (optional). Let dry.
- Glue the shell on top of the foam base.
- Glue the 1" pompom on the front of the shell as a head.
- Glue the googly eyes onto the head. Glue the ¼" pompom on for a nose, and then add two antennae made from the pipe cleaners.



Decorate an Egg

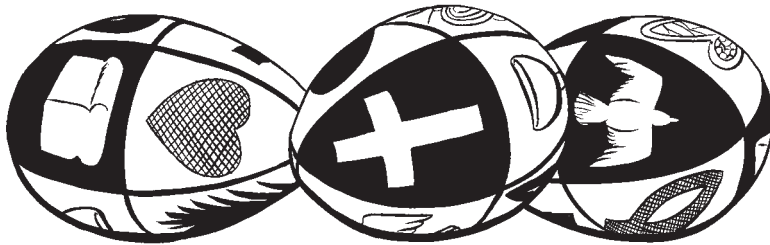
Barbara's family packed boiled eggs for the picnic. In the Ukraine, many people make *pysanky* (Easter eggs) in the spring. Ukrainians greet friends with a decorated egg and the phrase "Christ is risen." The friend replies, "He is risen indeed." Although Barbara is ethnically Hungarian, she goes to her Ukrainian neighbour's house before Easter to make *pysanky*. You can make a Ukrainian Easter egg at any time of the year.

You will need:

- one egg per person
- variety of colours of food colouring
- white vinegar
- cups or small bowls
- paper towels
- small Christian stickers
- pencil, crayons or permanent fine-tipped markers

To make *pysanky* eggs:

- Boil the eggs and let them cool. Do this in advance of the session.
- If you want to dye your eggs, mix 20 drops of food colouring with one tablespoon of white vinegar in a cup or small bowl. Add a half cup of room temperature water. Make as many of these cups as you desire colours to dye your eggs. Leave each egg in the dye for about three minutes. The longer you leave the egg in the dye, the darker it will be. Remove the egg with a spoon and pat dry with a paper towel.
- Draw vertical and horizontal lines on the egg with a pencil to divide the egg into eight parts.
- In each section, use a coloured pencil or a permanent fine-tipped marker to draw a Christian symbol – a cross, a heart, a dove, a loaf of bread, a fish, etc.
- With smaller children, you could also use small stickers or wax crayons to add symbols to each egg.
- The website www.learnpysanky.com gives detailed instructions.



Make a Gospel in a Nutshell

You will need:

- a whole walnut
- low temperature glue gun
- ¼" wide ribbon
- fine-tipped permanent markers
- ¼" wide strip of paper long enough to write the Bible verse on it



To make a gospel in a nutshell:

- Run a line of glue along the “seam” line of the walnut. Leaving a 4" tail of ribbon, start at the top of the walnut and press the ribbon along the glue line until you return to the top of the walnut wrapping the ribbon around the walnut once. Leave a tail at the end as well.
- Tie the ribbon ends at the top and then make a loop with the tails for a hanger.
- Use permanent marker to write “Matthew 28:20” on one side of the walnut and the person’s name on the other.
- Write the words of the verse, “Jesus said, “Remember, I am with you always” on the strip of paper. Curl the strip using the edge of scissors and attach to the ribbon to the holder at the top of the nut.

The children can make these as gifts and give them to someone that they care for.

Play the Big Bear Game

This is a traditional Ukrainian game for 8–30 players.

You will need a large, preferably outdoor space. Mark off a square playing area to be the field. Inside the square, designate a space to represent the bear den. One person is chosen to be the Big Bear.

Big Bear goes to the den and the others run around the field. Suddenly the bear shouts from the den, “The bear is coming!” The bear runs out of the den holding his or her hands together. The bear tries to catch a player by touching the person with his or her locked hands.

As soon as a person is touched, the person also becomes a bear and both run into the den. Now both players join hands and they shout, “The bears are coming!” and they go hunting in the field. They are allowed to catch only one player at a time by touching the player with their free hands. They must always keep together and not break apart.

The Big Bear always stays at the end of the line, which grows in length until all the players have become bears. The last player to be caught is the Big Bear for the next game.

Option: If you have a large group of 20 or more, you might want to start with two Big Bears.



Session 4

The Possibility of Chocolate!

Prepare

Create a worship table by covering a small, low table with a cloth and placing a Bible and a candle on it. Set up two displays on or near your worship table. On one, put different kinds of food for the body such as bread, canned soup, yams, apples, oranges, bananas. On the other, put food that nurtures the spirit, such as a school book, a musical instrument, a painting, a Bible, flowers, a photo album, a friendship card, a soccer ball.

