

CULTURAL AWARENESS WEEK 2023

# Gathering

*January 9-15*

ISAIAH  
56  
7 8  
NIV

GOD'S HOUSE OF PRAYER

FOR ALL NATIONS



# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

***Gathering: God's House of Prayer for All Nations***

**Welcome**

**Daily Devotions**

**Weekly Programs**

***Youth Programs***

Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade

6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade

High School

***Men's Program***

***Women's Program***

***Program Resources***

**Sunday Worship**

Drama (Bill Booth Theater Company)

Children's Moment

Sermon

Greetings!

My name is Captain Ketsia Diaz, Secretary of the Intercultural Ministries Department in the Central Territory. Our Territory has had the honor of preparing the Cultural Awareness Week 2023 Resources. This year's theme is "Gathering: God's House of Prayer for All Nations," based on Isaiah 56:7-8, *NIV*. Here is what it says:

*"These I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." The Sovereign LORD declares—he who gathers the exiles of Israel: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."*

Isaiah paints a beautiful picture of inclusion. God is gathering the faithful to His holy mountain and the experience is one of joy in God's house of prayer. Those invited to join the procession include a mix of faithful followers. Some feel worthy as God's people; others feel unworthy, believing they could never fully be a part of God's people because they were maimed and outcast, without family or community.

Yet all were invited to this joyful procession where God gives to these very ones who feel excluded, an honored place and a name that is better than sons and daughters. God makes it clear that those who persist in doing right in God's name and who keep the Sabbath, God is gathering into his family. He will not turn them away. And there are others yet to come who will join them!

So, how can we be a House of Prayer for All Nations in order for others to come? We must embrace the idea of intercultural living by agreeing to be changed; to allow others into our circle and us to step into theirs, gathering in the familiar places and learning to appreciate the differences.

The Cultural Awareness Week Resources will provide you with ideas of programs you could incorporate into this important event in your Unit. The resources include Daily Devotions, Youth, Men's and Women's Program Ideas, and Sunday Worship. And what would Cultural Awareness Week be without cultural celebrations and activities for your community gatherings?

We hope and pray the Cultural Awareness Week 2023 Resources are a useful tool as you Gather in God's House of Prayer for All Nations!

Please click this link if you would like to access the Welcome to Cultural Awareness Week 2023.  
<http://www.salvationarmymedia.org/caw2023.html>



This DAILY DEVOTIONS Section has a reading for each day of Cultural Awareness Week. The readings focus on God's great care for those who follow him and the invitation to partner with God in gathering the nations into his House. As you read, reflect on the social or religious barriers that are restricting your ability to gather others to God's family. And pray. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in overcoming these obstacles and to advancing His Kingdom here on earth.

## DAY ONE

### A Safe Dwelling Place

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." (Psalm 91:1-2, ESV)*

#### Gathering in a Place of Comfort and Safety

This image reminds me of a family picture that I framed for my late husband on Father's Day. It is a picture of our newborn son safely curled up in both hands. He was so tiny and displayed an image of innocence lying in both of our hands with no sense of worry or fear. We all have moments when we long for a place of comfort and safety because we all face seasons of life's calamities, stormy moments, or enemies that can make life miserable. During this time, we long for a friend, family member, or trusted one that can shelter us from our difficult situation and make us feel protected, even if it's only for a moment. Finding that place is not always convenient or possible. And it requires trust, dependency, and reliability on others.



The Psalmist, in verse 1, reminds his audience that this dwelling place is available in the presence of the Highest God. The author uses the term Most High implying something "way above" with the implication that God's power, protection, and provision are supreme and above anything other deities or people can offer. One commentary illustrates it this way when you think of the term shadow, you might think there is not much protection from that; however, in this context, the shadow imagery reminds us that we will be completely safe and protected when we are close enough to the Lord Almighty. (Bibleref). So, the focus of the shadow imagery is the consistent "closeness" of the individual with the Lord.

The Psalmist, in verse 2, expresses a personal relationship with God, who provides him with protection and safety. To go to that shelter, he needs to trust and be confident in the one offering refuge and the place of safety as promised to others in verse one. He makes the decision and commitment to abide and trust the Lord during his need for refuge. It might not be easy to trust people around you with all that is happening in your life, but as

followers of Jesus, we can be confident in the promise and come to Him to find refuge, protection, and provision.

