



We Cannot Keep from Singing

A Six-Session Workshop Rotation Unit for Preschool through Grade 2

This resource is designed to be used with the *We Cannot Keep from Singing Story Cube* (CH10511) available from United Church Resource Distribution.

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This resource can be downloaded at no cost from www.united-church.ca/allages/children/themes.

1. We Sing of the Creator

Game Workshop

Biblical Reference

Psalm 24:1

Objective

To help children celebrate God's good creation and see the ways that all parts of creation are related to one another

Preparation

Gather these supplies:

- items for the focal area (a Bible, a length of coloured fabric, rocks, seashells, pine cones, small plants or flowers, a bowl of water, a kite or pinwheel)
- glue
- scissors
- markers or crayons
- pieces of yarn cut in varying lengths
- several old magazines
- at least 20 large index cards (or, for an environmentally friendly option, cut off the fronts of old Christmas cards and use the backs; save the fronts for another activity)

Gather

Create a focal area by placing the Bible and several items representing the four spheres of the earth on the length of coloured fabric. Rocks, seashells, pine cones, small plants or flowers, a bowl of water, and a kite or pinwheel (to represent air) will work well. Gather the children around the focal area and show them the story cube.

Read through the whole cube and then come back to the panel that says, "We sing of the Creator." Read the Bible verse and ask the children to name some parts of God's creation.

Activity

Divide the children into four groups: land, water, living things, and air. Point to related parts of the story cube picture or items in the focal area as you name the four groups. Give each group at least five cards. Tell them that everything in creation belongs to God and to one of the four groups. Invite each group to cut out pictures from the magazines or to draw their own pictures of things from the part of creation that their group represents. Glue the pictures onto the cards.

Game

When each group has their cards prepared, invite everyone to join together in one larger group. Then the children take turns placing their cards on a table and explaining why they chose those pictures to represent their part of creation.

Invite the children, one at a time, to choose a length of yarn. Then ask them to place each end of the piece of yarn on a card, choosing cards from different groups they think are connected. For example, they might connect a picture of a lake to a picture of sand. They might connect a picture of a field to a cow. Ask why they made these connections. Ask some prompting questions if necessary, such as “What does wind do to sand?” or “How do people use and care for water?”

At the end of the game, you should have a web of yarn connecting the different pictures. Ask the children to look at the web and consider all the ways all parts of creation are related to one another.

Reflection

Ask the children to think about their day so far. Ask them to describe things in each of the four parts of creation that they have seen, heard, or felt. For example, they might have seen a bird in the sky. The bird is a living thing. The sky it was flying through is the air.

Closing

Say a closing prayer together, giving thanks to God for the goodness of creation and asking for God’s help in caring for it.

2. *We Sing of God the Spirit*

Drama Workshop

Biblical Reference

Galatians 5:22

Objective

To help the children recognize the work of the Spirit and consider ways they can be involved in the work of the Spirit

Note: The works (or fruits) of the Spirit aren't done to earn God's love, but are products of resting in God's love and intentionally coming close to God.

Preparation

Gather these supplies:

- items for the focal area (a Bible, nine pieces of fruit—real, plastic, or even pictures; a length of coloured fabric)
- crayons or markers
- nine index cards, each with one of the fruits of the Spirit named and symbolized on it. For example, write “Love” on a card and draw a heart beside the word; write “Faithfulness” on a card with a picture of someone praying; write “Self-Control” on a card with a picture of children taking turns in a game.

Gather

Create a focal area by placing a Bible and the pieces or pictures of fruit on a length of coloured fabric. Gather the children around the focal area and show them the story cube.

Read through the whole cube and then come back to the panel that says, “We sing of God the Spirit.” Read the Bible verse and then see how many of the fruits (or works) of the Spirit the children can recall. Add any that they forget. Make sure the children understand what each characteristic means. Ask them what they think is happening in the story cube picture and which fruits of the Spirit the people in the picture are showing. How is God the Spirit moving in the hearts of the people in the picture? Tell the children that today they will be exploring this image of “fruits of the Spirit.”

Activity

Read the Bible verse again. Show the children the prepared index cards with each of the different fruits of the Spirit listed and pictured on them. Invite the children to match a fruit of the Spirit with a real fruit. There is no right or wrong answer to this—simply try to have conversation and gain consensus on why the fruits are matched. Place each index card beside the piece of fruit the children choose to match it to.

