

**Building Faith's
VBS, Summer Camp, and
Intergenerational Curriculum
Perennial Favorites**

2025 Edition

Resources

- Abundant Life Garden Project (VBS or children's formation)*
- All God's Children (VBS or intergenerational program)
- Arts Camp (VBS or day camp)*
- Good Stewards Together & Journey Together (intergenerational program)
- Living God's Dream (children's formation or VBS)*
- Operation Restoration (VBS)

* indicates that the review consulted the full curriculum; all other reviews consulted sample materials

Resources

- Praying All the Time (VBS or children's formation)*
- ReNew: The Green VBS (VBS)
- S.P.Y. Parables (VBS)
- Water All Around the World (VBS)*
- Waves of Gratitude (VBS)*

* indicates that the review consulted the full curriculum; all other reviews consulted sample materials

Abundant Life Garden Project

Reviewed by Juniper LaNunziata

Abundant Life Garden Project: Snapshot



Abundant Life Garden Project is a curriculum that can be used for VBS or children's formation throughout the year. Its theme flows from Episcopal Relief & Development's mission. It focuses on the abundant life that God gives to creation and on sharing that life with others. The program follows the movement of the eucharistic liturgy: gather, listen, do, and go. The curriculum offers multiple story and activity options for each session. Leader guides provide rotation station suggestions as well as planning and decorating tips. The supplementary materials also include a preschool adaptation, take-home sheets, and litanies.

Abundant Life Garden Project: The Basics

- **Theme:** Gardening, “Shar[ing] the gift of abundant life”
- **Publisher & date:** Episcopal Relief & Development, 2020 (The Episcopal Church)
- **Intended ages/grades:** preschool, grades K – 5
- **Format:** onsite or online (a separate virtual program is available)
- **Number of sessions:** 5, plus a bonus intergenerational celebration & Eucharist
- **Types of activities:** worship, storytelling, Bible stories, experiential learning, creative activities, contemplative activities, gardening, snacks
- **Cost:** free

Abundant Life Garden Project: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Water**

Exodus 17:1–7, Water from the Rock

Mark 1:4–13, The Baptism of Jesus

- **Day 2: Soil**

Deuteronomy 6:10–12

Luke 8:4–8, Birds, Rocks, Thorns

- **Day 3: Seeds**

Genesis 1:11–12, Receiving the Gift of Seeds

Matthew 13:31–32, Seeds of Growth

Abundant Life Garden Project: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 4: Animals**

Exodus 3:1–10, Moses the Shepherd

Luke 15:4–6, Finding Lost Sheep

- **Day 5: Harvest**

Ruth 2:1–18, Gleaning the Fields

Luke 9:10–17, Feeding and Sharing

- **Day 6: Celebration**

Psalms 104 (select verses)

Luke 16:1–13

Abundant Life Garden Project: Where It Shines

Connection to the work of Episcopal Relief & Development

Each of the daily themes—Water, Soil, Seeds, Animals, Harvest, and even Celebration—tie to the work of Episcopal Relief and Development. The curriculum includes easy ways to bring children into this work and to spark a lifelong passion for justice around these themes.

Free resource is a boon for thin budgets

This resource costs \$0, and much of what it recommends for use is inexpensive and can be used for long-term good. Many other VBS resources tend toward the single-use, throw-away model. Even if you do not decide to use this resource in its fullness, it is free, and the activities and liturgies it contains would be useful to support other programs.

Abundant Life Garden Project: What We Miss

Not a “just add water” VBS

It's full of suggestions for how you might do VBS around these themes, but there's no starter kit, no online shop, no decoration guides. VBS directors who are seeking those things should look for other options.

**Abundant
Life Garden
Project:
Overall
Assessment**

**A flexible
resource for VBS
or children's
formation that
ties to the work of
Episcopal Relief
& Development**

All God's Children

Reviewed by Sally Benton

All God's Children: Snapshot



[All God's Children: The Church Family Gathers for a Very Blessed Summer](#) is a resource designed for intergenerational gatherings during the summer. It can be used as an intergenerational VBS or tailored to other summer programs or schedules. The sessions or events involve sharing a meal, playing through games and creative activities, reading and discussing Bible stories, and prayer. The curriculum includes menu and recipe ideas for the meals, and the publisher also provides suggestions for using the resource in at-home or online settings.

All God's Children: The Basics

- **Theme:** “The Church Family Gathers for a Very Blessed Summer”
- **Publisher:** [GenOn Ministries](#), 2020 (independent; see their [Theology and Values](#))
- **Intended ages/grades:** intergenerational
- **Format:** onsite, with suggestions for online and at-home gatherings
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** meals, crafts, games, Bible lesson, music, prayer
- **Cost:** \$54.90

All God's Children: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Walking and Growing with Jesus**
Luke 24:13–48
- **Day 2: Trusting the Good Shepherd**
Psalm 23; Luke 10:11–18
- **Day 3: Bearing the Good Fruit**
John 15:1–8
- **Day 4: Love Each Other**
Psalm 98; John 15:9-17
- **Day 5: Green and Growing in the Kingdom of God**
Psalm 92:1–4, 12–15; Mark 4:26–34

All God's Children: Where It Shines

Intentionally intergenerational

This program is focused on bringing generations together. Leaders will not have to guess at how best to engage multiple different age demographics. This program does that for you.

