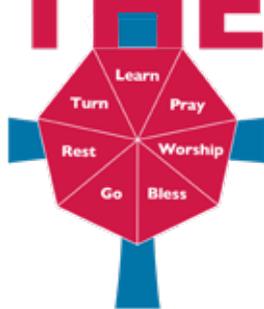


THE WAY OF LOVE



An Intergenerational Gathering

Practices for a Jesus-Centered Life



www.churchpublishing.org/wayoflove

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Content from *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*, Volume 2, revised and expanded (Church Publishing, 2017), *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*, Volume 3, revised and expanded (2017), *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*, Volume 4, revised and expanded (2018), *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*, Volume 8 (2012), and *Stories of God at Home: A Godly Play Approach* (Church Publishing, 2018) by Jerome W. Berryman is used with permission and has been adapted and included in these pages.

The Way of Love Catcher was designed by Jerusalem Greer and available from Forma to download at:
https://www.forma.church/uploads/files/final-wol-catcher-1_623.pdf

Please visit www.churchpublishing.org/wayoflove for more resources.

THE WAY OF LOVE: AN INTERGENERATIONAL GATHERING

As a means to introduce **The Way of Love** to children and families (including grandparents), the following pages describe a 90-minute session to engage all ages in learning about the seven practices that Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has called the Episcopal Church to follow in our daily life. Refreshments can be included and/or a simple potluck meal offered to conclude your gathering.



Supplies needed:

- ◆ 9 sheets of white poster board (to construct a large “Way of Love” cross in sections)
- ◆ Way of Love catcher (enlarge for easier usage and duplicate – one per participant https://www.forma.church/uploads/files/final-wol-catcher-1_623.pdf)
- ◆ handouts such as: The Way of Love for Families (one per family unit) <https://www.churchpublishing.org/siteassets/pdf/way-of-love-downloads/the-way-of-love-for-families.pdf>)
- ◆ figure/statue of Jesus or the Good Shepherd or an icon of Christ
- ◆ Christ Candle (white pillar candle) and matches
- ◆ small table (a piano bench or coffee table works well)
- ◆ Godly Play artifacts:
 - ◇ Circle of the Church Year banner
 - ◇ Circle of the Church Year Presentation Set (see page 27-29 in *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 2, revised and expanded*)
 - ◇ A rug or piece of felt (3 x 2 feet) of a neutral shade to use as an underlay
 - ◇ white plaque from “The Story of Creation”
 - ◇ fifth plaque (Christmas Day) from the “Advent IV” presentation (*Volume 3*)
 - ◇ seventh plaque of “The Faces of Easter” presentation that shows the crucified/risen Christ (*Volume 3*)
 - ◇ seventh plaque of “Knowing Jesus in a New Way” presentation that shows the gift of the Holy Spirit (*Volume 8*)
 - ◇ the Good Shepherd and the green underlay (folded) from “The Parable of the Good Shepherd” (*Volume 4*)
- ◆ painter’s tape
- ◆ crayons/markers
- ◆ scissors
- ◆ name tags

Room set-up:

- ◆ chairs and tables of various heights depending on the number of participants (adults, youth, and children) you expect in one portion of the room
- ◆ an open space in another portion of the room with an arc or “U-shape” of chairs facing toward a wall
- ◆ Circle of the Church Year banner hung on the wall that faces the above chair configuration
- ◆ small table against the wall on which the banner is hung; a white pillar candle with matches, a figure of Jesus, or an icon is placed upon the table
- ◆ Godly Play materials along the wall in preparation for the presentation / story sharing.

Advanced preparation:

- ◆ Create a large Way of Love cross shape
 - ◇ Cut out seven triangle shapes. Depending on size (the larger the better, with one triangle fitting on each sheet of poster board), the ratio of the sides of the triangles should be $1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
 - ◇ Cut out two “arms,” a “top,” and a wide “bottom” strip to form the cross portions.
 - ◇ With a thick black marker, write one word on each of the triangles: Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest
 - ◇ Scatter the triangles on the tables with markers and crayons nearby.
- ◆ Duplicate handouts and Way of Love catchers. Construct one in advance as a sample.
- ◆ Place nametags and a marker or two near the door where participants will enter.