Dramatization

Divide the children into groups of at least four. In each group, decide who will be a tree, a fruit (if you have odd numbers of children, there can be more than one fruit in each group), a farmer, and a harvester. As you read the following story, each person dramatizes his or her role. At times you'll say, "Freeze frame!" and all will hold their poses.

Story

The fruit tree was having a wonderful year. There had been lots of rain and sunshine and warm breezes. The tree was feeling strong and healthy. The farmer had been taking good care of the tree, watering it as needed, mulching it, fertilizing it, and pulling up the weeds around it.

Freeze frame!

Ask the children what the farmer is doing to take care of the tree. Ask them to pretend for a moment that the tree represents people or a church and the farmer represents God. What does God do to take care of people? What happens to people who come close to God?

Continue the Story

Now the tree was getting really strong and began to notice little buds popping out on its branches. The buds grew and grew and finally ripened into beautiful fruit.

Freeze frame!

Notice with the children that the fruit comes because the tree is strong and healthy and receives the care it needs. Remind the children to think of the farmer as God and the tree as a person or a church. Tell them that the fruit might be kind, generous, or justice-making actions taken by the church as a whole or by people.

Continue the Story

Soon the fruit was ready for the harvesters to come along and pick. The harvesters found that the fruit looked so delicious they just had to try some. "Mmmm...it's delicious!"

Freeze frame!

Notice with the children that fruit is meant for people's enjoyment and nourishment. Ask them to pretend that the harvesters are people who need help. Point out how the fruits of the Spirit can be used to help and nourish people.

Reflection

Consider sharing some delicious fruit with the children as you discuss the experience. Ask what it felt like to be a tree, a farmer, a fruit, or a harvester. Ask what the farmer did to help the tree grow fruit. Ask what the tree needed to do to grow fruit. Ask what the fruit had to do to be delicious. Ask what the harvester had to do to enjoy the fruit.

Tell the children that for fruit trees, growing fruit is a natural thing. As long as fruit trees are rooted in good earth, are free of disease, receive the gifts of creation, and are tended with love, they will grow fruit. Say that as long as we stay close to God, we will bear the fruits of the Spirit. Remind the children what the fruits of the Spirit are. Ask what the children like to do or need to do to come close to God.

See whether they can think of fruits of the church. What does the church do to show God's love to others? You might want to bring up the United for Peace campaign or the "fruits" of the M&S Fund.

Closing

Invite the children to think of one of the fruits of the Spirit that they need the most help with. They don't have to name it out loud, just think of it. Say a prayer together, asking the Spirit to move in your hearts and help you to bear good fruit.

3. *Scripture Is Our Song for the Journey*

Music Workshop

Biblical Reference

Psalm 119:105

Objective

For the children to learn a song that animates the Bible verse and helps them think about how the Bible is meaningful and beneficial to life.

Preparation

Gather supplies:

- items for the focal area (Bibles, a large white pillar candle in a small dish of sand, a length of coloured fabric)
- old film canisters, spice jars, or other small containers with tight lids
- sand, beans, rice, buttons, or other items to create shakers
- tablespoons
- Record “I Know Your Word” (*More Voices* 108), or arrange for someone to play it during the session.
- nine large footprints cut from heavy paper. If possible, use a different colour for each footprint. On each footprint write one word or phrase: I know; your Word; is a; lamp; to my feet; O God; to light; my path; forever. Because most of the children will be non-readers, it will be helpful to use pictures as well as words on the footprints.

Gather

Create a focal area by placing the candle and several types of Bibles on a length of coloured fabric. Gather the children around the focal area and show them the story cube.

Read through the whole cube and then come back to the panel that says, “Scripture is our song for the journey.” Point to the person on the cube who is writing a letter. Tell them that the Bible is made up of many different types of writing and stories. Together, these writings and stories make up “The Big Story” of our faith.

Invite the children to close their eyes as you read the Bible verse. While their eyes are still closed, ask whether they have ever had to walk around in the dark. Maybe they had to get up in the night and no one had left a light on, or they were playing outside and suddenly it got very dark. Ask them how it felt to try to find their way in the dark. Invite them to open their eyes and light the candle. Tell them that the writer of the Bible verse may have felt that life was sometimes confusing or scary or hard to understand. The author found comfort, assurance, and direction in the Bible

(or scriptures). Say that, just as a light in the darkness can be comforting and can show us the way to go, the Bible gives us comfort and direction.

Remember to extinguish the candle before continuing with the activity.