New sessions

If you have used “The Church Family Gathers for Summer,” this material is new. These sessions are different in both topic and grounding scripture. If you liked what you used before, you can be assured that you can continue with this program.

Inclusion of outreach options

This program has an entire section on blessing others that can be used to expand on the basic lessons. You can choose to bless those in your church, community, or the world for a wide range of experience and impact.

All God's Children: What We Miss

Child-specific programming

Very Blessed Summer encourages people of all ages and stages of life to be fully engaged. While all of the suggested activities will be appropriate for children, you are less likely to see child-specific activities.

More specific step-by-step instructions

This program gives a lot of content and support, but you will want someone who is familiar with this kind of programming helping to plan, coordinate, and lead. This is not a program you want to put into the hands of an inexperienced volunteer without being able to offer them guidance as they determine what will be best for your community.

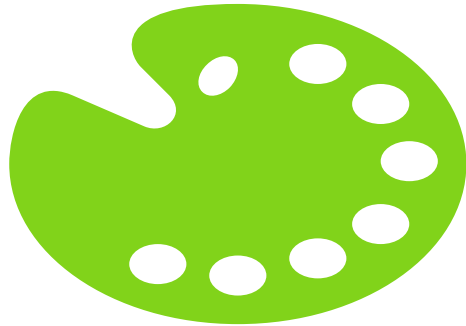
All God's Children: Overall Assessment

**A highly
adaptable
resource for
intergenerational
groups who enjoy
gathering around
a shared meal**

Arts Camp

Reviewed by Juniper LaNunziata

Arts Camp: Snapshot



[Arts Camp](#) is a book by Christina Clark that offers a guide to developing a day camp or VBS program for elementary age children or middle school youth that centers on the arts. It is not a traditional VBS but bills itself as “A Creative, Customizable Alternative to Vacation Bible School and Beyond.” Each chapter includes details on art projects, programming, music, drama, games, and resources. It offers a way for churches to conduct an artful exploration of faith themes.

Arts Camp: The Basics

- **Theme:** Art and Creativity
- **Publisher & date:** [Morehouse](#), 2015 ([The Episcopal Church](#))
- **Intended ages/grades:** grades 1 – 5, middle school youth
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** contains content for 5 five-day camp experiences, with suggestions for Sunday worship
- **Types of activities:** art projects, music, drama, games
- **Number of pages:** 128
- **Cost:** \$34.95

Arts Camp: Scope & Sequence

- **Arts Camp Week 1: Praise!**
Isaiah 42:10–12, Philippians 4:4–8, Matthew 22:37–39
- **Arts Camp Week 2: EcoJustice**
Genesis 1:1—2:4, Psalm 148, Matthew 6:25–33
- **Arts Camp Week 3: Who is my Neighbor?**
Jeremiah 31:7–9, Acts 4:32–37, Matthew 25:31–40
- **Arts Camp Week 4: Interfaith Peace**
Genesis 13:14–18, Philippians 4:4–8, Luke 6:37–38
- **Arts Camp Week 5: Saints and Holy Helpers**
Isaiah 6:1–8, Philippians 4:4–8, Matthew 5:3–10

Arts Camp: Where It Shines

Highly specialized themes

The topics of Praise, EcoJustice, Who is my Neighbor?, Interfaith Peace, and Saints and Holy Helpers are well developed, and each activity is closely tied to each theme. The book provides enough activities for 5 days each. Each theme includes an outline for a whole-community worship experience—tying the VBS experience to the larger church community.

Inexpensive resource

This book is very inexpensive for containing 25 sessions worth of content. At \$34.95, it's a worthwhile addition to your library, as the contents could be useful in many contexts and would be useful to supplement other types of programs.

Arts Camp: What We Miss

Not a “just add water” VBS

This is a single book. It does not include a starter kit, volunteer-specific resources, video, music, or images. It is a guide to creating your own camp experience using creative art resources. If you're looking for a full-featured VBS, this is not it. If you're looking to create something highly customized for your community, this is a great resource! There are some sections that explain how the program could be adapted for a VBS, but there are no detailed Day 1, Day 2, etc lesson plans. Each week of camp has some multi-day activities with instructions.

