



**Building Faith's
VBS & Summer Camp
Curriculum Reviews**

2024

Resources Reviewed for 2024

- Camp Firelight (VBS)
- Compassion Camp (VBS)
- Gather Together (intergenerational events)
- Hometown Nazareth (VBS)
- Kindom Crafters (VBS)
- Linked by Love (summer camp)
- Outback Rock (VBS)
- Scuba (VBS)
- Seekers in Sneakers (VBS)
- Start the Party (VBS)

Camp Firelight

Reviewed by Marvin McLennon

Camp Firelight: Snapshot



[Camp Firelight](#) is one of Building Faith's top picks for VBS for 2024. It is a fun curriculum that kids will love. Its theme is summer camp, and its main message centers on Psalm 56:3, which says, "Whenever I'm afraid, I put my trust in you" (CEB). The curriculum masterfully incorporates this message into all of its activities and skits. It is dynamic, creative, and flexible with many activity and storytelling options. The curriculum also includes clear lists of supplies and directions for each activity. While the kit can be intimidating, it gives leaders plenty of options to make a memorable VBS program.

Camp Firelight: The Basics

- **Theme:** “A Summer Camp Adventure with God”
- **Publisher:** Cokesbury, coming March 2024 (United Methodist Church)
- **Intended ages/grades:** grades pre-K – 5
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** music, drama, storytelling, games, arts and crafts, science
- **Starter kit cost:** \$199.99

Camp Firelight: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Trust God to Go with Us!**
Genesis 28:10–22, God Goes with Jacob
- **Day 2: Trust God to Lead the Way!**
Ruth 1, Ruth Chooses to Go
- **Day 3: Trust God to Share Wisdom!**
Luke 2:41–52, Young Jesus Shares Wisdom
- **Day 4: Trust God to Give Us Peace!**
Mark 4:35–41, Jesus Calms the Storm
- **Day 5: Trust God to Spark Joy!**
Acts 8:26–40, The Good News Sparks Joy

Camp Firelight: Where It Shines

Immersive theme

The summer camp theme creates a fun and creative approach to diving into Psalm 56:3. The camp element is present in all of the activities offered without losing sight of the message of God's presence in everything we do and everywhere we go.

Easy plug and play content

The starter kit includes a wide variety of materials making it easy for leaders to dive into the camp quickly, along with providing easy access to the digital copies. The printed materials also conveniently fit into a box kit making transportation easy.

Dynamic activities

The curriculum offers a diverse array of activities to help kids engage with the Bible story, including fun science experiments and theme-related manipulatives.

Camp Firelight: What We Miss

More affordable overall cost

If you wanted to have the “full” Camp Firelight experience with posters, banners, take-home items, and all the other items in the Cokesbury VBS shop, it could add up very quickly and be cost-prohibitive for some communities. All of the items are not mandatory to implement this curriculum, however.

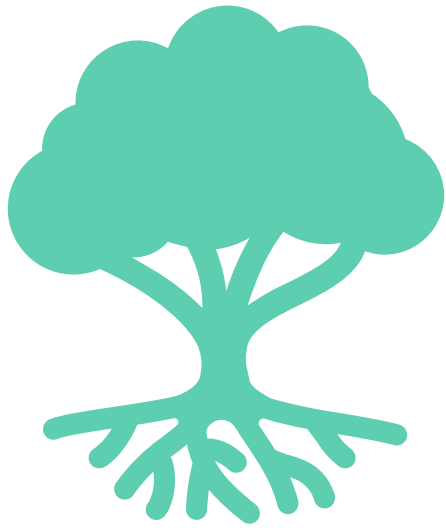
**Camp
Firelight:
Overall
Assessment**

**Curriculum
Recommended
for 2024**

Compassion Camp

Reviewed by Marvin McLennon

Compassion Camp: Snapshot



[Compassion Camp](#) is one of Building Faith's top picks for VBS this year. This is not only a great VBS curriculum, but it has enough content that it can be adapted for an extended children's program series. Its theme is "What Every Living Thing Needs," and it focuses on Psalm 104 to promote care and compassion for God's creation. It provides a variety of activities to keep participants engaged and encourages leaders to adapt activities in ways that would best suit everyone. It's a joyful and fun program that has something for everyone, even adults.