*As you go about your day, I invite you to come to that dwelling place of the Almighty God to find the peace you desire. I pray today that you will find comfort and safety in the Lord Most High as you seek rest and reassurance. By the Holy Spirit, I also pray that you would lead and offer a dwelling place and protection to someone else.*

## DAY TWO

### A Trustworthy and Inclusive Place of Worship

*For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:47-48, ESV)*

#### Gathering in a Welcoming Place



Have you ever been in a situation where you see something good happening, and you want to be a part of it? But you feel like you are being held at arm's length because you are considered an outsider who will never fully belong. Deep inside of us, we all want to find that place to call home, a dwelling where we are not merely tolerated but entirely welcomed and accepted. As believers, we often seek to belong to our church community.

During Paul's time, Jews were scattered all over the Roman Empire. Many were living far away from Jerusalem, their home, and unable to worship in the Temple. However, for many Jews, wherever they settled, they built synagogues as their places of worship, and followed the Mosaic law, which also defined the Jewish people.

God's covenant and promise to Abraham, through the Jewish nation that would come from him, would be a blessing to all other nations (Genesis 12:3). The Jewish people opened the synagogue to Gentiles who followed their God. But the Gentiles were not fully accepted as part of the Jewish nation unless they followed certain rituals that gave them entry.

When Paul, in his words of encouragement in the synagogue, proclaimed that God's salvation and forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ are for all, Jews and Gentiles included, without the need for ritual sacrifices or the traditional way of Jewish worship--something the Law of Moses could not do (v.39)--Paul's message brings something new.

Through Jesus, the Gentiles are entirely welcomed, without the need to assimilate into the Jewish customs in order to be wholly accepted as God's children. Many of these Gentiles were excited by this Good News of true inclusion in God's family. As Paul leaves his audience, he urges these believers (Jews and Gentiles) to rely on God's grace (v.43).

It is interesting to notice that although the Jews let the Gentiles come into the Synagogues, the message of Paul and his companions--that everyone who believes in Jesus is made right in God's sight (v.39)--did not sit right with some of the Jews.

Some Jews did not want to give up their title of "the chosen nation," which gave them a sense of superiority and kept the Gentiles labelled as "others" or the lesser ones. The Gentiles, however, were glad and thankful for this new message of complete inclusion in God's family which gave them the freedom to worship God without restraint (v.48).

*As followers of Jesus and the church community, we are called to be a light, a blessing to all people, a place of welcome where people can feel that they belong and matter. In Isaiah 56:3 ESV, God says, "Don't let the foreigners who commit themselves to the Lord say, "The Lord will never let me be part of his people." We need to be careful not to create environments in which we merely tolerate others but accept them in view of God's grace. Today, may your attitude bring light and hope to someone, and may you receive the blessing of feeling welcomed in God's family.*

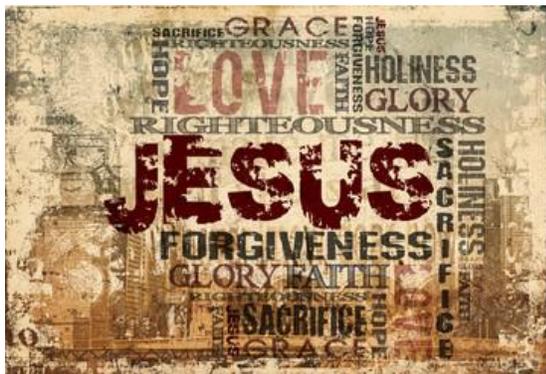
## DAY THREE

### A Righteous Place of Worship

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you. Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face, who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted. (Psalm 89:14-16, ESV)*

#### Gathering in a Righteous Place

Knowing who God is and understanding His nature are at the heart of those who follow Him. God does not hide His character from us. Throughout scripture, we progressively learn more about who the Almighty God is.



In Psalm 89, the author Ethan calls on God to remember His covenant with King David amidst the people's disobedience. At the beginning of the Psalm, the Psalmist recounts God's power, majestic grandeur, and faithfulness. In verse 14, which we are reflecting on today, Ethan states four of God's primary characteristics: "Righteousness, Justice, Love, and

Faithfulness". These are the ways God rules His kingdom and the people under His care. They are the foundation (basis) of God's character and his divine government ruling of the world.