Cut fair trade certified chocolate bars into enough pieces for everyone to have a piece. Place them on a plate for use in the Engage activity.

Have pre-cut construction paper leaves ready to add more ideas to the Possibility Tree.

Gather any of the materials you need for the Explore options you have chosen to use.

Engage

Pass around a plate with pieces of fair trade certified chocolate and invite everyone to have a piece. Fair trade certified chocolate can be found at stores such as Ten Thousand Villages and most large grocery stores. Keep the wrapper from your chocolate bar to show to everyone later.

Discuss each child's favourite treat as you nibble on the chocolate together. Discuss where the children think chocolate comes from and how it might be made. Would chocolate be a treat your family might serve to a special guest who visits your house? Our stories today feature special guests and chocolate.

Hear

God's Story: Two Kinds of Food

Luke 10:38–42

Tell the story of Mary and Martha found in Luke 10:38–42.

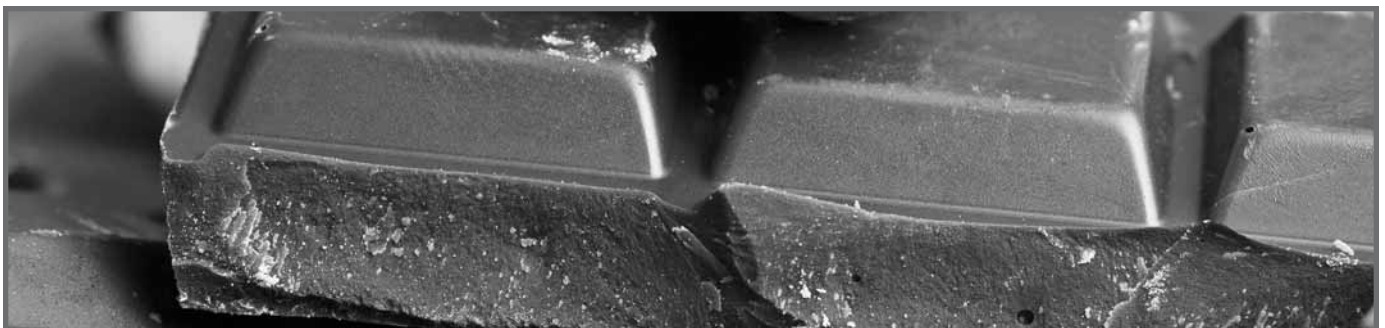
The story can be found in the *Family Story Bible*, by Ralph Milton, on page 222, entitled, “Martha Learns About Food.”

This story is also in the *Lectionary Story Bible: Year C*, by Ralph Milton. It can be found on page 174, Proper 11.

Another possibility is to use the “Jesus, Mary and Martha” script found on page 60 of *Spotlight on Jesus: Readers' Theater for Children's Church*, by Robert Lakey. Change the last line of Jesus to read, “Martha, we came to your home, not to eat food, but to be with you. Food for the body is necessary, but even more important is the food Mary has chosen. Mary's food has been spending time with me.”

To talk about the story, ask questions such as these:

- What are the two types of food Jesus talks about in this story?
- What does food for the body provide for us?
- How can we help people who don't have enough food for their bodies?
- What does food for the spirit provide for us?
- How do you find spiritual food for yourself?
- How do you help other people find spiritual food?



Partner Story

Jessica's Story from Ghana

As you tell this story to the children, have them listen for different kinds of food and come up to the worship table to choose the ones they hear in the story. Have them raise their hands first, so you don't have everyone running for the same item. Or ask the children to put their hands on their stomachs when "body food" is mentioned and to put their hands on their hearts when "spiritual food" is mentioned.

My name is Abena Jessica Ayvor, but everyone calls me Jessica. I am 12 years old and live in the suburbs of Accra, Ghana. I live in a nice house with my parents, my brother and my sister. Our parents pay extra money for us to attend a private school because they think the public schools are not safe and they are afraid we will be bullied. I enjoy school, and I work hard because I want to be a nurse like my mother. If I was a nurse, I could help the poor people in Ghana who often get sick because they don't have clean water or nutritious food, and they can't afford to go to the health clinics.

I have a few chores at home, but not too many, because my parents want me to have time to study and do well at school. My jobs are to sweep the house, fetch water, help wash the clothes and get the coal pot ready for cooking. I don't usually have to go far for water because we have a reservoir for collecting rain water in our yard. Many of our neighbours don't have one, so there is a steady line of children and adults walking by our house to a community tap a short distance away. They carry the water home in buckets on their heads or in a wheelbarrow. Often I see my special friend Lamissa walking with a bucket on her head. She's only nine years old, but she can carry a full bucket of water on her head as well as any adult.