Compassion Camp: The Basics

- **Theme:** “What Every Living Thing Needs”
- **Publisher:** [Illustrated Ministry](#), 2023 (independent)
- **Intended ages/grades:** grades K – 5 as well as pre-K and intergenerational offerings
- **Format:** onsite; adaptable for alternative formats like offsite and online programs
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** music, Bible study, physical engagement, games, service
- **Starter kit cost:** sliding scale by congregation size: \$299.99 for 1–100 members, \$349 for 101–500, \$449 for 501+

Compassion Camp: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Every Living Thing Needs Shelter**
Psalm 104
- **Day 2: Every Living Thing Needs Food**
Psalm 104
- **Day 3: Every Living Thing Needs Water**
Psalm 104
- **Day 4: Every Living Thing Needs Air**
Psalm 104
- **Day 5: Every Living Thing Needs Community**
Psalm 104

Compassion Camp: Where It Shines

Compassionate and grace-filled theme and goal

The main goal of the curriculum is to cultivate compassion for each other, ourselves and the world, and that is reflected incredibly well in all of its content. This is an established curriculum, with this being the third edition of Compassion Camp. A lot of ongoing care has been put into it, and it shows.

Flexible and adaptable design

There is so much content present that it feels like a “Choose Your Own Adventure” kind of curriculum. It doesn’t lose sight of the core theme of compassion for others and the world around us. It encourages leaders to discern how they might best use the curriculum in their context, whether as a traditional 5-day program or with family pods or online.

Compassion Camp: Where It Shines

Supportive resources for directors

The Director's Guide includes everything one would need to run Compassion Camp, including scripts, prompts, and directions. Illustrated Ministry also has a Facebook Group for people leading Compassion Camp. Leaders and volunteers can swap ideas and find support from others running the program in their parish contexts.

Music offerings

The curriculum includes several upbeat original songs on Spotify and Apple Music to help campers and volunteers get excited for camp. The lyrics provide an exciting message of hope and feeling welcome in this space no matter who you are. They also have songs dedicated to each day's theme.

Compassion Camp: What We Miss

More affordable overall cost

There are three tiers of pricing, which could make it more affordable for parishes who have the means. However, the starting cost for the lowest tier may still be cost-prohibitive for some parishes.

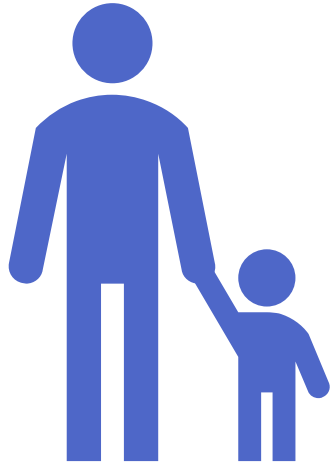
**Compassion
Camp:
Overall
Assessment**

**Curriculum
Recommended
for 2024**

Gather Together

Reviewed by Juniper LaNunziata

Gather Together: Snapshot



[Gather Together](#) is not a traditional VBS or camp curriculum, but we've listed it among Building Faith's top picks for 2024 because it may be of interest for VBS or for an intergenerational program. It offers 8 events designed to introduce congregations to "All Creation Sings," a worship resource by the ELCA released in 2020. Gather Together focuses on the four major themes of "All Creation Sings": creation care, lament in crisis, healing and wholeness, and justice and peace. Its events include activities, worship, and the option for liturgical meals. This is an excellent resource for engaging "All Creation Sings" in community.

Gather Together: The Basics

- **Theme:** “Intergenerational Events to Explore All Creation Sings”
- **Publisher:** [Sparkhouse](#), 2023 ([Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#))
- **Intended ages/grades:** intergenerational for all ages
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 8
- **Types of activities:** meal option, worship, art, nature walk, puzzles
- **Cost:** \$40; All Creation Sings is sold separately

Gather Together: List of Events

- **Event 1: Earth Is Full of Wit and Wisdom**
A kick-off event to introduce All Creation Sings
- **Event 2: The Work of the People**
An event about worship
- **Event 3: Image-ine the Possibilities**
An event about images for God
- **Event 4: All Around the World**
An event about our global Lutheran community

Gather Together: List of Events

- **Event 5: Life Transitions**
An event for all stages of life
- **Event 6: God Is Here**
An event when traumatic things happen
- **Event 7: Creation Care**
An event for all of earth's stewards
- **Event 8: Climate Justice**
An event to call all generations to action

Gather Together: Where It Shines

Meaningful, widely accessible activities

This resource makes fantastic use of the content from All Creation Sings, including prayers and music. It introduces key parts of these new liturgies and expands them for use during liturgical meals. Many activity options are presented for each of these feasts that make physical the spiritual concepts introduced in All Creation Sings. The activities seem well thought out, appropriate for a variety of ages, and accessible for disabled and non-disabled people.