The holy God is never unjust or unwise in His decision-making. His Righteousness and Justice are constant, never changing, and are equally offered to all. Mercy and Truth go before the Lord Almighty. He calls these to the forefront when dealing with sinful people, taking away our guilt and shame and offering salvation and a changed life based on His holiness. He makes us His ambassadors and enables us to share that same justice, love, and mercy with others in an unfair world. So, these attributes are required of all God's children who choose to follow Him, to provide a place of worship where all can feel loved and express their joyful hearts.

In Isaiah 56:1, God's words to his people are to "maintain justice and do what is right" as His children. We are called to be like our Father; the attitude and action of our lives should be one of fairness toward others. Unfailing love and truth should pave the way in how we interact with others. Our world is not fair and doing the right thing can be based on one's desire and level of comfort. We cannot rely on our society's meaning of Righteousness and Justice to support our brothers and sisters who are being mistreated. We are blessed to serve a God who shows us, treats us, and loves us all the same and blesses us with the same power to be the light in someone else's life.

*The Psalmist says that those who learn to honor God and walk in His light are blessed. They rejoice in God's name all day long and celebrate His Righteousness (v.16). As God's representatives, we are to reflect this character in our lives and places of worship. Is the nature of Righteousness, Justice, Love, Mercy, and Truth the basis of your life? Is your place of worship governed by these characteristics of God so that others are drawn to it?*

## **DAY FOUR**

### **Preparing for the Coming Glory**

*So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32, ESV).*

Gathering in Holding Fast to God's Covenant



Being obedient can be such a hard thing to do. Some of us take pride in being stubborn, rebellious, or strong-willed. These characteristics can be seen as strengths and as being independent, which is not a bad thing. We are all created with certain strengths and weaknesses that shape us and we learn to navigate these aspects of our personalities.

However, love and obedience to God's word is critical to a fulfilling life. As His children, His word instructs and guides us in our decisions and in choosing the right path. God's laws are about having the right relationship with Him, with others, and with ourselves.

In Isaiah 56:1-8, the prophet reminds us of the value of living according to God's commands. We are called to keep justice and do righteousness; to hold fast to His covenant in preparation for the coming of Salvation (v.1); to keep the Sabbath, not profaning it; and to keep our hands from doing evil (vs. 2, 4, 6b).

The Sabbath covenant, which is more than a day of rest, represents the time believers take to reorganize and dedicate themselves to the Lord. The faithful observance of the Sabbath covenant is a believer's lifestyle and devotion to the Lord. It provides a moment of rest to refuel and refrain from doing evil. And all who join themselves to the Lord in serving and loving ministry (v.6) are called blessed and invited to the house of prayer in joyful celebration. The glorious kingdom that God promises to Israel is a spiritual kingdom that will continue to be built, centered on Jesus Christ the Messiah, and open to all people. Everyone who joins the family is called and expected to obey God's commands, to live by them, and be transformed by them because we are precious in His sight.

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32, *ESV*). Jesus also said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever" (John 14:15-16, *ESV*). God's covenant union transforms, frees, and gives believers the ability to love others without measure. Through that unconditional love, the whole world will know Jesus and what it means to be called children of the Highest King.

*As God's people, obeying God's word and living by it redefines who we are in relationship with others and in worship. As we gather in the house of the Lord, may we encourage one another to keep hold of God's command of love, rest in His presence, and find freedom.*

## DAY FIVE

### The Faithful Chosen of God's Redefined



*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd. (John 10:14-16, ESV)*

#### Bringing Others in God's Family

Jesus begins His ministry quoting from Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor." He has *sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*"(Luke 4:18-19, ESV).

Throughout His teaching and deeds, he continuously demonstrated to His followers the meaning and importance of that statement in building God's kingdom. Jesus intentionally explained and clarified the Father's commandments and purpose of Salvation for all. While the Jews thought that God's promise of freedom and Salvation through the Messiah was limited to their nation, and other selected few, Jesus clarified that misconception by defining God's commands in his teachings. He reminded the people of his day that God's mission was worldwide and not limited to one group of individuals.