I met Lamissa in a queue at the community water tap. It was the dry season and we didn't have any water in our reservoir. The line was very long because the town water was running slowly. I had been standing in the line just in front of Lamissa, but I had to go to the bathroom. Lamissa held my spot in the queue while I ran home. From that day on, Lamissa and I were special friends and I always watched for her in the line.

Lamissa and her aunt sell charcoal on the street. Lamissa's mother and father died, so now she lives with her aunt and uncle and their children. Lamissa went to a public school for two years, but she doesn't attend anymore because there isn't enough money to send her. She helps her aunt with the charcoal-selling business.

Lamissa fills the plastic bags with charcoal, so her finger nails and hands always look dirty. Some of the other children laugh at Lamissa and call her names because she has no parents. I like Lamissa, and sometimes her aunt lets her leave her job and play soccer with us or to listen to a story. Lamissa can't read very well, so she likes me to help her read Bible stories. Sometimes when I am playing with Lamissa, my mother will invite us for a special treat of peanuts or an orange. On Valentine's Day, my mother gave each of us a red apple. That was the first apple Lamissa ever ate and she took so long to finish it that it started to turn brown. Apples are very expensive because they don't grow in Ghana. She wanted to enjoy that apple for a long time.

I think Lamissa's best day ever was the day I invited her to church and her aunt said, "Yes." For that day, Lamissa didn't have to sell charcoal in the morning. She loved the music, especially when the youth played drums and guitars. She liked it when the Sunday school teacher told us how God created each of us so that we are special and unique and that God loves us. After church, Lamissa ate the noon meal with my family. We had *fufu* (ground yam), soup and bananas.

Then the family shared a chocolate bar that had come in a parcel from a relative in Canada. We all let the small piece of chocolate sit on our tongues for a long time. Even though Ghana is the second largest exporter of cocoa beans in the

world, chocolate bars are very expensive and a very special treat. The cocoa is sold to Europe and the United States, where it is made into chocolate. Ghana also has so much gold that it used to be called the Gold Coast, but nobody has much gold either. Lamissa and I think that is very funny, and wonder if children in Canada like Ghanaian chocolate as much as Ghanaian children like Canadian apples. We wonder if Canadian children know where chocolate comes from and if Ghana will have chocolate factories of its own one day, and sell chocolate to other countries instead of cocoa.



Photo: Ruth Hourby, PWS&D

Discuss the following:

- **What do you have that Lamissa doesn't have?**
- **What kind of body food did Jessica share with Lamissa?**
- **What kind of spiritual food did Jessica share with Lamissa?**
- **How do you think Lamissa feels when she sees other children going to school or Sunday school and she can't because she is selling charcoal?**
- **How can we share body food and spiritual food with others?**

The Possibility Tree

Discuss the ways that Jessica helped make Lamissa's life easier. How can we help make other's lives easier? Have the children write their answers on the leaves and add them to the Possibility Tree.

Songs and Prayers

Sing the following:

- **Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love** (Ghanaian folk melody), #229, *Book of Praise*

Sing "For Health and Strength" as a prayer. Add a second verse using "For lakes and trees and cocoa beans":

*For health and strength
and daily bread
we praise your name, O Lord.*

*For lakes and trees
and cocoa beans
we praise your name, O Lord.*

Perhaps the children can make up new verses to this singing prayer!

Snack and Fellowship

- Chocolate milk
- Apple pieces
- Chocolate fondue with apple and banana pieces

Explore

Play Ampe

Ampe is a simple game played by school age children in Ghana. The game, played by two or more players, is simple and requires no equipment.

The leader, or "it," and another player jump up at the same time, clap, and thrust one foot forward when they jump up. If the leader and the other player have the same foot forward, the leader wins a point. If they are different, then the other player gets the point and becomes "it" and plays against another player.

If the players are in a circle, the "it" moves along the inside of the circle, playing against others in turn. If they are in a line, the "it" moves down the line. If only two players are playing, they keep score until one player has ten points.

Write a Grace

Ask the children to write a prayer thanking God for the two kinds of food Jesus talked about. Encourage them to pray their prayers with the whole group at the closing.

Research Cocoa Trees

Ask the children to go to www.urbanext.illinois.edu/food/sections/cacao to learn about cocoa.