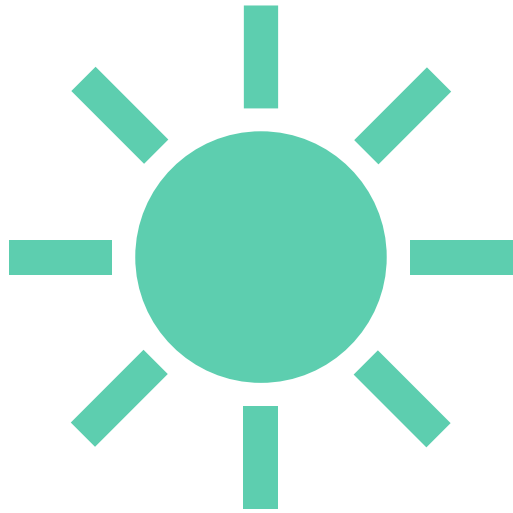
Arts Camp: Overall Assessment

**A flexible
program for
5 weeks of
arts-based camps
for children
and youth**

Good Stewards Together & Journey Together

Reviewed by Jodi Belcher

Together Series: Snapshot



[Good Stewards Together](#) and [Journey Together](#) are two different resources for facilitating a series of 12 intergenerational formation events during the summer season. They can also be adapted for an intergenerational VBS program. Good Stewards Together focuses holistically on the theme of stewardship, and Journey Together explores fundamental elements of Christian faith and life. Both series involve meals, creative activities, outdoor projects, and service opportunities. These are helpful resources for communities interested in intergenerational VBS or church-wide gatherings during the summer.

Together Series: The Basics

- **Theme:** Stewardship (Good Stewards); Christian Faith & Discipleship (Journey)
- **Publisher & date:** [Sparkhouse](#), 2021 (Good Stewards) and 2020 (Journey) ([Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#))
- **Intended ages/grades:** all ages (intergenerational)
- **Format:** onsite, with options for online gatherings
- **Number of sessions:** 12
- **Types of activities:** creative arts, outdoor projects, service, meals, drama, prayer
- **Cost:** \$39.99 each

Good Stewards Together: Scope & Sequence

- **Event 1: Summer Kickoff**
- **Event 2: Stories of Stewardship**
- **Event 3: Biblical Good Stewards**
- **Event 4: Holy Spirit of Stewardship**
- **Event 5: Stewards of Grace**
- **Event 6: Stewards of the Love of God**
- **Event 7: Food to Share**
- **Event 8: Stewards of the Body of Christ**

Good Stewards Together: Scope & Sequence

- **Event 9: Faith, Fellowship, and Fun**
- **Event 10: God's World, Our World**
- **Event 11: Good Stewards Celebrate**
- **Event 12: Summer Sendoff**

Journey Together: Scope & Sequence

- **Event 1 – Summer Kickoff**
- **Event 2 – Bible: The Bible = 66 Books**
- **Event 3 – Bible: God’s Word Is for Everyone**
- **Event 4 – Spirit: Five-a-Day to Grow God’s Way**
- **Event 5 – Spirit: Four More for Growth Galore**
- **Event 6 – Disciples: Discovering the Disciples**
- **Event 7 – Disciples: Becoming Disciples**
- **Event 8 – Church: Kids in the Temple**

Journey Together: Scope & Sequence

- **Event 9 – Church: We Are One Body**
- **Event 10 – World: God’s People Pray**
- **Event 11 – World: One God, One World**
- **Event 12 – Summer Sendoff**

Together Series: Where It Shines

Fun and formative programs for intergenerational ministry

These event programs do an excellent job of combining fun activities, community-building fellowship, and substantive faith formation. Their design shows intentionality in creating opportunities for people to engage one another across ages and generations. The series on stewardship provides a theologically expansive exploration of the theme, and the series on the core of Christian faith can function like an intergenerational catechesis program.

A variety of activity options

The resources include a variety of activity options to choose from for each event. The variety enables the curriculum to be flexible and adaptable to your community's needs, gifts, and context.

Together Series: Where It Shines

Detailed guides and helpful tips for event leaders

The resources provide step-by-step guidance and instructions for leaders and facilitators, and they offer helpful tips along the way to enrich participants' experiences and to ensure safety (like developing a menu that is attentive to allergies).

Attention to accessibility for all ages and mobility-related disabilities

These resources explicitly encourage leaders to shape activities that involve movement in ways that are accessible and inclusive for people of all ages as well as for people with mobility-related disabilities.

More budget-friendly resources

The cost of these resources is relatively affordable, especially given the number of events included.

Together Series: What We Miss

More care with differences between Christianity and ancient Judaism

One of the events in Journey Together is titled “Church: Kids in the Temple.” This language suggests a possible conflation of Christian churches with the ancient Jewish temple, which does not sufficiently attend to the differences between these religious traditions. We encourage leaders to make modifications if needed by taking care not to refer to the temple as a church.

Not designed for traditional plug-and-play children’s VBS

These resources offer ideas for using the curriculum in a VBS format, but they are designed for intergenerational gatherings rather than for children-only VBS. If you want a VBS program geared solely toward children, other curricula would better meet your needs.

**Together
Series:
Overall
Assessment**

**A rich, flexible
resource for
church-wide
intergenerational
gatherings and a
VBS alternative**

Living God's Dream

Reviewed by Sarah Bentley Allred

Living God's Dream: Snapshot



[Living God's Dream: Dismantling Racism for Children](#)

is a flexible faith formation curriculum that can be used as VBS or in other contexts. Grounded in scripture, the curriculum aims to help children root themselves in their own belovedness and practice seeking the image of God in others. The curriculum offers five topics, and each lesson includes enough content for multiple sessions if desired. Lessons include a biblical connection, storybook, art activity, music, snack, and service idea.