Attention to justice

This resource engages concepts like creation care and climate justice with simple activities to reinforce its messages.

Gather Together: Where It Shines

Minimal additional materials required

The additional materials needed to execute the events seem modest, which can make this easier and more budget-friendly to implement.

Adaptable for VBS

It would be very easy to take the basic structure of the events and add games and other activities to create a VBS program around this resource.

Gather Together: What We Miss

Not intended for an out-of-the-box VBS

This resource is not designed to be a standalone VBS curriculum. If you're looking for a full-featured curriculum that comes out of the box with everything you need, you may want to consider other options.

**Gather
Together:
Overall
Assessment**

**Resource
Recommended
for 2024**

Hometown Nazareth

Reviewed by Molly Herman-Gallow

Hometown Nazareth: Snapshot



[Hometown Nazareth](#) is one of Building Faith’s top picks for VBS for 2024. This curriculum aims to bring ancient Nazareth to life, and it teaches children stories about Jesus through his mother Mary’s perspective. It includes immersive settings, experiential storytelling, crafts, games, and worship. It is an engaging curriculum that can offer children a memorable experience. We do encourage leaders to modify the key point for Day 4 by not referring to the Jewish temple as a church. We also recommend taking stock of how many activities you want to implement so that the Bible stories don’t get lost in the “everything else.”

Hometown Nazareth: The Basics

- **Theme:** “Where Jesus Was a Kid”
- **Publisher:** Group, 2024 (independent)
- **Intended ages/grades:** grades K – 5
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** worship, celebration, crafts, fun and games
- **Starter kit cost:** \$224.99; \$264.99 with digital starter kit

Hometown Nazareth: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Jesus Had a Family**
Luke 1:26–38, Mary is chosen to be Jesus’s mother
- **Day 2: Jesus Had a Name**
Luke 2:1–40, Jesus is born and gets his name
- **Day 3: Jesus Had a Home**
Matthew 2:13–14, 19–23, Jesus’s family escapes to Egypt
- **Day 4: Jesus Went to Church**
Luke 2:41–52, Jesus goes to temple
- **Day 5: Jesus Served Others**
John 2:1–12, Jesus does a miracle in Cana

Hometown Nazareth: Where It Shines

Engaging and immersive experience for children

This curriculum brings to life Jesus's hometown through intricate sets, props, costumes, and stations. You meet characters from the time in which Jesus was growing up, and children can be fully present and engaged in an entirely different world than what they're used to.

Unique approach to Bible storytelling and learning

In this curriculum, Mary is the teacher for the week. She shares all about Jesus and what it was like to raise the Son of God. It's a fresh, alternative way to present the Bible stories. Children aren't observers only but get to be participators and ask Mary questions.

Suite of materials provided to equip facilitators

All the materials that you need for this curriculum are provided in the starter kit. The various leader and director guides are helpful for reviewing each day's content and the curriculum as a whole to ensure the week's theme and Bible stories are being revisited.

Hometown Nazareth: What We Miss

More connection between additional activities and daily lessons

Some additional activities seem a bit random and used to fill time, rather than related to the Bible story or daily message. They could create a sense of “busyness” that might fill the day with a lot more chaos and moving parts than needed.

More care with differences between Christianity and ancient Judaism

One of the key daily points describes Jesus as going to church when he visits the Jewish temple, which does not attend sufficiently to the differences between ancient Judaism and contemporary Christianity. We encourage leaders to modify their teaching on this point to be more historically accurate and mindful by not referring to the temple as a church.

More simplicity in execution

Though creative and memorable, it involves a lot of setup and participants as well as adequate spaces to ensure its success, and it might not work in a shorter daily timeframe.