Write a Grace on a Plate

Give each child a paper plate. (A flimsy paper plate is fine, but don't use foam.) Punch holes around the edge. Older children can do their own punching with a one-hole punch, but the younger children will need help with this.

Weave ribbon or wool through the holes around the edge in whatever pattern they choose. Write a grace on the plate. The children can take this plaque home and put it up near their kitchen table.



Find your Ghanaian Name

Give the children the following information and ask them to find out what their name would be if they had been born in the Ashanti tribe in Ghana. Different tribal groups name their children in a similar pattern, but with different names.

In the Ashanti tribe, there are corresponding male and female names for the day of the week a child is born.

Sunday:	male – Kwesi	female – Akosua
Monday:	male – Kojo	female – Adjoa
Tuesday:	male – Kwabena	female – Abena
Wednesday:	male – Kwaku	female – Akua
Thursday:	male – Yaw	female – Yaa
Friday:	male – Kofi	female – Afua
Saturday:	male – Kwame	female – Serwaa

Children are given a first name to correspond to the day they were born, and then a middle name that is from the Bible or is the name of one of their ancestors or that has a special meaning. On what day of the week was Jessica born?

Find out the children's dates of birth beforehand, and check the website www.calendarwerks.com to find the days of the week when the children were born.

For example, Matthew John Smith would be Yaw Matthew John Smith if he was born on a Thursday.

Options:

- Ask the children if they know why their parents gave them the name they have.
- Check your local library for a baby name book, and look up the meanings of the children's names.

Make a Cocoa Gift Jar

Mix the following ingredients together:

- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup unsweetened Fair Trade cocoa
- 1 cup powdered milk
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ cup miniature chocolate chips
- ½ cup miniature marshmallows

Put the mixture in small glass jars (recycled jam jars or baby food jars work well).

Decorate the lid with a round piece of fabric and ribbon. Attach a recipe card with a note of encouragement on one side, such as “Food for the body and food for the spirit,” and the following recipe on the reverse:

Hot Chocolate With Possibility

Put 1/3 cup of mix in mug.

Add 1 cup boiling water and stir to mix.

Option: If you would prefer a soup mix, go to www.allfreecrafts.com/giftinajar for lots of great ideas.

Read a Book

One Hen is a children’s book about how a micro loan in Ghana changed a boy’s life. This book is available for purchase from The Book Room or could be borrowed from your public library.

- Katie Milway, **One Hen** (Kids Can Press)

Discover What Fair Trade Certified Means

Show the children some chocolate bar wrappers to see if they can identify where the cocoa comes from. It may be hard to find “Ghana” on a chocolate bar, even though it is the world’s second largest supplier of cocoa.

Tell the children that many fathers, mothers and children in Ghana work picking cocoa off trees, but they make a very small wage. The farmers often do not get a fair price for their cocoa. People who run companies in North America and Europe buy the cocoa, make it into chocolate and sell it. Those people make a lot of money. If all the farmers in Ghana could get a fair price for their cocoa, and if there were factories in Ghana to make it into chocolate, then the workers and the farmers would earn more money to buy the food and clothes they need. That would be fair.

When we see the fair trade symbol on something we buy, we know that the workers and the farmers received fair treatment and a fair price for their product. Fair trade chocolate is available in grocery stores and specialty shops like Ten Thousand Villages. Look for the words “Fair Trade Certified” on the package. Other common fair trade food products we can buy in Canada are coffee, tea, bananas and pineapple. A fair trade product could also be a hand-crafted item: a weaving, hand-made jewelry or a wood carving.

Invite the children to visit The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s website (www.presbyterian.ca) and search for “Fair Trade” to find how we are involved as a national church.





Session 5

The Possibility of a Home!

Prepare

Create a worship table by covering a small, low table with a cloth and placing a Bible and a candle on it. If you have a bread maker, have fresh bread baking as the children arrive. Or place bowls of flour and yeast on the worship table.

Have three or four colourful pipe cleaners ready for each person for the Engage activity.

Have pre-cut construction paper leaves ready to add more ideas to the Possibility Tree.

Gather any of the materials you need for the Explore options you have chosen to use.

Engage

Give each participant three or four pipe cleaners and ask them to quickly build a home they would like to live in using the pipe cleaners they have been given. If your group is small, ask each person to tell the group what is special about the home they made. If the group is large, ask them to share with another person in the group.

Discuss together:

- What are some of the different kinds of homes God's creatures live in? Some answers might be nests, caves or trees.
- People need homes too. Think about all the different kinds of homes people live in. A collection of photos of different kinds of homes would be helpful.
- If someone has no home, then we say they are homeless. Have you ever met someone who was homeless?