Opening Activity (15-20 minutes)

1. As families and individuals arrive, invite them to make a nametag for themselves.
2. Show them to the tables where the triangles are located and encourage them to “visit” each triangle and write a word or phrase that describes the word written on the triangle. For example, for “Rest” someone might draw a bed or some “zzzzzs” or write “take a walk in the woods.”
3. Encourage conversations at the tables and have everyone move around so they can add their creativity to each of the seven practices. There is no need to give an answer or to mention that each of these spiritual practices is one of many.



Exploring the Way of Love (15 minutes)

1. Call everyone together, bringing all the triangles to a central, open location in your gathering space. (Grab the painter's tape and 4 cross pieces.)
2. Place each triangle on the floor and invite the children to put the pieces together like a puzzle to create a heptagon – a seven-sided polygon shape.
3. Once all the pieces are connected, enlist two volunteers to help you hold the seven pieces down as you tape them together.
4. Have everyone stand up and walk around the unified shape to review it, naming out loud –and one at a time – each of the seven practices.
5. Invite comments, observances, and other thoughts about what each of these words (Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest) means to the participants.
6. Add the “arms” of the cross (four pieces), taping them onto the heptagon.
7. Introduce The Way of Love.



This can be done using any number of handouts or explanations found at the Episcopal Church's Way of Love website <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/explore-way-love>

- ◇ Turn: Pause, listen, and choose to follow Jesus
 - ◇ Learn: Reflect on scripture each day, especially on Jesus' life and teachings
 - ◇ Pray: Dwell intentionally with God each day
 - ◇ Worship: Gather in community weekly to thank, praise, and dwell with God
 - ◇ Bless: Share faith and unselfishly give and serve
 - ◇ Go: Cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus
 - ◇ Rest: Receive the gift of God's grace, peace, and restoration
8. With the newly created Way of Love symbol, invite everyone to the area of the room where the chairs are formed in a semicircle and tape The Way of Love to the wall, next to the Circle of the Church Year banner.



Story Sharing: The Circle of the Church Year and The Way of Love (20 minutes)

1. Invite everyone to be seated in chairs or on the floor facing the wall where the Circle of the Church Year and Way of Love image are hanging.
2. The storyteller invites all participants to get comfortable. Explain that you will be exploring The Way of Love and how it fits into our way of living a Jesus-centered life throughout the year.
3. Light the Christ Candle.
4. Share the story of the “Circle of the Church Year” (pages 27-40 in *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 2, revised and expanded*). Abbreviate the story to focus on the portions that talk about “time” and the “three great times.” Do not take out and replace each block but simply speak about each season and relate them to the seven practices of The Way of Love.

For example:

- ◇ Advent – The four weeks of Advent help us to remember to turn to Christ – the one who is coming and for whom we wait. The prophets kept showing us the way and told us to turn toward Bethlehem – for the coming of the Messiah. We read scripture and learn about those who showed us the way.
- ◇ Christmas – We celebrate the holy mystery of God coming to us as a baby – Jesus. We worship and give thanks to God for this great gift. Just as God blesses us, we bless one another in the sharing of gifts of love to one another.
- ◇ Epiphany – This long season helps us learn about Jesus: his call of the disciples to turn and follow him; his teaching in parables and how to pray; how he rested when he was tired; how he blessed everyone he came upon.
- ◇ Lent – We prepare to follow Jesus to Jerusalem to experience the most holy of mysteries. We turn our heads and hearts to the cross. It is a deep time of prayer and learning for followers of Jesus – including us today.
- ◇ Easter – We give thanks to God for Jesus, and our worship is joyful as we celebrate the resurrection. It is so important because it also helps us prepare to go into the world to share the Good News.
- ◇ Pentecost – Just as Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit comes upon us and blesses us to continue the work of Jesus. We are commissioned to go and bless others, acting as examples of what it means to pray, worship, learn, and bless.
- ◇ Ordinary Time (Season after Pentecost) – For many of us, this is a time of rest. The summer months remind us of God’s growing creation and how we need to feed ourselves and keep growing in mind, body, and spirit.