Activity

Turn on the recording of “I Know Your Word” or begin to play it in the background as you invite the children to each fill a film canister or other small container with a spoonful of sand, rice, beans, or buttons to create a musical shaker. Different items will create different sounds. Make sure the lids are securely closed before the children begin shaking the instruments!

Music

Read the Bible verse to the children. Invite them to listen once to “I Know Your Word.” Ask them to use their shakers as they listen again to the song. Introduce the footprints with the words to the song written and depicted on them.

Lay the footprints close together on the floor and have the children make a circle around them. Show the children how to hop from one footprint to another while singing the song. (Be sure to practise this ahead of time!) Allow the children to take turns hopping on the footprints—one at a time—as the others sing and use their shakers.

Closing

Say a prayer of thanks to God for the Bible and its many treasures, as well as for the gift of music.

4. *We Sing of Jesus, We Sing Hallelujah*

Storytelling Workshop

Biblical Reference

Luke 2:52

Objective

To remind children of key points in the life of Jesus and to help them understand that his life continues

Preparation

Gather supplies:

- items for the focal area (Christ candle, cross, crèche, water, vine, length of coloured fabric)
- about 10 pictures depicting various stories from the life of Jesus: birth, boyhood, baptism, temptation, ministry, death, and resurrection
- length of yarn or cord to create a clothesline
- clothespins
- Who Am I? template (see page 12), one copy for each child. If working with younger children, cut the templates ahead of time. You will also need scissors, cardboard such as Bristol board, glue, 24-inch (60-cm) pieces of yarn, and a hole punch
- crayons or markers

Gather

Create a focal area using different symbols for Jesus—for example, Christ candle, cross, crèche, water, vine, and so on, arranging them on a length of coloured fabric. Gather the children around the focal area and show them the story cube.

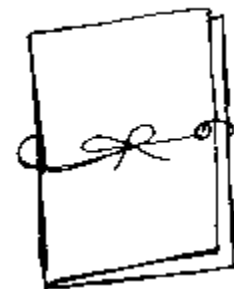
Read through the whole cube and then come back to the panel that says, “We sing of Jesus.” Tell the children that Jesus was known by different titles: Messiah, Christ, Redeemer, Son of God, Son of Man, and Lord. He also made many statements about himself to help people understand who he was and what his ministry was, calling himself the vine, the living water, and the light of the world. Tell the children that even today people have different understandings of the meaning of Jesus’ life and his relationship to God. While we understand that Jesus lived, engaged in ministry, and died about 2,000 years ago, we also know that today he is still with us in some mysterious way.

Story

If possible, hang the yarn or cord along a wall at a height the children can reach, or lay it out on the floor. Read the Bible verse to the children. They can use the pictures to tell a “clothesline” story of Jesus’ life, pinning up pictures of key moments in his life as you go over the story again. After the story is finished, make the pictures available to the children so they can continue to work with them.

Activity

1. Start with a printout of the Who Am I? template (page 12), or make your own from a piece of paper folded into thirds lengthwise and then widthwise. Cut off the four corners and fold the four flaps into the centre (the order doesn't matter).
2. At this point, the children can add their own art to the reverse of each flap that has text printed on it. For example:
 - On the reverse of "Who am I?" draw Jesus.
 - On the reverse of "I am the vine," draw a vine.
 - On the reverse of "I am the light," draw a candle or sun or other light source.
 - On the reverse of "I am living water," draw a river, lake, pitcher of water, or other source of water.
 - In the centre, the children can draw anything they like or anything that reminds them of Jesus.
3. Fold the four flaps to the centre. Turn the folded pages flap-side down and cover the back with glue. Glue this back onto the centre of a piece of cardboard as shown, leaving a narrow border at the top and bottom.
4. Fold each side of the cardboard over the pages.
5. Punch a hole in the centre of one of the cardboard flaps. Loop the yarn through the hole to the inside of the book, put the ends of the yarn through the loop, then pull to tighten.
6. Wrap the yarn around the book and tie a bow to keep the book closed.



Adapted from Susan Kapuscinski Gaylord's "Making Books with Children" (2008). Retrieved July 29, 2008, from www.makingbooks.com/whoami.shtml.

Closing

Give thanks for the life of Jesus and for his presence in our lives today.