Living God's Dream: The Basics

- **Theme:** “Living God’s Dream: Dismantling Racism for Children”
- **Publisher & date:** [Church Publishing](#), 2024 ([The Episcopal Church](#))
- **Intended ages/grades:** pre-K – grade 5
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** Bible reading, storybook ideas, personal story, art, music, games, snack, service
- **Cost:** \$49.95 for leader guide, \$14.95 for participant guide

Living God's Dream: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: I Am Beloved**
Genesis 1:27–28, Revelation 7:9
- **Day 2: I Am Brave**
Genesis 37, 41—45
- **Day 3: I Am Compassionate**
Ruth 1:16–18, 2:11–12
- **Day 4: I Am Resistant**
Daniel 1
- **Day 5: I Am Ready**
James 2:1–4, 8–9, 14–17

Living God's Dream: Where It Shines

Addressing the important topic of racism in an age-appropriate way

Children are highly attuned to justice and fairness, yet very few mainline Protestant resources directly address racism in a way developmentally appropriate for children as young as preschool. Living God's Dream offers a much-needed resource for this work.

Solid grounding in scripture

This curriculum is grounded in scripture from the overall theme, "living God's dream," to the biblical stories used in each session. Concepts are repeated again and again using different activities to build not just awareness, but the ability to analyze and apply.

Living God's Dream: Where It Shines

Integration of children's literature

Most lessons have three or more storybook suggestions. For each book, there is an overview for the leader, summary of how it connects to the lesson, statement to use to introduce the book, discussion prompts, and statement to use to wrap up the discussion.

Living God's Dream: What We Miss

Acknowledgment of systemic racism

This curriculum emphasizes individual relationships and personal interactions. Some of the suggested children's literature touches on systemic racism, but it is not directly addressed. If working with upper elementary aged children, we recommend considering how to address the idea of unfair systems and our call to work together as the full community of faith to move toward God's dream.

Not a "full featured" VBS

This resource is designed for flexible usage rather than directly designed as a VBS. If you're looking for a full featured curriculum that comes out of the box with decorations you can purchase and music videos, you may want to consider other options.

**Living God's
Dream:
Overall
Assessment**

**A curriculum that
helps children
root themselves
in belovedness
and seek the
image of God
in others**

Operation Restoration

Reviewed by Marvin McLennon

Operation Restoration: Snapshot



[Operation Restoration: Mending God's World](#) is a thematically rich and engaging Vacation Bible School curriculum that focuses on healing, repairing, and restoring relationships with God, others, and creation. The program also is designed to help children become “menders” in God’s world by engaging in Bible stories and activities that encourage care for others, self, and creation.

Operation Restoration: The Basics

- **Theme:** Being “Menders in God’s World,” Restoration
- **Publisher & date:** [Augsburg Fortress](#), 2022 ([Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#))
- **Intended ages/grades:** pre-K – grade 12
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** art, music, science, service and storytelling
- **Cost:** \$140 for base curriculum with options to buy single guides
- **Video:** <https://youtu.be/8zXvjuYWX48?si=fdm6LksbpiQpNIII>

Operation Restoration: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Feed**
Exodus 16:1–36, God Gives Enough Food for All
- **Day 2: Heal**
Luke 13:10–17, Jesus Heals Those Who Are Sick and Hurt
- **Day 3: Forgive**
Matthew 18:21–22, Jesus Forgives Us and Tells Us to Forgive
- **Day 4: Pray**
Luke 11:1–4, Jesus Teaches Us to Pray
- **Day 5: Rest**
Exodus 16:23–30, 20:8–11, 23:10–12, God Gives Sabbath for All Creation

Operation Restoration: Where It Shines

Value for money

One of Operation Restoration's strongest aspects is the abundance of materials included in the curriculum, making it a worthwhile investment for churches and VBS organizers. The package comes with a wide variety of resources, including signs, posters, décor, promotional materials, forms, and teaching aids—all of which help streamline the planning and execution of the program.

Engaging presentations and stations

Each day comes with a series of PowerPoints that include fun chants to begin the small group gathering time along with effective illustrations to support the day's Bible story.

Operation Restoration: Where It Shines

Family engagement

The Family Page is a standout feature, offering activities for families to do together, including ways to care for the environment. Rather than limiting faith-based discussions to the church setting, this feature encourages continued engagement at home, helping families deepen their conversations and reinforce key lessons together.

High-quality illustrations

The artwork throughout the curriculum is fun, engaging, and visually appealing!

Operation Restoration: What We Miss

Needs more discussion questions

While activities are strong, additional discussion prompts for parents to use could help extend lessons beyond the VBS setting and encourage more conversations in the car or at home.