In John, Jesus describes himself as a good shepherd who knows his sheep and is known by them. Jesus emphasizes his loving commitment to the sheep under His care, and to those other sheep that are not yet a part of the fold that He will go after. Jesus' devotion does not only extend to one group of sheep. This statement from Jesus to his audience is a clear insight into His worldwide mission: Salvation is offered to all people, Jews, and Gentiles alike.

It is easy to fall into the trap of restricting God's blessing to a particular group of individuals. Jesus refuses to let the religious leaders of his time limit God's blessing by the behavioral fences they built. He will not accept this kind of behavior from us either. God's messages to the Israelites in Isaiah 56:8, *ESV*, "I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered," is a reminder to us of His original plan to gather others into His kingdom continuously from all nations. God faithfully seeks after His children, wherever they are and whatever their situation, to bring them into His family.

As followers of Jesus, we are privileged to be invited to join in the mission of bringing others into the body of Christ. Do not fall into the temptation of limiting God's invitation by building cultural, social, gender, behavioral and other fences in our hearts and in the body

of Christ. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in creating a community, a home, and a house of prayer built on Jesus' love and acceptance.

*As we conclude this weekly devotional, what are the social or religious barriers that restrict your ability to gather others to God's family? May you allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in overcoming these obstacles to advance His Kingdom here on earth.*



Captain Ketsia Diaz  
Secretary of the Intercultural Ministries Department  
Program Section, Territorial Headquarters  
USA CENTRAL TERRITORY





## YOUTH MESSAGE

I want to talk about a familiar word today: “Welcome.” What do you think it means? (*Allow responses.*) You’ve probably heard the word plenty of times before. You might have seen it at your house, or in restaurants and stores. You may have even seen it here at our corps. Sometimes when someone you love has been away travelling, and they return, you make a sign that says, “Welcome home!” Perhaps you have a mat like this (*demonstrate if available*) in front of your house, that says “Welcome.” Maybe you’ve seen celebrities on TV being welcomed with a big red carpet!

The dictionary defines the word as a “friendly greeting”, or as someone or something that is “gladly received.” When we welcome others, we communicate to them that they are valued and that we are glad to see or be with them.

Sometimes, though, these types of signs and words can be a little deceiving. A place might say Welcome but will accept people only under certain conditions. For example, some places require a membership, or you have to be over a certain age or with a grown-up to go inside. Other times you have to have an invitation. Like that big, red carpet that seems so welcoming, but it is only for certain people with a special invitation, not just anyone.

It can be hard to not be welcomed or to be excluded. Some people do not want to welcome others who aren’t like them. We see this happen in school cafeterias, on playgrounds and even sometimes in church. We might say we welcome everyone, but if people are too different, they might be treated negatively or feel cast out.

Can you think of people who might be hard for you to get along with or people that would be hard to welcome? Yes, that is a reality of life. We don't always let people in the inside of our lives or even the inside of groups that we belong to.

In our scripture passage today the prophet Isaiah is speaking to the Israelites, God’s chosen people. Isaiah wanted the people of God to understand that how they lived with others mattered to God. Isaiah talks about some people who were difficult for the others to welcome in or get along with or understand. They were people that others would not want to let into the inside of their circle. The Israelites wanted God to be just for them, but this passage reminds the people that God’s love is for everyone; it does not stay inside one little place or with one group of people.

Jesus also taught about this when He was on earth. In Matthew 10:40-42, Jesus told people that when we receive and welcome others, it’s like we are welcoming Him, and welcoming “the One who sent Him” (vs.40). In His life, Jesus had a reputation for welcoming people who might otherwise be looked down on. He demonstrated love for children, even though kids in that time were not too valued. He went to people who were sick and hurting, outcasts of society and those who had done wrong. Jesus cared for them and loved them. He welcomed them into God’s family.

We can rejoice in this because we know that He welcomes us. He loved us enough to die for us, allowing us to be a welcome part of the Kingdom of Heaven. We also know that He wants us to welcome others. We can remind others that they are valued and loved. And, of course, the best thing we can do is pray! We can ask God to bring people into His family and give thanks for helping us to be part of that process.