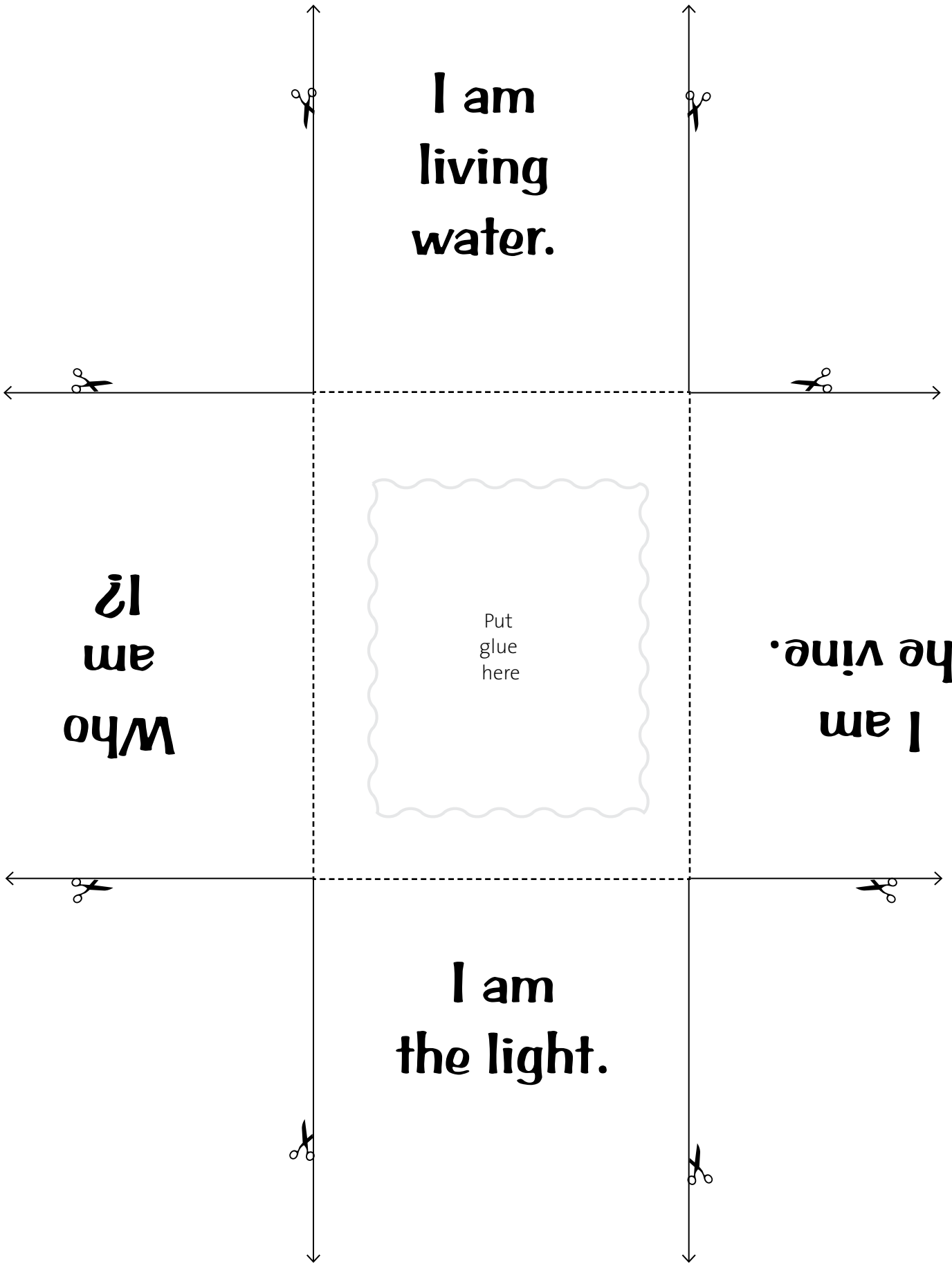
**I am
living
water.**

**I am
the vine.**

**I am
the light.**

**Who
am
I?**

Put
glue
here



5. *We Sing of God's Mission*

Cooking Workshop

Biblical Reference

Matthew 25:35

Objective

To help children understand that they can participate in God's mission and to give them an opportunity to raise funds for M&S

Preparation

Decide ahead how many soup mixes you would like to make and sell to your congregation. One 1 lb. (450 g) bag of each of six types of bean will make four packets of soup mix. If you have 10 bags of each of the six types of bean, you will make approximately 40 mixes.