Deeper engagement with Bible stories

While the Bible story selections are well-chosen and align with the overall theme of Operation Restoration, some of them feel surface-level, lacking deeper engagement with the text. The lessons often focus on broad, easily digestible messages rather than encouraging participants to explore the richness of the biblical narratives in a meaningful way.

Operation Restoration: What We Miss

Cultural sensitivity in music selection

The inclusion of songs with African languages and a “Caribbean Lord’s Prayer” traditions felt somewhat uncomfortable. A more thoughtful approach that fully acknowledges why those songs were selected and their cultural and historical significance would enhance inclusivity and respect.

Activity options or modifications that are appropriate for all ages

Some activities, like the Day 1 Lab Station, may be too complex for younger participants to fully grasp or engage with effectively. Providing alternative, age-appropriate modifications or clearer guidance on how to scale the activity for various age levels would help ensure all children can participate meaningfully.

Operation Restoration: Overall Assessment

**A comprehensive
and resource-rich
VBS experience,
but prep-heavy
and missing a
deeper dive into
the Bible stories**

Praying All the Time

Reviewed by Sally Benton

Praying All the Time: Snapshot



Praying All the Time is a multi-session curriculum that can be tailored to a seasonal formation series or VBS. It uses children's picture books to teach children a variety of ways to pray. The curriculum is designed for sessions that are 45–60 minutes long, and each session includes a gathering ritual, storytelling and group discussion, craft, and sending ritual.

Praying All the Time: The Basics

- **Theme:** “Using Children’s Books to Explore Different Kinds of Prayer”
- **Publisher & date:** Leader Resources (The Episcopal Church)
- **Intended ages/grades:** grades K – 5
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** prayer, storytelling, crafts
- **Cost:** \$49.95

Praying All the Time: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: The Song of Francis**
Praying with Singing
- **Day 2: The Very Hungry Caterpillar**
Praying Extemporaneously
- **Day 3: The Red Ribbon**
Corporate Prayer
- **Day 4: Old Turtle**
Breath Prayer
- **Day 5: The Legend of the Bluebonnet**
Jesus Prayer

Praying All the Time: Where It Shines

Accessible materials

This curriculum is based off books that are easily to acquire. If you don't already have access, you could likely find them from your local library. The crafts also require few materials. Most of what is needed is likely already sitting unused in a church cabinet or closet.

Repetitive in a familiar way

While the content changes each day, the structure of the day is relatively simple and does not change day to day. This helps children know what to expect and be prepared for what is to come at each transition throughout the program.

Praying All the Time: What We Miss

Catchy music or flashy theme

This is not going to be a flashy production. There is space to incorporate your own music, but there isn't more attention paid to that aspect than a line in the suggested schedule and a suggested Taizé chant. There is no flashy theme to decorate from, which is a drawback for some and a benefit to others.

Extensive content

The lessons for each day are not extensive. If you are aiming for a traditional VBS feel, you will need to plan to supplement the curriculum with your own additional activities.

Praying All the Time: Overall Assessment

**A simple
curriculum
geared toward
children that can
be used any time
of year**

ReNew: The Green VBS

Reviewed by Jodi Belcher

ReNew: Snapshot



ReNew: The Green VBS is a VBS program that aims to help children care for God's creation. It focuses on the Parable of the Sower in Mark's gospel and highlights the connection between relationship with God and relationship with creation. The curriculum includes creative and environmentally attentive activities, and it encourages leaders and participants to incorporate green materials and practices into the VBS itself, particularly in selecting art supplies and decorating. The curriculum also offers opportunity to tailor the program to your community's environment and involvement in local creation care.

ReNew: The Basics

- **Theme:** Parable of the Sower and Caring for Creation
- **Publisher & date:** Sparkhouse, 2017 (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)
- **Intended ages/grades:** pre-K – grade 6
- **Format:** onsite with offsite activity possibilities
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** music, worship, Bible stories, games, ecological and creation care activities, art, snacks
- **Cost:** \$89.99
- **Video:** <https://youtu.be/fqvzGAbGgbc?si=uu7i4GIIYnY9IQwt>

ReNew: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Planting Seeds**
Mark 4:1–9, Sower Went Out to Sow
- **Day 2: Taking Root**
Mark 4:1–9, Path and Birds
- **Day 3: Growing**
Mark 4:1–9, Rocky Ground
- **Day 4: Facing Challenges**
Mark 4:1–9, Thorns
- **Day 5: Living Together**
Mark 4:1–9, Good Soil

ReNew: Where It Shines

Connecting Christian faith with creation care ethics

The lessons in this curriculum are designed to help children perceive creation care as an integral part of living into Christian faith. Each lesson provides a question about God and an “eco-question” so that participants can engage the questions together.

Affirming children as active participants in caring for creation

Its main goal is to inspire children to actively care for creation in their personal lives, communities, and world. Toward that end, it starts from a powerful place of affirming children’s agency in their lives of faith and invites them into creation care opportunities.

Promoting eco-friendly approaches to doing VBS

This program enables the medium to be the message as well by encouraging and suggesting eco-friendly options for designing, decorating, and implementing VBS.