**Hometown
Nazareth:
Overall
Assessment**

**Curriculum
Recommended
for 2024**

Kindom Crafters

Reviewed by Juniper LaNunziata

Kindom Crafters: Snapshot



[Kindom Crafters](#) is one of Building Faith's top picks for VBS for 2024. Its theme is building community, and it engages Minecraft to focus on different aspects of community building. Instead of "kingdom" of God, which contains shades of monarchy, imperialism, and patriarchy, the curriculum uses "kindom" to emphasize the mutuality and equality of the whole Christian family. It offers a vision of God's kindom that actively makes room for all people of all races, genders, sexual orientations, economic statuses, and disabled and non-disabled identities. It is a good option particularly for a director on a budget who is comfortable creating their own materials, props, and decorations.

Kindom Crafters: The Basics

- **Theme:** Building Community
- **Publisher:** Chalice Press, 2023 (Christian Church/Disciples of Christ)
- **Intended ages/grades:** suitable for elementary children; could be adapted for youth and intergenerational groups
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** worship with simple songs, Bible storytelling, wondering, games, crafts, snacks
- **Starter kit cost:** \$75

Kindom Crafters: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Welcoming Is Building**
Genesis 18:1–8, Abraham and Sarah’s Hospitality
- **Day 2: Fixing Is Building**
Genesis 45:1–15, Joseph and Family Reconnect
- **Day 3: Choosing to Build Together**
Ruth 1:16–19, 4:9–10a, Ruth and Naomi’s Chosen Family
- **Day 4: Build Everywhere**
Matthew 4:18–23, Jesus Calls Disciples
- **Day 5: Keep Building**
Acts 2:1–12, Pentecost Starts Building the Church

Kindom Crafters: Where It Shines

A fun and justice-focused theme

This curriculum's attention to justice sets it apart from many others. The Minecraft theme is cool and will be exciting to many children.

Meaningful choice of scriptures

The scripture stories chosen are important for building sacred communities. They cover both the Old and New Testaments. Bible storytelling also includes wondering questions based on the work of Sonya Steward and Jerome Berryman to get children to think about sacred stories and their own stories in a new way.

Activities that engage children in scripture

Each part of the day ties into the day's theme, including the snacks. On the first day, for example, which focuses on Abraham's and Sarah's hospitality, children prepare a snack for the person in line behind them, rather than for themselves.

Kindom Crafters: What We Miss

More ideas or resources for design and decoration

With no provided graphics, the curriculum leaves a lot of decorating to the imagination of the director. This would be a plus for some, but it might cause anxiety for others.

Additional activities for longer programs

If your VBS program is longer than 2 hours each day, you may need to add supplemental games or activities.

**Kindom
Crafters:
Overall
Assessment**

**Curriculum
Recommended
for 2024**

Linked by Love

Reviewed by Meg Jones

Linked by Love: Snapshot



[Linked by Love](#) is one of Building Faith's top picks for 2024. It is a curriculum designed for summer camp with age-appropriate material for elementary children as well as middle and high school youth. It also offers resources and ideas for tailoring the curriculum to intergenerational groups and retreats, and it can be used for VBS with grades 1–5. Its theme focuses on how children and youth can discern God's love at work in their lives and in their relationships with others. It features a variety of activities, like games, art, science, journaling, and worship, as well as take-home sheets and a Spotify music playlist.

Linked by Love: The Basics

- **Theme:** We Are All Linked by Love
- **Publisher:** Chalice Press, 2023 (Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, produced by a multi-denominational protestant team)
- **Intended ages/grades:** grades 1 – 12 as well as intergenerational groups
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 7
- **Types of activities:** lessons, worship, games, art, science, small group devotions, journaling
- **Cost:** \$395 (congregations may also be able to receive access through a local camp center; you can contact the publisher for more info)

Linked by Love: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Linked in Love**
Colossians 3:12–14
- **Day 2: Linked through Acceptance**
Luke 10:38–42
- **Day 3: Linked and Present**
Job 2:11–13
- **Day 4: Linked by Grace**
Luke 15:11–32

Linked by Love: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 5: Linked in Truth**
Exodus 18:5–24
- **Day 6: Linked to Change**
Philemon 1:8–17
- **Day 7: Linked to Love**
1 John 4:7–9, 19

Linked by Love: Where It Shines

Emphasis on community

This curriculum shows great examples of how we can learn, grow, and change in community by helping kids and youth engage the community they are in during the program week. The practices that Linked by Love teaches, like acceptance, grace, and loving one another, are easy to make concrete and applicable for kids or youth over multiple days at VBS or camp. People of all ages can also easily remember and take these practices home.