Hear

God's Story: A Roof Over Elijah's Head

1 Kings 17:7–24

Today's story is about someone who was homeless. Elijah was one of God's prophets and he helped the people understand what God wanted them to do. Elijah had no home and God instructed him to go to the home of a widow where he would be cared for.

Tell the story of Elijah finding a home with the widow and her son, found in *1 Kings 17:7–24*.

You may wish to read the first half of the story, "The Prophet Elijah," found on page 118 of *The Family Story Bible*, by Ralph Milton. End the reading of the story with the line, "Elijah had been staying with the woman for quite a while, yet there always seemed to be enough bread to eat."

This story can also be found in the *Lectionary Story Bible: Year C*, on page 157, entitled "The Prophet Elijah," Proper 5.

Alternatively, use one of the other ways of presenting a Bible story suggested in the Background and Preparation section of this resource (page 6).

Discuss the following questions:

- Why did the widow say "Yes" and take Elijah to her home and make him bread?
- How can we help people who have no home to live in?

Partner Story

Tawo's Story from Malawi

Tawo tucked the mosquito net under his sleeping mat and lay down. Today his family learned that they will soon be moving to a new home, and he is excited. Tawo, his mother and his two older sisters, Loveness and Grace, will be living in the Tidzalerana Shelter at the end of the month.

Their present home is a one-room shack with no water, no electricity and no yard. Tawo and his sisters have to walk half a kilometre to collect water at the village well. Their mother had a stroke when Tawo was only three years old. Only one side of her body moves like it is supposed to, so she needs lots of help, but she can still do most of the cooking and always gives the best hugs. Tawo's father didn't like having a sick wife, so he left them, and Tawo doesn't even remember what he looked like.

Tawo's mother isn't able to work in the maize fields to make money, so she relies on her family and church friends to help provide food, medicine and an education for her children. Their neighbours help, and Tidzalerana Shelter helps too.

Now they are going to move into a new home at Tidzalerana Shelter with other families whose parents have a disability. When they live there, Tawo won't worry all day at school about leaving his mother alone. They will have two rooms and share a kitchen with another family. The children will still have chores, but not nearly so many; and best of all, they won't have to carry water. Tidzalerana has its own tap, and the water even comes right into the kitchen! Tidzalerana means, "We will take care of each other," in Tawo's language, Chichewa.

"Thank you, God, for giving us a new home and people to take care of us," prays Tawo as he falls asleep.

Tawo's first job, very early in the morning, is to fetch water. Tawo is only seven years old, so he has a small bucket that he carries on his head while his sisters each carry a big bucket of water. After they return, Tawo bathes and dresses in his school uniform – a freshly washed and ironed yellow shirt and green shorts. His eldest sister starts the fire and puts water on to boil before she dresses for school. Mother prepares *nsima*, a thick corn flour porridge, for their breakfast. Tawo helps with the stirring so that the porridge doesn't get lumpy. Together they all sing "God is so good" and then eagerly take handfuls, form them into balls, poke holes in the balls and fill them with green vegetable sauce, then pop them in their mouths. They drink sweet hot tea with the *nsima*. After breakfast, Tawo helps his mother wash the dishes.

Mercy and Silas, their neighbours and their friends from Sunday school, come to the door as usual so all the children can walk to school together. Today they have brought a piece of pumpkin to give to Tawo's mother. Yesterday it was spinach.

The girls hold hands as they walk to school.

"Have you learned the Bible verse yet?" asks Mercy.



Grace recites, “Blessed are those who dwell in God’s house; they are ever praising God. Psalm 84:4.”

The girls continue to practise the memory verse with each other. If they recite it perfectly on Sunday, they will have learned 25 Bible verses and receive a prize.

The boys are not practising Bible verses. They are kicking the soccer ball back and forth as they walk to school – not a regular soccer ball, but one made of plastic bags. When they reach the school yard, the boys join the soccer match and the girls join the hopscotch game.

Grace and Loveness do not walk Tawo home after school on Tuesdays because it is the day they help at Tidzalerana Club. They help children with disabilities do colouring and other crafts; they sing, play instruments and even dance with the children. The Presbyterian Church in Canada sends money so the club can purchase craft materials. Even though Grace and Loveness are volunteer workers, they have just as much fun as the younger children doing crafts. They always get a healthy snack too – sometimes even banana bread!

It wouldn’t be safe for Tawo to walk home alone, so his sisters make sure he goes with 12-year-old Silas. On the way home, Tawo talks to Silas about his family’s big move. Tawo tells Silas, “Soon we are going to live at Tidzalerana Shelter. I hope the other children there will like me and play with me. Silas, when I move, you won’t be able to walk to school with me or bring my mother vegetables from your garden.”