ReNew: What We Miss

More affordability for more congregations

While this curriculum is cheaper than a lot of new options, it may still cost too much for some communities with smaller budgets. However, the creation care theme of this curriculum may lend itself particularly well to partnering with another nearby congregation for VBS if the cost is too high for your community to shoulder alone.

ReNew: Overall Assessment

**A conscientious
VBS curriculum
for exploring and
prioritizing
creation care in
your own context**

S.P.Y. Parables

Reviewed by Marvin McLennon

S.P.Y. Parables: Snapshot



S.P.Y. Parables is a fun, interactive Vacation Bible School curriculum that immerses participants in a spy-themed adventure to uncover the meaning behind Jesus's parables. Designed to be adaptable for various parish settings, this three-session program encourages creativity and can be expanded into a full week of content. Each lesson ties into a key biblical teaching with hands-on service components and engaging activities.

S.P.Y. Parables: The Basics

- **Theme:** Parables of Jesus
- **Publisher & date:** [Leader Resources](#), 2010 ([The Episcopal Church](#))
- **Intended ages/grades:** pre-K – grade 5
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 3
- **Types of activities:** music, arts and crafts, service projects
- **Cost:** \$39.95

S.P.Y. Parables: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: The Seed**
Matthew 13:31–33, Parable of the Mustard Seed
- **Day 2: The Pearl of Great Price**
Matthew 13:45–46, Parable of the Pearl
- **Day 3: The Yeast**
Matthew 13:33, Parable of the Yeast/Leaven

S.P.Y. Parables: Where It Shines

Adaptability

The program is fairly short and was created in the author's parish context. Knowing that, it gives the you as a leader a chance to get creative and not only adapt the program to your context, but an opportunity to add fun spy-themed elements to other parables if you choose to stretch the 3 sessions out to a full week of content.

Engaging theme

The excitement the creators have for the theme is a constant throughout the material available. The spy-themed approach offers a creative and interactive way for participants to explore Jesus's parables and apply them to daily life.

S.P.Y. Parables: Where It Shines

Service oriented

Each day's service component aligns well with the lesson's theme and "word of the day," reinforcing key takeaways.

Budget-friendly

The cost of the program is budget friendly and flexible, making it easy for someone to adapt it to their parish context with as much or as little items as they would like.

S.P.Y. Parables: What We Miss

More content for extended lessons

It's a short curriculum, which makes it convenient. However, it feels like there could be more added to each lesson and more materials provided, such as suggested games and discussion questions.

More resources for leaders

While there are pictures included about items purchased for the theme, there aren't any example pictures of the crafts, which would be helpful for volunteers to use for reference.

More contemporary cultural references

Originally published in 2010, some references (e.g., *Kim Possible*, *Spy Kids*, *Nancy Drew*) feel outdated. Updating these could make the content more relevant for today's participants.

**S.P.Y.
Parables:
Overall
Assessment**

While needing fresher references, S.P.Y. is a unique, fun, adaptable, and budget-friendly curriculum

Water All Around the World

Reviewed by Molly Herman-Gallow

Water All Around the World: Snapshot



[Water All Around the World](#) is a curriculum that focuses on water, and it teaches about the countries that might not have access to clean water. Through mission stories, discussions, scripture, and crafts, children learn of the value of clean water and how children and their families near and far struggle to gain access to this essential resource. It highlights the importance of mission work in a church context and is an adaptable curriculum that can be applied in many contexts beyond the traditional five-day VBS experience. It is also a curriculum that can apply to any age at any stage in life, from children to youth to adults.

Water All Around the World: The Basics

- **Theme:** “Join[ing] God’s mission to restore the ‘goodness’ of God’s creation”
- **Publisher & date:** [Living Waters for the World](#), 2016 ([Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#))
- **Intended ages/grades:** preschool, grades K – 5, with intergenerational options
- **Format:** onsite (a free at-home version is also available for families)
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** music, mission stories, recreational activities, snacks, art
- **Cost:** \$85
- **Video:** <https://www.livingwatersfortheworld.org/vbs>

Water All Around the World: Scope & Sequence

- **Day 1: Water Is Necessary to Life**
Children in Guatemala
- **Day 2: Water Is Sometimes Very Scarce**
Children in Cuba
- **Day 3: Water Can Be Dangerous**
Children in Mexico
- **Day 4: Water Is a Sign of Grace**
Children in Haiti
- **Day 5: Jesus Gives Us Living Water**
Children in Ghana

Water All Around the World: Where It Shines

Extreme focus on mission and service to others

The entirety of this curriculum is focused on teaching children about those who live around the globe. It takes them outside of their own contexts to teach them about our global neighbors and partners. It introduces children to what it means to be global stewards of the Earth and educates them on the water crisis around the world that they might not otherwise be prompted to think about.

Easy to implement and affordable

This is an easy curriculum to follow and execute. It includes all you need in the simple curriculum that you can purchase or download digitally. Everything included utilizes what is either already provided by the curriculum or what you might already have on hand in terms of art project supplies, etc. It is also very affordable, yet the affordable price doesn't deter from the overall originality and richness of the content.