Helpful and inclusive theological grounding

The writers have provided great theological backgrounds for each Bible story. The background content also makes helpful connections back to camp. The curriculum also uses inclusive language for God. Additionally, with its multi-denominational approach, it has the flexibility to incorporate specific theological commitments from different church contexts into the lessons.

Linked by Love: Where It Shines

Variety of activities to promote learning in different ways

Linked by Love seems to be well rounded. It offers a lot of ways to learn the lessons, including through play and games. It also lends itself well to teaching youth to lead the small group sessions.

Adaptable for multiple settings and denominational contexts

The curriculum gives suggestions on how to combine the seven sessions into three or four. It could work well as a weekly program for a church season. It also includes intergenerational lesson plans.

Linked by Love: What We Miss

More tips for large group settings

While the curriculum offers ideas for various uses and settings, most of the content seems geared toward smaller groups, which is fitting for a camp setting. However, additional guidance on using the curriculum in large group gatherings would be helpful. For programs involving large groups, leaders may need to adapt or get creative with some of the content.

A community service opportunity

This curriculum does not include a specific service project for participants to do. However, it would be easy to connect a service opportunity that your church is involved in with the Linked by Love theme.

**Linked by
Love: Overall
Assessment**

**Curriculum
Recommended
for 2024**

Outback Rock

Reviewed by Sally Benton

Outback Rock: Snapshot



[Outback Rock](#) is not one of Building Faith's top picks for VBS for 2024. This curriculum is designed to be a short, weekend-length VBS. Its message revolves around how God is always with us, and it includes flexible activity options and a mission focus that enables children to do a service project for their wider community. We did not include it among our recommendations, though. We had concerns about the curriculum's cultural sensitivity in its treatment of Australia as a backdrop. We also had concerns about the emotional weight of its lesson on Jesus's death and resurrection for children.

Outback Rock: The Basics

- **Theme:** “Where Kids Venture into Solid Faith”
- **Publisher:** [Group](#), 2024 (independent)
- **Intended ages/grades:** grades pre-K – 5 with youth and adult leaders
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 2 plus a Sunday celebration (a weekend program)
- **Types of activities:** opening and closing gatherings, small group rotations with Bible stories, outreach projects, and games
- **Starter kit cost:** \$119.99

Outback Rock: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: God Is with Joseph**
Genesis 37:1—45:15
- **Day 2: Jesus Dies and Comes Back to Life**
Matthew 26:26—28:30
- **Sunday Celebration: Rock the House**

Outback Rock: Where It Shines

A plug-and-play VBS program

This curriculum can take the guesswork out of VBS programming. It has a plug-and-play design for a weekend program, and the activity options within the rotation stations can be adapted to fit the needs and schedules of different contexts.

Theme of God's presence with us

As an abbreviated program, the curriculum keeps a single focus on the theme that God is always with us. The lessons include both Old and New Testament stories and highlight God's presence through time.

A focus on mission

This curriculum includes a focus on mission. It offers options for community outreach and service projects for children to do during VBS.

Outback Rock: What We Miss

More cultural sensitivity in its treatment of Australia

The curriculum's preview materials raised concerns for us about potential cultural stereotyping in how the curriculum engages Australia.

Attention to the emotional weight of the story of Jesus's death

The New Testament story focuses on Jesus' death and resurrection. This can be a heavy concept for young children, and there is a possibility that some of the conversation focuses on "being saved."

References to God without gender

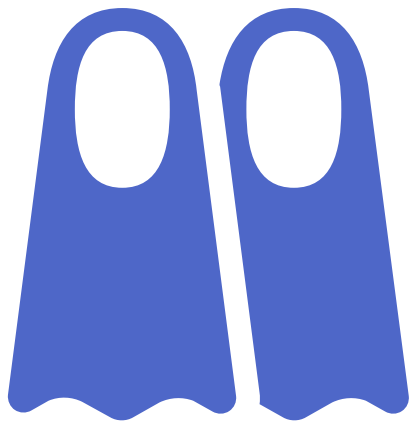
This curriculum is full of masculine pronouns for God. You could still make the decision to use non-gendered terms, but it would need to be an intentional decision that is communicated clearly with all leaders because of the way the provided material is written.