Gather supplies:

- items for the focal area (pictures and items from around the world and a length of coloured fabric)
- 34-ounce (1 L) ziplock bags, one per mix (to hold beans), or clean, empty 24-ounce (700 mL) glass jars, one per mix
- small ziplock bags, one per mix (to hold seasonings)
- preprinted soup recipe, one per mix
- beans for soup mix, poured into a large container
- seasonings for soup mix
- measuring cups and spoons
- tape

Gather

Create a focal area using pictures and items from around the world displayed on a coloured length of fabric. Gather the children around the focal area and show them the story cube.

Read through the whole cube and then come back to the panel that says, "We sing of God's mission." Point to the various people on the cube and ask the children what they think is happening in each grouping. Read the Bible verse and tell the children that Jesus helped people in many different ways in order to show God's love. We can also help people in many different ways to show God's love.

Tell the children that one way The United Church of Canada shows God's love throughout the world is by giving money to the Mission and Service Fund. Show an M&S logo to the children. The M&S Fund is the unique way the United Church witnesses to God's love by working with overseas partners, engaging in ministry in Canada, supporting small congregations, and participating in many other opportunities. The M&S Fund helps us all share in this work and more. You might want to offer a specific example by reading a story from *Minutes for Mission* or *M&S Kids*.

Activity

Invite the children to help make bean soup mixes that will be sold to the congregation during coffee hour to raise funds for M&S.

Dried Bean Mix (makes four packets or jars of soup mix)

1 lb (450 g) bag of each of the following:

- kidney beans
- garbanzo beans (chickpeas)
- black beans
- lentils
- red beans
- split green peas

Combine all the beans in a large container. Measure 3 cups (750 mL) of the dried bean mix into each of the large ziplock bags or jars.

Seasoning Mix (¼ cup/50 mL for one packet or jar of soup mix)

- 1 tbsp (15 mL) dried sweet pepper flakes
- 2 tsp (10 mL) chicken bouillon granules
- 2 tsp (10 mL) dried minced onion
- 1½ tsp (7 mL) salt
- 1 tsp (5 mL) dried parsley flakes
- ½ tsp (2 mL) black pepper
- ½ tsp (2 mL) garlic powder
- ½ tsp (2 mL) celery seed

Combine ingredients in a small bag. Close the bag tightly and shake gently to blend. Tape a small bag of seasoning mix to each jar or put it inside the larger bag of mixed beans.

Attach a printout of the following recipe to each jar or bag of soup mix:

M&S Bean Soup

Ingredients

- 1 packet dried bean mix (3 cups/750 mL)
- 1 packet seasoning mix (¼ cup/50 mL)
- 2 cans (300 g each) stewed tomatoes

Rinse beans in colander and then place in large pot. Boil 4 cups (1 L) water. Pour over beans; cover and let soak overnight. Drain beans in colander and return to pot. Add 6 cups (1.5 L) cold water; cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Then reduce heat to low and simmer 1 to 1½ hours or until beans are almost tender. Add seasoning mix and tomatoes. Stir. Cover and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Uncover and allow to simmer about 1 hour longer or until beans are tender and soup thickens.

Makes about 10 cups of soup.

Closing

Say a prayer, giving thanks to God for the work of the church and the many opportunities we have to share God's love with others.

6. *We Sing of a Life beyond Life* **Art Workshop**

Biblical Reference

Romans 14:8

Objective

To help children explore the mystery of eternity—“life beyond life”—in a safe and creative environment

Preparation

Choose the story you will read and the corresponding art project; then gather all the supplies.

Gather

Create a focal area using a budding branch, blooming plant, butterflies, dragonflies, or other items representing new life. Display them on a length of coloured fabric. Gather the children around the focal area and show them the story cube.

Read through the whole cube and then come back to the panel that says, “We sing of a life beyond life... We cannot keep from singing.” Tell the children that today you’ll be exploring the ways life extends beyond death. Read the Bible verse and wonder with the children what it means to belong to God. Let the conversation continue as long as the children want to talk.

Activities

Read the story you have chosen and do the corresponding art project.

***The Next Place* by Warren Hanson (Golden Valley, MN: Waldman House Press, 1997)**

Talk with the children about some of the images in the book. Ask them what they think happens when people die and what they think the “next place” might be like.

Point out the mosaic-style borders of the illustrations in the book. Invite them to create a torn-paper mosaic to illustrate how they imagine the “next place” might look. You will need:

- construction paper or drawing paper
- glue sticks
- bits of torn coloured paper (use old magazine pages if you like)

Water Bugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children by Doris Stickney

This story is only available online:

<http://belovedhearts.com/stories/Doris-WaterbugsandDragonflies-632617144169637500.aspx>

Talk with the children about how the water bugs who were left behind felt. Ask them whether a person or pet they were close to has died. How did they feel when they were left behind? Do they ever wonder what happened to the person or pet? Do they wish the person or pet could come back and tell them what happened?