Water All Around the World: Where It Shines

Music in additional languages

This curriculum introduces the beauty of language and how it can connect all of us. Children have the chance to learn songs in the native tongues of those about whom they're learning in the mission stories. It provides a chance to learn something new during the day and apply it to their own lives if they were to ever meet someone from a country they studied that is included in this curriculum.

Freedom in exploration and wondering

Children have the freedom to openly explore and wonder alongside fellow peers during small group discussion questions and throughout the day. There is no assumption that they need to think certain things along certain lines. This curriculum emphasizes an open and honest approach for children to bring their questions and ponderings to the table and have them be met with equal engagement about the curriculum facilitators.

Water All Around the World: What We Miss

Activities that appeal across ages

Though this curriculum is super simple and easy to follow, there isn't a lot by way of a variety of activities for various age groups. Most of the activities included such as the arts crafts and recreational activities are best suited for a younger audience. Due to this, older ages might feel a bit less engaged or left out.

More robust theological messaging

Though this VBS is rooted in a firm and grounded theme and theology, it doesn't include a lot of opportunity to be grounded in scripture. A Bible story is presented, but not much else is included except the story itself and a few discussion questions. The relationship between us and God is alluded to and even touched on when reflecting on the Bible story, but much of the content addresses the needs of those who are from each country that is the focus of the day. If anything, this curriculum does a good job of spotlighting the fact that water is a key component of the Bible and plays an active part in how God serves and loves us.

**Water All
Around the
World:
Overall
Assessment**

**A flexible and
engaging
curriculum that
emphasizes
serving others
and learning
about our global
communities**

Waves of Gratitude

Reviewed by Molly Herman-Gallow

Waves of Gratitude: Snapshot



[Waves of Gratitude](#) is a United Thank Offering original curriculum and focuses on the themes of water and gratitude. Created to be a traditional five-day VBS (either half-day or full-day), children experience a gratitude-based theme accompanied by a scripture passage. Additional activities are also included in this curriculum, and it's available for all to use at no additional cost. Each of its resources are available to download. This curriculum presents a down-to-earth and engaging VBS experience for children, youth, and adults alike that reminds them of the importance of gratitude in the life of a Christian.

Waves of Gratitude: The Basics

- **Theme:** “Waves of Gratitude”
- **Publisher & date:** [United Thank Offering](#), 2023 ([The Episcopal Church](#))
- **Intended ages/grades:** grades K – 5
- **Format:** onsite
- **Number of sessions:** 5
- **Types of activities:** big group gatherings, water activity, music, movement station, crafts station, STEAM projects, gratitude station
- **Cost:** free

Waves of Gratitude: Scope & Sequence

Day 1: Grateful for Connections

Matthew 25, Connecting with Jesus by Caring for Others

Day 2: Grateful for Creation

Genesis 1, The Creation Narrative

Day 3: Grateful for Baptism

Matthew 3, Jesus's Baptism

Day 4: Grateful for Everyday

Jonah 1–4, Story of Jonah

Day 5: Grateful for Water

Matthew 8, Jesus Calms a Storm

Waves of Gratitude: Where It Shines

Inclusive language for God

This curriculum does a great job of characterizing God's relationship with us. It presents God as healer, provider, and caretaker and includes open and affirming language for God without using masculine pronouns. The way in which God is presented in the context of this curriculum is in a way that many can relate to and resonate with while being firmly rooted in scripture-based passages as well.

Grounded in Episcopal tradition

It is evident this curriculum is rooted in The Episcopal Church tradition because it makes specific reference to the Book of Common Prayer and the Baptismal Covenant. Because it's grounded in this denomination, children who are familiar with The Episcopal Church will grow further rooted in the ways and life of this denomination; however, it's written so all might be comfortable with its content.

Waves of Gratitude: Where It Shines

“I Wonder” questions promote curiosity

This curriculum often uses “I Wonder” questions during the small group setting to encourage curiosity and conversation. Children are reminded that it is okay if they might not have all of the right answers and that part of having faith is being curious and growing more with God through new discoveries and conversations.

Variety of ways for children to learn

Included in this curriculum are a variety of activity stations that allow for learners of all ages to engage with each day’s content. There are arts and crafts, a science-based station, a station solely dedicated to water, a gratitude practice station, and time for singing and fellowship. Having these many options to participate in creates a learning environment for children of all ages and with all different learning styles that meets them where they might learn best.

Waves of Gratitude: Where It Shines

Includes an entire lesson on creation care

This curriculum is unique because it includes a full days' worth lesson on creation care. The Creation Story is told and children are encouraged to think about how they can care for creation around them in loving and impactful ways. This lesson also does a great job of tying gratitude to creation and how children can think about how creation brings them joy.

Simple and easy set-up

Set-up for this VBS is incredibly simple and easy. There aren't a lot of demands for each station, and every station can be set-up and broken-down with minimal effort and in ample time. This VBS is very cost-effective and affordable. There is an included Director's Guide that walks the Director through what each station's set-up requires for incredibly easy planning and week-of implementation.

