

United Church of Christ Connections in *Gather 'Round* Fall Quarter 2008

For all ages

Those who desire an inclusive language version of Psalms used during this quarter may wish to use the Psalter in *The New Century Hymnal*, pages 621–731.

Multiage

Session 2

Gather 'round

3. Play “Hush, Hush” from the *Gather 'Round* CD as you quietly call each child by name to the worship area. When everyone is seated, stop the CD and silently light a candle.

Read the responsive prayer, “Come, everybody worship!” on page 6 in *Together*; asking a volunteer to read the lines marked “One.” Everyone reads the lines marked “All.” When finished, sing “Sing a Song of Praise” from the *Gather 'Round* CD. The words are on page 2 in *Together*. Or sing another gathering song such as “Enter, Rejoice, and Come In” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 73). Extinguish the candle.

Session 9

Responding

A new heaven and a new earth.

For older children: They will sing the spiritual “Peace Like a River” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 478) and suggest new lyrics about peace. (For example: I’ve got peace like a baby; I’ve got peace like a hug from mommy.) There is space on page 36 in *Together* for their verses. Have the group practice singing the new verses with rhythm instruments.

Preschool

[no UCC suggestions needed]

Middler

Session 9

Connect to the story

1. Explain that Christians today see Jesus as the child Isaiah talked about. The words from Isaiah are often used in Christmas songs and other hymns. Read one such hymn out loud as a poem. One possibility is to read the first two verses of “Who Would Think That What Was Needed” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 153).

Junior Youth

Session 1

Ending and sending

1. Pull the activity groups back by either playing “Hush, Hush” on the *Gather 'Round* CD or by singing about God’s calling. Choose a song such as “Called as Partners in Christ’s Service” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 495). If your group doesn’t enjoy singing, you can read songs together as poems.

Junior Youth, continued

Session 2

Ending and sending

2. Sing either “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” with the Gather 'Round CD (words are on page 5 in *Call*) or “Take My Life, and Let It Be” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 448; words are on page 6 in *Call*).

Session 4

Responding

Rhythm of courage.

Youth will create homemade rhythms to accompany a song of courage. Choose a song about courage or standing up for what is right, such as “This Little Light of Mine” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 524 or 525).

Ending and sending

1. Bring the group back together by singing whatever song of courage was chosen by the “Rhythm of courage” Responding group. Have the whole group join in the rhythm on the second verse (or the second time of singing it if it’s a short song). If no one chooses this option, sing a song about courage such as “We Shall Overcome” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 570).

Session 5

Ending and sending

2. Bring the group back together by singing a song of confession and reconciliation, such as “Give Me a Clean Heart” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 188).

Session 6

Gather 'round

2. Sing “Jesu, Tawa Pano” (Jesus, We Are Here) using the lyrics on page 7 of *Call*. This song is on the Gather 'Round CD. Or sing “This Little Light of Mine” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 524 or 525). Use everyday items from around the room as rhythm instruments.

Session 7

Gather 'round

2. Sing “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me.” The words for this song are on page 5 in *Call*. You can learn the tune by listening to the Gather 'Round CD. Or sing any upbeat song that praises God, such as “This Is the Day” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 84).

Session 9

Ending and sending

2. Sing a song with words from Isaiah 9 or 11, such as “Come, O Long-Expected Jesus” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 122).

Session 11

Ending and sending

2. Prop a bare branch in a jar filled with sand. Then hold up some of the grapes you labeled during Connect to the story. Remind the group that God wants us to grow and produce good fruits. However, we can bring both our good fruit and our mistakes to God.

Sing a prayer song such as “Take My Life, God, Let It Be” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 448). Invite everyone to tape the labeled paper grapes to the branch as you sing.

Youth

Session 2

Responding

Amazing grace.

Youth will use a variety of instruments such as a tambourine, a kazoo, a harmonica, shakers, pots, and drumsticks (or substitutes) to produce a creative performance of the song, “Amazing Grace” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 547). Encourage youth to experiment with rhythms and instruments. The back of a chair might serve as a great drum! They can clap their hands or snap their fingers. As they work together, they will undoubtedly make plenty of mistakes, but the end results can be beautiful.

Ending and sending

2. Sing a song that speaks of doing God’s will, such as “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 498).

Session 3

Responding

In the bulb.

Youth will examine and hold several natural items on a tray. As they do, they will contemplate the potential that each of these natural items holds. (If you have access to *The New Century Hymnal*, they might read the words to the song, “In the Bulb There Is a Flower,” number 433.) Have them ponder the following questions: What parts of your own potential do you value? In what ways do you feel your potential is hidden from others? If you truly believed God saw your inner heart, what would you be drawn to do? What risk might you take?

Ending and sending

4. Sing a closing song that speaks of dedication to God, such as “Lord, Make Me More Holy” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 75).

Session 8

Gather 'round

2. After a couple of minutes, end the silence by singing a song that invites God’s presence, such as “Come, Teach Us, Spirit of Our God” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 287).

Responding

Singing hope.

Youth will each select an issue of injustice. They will gather in a circle and take turns sharing their concerns and hopes about the issue. How might justice roll down like water in these situations?

After each youth has shared, the whole group will sing “Nothing Can Trouble” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 772) or another short song that speaks of God hearing our cries. (If the group is large, the song can be sung in intervals after a few youth have shared or sung at the end of the Responding time.)

Session 9

Responding

Words that inspire.

The words of Isaiah 7, 9, and 11 have inspired many songwriters. Youth will look through their hymnals for songs that contain phrases and images from these chapters. Some suggestions are: “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 127), “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 144), and “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 116).