**Outback
Rock: Overall
Assessment**

**Curriculum Not
Recommended
for 2024**

Scuba

Reviewed by Sally Benton



Scuba: Snapshot

[Scuba](#) is one of Building Faith's top picks for VBS for 2024. Its theme is friendship with God, and it uses ocean life as a fun summer backdrop to help children learn about God as a friend. It is designed for preschool and elementary age children, and it features large group gatherings and rotation stations for small groups with activities like Bible stories, crafts, games, and science. It also includes themed music and extensive decorating ideas and options to create an immersive experience. It is available in English and in Spanish. We do recommend assessing its theological messages and language to discern if and how it may be fruitful for your church context.

Scuba: The Basics

- **Theme:** “Diving into Friendship with God”
- **Publisher:** [Group](#), 2024 (independent)
- **Intended ages/grades:** preschool and elementary children with youth and adult leaders
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** opening and closing gatherings, rotating stations of Bible stories, crafts, snacks, science, and special scripture focus
- **Starter kit cost:** \$274.99; \$309.99 for plus digital; \$139.99 for digital in Spanish

Scuba: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: God Is a Friend Who's Real**
1 Kings 18–19, God shows Godself to Elijah through ups and downs
- **Day 2: God Is a Friend Who Loves**
Jonah 1–3, God shows compassion to the people of Ninevah
- **Day 3: God Is a Friend We Can Trust**
Mark 4:35–41, Jesus calms a storm
- **Day 4: God Is a Friend Forever**
John 18–20, Jesus dies and comes back to life
- **Day 5: God Is a Friend for Everyone**
Acts 16:11–15, Lydia believes in Jesus

Scuba: Where It Shines

A meaningful theme for children

The curriculum focuses on friendship with God, and it reinforces this theme with stories from the Old and New Testaments. It would help children relate positive aspects of friendships that they already have with their relationship with God.

Available in English and in Spanish

This curriculum is offered in English and in Spanish. It would be particularly fruitful for communities with both English and Spanish speakers.

Training opportunities for the curriculum

The publisher is providing regional training for this curriculum. Training can enable leaders to learn more about the curriculum and about what others are doing for their programs.

Scuba: What We Miss

More continuity among the scriptures used

While there seems to be continuity in the theme and lessons throughout the days and week, there isn't one continuous story through the week. The key Bible verses for each day are not drawn from or connected to the stories.

Attention to the emotional weight of the story of Jesus's death

The curriculum includes a lesson on Jesus's death and resurrection. This story can feel shocking for some children, especially if the lesson involves an expectation that they affirm their belief in Jesus as their savior. Leaders may need to modify the lesson depending on their communities' theological perspectives and VBS participants' development.

Attention to social justice, service, and creation care

This VBS does not focus on social justice, service, or creation care. It primarily aims to engage children with God and scripture.

Scuba: Overall Assessment

**Curriculum
Recommended
for 2024**

Seekers in Sneakers

Reviewed by Molly Herman-Gallow

Seekers in Sneakers: Snapshot



[Seekers in Sneakers](#) is one of Building Faith's top picks for VBS for 2024. This curriculum's theme centers on discovering Jesus, and it draws upon geocaching to encourage children to seek and learn about Jesus. It presents a well-rounded VBS with engaging stories, activities, content, and well thought-out processes for executing VBS smoothly and efficiently. Participants and facilitators will very much enjoy and benefit from all that this curriculum has to offer, and they will, indeed, grow one step closer to seeking Jesus out in their daily lives.