Silas puts his arm around Tawo and says, “Of course they’ll like you, and your mother will have help at your new home. You won’t need me to bring you vegetables because the shelter



Photo: Paul Jeffrey, PWS&D

has its own garden. You will be able to plant spinach, pumpkin and sweet potato; and maybe I'll become a volunteer too, and help with the gardening once a week. We will work together. That would be fun, wouldn't it?"

Tawo agrees that would be fun. He knows he'll still see his friends at school and at church, but he is still a little scared. Life is going to be different at Tidzalerana Shelter! Even if different is better, it is still scary. Tawo knows God is with him in his one-room shack. He is thankful God will be with him in his new, bigger and better home.

Discuss the following:

- **How do you think Tawo feels when he helps his mother?**
- **Have any of you moved to a new home? Was it a happy time? Was it a scary time?**
- **Tawo and his family sang "God is so good" at breakfast. What were they thanking God for?**
- **Sing "God is so good" together. In what ways is God good to us?**
- **What is your favourite meal at home? How could you thank both God and your parents for providing it?**

The Possibility Tree

Moving to a new home is exciting for Tawo. It will be bigger and there will be extra help for his mother. There will be more time for Tawo to play with new friends and to learn new things.

Going to a new place can also make us nervous or anxious. If your family has ever visited the home of someone you didn't know well, or if you've changed schools or moved to a new neighbourhood, you will have experienced some of the fears Tawo is feeling about his big move. Will he be welcomed in the shelter by the people who already live there? Will he make new friends? Will he be invited to join in a soccer game or to sit with someone at lunchtime? Helping others feel welcome is something that is possible for all of us to do.

Discuss ways that we can help people feel welcome in our homes, at school, at church, and in our neighbourhood. Write the ideas on the last of the leaves and add them to your Possibility Tree.

Take a moment to look at your Possibility Tree. Talk about how full it is of possible ways we can help others and God's creation. What are some of the group's favourites? What are some of the possibilities participants have already started to do? What possibilities will you do next? How will we keep our eyes and ears open for new possibilities in the future?

Invite each child to pick a few leaves off of the tree to take home and place on their dresser or fridge to remind them of the ways they want to continue to be a partner in possibility.

Or you may also wish to leave the tree up a little longer for the congregation to see in the weeks to come. You could write an article for the church's newsletter or website about all of the possibilities your group has discovered are available for them to help others and God's creation. If you leave the tree up for a time, consider mailing a few leaves to each participant at a later date, inviting them to "remember the possibilities."

Songs and Prayers

Choose one or two songs from the following:

1. **God Is So Good**, page 51, *Wee Sing Bible Songs*
2. **Jump with Joy**, #406, *Book of Praise* (words in English and Chichewa)
3. **Siyahamba/We Are Marching**, #639, *Book of Praise*
4. **Forest Trees**, #92, *Songs for Life*, CRC Publications

"We are Marching" is a great song with which to make up your own verses. Ask the children for ideas. Here is an example: "We are walking to the water well..." It is also a great song to dance to. Dance in a circle or by following a leader around the room.

Pray together:

Dear God,

We thank you for our home, our church and our school. We thank you for food, clothes, sports, music and all that we have to make our life good. Help us to remember others who do not have the homes, food, churches and schools that they need. We pray for church leaders around the world as they work to make life better for those who do not have what they need. We pray for the families living at Tidzalerana Shelter.

Help us to be followers of Jesus who care for the earth and the people who live on it.

Amen.

Snack and Fellowship

- Fresh bread
- Tropical fruit like bananas, mangoes, oranges, papaya, pineapple
- Banana bread
- Tropical fruit juice

Explore

Decorate a Clay Pot

Almost everyone in Malawi has a garden for growing vegetables. Use recycled plastic food containers and potting soil to plant a fast-growing crop. Sweet potatoes and green beans grow quickly.

Option: Purchase small terra-cotta pots and decorate them with permanent fine-tip felt markers, or with acrylic or tempera paints. If you use paints, try dipping small leaves and twigs into a tray of paint and then pressing onto the pots. Experiment with insect designs such as ants, ladybugs and spiders. The children can make insect designs by dipping their finger lightly into the paint and then pressing their fingerprint onto the side of the pot. Let the finger prints dry then draw legs onto the finger print body with a marker. If you want the paint to dry quickly, put the pots in a 150°F oven.