## KINDERGARTEN-5<sup>TH</sup> GRADES

### **House of God Craft:**

Today we are talking about how God loves everyone. Isaiah 56:7, *ESV* says, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” For our craft we will be making a church that reminds your family that God’s house is for all people.

You will need:

- An Envelope
- Glue
- Popsicle Sticks
- Construction Paper
- Crayons or Markers

First glue an envelope onto a sheet of construction paper, opening facing out.

Show your child the envelope and talk about how this is a picture of God’s house of worship.

Who can go into this house of worship? Talk about how God’s house of worship is for all people.

Today we are going to make people to go inside. People that look different but are all welcome.

Give your child 3-4 popsicle sticks. Allow them to decorate these to look like different people. Put the people inside of the House of Worship.

Finish up by putting the verse Isaiah 56:7 on the envelope

### **“Red Carpet Reminder” Craft:**

You will need:

- Paper towel tubes
- Construction paper or fabric (red, preferably)
- Glue or tape
- Scissors
- Extra decorations (stickers, etc.)
- Markers or crayons
- String

Procedure:

Decorate the paper “red carpet”. Consider making it a special card of encouragement to a friend, or an invitation welcoming them to church or a play-date. Don’t forget to use their name!

If necessary, cut the paper and tape into a long strip.

Add extra decorations as desired, such as stickers or glitter.

Tape the paper onto the paper towel tube; then roll it up and tie the roll with a piece of string

Deliver to someone special and let them roll out the red carpet!

### **Interactive Game “Get to know you BINGO”:**

This activity encourages kids to get to know each other, while also recognizing the similarities and differences.

Using the attached BINGO sheet (or feel free to make your own) have the kids meet people in the group or in your corps that can sign in the box. Kids are encouraged to get a blackout, where all of the boxes are filled in. Remember each person can only sign one box.

### **Focused Prayer:**

Spend time together as a group praying that all people would feel welcome. Set up interactive prayer stations to provide some reflection on how we can demonstrate God’s love to everyone around us.

Station 1 – Ourselves: Have the kids write the name or draw a picture of someone they want to be more welcoming to, maybe it is someone they have a hard time with or a new person at school that they should get to know. Once they have written/drawn this, have the kids put the slips of paper in a basket as they ask God to help them show love to this person.

Station 2 – Our Community: Print out or use a map of your community. On the map mark with a sticker/post it note where the corps building is located. Help the children to then find their street and have them mark with a sticker/post it note where they live. As they mark their location, they can reflect and pray about sharing the love of Jesus in the community around them.

Station 3 – Our World: On a large poster board or butcher paper have the kids write the word “Welcome” in another language. *Suggested welcomes are provided, feel free to add more.* As they finish writing this word encourage the children to pray for the people in that country and around the world that they will know God’s love and find belonging in His family.

- English - Welcome
- Spanish - Bienvenidos
- French - Bienvenue
- Russian - Privet
- Swahili - Karibu
- Romanian - Bine ati venit

- Japanese – Yōkoso
- Afrikaans - Welkom
- Chinese - Huānyíng
- Arabic - 'Ahlaan bik
- German – Willkommen
- Norwegian – Velkommen
- Portuguese – Bem-Vinda
- Vietnamese – Chào Mừng
- Somali – Soo Dhawow
- Hindi – Svaagat He
- Italian – Benvenuto
- Bosnian – Dobrodošli
- Samoan - Fa'ailoa

# FIND SOMEONE WHO

FIND A DIFFERENT PERSON FOR EACH BOX.  
CAN YOU GET A BINGO OR A BLACKOUT?

Has had a broken bone.	Has been out of the country.	Went to a National Park this summer.	Has a little sister.	Has a pet that is not a dog or cat.
Can play a music instrument.	Wears the same shoe size as you.	Can speak two languages.	Favorite food is pizza.	Is left handed.
Was born the same month as you.	Went camping last summer.	Wearing mismatched socks.	Can whistle.	Has read all of Harry Potter.
Plays a sport.	Has a big brother.	Has pierced ears.	Favorite color is red.	Likes to eat sushi.
Has dyed their hair.	Has been on a rollercoaster.	Has been in a parade.	Can curl their tongue.	Can do a cartwheel.