Seekers in Sneakers: The Basics

- **Theme:** “Discover Jesus”
- **Publisher:** [Shine](#) by [Brethren Press](#) & [MennoMedia](#), 2024 ([Church of the Brethren](#), [Mennonite Church USA](#), & [Mennonite Church Canada](#))
- **Intended ages/grades:** grades pre-K – 5
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** worship, drama, Bible study, geocaching, art and science experiments, games
- **Starter kit cost:** \$229.99

Seekers in Sneakers: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Jesus the Learner**
Luke 2:41–52, Jesus in the temple talking with leaders
- **Day 2: Jesus Our Companion**
Matthew 4:17–22, Jesus at the Sea of Galilee calling disciples
- **Day 3: Jesus Our Teacher**
Matthew 5:14–16, John 8:12, Jesus on a mountain preaching to a crowd
- **Day 4: Jesus Our Example**
John 13:1–17, Jesus at a home in Jerusalem sharing a meal with his disciples
- **Day 5: Jesus Our Helper**
John 21:1–14, Jesus by the Sea of Galilee helping his disciples catch fish

Seekers in Sneakers: Where It Shines

Engaging learning that encourages children's creativity and discovery

This curriculum does a wonderful job of highlighting the importance of curiosity and wondering for children as they make their way through the Bible stories, activities, and lessons presented. Open-ended questions are encouraged so children don't feel pressured to answer or see things a certain way; their freedom of creativity and autonomy is at the forefront of the curriculum's teaching model. Children are free to be their entire selves and, most importantly, have fun.

Resources provided for easy execution

This curriculum provides all the resources needed to make it easy and flawless to execute. Various guides for the different stations and the director include each day's overall theme, needed materials, takeaways and big ideas, prompting questions, and more. There's very little room for error because everything is outlined thoroughly.

Seekers in Sneakers: Where It Shines

Meaningful images of Jesus as leader, mentor, guide, and friend

The way Jesus is presented as leader, mentor, guide, comforter, and friend is sound theology and comfortable for anyone from a Protestant background. This curriculum's theme is very relevant to the overall Christian experience of always searching for God and trying to discern where we can locate God and Jesus in our everyday lives, and children can easily connect with this. The curriculum takes a creative approach to the messaging around Jesus and allows the campers to embrace curiosity, to wonder, and to be on the hunt for how Jesus may be present and teaching them in their own lives.

Conducive to week-long VBS as well as other formats

This curriculum has the potential to serve as not only a Vacation Bible School curriculum but also as a weekend retreat or mid-week program. It includes all essential components to allow for fellowship, conversation, fun, and learning to be had by all.

Seekers in Sneakers: What We Miss

More attention to social justice and creation care

There isn't much in this curriculum by way of attention to social justice and creation care. There is a service opportunity, however. The large group component includes an offering that enables participants to support a selected local nonprofit organization throughout the week.

More opportunities for female voices and perspectives

In the short Bible story “teasers” that introduce each day’s scripture, there are many roles, but most are for males. Not many female roles are included, and the curriculum suggests that females who wish to participate should play “friends” or any other role that isn’t specifically male-specified. This curriculum could use more flexibility and inclusivity surrounding who plays which roles, and with the right amount of creativity, the roles could potentially be rewritten to be gender-neutral.

Seekers in Sneakers: Overall Assessment

**Curriculum
Recommended
for 2024**

Start the Party

Reviewed by Meg Jones

Start the Party: Snapshot



[Start the Party](#) is not one of Building Faith's top picks for VBS for 2024. Its theme focuses on celebrating the good news about Jesus, and it uses party elements to highlight this theme. It includes large and small group gatherings, worship, games, music, crafts, skits, videos, and service projects. We did not include this among our recommended curricula, however, because it focuses too much on the party concept and added elements at the expense of meaningful faith formation for children through Bible stories.

Start the Party: The Basics

- **Theme:** “Celebrate the Good News”
- **Publisher:** [Orange](#), 2023 (independent)
- **Intended ages/grades:** grades pre-K – 5
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** large group, small group, videos, games, worship, skits, music, crafts, service
- **Starter kit cost:** \$249

Start the Party: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Matthew's Party**
Luke 5:27–32
- **Day 2: Jesus' Parable of the Wedding Feast**
Matthew 22:1–14
- **Day 3: Jesus' Parable of the Lost Son**
Luke 15:11–32
- **Day 4: The Woman at the Well**
John 4:1–26
- **Day 5: You Are the Light of the World**
Matthew 5:14–16

Start the Party: Where It Shines

Simple presentations of Bible stories

The curriculum spells out the Bible stories easily. This can make the stories accessible for participants who are new to Christianity or to the church.