Option: Transplant a herb such as parsley or thyme.

Make a Paper Bag Home

Open a brown paper lunch bag with a flat bottom and place it on a table. Fold the top down to make a roof. Decorate the house with markers. Some children might like to cut out windows and a door, so have scissors available.

Option: Remind the children that some people in the world have no home, and that there are homeless people in Canada. Ask them what kinds of things we could put in our paper bag homes that would help people who don't have a home.

Make a Soccer Ball

Make a homemade soccer ball similar to one you would find in rural areas of Malawi. They are usually made of old plastic bags, crunched tightly together in the shape of a sphere and tied firmly with string.

Option: Use your homemade soccer ball to have a game of soccer, or use it for a team ball activity such as tossing a ball into an empty basket.



Explore

Make Nsima and Greens

Nsima is a basic food staple, eaten by almost all Malawians every day. To make this recipe, you will need:

- 1 cup cornmeal
- 2 – 3 cups water

Heat the water in a pot until luke warm.

Mix a little of the cornmeal with the water, stirring well with a wooden spoon to make sure there are no lumps. Bring to a boil, stirring well, then lower the heat and let boil gently for a few minutes. The mixture should look like a thin transparent porridge. Sprinkle the remaining cornmeal over, a little at a time, stirring continuously to avoid lumps from forming. Reduce the heat and place the lid on the pot to allow the cornmeal to absorb the water and cook through. Let cook for 15 to 20 minutes. Uncover and stir once again to keep the nsima smooth. Adjust the water or cornmeal if necessary to reach a consistency of cookie dough. Recover to continue cooking for a few more minutes.

Ladle the nsima into a greased bowl, one ladle at a time, leaving it in nice smooth clumps, and allow it to cool a little.

To eat, take a small handful, shape it into a smooth ball with your hand.

Make an indentation in it with your thumb. In Malawi they use this hollow to scoop up a “greens” sauce made with spinach and tomatoes.

Masamba or Ndiwo (also called Greens)

To make this recipe, you will need:

- 3 cups spinach or 2 small onions, finely chopped
- 1 tsp. cooking oil
- 2 or 3 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup water
- Salt

Sauté onions in oil. Add remaining ingredients and cook just until the greens are tender.

Option: Your children may prefer spaghetti sauce, honey or maple syrup.

Research Malawi

Find some interesting facts about Malawi and share with the rest of the group two things that really surprised you.

Go to www.kidcyber.com.au and click on people/places and then Malawi.

Make Some Musical Instruments

Music is a big part of life in Malawi, and the church is full of music, singing and dancing. Many rural people make their own instruments.

Drums: Use a coffee can with both ends removed. Make sure there are no sharp edges. Cut two circle shapes (an old flannel-backed table cloth works well) about 8 cm larger than the ends of the can. Use dental floss to sew the top and bottom pieces together in a zigzag.

Bells: Buy a few bells and sew them onto a piece of felt or wide elastic to wear as a wrist band or hold in the hand as a shaker. Or buy foam bracelets and attach the bells to the bracelet.

Use the musical instruments to accompany African music on a CD or when you sing “We are Marching.”

Additional Resources

Signing

www.deafleaders.org/Vocabulary/VocabularyI.html

This is a free Lutheran website with video demonstrations of religious signs.

Elaine Costello, **Religious Signing** (Bantam, 1997).

Daphna Flegal, **Sign & Say** and **More Sign & Say** (Abingdon Press, 1999, 2000).

Songs for LIFE Leader's Edition (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1995).

Resource Books for Bible Story

Ralph Milton, **The Family Story Bible** (Wood Lake Books). This book is now in its 8th edition.

An earlier edition was called **Living God's Way**.

Ralph Milton, **Lectionary Story Bible**, Year A, Year B, Year C (Wood Lake Books).

Dorothy Henderson with Lisa-Dawn McKenzie, **Learning God's Stories Together** (Wood Lake Books, 2007).

Robert Lakey, **Spotlight on Jesus: Readers' Theater for Children's Church** (CSS Publishing Company, 2006).

Music Books

The Book of Praise (The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1997)

Songs for LIFE Leader's Edition (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1995).

Pamela Beall and Susan Nipp, **Wee Sing Bible Songs** (Price Stern Sloan, 2005).