## 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> GRADES

### **Hospitality Opener:**

The goal of this exercise is to give young people the opportunity to articulate the places in their lives where they feel welcome (or unwelcome) and why. Our hope is that young people can begin to intuitively pick up on the intentional ways in which “welcome” is expressed, or not, and how this might inform the way in which they experience the hospitality of God and offer that hospitality to others.

Using a white board or poster board draw a line down the middle and label one side “welcome” and the other “unwelcome”.

Have the youth begin sharing PLACES where they feel welcome or unwelcome.

Next have them share THINGS/ACTIVITIES that make them feel welcome or unwelcome.

- You can also use post it notes have the youth write it down put the notes on either side.

Spend a few minutes discussing with the large group any common themes.

### **Ask: What does hospitality mean?**

Hospitality is more than just saying that people are welcome, but it includes an attitude of welcoming so that everyone knows that they belong. Remember Jesus taught about this in His ministry on earth. In Matthew 10:40-42, Jesus told people that when we receive and welcome others, it’s like we are welcoming Him, and welcoming “the One who sent Him!” In His life Jesus had a reputation for welcoming people who might otherwise be looked down on. He demonstrated love for children, even though kids in that time were not too valued. He went to people who were sick and hurting, outcasts of society and those who had done wrong. Jesus cared for them and loved them. He welcomed them into God’s family.

But it has been God’s plan all along that people would know His love. In Isaiah 56:1-8 the prophet Isaiah is speaking to the Israelites, God’s chosen people. Isaiah wanted the people of God to understand that how they lived with others mattered to God. Isaiah talks about some people who were difficult for the others to welcome in or get along with or understand. They were people that most others would not want to let into the inside of their circle. The Israelites wanted God to be just for them, but this passage reminds the people that God’s love is for everyone; it does not stay inside one little place or with one group of people.

Questions:

**How is our corps/youth group welcoming to each other as well as visitors?**

**What can we do better to make this place more welcoming?**

**How can you practice loving hospitality and welcome of God in your world?**

**Interactive Game:**

Using the selected cards from the deck of cards, the leader will tape a card to each participant's back.

They should NOT be told what their card is.

Invite youth participants to mingle and greet each other using the following instructions:

- If the person they're greeting has a face card of any suit (Jack, Queen, King) on their back, they should be greeted warmly and in a friendly manner.
- If the person they're greeting has a club or spade numbered card on their back, they should be greeted in a neutral manner.
- If the person they're greeting has a heart or diamond numbered card on their back, they should be ignored or snubbed.

Let the participants mingle for 2-3 minutes.

After 2-3 minutes, ask participants to form groups with other people that they think have cards that are most similar to theirs.

Once they are in small groups, they can take the card from their back and look at it.

LEADER NOTE: Usually the people who were treated neutrally are more likely to be interspersed with the people who were treated negatively. Rarely do they group themselves with those who were treated warmly. This becomes important to notice for later in the lesson.

Ask the group several of the following questions:

**How long did it take you to find out if you had a card that was valued and respected by the group (the face cards)? What verbal and non-verbal cues did you use to figure that out?**

**How did it feel to be greeted the way you were during the activity?**

**Who decided which cards were more valuable (worthy of being treated kindly)?**

**How did it feel to have someone else decide what card you received and thus, your value?**

**Why do you think the people with the neutral cards were more likely to be grouped with the people who were treated negatively?**

## **How do you think this activity is related to our discussion today about being a welcoming youth group?**

Neutral and negative sometimes looked or sounded the same. Both neutral and negative were clearly different from the positive greetings. If we aren't being actively welcoming, our neutral responses might feel like negative responses to people, even if that isn't our intent.

It's important to treat all people kindly because it can be quite hurtful to them if we don't. It can also be hurtful to them if we're neutral.

### **Focused Prayer:**

Spend time together as a group praying that all people would feel welcome. Set up interactive prayer stations to provide some reflection on how we can demonstrate God's love to everyone around us.

Station 1 – Ourselves: Have the youth write the name of someone they want to be more welcoming to, maybe it is someone they have a hard time with or a new person at school that they should get to know. Once they have written, have the kids put the slips of paper in a basket as they ask God to help them show love to this person.