Waves of Gratitude: What We Miss

Potentially too denominational-focused

Due to this curriculum being so heavily focused in the Episcopal denomination, children with an experience in a different denomination or in non-denominational church settings might have a bit of a hard time engaging with this curriculum's content.

Connection between stations and daily scripture passages

Though each day features a different scripture passage or Bible story that relates to gratitude and/or water, there is not a lot of connection between the various stations' activities and the daily scripture. The only time in which the scripture passage is really visited is during the opening big group gathering. It would have been nice to see more connections built between what the children hear in the big group gathering regarding the day's Bible story and the stations they visit.

Waves of Gratitude: What We Miss

Lack of content surrounding diversity of human identities and experiences

Not much is found in this curriculum surrounding the topic of diversity of human identities and experiences. Though it has great themes of loving God, loving others, serving others, and being grateful for God's many gifts and blessings, there is nothing specific that touches on the diversity of human identities and experiences, potentially affecting the way in which this curriculum might be experienced by some participants.

Waves of Gratitude: Overall Assessment


**A traditional
5-day VBS
curriculum for an
engaging
approach to
learning about
gratefulness and
gratitude**

Building Faith VBS, Camp, and Intergenerational Perennial Favorites Chart (2025)

	Abundant Life	All God's Children	Arts Camp	Together Series	Living God's Dream	Operation Restoration
Children	pre-K – 5 th	Y	1 st – 5 th	Y	pre-K – 5 th	pre-K – 5 th
Youth		Y	6 th – 8 th	Y		6 th – 12 th
Adults		Y		Y		
VBS	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y
Camp			Y			
Intergen.		Y		Y		
Year-round	Y			Y	Y	
Church Affil.	Episcopal	independent	Episcopal	ELCA	Episcopal	ELCA
# Sessions	5	5	5 x 5	12 each	5	5
Cost	free	\$54.90	\$34.95	\$39.99 each	\$49.95+	\$140

Building Faith VBS, Camp, and Intergenerational Perennial Favorites Chart (2025)

	Praying All the Time	ReNew	S.P.Y. Parables	Water Around the World	Waves of Gratitude
Children	K – 5 th	pre-K – 6 th	pre-K – 5 th	pre-K – 5 th	K – 5 th
Youth				Y	
Adults				Y	
VBS	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Camp					
Intergen.				Y	
Year-round					
Church Affil.	Episcopal	ELCA	Episcopal	PC(USA)	Episcopal
# Sessions	5	5	3	5	5
Cost	\$49.95	\$89.99	\$39.95	\$85	free



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

Sarah Bentley Allred (she/her/hers)

Sarah Bentley Allred is the Senior Formation Associate and Project Director of Roots & Wings: Intergenerational Formation Collaborative for Lifelong Learning at Virginia Theological Seminary. Before joining the Department of Lifelong Learning, Sarah served as Director of Children and Youth Ministries for four years and then completed the M.Div. program at VTS with a focus on Christian formation. She is passionate about children's spirituality, intergenerational worship, and small church formation. She loves local coffee shops, board games, the beach, and exploring new places with her husband, Richard, and their toddler, Eleanor. Find out more at sarahbentleyallred.com.

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)

Molly Herman-Gallow lives in Durham, North Carolina, where she is pursuing her Master of Divinity at Duke Divinity School. She formerly worked at St. Martin in the Fields Episcopal Church in Brookhaven, GA as its Children & Youth Minister. In that role, she loved ministering to all of St. Martin's children and families, and she especially enjoyed aspects of curriculum creation and Christian education that her role required of her. Molly is a cradle Episcopalian and grew up in the Diocese of Atlanta. She graduated from Elon University in 2019 with a filmmaking degree and a minor in religious studies. Molly loves continuing to tell the story of the Church and discovering her identity further as a Christian formation educator.

Juniper LaNunziata (they/them)

Juniper LaNunziata is a postulant for holy orders in the Diocese of East Carolina and currently serves as Campus Minister for The Well Campus Ministries of East Carolina University. They served as Director of Christian Formation at St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Greenville, NC for 8 years. Juniper was born and raised in Pennsylvania but has been living in the South for almost 20 years. They love 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. An Arkansas native and cradle Episcopalian, Marvin grew up at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, where he was actively involved in the youth group, held diocesan youth leadership roles, and spent summers at Camp Mitchell as a camper and Counselor in Training. He went on to attend Hendrix College, earning a degree in Communications. After graduating in 2013, Marvin joined the Episcopal Service Corps in Louisiana, where he served as Assistant Youth Director at St. James Episcopal Church in Baton Rouge. Following his year of service, he became the Youth Director for St. James and the Diocesan Youth Director in the Diocese of Louisiana. In 2016, he returned to Arkansas to begin his work at Christ Church while also becoming an active member of the Forma Council in 2019 and part of the Forma Executive Council in 2021.

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