5. Place the following plaques accordingly, sharing the following sentences:

- ◇ Say: The whole year reminds us of ways we can follow a Jesus-centered life. God is the center extending to infinity, so the center includes the three great times that help us turn and connect with God.
- ◇ Action: Pick up the Good Shepherd figure and the green felt underlay (folded up as small as you can get it) and show it to the group.
- ◇ Say: Here is the Good Shepherd caring for us and showing us how to care for others. We are a blessing to God and to others.
- ◇ Action: Place them in the center of the Circle of the Church Year (on top).
- ◇ Say: God is the source and home for all that we seek.
- ◇ Action: Pick up the white plaque from “The Story of Creation” and place it on the side of the green blocks of the season of Pentecost.
- ◇ Say: Here is the Creation. On the seventh day God gave us a day to rest and remember all the days of creation.
- ◇ Action: Pick up the fifth plaque, Christmas Day from the “Advent IV” presentation, and place it to touch the Christmas (white) blocks.
- ◇ Say: Here is Christmas. In the mystery of Christmas, we find unending wonder. We learn about the birth of Christ and worship him.
- ◇ Action: Pick up the seventh plaque of “The Faces of Easter” presentation that shows the crucified/risen Christ – showing both sides.
- ◇ Say: Here is Easter. On this side we see the one who was crucified. On the other side we see the one who is still with us, and you cannot pull them apart. That is the mystery of Easter.
- ◇ Action: Place the plaque near the Easter blocks.
- ◇ Action: Pick up the seventh plaque of “Knowing Jesus in a New Way” presentation that shows the gift of the Holy Spirit and lay it down.
- ◇ Say: Here is Pentecost. This is the time when the Holy Spirit awoke Jesus’ followers to make them leaders to love and care for others as well as themselves.
- ◇ Action: Move your hand around the whole circle.
- ◇ Say: This is also the circle of our family. We put Jesus at our center and remember all the stories about God’s love.

Wondering (5-10 minutes)

Ask open-ended questions that may lead to story sharing from participants. Invite observations on where each of the seven practices show up during the year in our lives as well as our church calendar. Some examples:

- ◆ What is your favorite season of our church year?
- ◆ What does your family do to celebrate Advent, Christmas, etc.?
- ◆ What is your favorite story about Jesus?
- ◆ Where are you in this whole story?
- ◆ Where is your family?
- ◆ Where is your baptism? Do you remember your baptism?

Music and Prayer (10 minutes)

This portion of the gathering is open and flexible for the gifts that are present in your leadership. Some options – and get everyone up and moving around!

- ◆ Learn a song related to the Way of Love such as:
 - ◇ “His Banner Over Me is Love” <https://godspeaking.blog/about/his-banner-over-me-is-love-lyrics/>
 - ◇ “Jesu, Jesu” (#602 *The Hymnal 1982*)
 - ◇ “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy (Down in My Heart)” <https://youtu.be/LylgwOEI7AY>
 - ◇ Teach a table grace, bedtime prayer, or other prayer.
 - ◇ “Superman Grace” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4q0xQlHeqM>
 - ◇ “Johnny Appleseed Song”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAHhSZkg2BM>

Way of Love Catcher (10 minutes)

Move back to the tables and distribute the Way of Love catcher handouts. If needed, use scissors to cut out the square. Color, then fold to create the catcher. Play the game with one another.

Closing (5 minutes)

Conclude your gathering with a potluck meal, prayer, or by watching Presiding Bishop Michael Curry share in The Way of Love video how the seven practices can become part of our Jesus-Centered life. <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/explore-way-love>

Other Options:

- ◆ Have other resources available for viewing and/or borrowing:
 - ◇ Children’s books about Jesus, worship, and prayer, including children’s Bibles.
 - ◇ Books for adults on prayer practices
- ◆ Offer opportunities that families or individuals may participate in that involve community service and faith in action, such as preparing and/or delivering meals to the homebound, visiting nursing homes or senior daycare centers, or gathering non-perishable goods for a local food pantry.
- ◆ Create fliers of upcoming community and/or congregational events that involve sacramental preparation such as baptism or confirmation/reception (turn), worship (prayer and worship), educational opportunities (learn), outreach/faith-in-action activities (go, bless), and retreats (rest).