Station 2 – Our Church: Using a corps membership list/directory create slips of paper with the names of corps families or individuals. Have the youth participants choose a name and spend some time praying for that individual/family. After praying, write a note on a postcard to that individual/family letting them know they were prayed for today.

Station 3 – Our Community: Print out or use a map of your community. On the map mark with a sticker/post it note where the corps building is located. Help participants find their street and have them mark with a sticker/post it note where they live. As they mark their location, they can reflect and pray about sharing the love of Jesus in the community around them.

Station 4 – Our World: On a large poster board or butcher paper have the youth write the word "Welcome" in another language. *Suggested welcomes are provided, feel free to add more.* As they finish writing this word encourage them to pray for the people in that country and around the world that they will know God's love and find belonging in His family. One step further, provide information about how The Salvation Army is serving in the various countries and spend some focused time praying for the ministry and work of The Salvation Army.

- English - Welcome
- Spanish - Bienvenidos
- French - Bienvenue
- Russian - Privet

- Swahili - Karibu
- Romanian - Bine ati venit
- Japanese – Yōkoso
- Afrikaans - Welkom
- Chinese - Huānyíng
- Arabic - 'Ahlaan bik
- German – Willkommen
- Norwegian – Velkommen
- Portuguese – Bem-Vinda
- Vietnamese – Chào Mừng
- Somali – Soo Dhawow
- Hindi – Svaagat He
- Italian – Benvenuto
- Bosnian – Dobrodošli
- Samoan - Fa'ailoa

Resources Used:

<https://yaleyouthministryinstitute.org/>

<https://ministry-to-children.com>

Think Orange Curriculum



Peggy McGee  
Youth Leadership and Resource Development  
Youth Department, Territorial Headquarters  
USA CENTRAL TERRITORY

## HIGH SCHOOL

### Opening Activity

Hunger Games Dodgeball

Equipment needed: dodgeballs and tables (and other objects that can be used as barriers)

Setup: Place all dodgeballs in the middle (this becomes the cornucopia)

Set up barriers in various places around the play area. Players may use these barriers to take cover. Divide the group into pairs (districts). These pairs will form an alliance and work together to win the game.

How to play: The goal is to eliminate all about other players. Teams can establish partnerships with other teams. If the person who gets you out, gets out, you are back in the game. You cannot run with a ball. Players are allowed to toss the ball and go grab it or pass it between alliance members.

### Lesson (Nehemiah and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem: (Nehemiah 3-6, *NIV*))

Let's vote! Which team portrayed the best teamwork in our game? Why?

In the Bible, there was a man named Nehemiah. God gave Nehemiah the job of rebuilding the great city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a holy city – this was God's city – a special place where God was known and experienced.

In the cultural context of Nehemiah's day, a city without walls would never amount to much, which is why rebuilding was so necessary to restore the image and calling of Jerusalem as the holy city.

The city was a mess; totally destroyed. There was a time when the city of Jerusalem stood tall. The city walls were tall, and strong and had guards all around for protection... No one was messing with this city!

Jerusalem found itself in some conflict with enemies; people who hated God and wanted to see His city ruined. The enemies were attempting to throw a wrench (wink wink) in this project of rebuilding the wall, as they knew of the restoration that was coming. The enemy (the devil) knew that lives were going to be renewed, he knew that God was going to be honored, he knew that people were going to be in a restored relationship with God. Satan's tactic of causing discouragement, chaos and ruin is oh so common. We see it all around us, even within the church. And the thing about discouragement? It often hits when we least expect it, from the people or circumstances we least expect it, and it always causes us to question our identity – our qualifications – our abilities – our standing – sometimes even our faith.

These enemies were able to damage the wall of Jerusalem, which is why it needed to be fixed... this is where Nehemiah comes in!

The task of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem was a big deal and was not going to be an easy task. Nehemiah definitely could not complete this task on his own. Nehemiah then became a leader in accomplishing the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The people of the city all came together from priests, leaders, goldsmiths, perfumers, mothers, and children alike. Each person brought their time and effort in order to rebuild the great city of Jerusalem – each of them came together and developed a plan to work on different portions of the wall. You know what they say, teamwork makes the dream work!