Start the Party: What We Miss

Cohesiveness between theme and scriptures

The curriculum makes a loose connection between a party and Jesus. We would have liked to see more meaningful connections in its design.

Spiritual depth

There is little mention of God in the curriculum. The engagement with the Bible stories is pretty surface level. The heavy emphasis on the party overshadows spiritual formation.

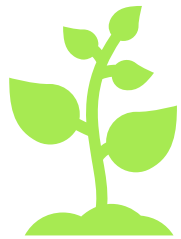
More variety in selection of scriptures

The Bible stories are pretty typical and have been done a lot in other curricula. They only include New Testament stories. We would have liked to see Old Testament stories as well.

**Start the
Party: Overall
Assessment**

**Curriculum Not
Recommended
for 2024**

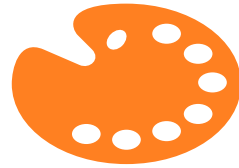
Perennial VBS Curriculum Favorites



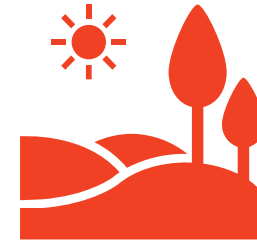
Abundant Life
Garden Project



All God's
Children



Arts Camp



God's Garden,
God's City



God's Love Is
Everywhere



Praying All the
Time



S.P.Y. Parables



Water All around
the World



Wild Willy's
Candy Factory



**Thank You to
Our 2024
Review Team!**

Sally Benton **(she/her/hers)**

Sally Benton is the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries at St. John's in McLean, Virginia and has been ministering to children and youth for over 10 years. She and her husband are currently living in Alexandria, VA with their two small children. They have had the joy of ministering together not only in parishes, but on college campuses, at summer camp, and just about everywhere in between. Sally is passionate about faith formation for all people and helping people build confidence in exploring their faith independently as well as in community.

Molly Herman- Gallow (she/her/hers)

Molly Herman-Gallow lives in Atlanta, GA and works on staff at St. Martin in the Fields Episcopal Church. She currently serves as St. Martin's Children & Youth Minister and enjoys getting to minister to all of St. Martin's families and youth. Molly is a cradle Episcopalian and grew up in the Diocese of Atlanta. She graduated from Elon University in 2019 with a filmmaking and religious studies degree. To this day, she loves telling the Church's story through her work in ministry and her passion for photography and videography. In the fall, Molly plans to begin her Master of Divinity at Duke Divinity School.

Meg Jones

(she/her/hers)

Meg Jones is serving as the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at Grace Church Cathedral in Charleston, SC. She is a lifelong Episcopalian, raised in the Diocese of Atlanta. After graduating from Appalachian State University, she spent two years at the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta in their youth ministry internship program, a year doing children and youth ministry at a smaller church, and formerly as the Director of Christian Formation at Christ Church in New Bern, NC. Meg brings experience in churches of varying sizes as well as diocesan, provincial, and national church connections.

Juniper LaNunziata (they/them/theirs)

Juniper LaNunziata is the Director of Christian Formation at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Greenville, NC. They are a Pennsylvania native, but they have been living in the south for 15 years. Juniper loves to bake bread, drink boba tea, and go geocaching. Check out their blog for Christian formation and design at www.formedbyexperience.blog.

Marvin McLennon (he/him/his)

Marvin is the Director of Children and Youth Ministries at Christ Episcopal Church in Little Rock, AR. Marvin is a cradle Episcopalian and Arkansas native. He grew up attending St. Mark's Episcopal Church where he became active in their youth group, diocesan youth leadership positions, and as a camper/counselor in training (CIT) at Camp Mitchell. Marvin attended Hendrix College, where he received his degree in Communications. During his college years, Marvin spent his summers attending Camp Mitchell as a camp counselor and social media coordinator. After graduating in 2013, he moved to Louisiana to be a Episcopal Service Corps member, where he served as the assistant youth director for St. James Baton Rouge. After his year of service, Marvin became the Youth Director for St. James as well as the Diocesan Youth Director for the Diocese of Louisiana until 2016, when he moved back to Arkansas to begin working for Christ Church.

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