International Partner Resources

Partners: Meeting Mayan Friends in Guatemala, The PCC Children's Mission Study, 2007

Making Connections: Maya People of Guatemala, The PCC Adult Mission Study, 2007–2009, also available at www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online/2228

Hola from Guatemala, DVD/Video that accompanied Partners 2007, The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Partners: Meeting Friends in Malawi, The PCC Children's Mission Study, 2005

Partners: Meeting Friends in Ukraine, The PCC Children's Mission Study, 2001

Partners: Living in God's Creation, The PCC Mission Study, 2008, also available at www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online/3215

Water Partners: Safe Water for All, The PCC Children's Mission Study, 2006

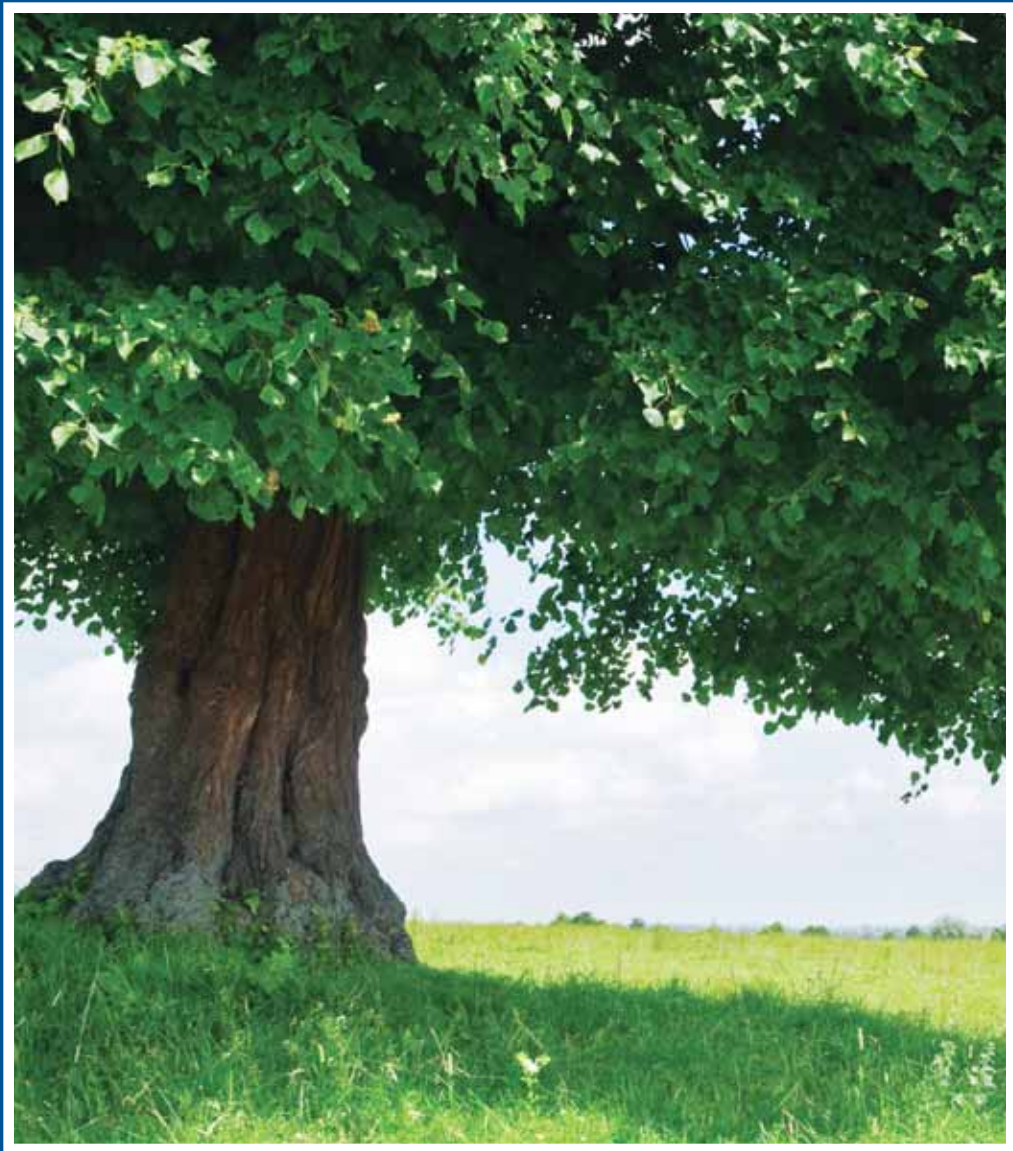
Craft Resources

www.allfreecrafts.com – this is a great website with a large variety of free craft ideas for children.

Miscellaneous

For basic information about composting:
<http://web.extension.illinois.edu/homecompost>

Enough for All ABC's, published by PWS&D, available at www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/abc



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