Youth, Session 9, Responding, continued

If your hymnal has a scriptural references index, youth could also search there. After youth have identified concepts and words from today's text, they will select one or two songs for the group to sing during Ending and sending.

Ending and sending

4. Close by singing a song that the "Words that inspire" Responding group selected. Or sing a song about peace, such as the refrain of "You Are Salt for the Earth, O People" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 181).

Session 11

Ending and sending

5. Sing a song that prays for restoration as your benediction. One choice is the refrain of "Lead Us from Death to Life" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 581).

Session 12

Responding

Out of exile.

Youth will choose a simple melody to repeat, such as "Alleluia" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 765). Then they will think of lines to sing to the melody. Their words should express the thoughts and feelings of the exiled Israelites or of anyone who is turning to God for forgiveness. For example, "O God, remember us. Show us now your loving kindness." They should sing their song together. If you can, provide musical instruments such as tambourines, drums, or guitars.

Ending and sending

2. Sing a song that speaks of obedience to God. One choice is "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 454).

Parent/Caregiver

Session 1

Responding

Service song.

Reflect on the symbols that you wrote on your nametag at the beginning of the session. Turn to "Take My Life, God, Let It Be" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 448), or choose another song about service. Work together to write alternate lyrics for the song. Develop a verse for each person working on this activity. Each verse should focus on the ways that person engages in service. For example: "Take my hands, God, let them build." When you have completed your verses, sing them together.

Ending and sending

1. Sing a song of commitment, such as "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 454).

Session 2

Gather 'round

3. Sing a song about God's guidance, such as, "Be Now My Vision" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 451).

Parent/Caregiver, Session 2, continued

Ending and sending

3. Sing a song of blessing, such as “Go, My Children” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 82). As you sing, place your leaves on the “tree.” (Remember that you are working with the symbol of a tree this quarter. You will add to or subtract from this tree each week.)

Session 3

Gather 'round

1. Sing a song that focuses on God’s presence within us, such as “Breathe On Me, Breath of God” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 292).

Ending and sending

2. Sing a song that focuses on God accepting us, such as “Great Is Your Faithfulness” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 423). As you sing, place your hearts on the quarterly “tree.”

Session 4

Gather 'round

1. Open by singing a song about trusting in God, such as the third verse of “O God of Love, O God of Peace” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 571) or “I Walk by Faith” from the *Gather 'Round* CD. The words for “I Walk by Faith” are on page 123.

Ending and sending

2. Sing a song of reassurance, such as “Be Still, My Soul” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 488). As you sing, add your leaves to the quarterly “tree.”

Session 5

Gather 'round

1. Sing a song of praise, such as “Masithi” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 760). Play rhythm instruments to add a beat.

Ending and sending

4. Sing a song of commitment, such as “Lord, I Want To Be a Christian” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 454). Another suggestion for a sending song is “Called as Partners in Christ’s Service” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 495).

Session 6

Gather 'round

3. Sing a song that asks for wisdom, such as “God of Grace and God of Glory” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 436).

Session 7

Gather 'round

2. Sing a song of commitment, such as “Lord, I Want To Be a Christian” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 454).

Session 8

Responding

Newspaper prayers.

Divide a stack of newspapers so that each person has a section or two. Search for stories that reveal a need for justice or righteousness. After several minutes, share the stories you have found in one- or two-

Parent/Caregiver, Session 8, Responding, continued

sentence summaries. After each person has shared say, “O Lord, hear our prayer.” Or sing “Nothing Can Trouble” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 772). As you sing, pray silently for justice to be done in each situation.

Session 9

Responding

A surprising shoot. Reread Isaiah 11. Also read the text of a hymn about hope, such as “In the Bulb There Is a Flower” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 433) or “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 593). The shoot in Isaiah 11 was a sign of hope for a new future. When have you experienced the sudden appearance of hope in the midst of difficult circumstances? When have you felt that hope was hidden, much like a tender shoot still under the ground? What things about the world cause you to feel discouraged? What do you find to be your greatest personal challenge to keeping hope alive? How can you remind yourself to hold on to the hope of God’s redeeming work?

Ending and sending

3. Sing a song of hope, such as “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 593). As you sing, hang your colored balls on the quarterly “tree.”

Session 10

Gather 'round

3. Sing a song about justice, such as “You Are Salt for the Earth, O People” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 181).

Session 11

Gather 'round

2. Sing the first two verses of “Lead Us from Death to Life” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 581) or sing another song that prays for God’s healing and justice.

Responding

God’s love song.

Today’s text began as a love song, with God’s hopes for the people expressed passionately. It drew on images of a vineyard to express God’s care. Reread Isaiah 5:1-4 and create a song based on these verses. Try to keep God’s passion for the people in your song. Write your song to a familiar tune, such as “Amazing Grace” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 547). Sing the song together.

Ending and sending

3. Sing verse three of “Lead Us from Death to Life” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 581). Or sing “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” with the *Gather 'Round* CD. The words are on page 125.

Session 12

Gather 'round

1. Sing a song that calls for faithfulness to God, such as “This Is a Day of New Beginnings” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 417).

Ending and sending

2. Sing “Go, My Children, with My Blessing” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 82) or another song of sending.

Parent/Caregiver, continued

Session 13

Gather 'round

1. Sing a song about grace, such as “Amazing Grace” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 547) or “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 23).

Responding

The forgiving father.

Option: Sing together “O God, How We Have Wandered” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 202).