Make a water bug or dragonfly and its habitat. You will need:

- paper plates
- craft sticks
- small magnets or magnetic tape
- crayons, markers, paints
- plastic wrap
- tape and glue
- chenille stems
- googly eyes
- pompoms
- scraps of coloured paper

Have the children colour or paint the paper plates to look like a water bug habitat. Next, invite them to make water bugs using paper, pompoms, chenille stems, googly eyes, and any other bug-type materials that are available.

Glue a small magnet to the bottom of each bug. Glue an attracting magnet to the tip of a craft stick. Place a water bug on a habitat paper plate. Then cover the paper plate with plastic wrap, making sure to keep the bug under the wrap. Show the children how to “magically” move the water bug around its habitat by moving the craft stick behind the plate.

Simpler version of the above activity:

Using washable ink pads and coloured pencils, help the children create “fingerprint bugs” by inking their fingertips and then pressing them onto index cards or half-sheets of paper. Then the children can add any features they like and colour the paper to look like a puddle, pond, or lake.

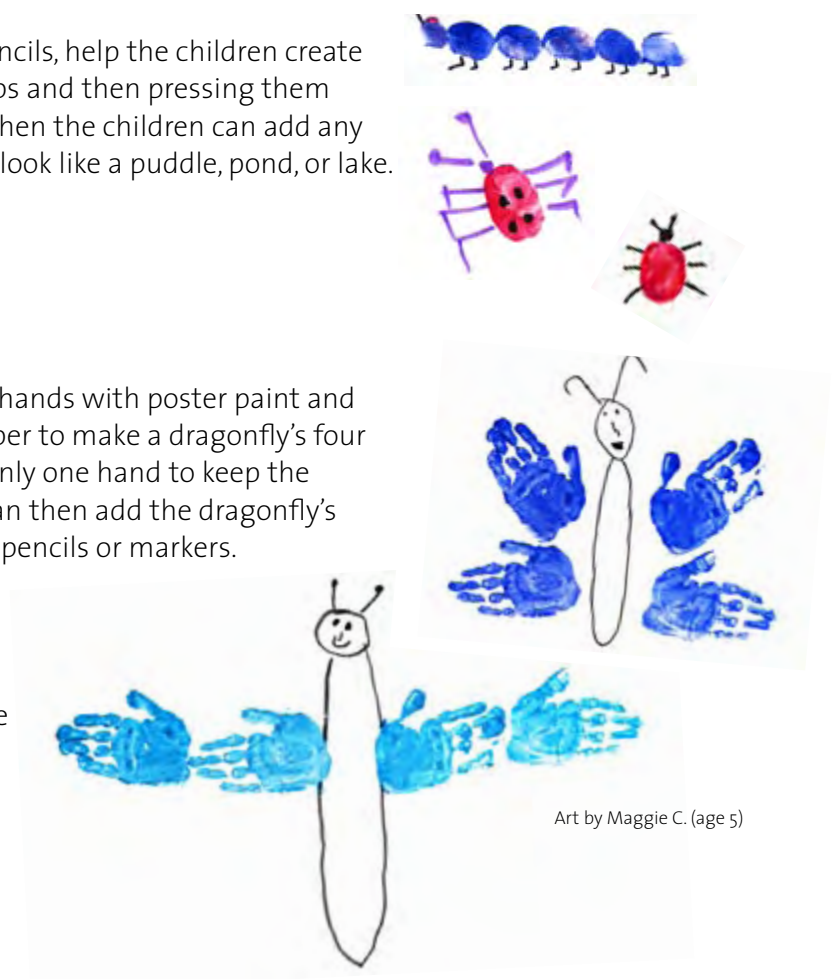
You could also make dragonflies:

- poster paint
- large sheets of plain paper
- coloured pencils and markers

Have the children coat the palms of their hands with poster paint and then press their hands down onto the paper to make a dragonfly’s four wings. (You may want to have them use only one hand to keep the messiness to a minimum.) The children can then add the dragonfly’s eyes, mouth, and antennae with coloured pencils or markers.

Closing

Say a prayer, giving thanks for the knowledge that whether we live or die, we belong to God.



Art by Maggie C. (age 5)