Each resident of the city of Jerusalem was responsible for their portion of the wall. Each portion mattered and each person had a part to play. Despite the anxiety of potential attack, the people kept working. Weapon in hand, eyes open, the people kept going. Even though there were enemies out to destroy their hard work, bring them down and divide their city, the people of Jerusalem kept clearing the mess, and most importantly, kept building.

When Nehemiah felt the calling to lead the people of Jerusalem in the rebuilding of the city, he remembered a promise made to Moses:

“If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my name” (Nehemiah 1:8-9, *NIV*).

We cannot see full restoration in ourselves and in the world around us if we cannot identify the true source of discouragement and opposition. This requires us to stop making enemies out of each other, but instead come together – gather – to be the people and church God desires for us to be! With love for God and love for one another, unity is possible (Ephesians 4:13). It helps to be humble and “consider others better than ourselves” (Philippians 2:3).

We might not have a holy city, but we have each other. We are God’s holy dwelling. (1 Corinthians 6:19) Our lives must remain strong and firm in Him as we work together with others to serve Him and make Him known to our world. Let’s gather together in love and build each other up as we build God’s kingdom.

## **Discussion**

What does good teamwork look like?

How can we show love to one another?

What happens when God’s people do not work together in love?

What could the world look like if people truly loved each other and gathered together?

What are some things you can do to build God’s kingdom?

What do you need to work on in order to be a good team player?

## **Closing Activity**

Select a teamwork focused activity that will benefit your corps.

Ideas:

Packing food pantry bags

Cleaning/organizing an area of the building

Writing cards to people who need encouragement/prayer

Painting a wall

Cleaning/Reviving kettle stands or other equipment

Preparing baked goods for an event or visitation

Folding bulletins

Rolling silverware

## **References and Additional Resources**

Make Us One <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3g20vYw9hlo>

Build Your Kingdom Here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ3EZbgeCaU>

Heal our Land <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fq8ffjcEcU>

Graves into Gardens <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uTGVLArbNU>



Katie Laidlaw

Territorial Christian Education Director for Discipleship

Youth Department, Territorial Headquarters

USA CENTRAL TERRITORY



## **OVERVIEW**

The Prayer and Prayer Night is designed for men to worship together in the context of our Cultural Awareness Week. Our theme is “Gathering: God’s House of Prayer for All Nations.” As you gather for prayer, create a space to expectantly hear from the Lord. Create opportunities for the men to pray and worship in their own worship expressions and native languages.

## **WORSHIP: Prayer & PRAYER Night**

### **OUTLINE**

Gathering: God’s House of Prayer for All Nations

Welcome

Praise & Worship

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 56:7-8

Praise & Worship

Devotional Thought

Time of Prayer

Closing Song

Benediction

### **SONG SUGGESTIONS:**

- House of God Forever By: Jon Foreman
- House of the Lord By: Phil Wickham
- Good of God: Bethel Music
- Here I am to Worship: Hillsong Worship
- Shout to the Lord/Beautiful Name: Influence Music
- Kingdom By: Maverick City

## **SCRIPTURE READING:**

(Isaiah 56:7-8, NIV)

*“...these I will bring to my holy mountain  
and give them joy in my house of prayer.  
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices  
will be accepted on my altar;  
for my house will be called  
a house of prayer for all nations.”  
The Sovereign Lord declares—  
he who gathers the exiles of Israel:  
“I will gather still others to them  
besides those already gathered.”*

## **DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:**

Salvation offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is offered to all creation. God gathers His people, both Jews and Gentiles, and unites them with Him and one another.

He provides an opportunity for followers living in obedience to become more like Him. What is our response to God’s salvation, mercy, and grace? How do we respond to the invitation He gives us to live one with Him and one another?

The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible suggests, “The proper response of the people of God is that of covenant loyalty. The Lord expects his people to act like him. He expects that the people who have been justified and thereby have entered into a relationship with him will act in accordance with his own standards. There is a blessing for all who keep the covenant.”

The prophet Isaiah reveals keeping the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant (v.3-8). Practice of the Sabbath is an indication of how one honors the remaining commandments provided in scripture. The way we (all believers) approach the spiritual discipline of Sabbath is representative of our spiritual condition. Keeping the Sabbath is living within the covenant between God and His creation.

The Gentile (“foreigner”) as well as the eunuch show their commitment to the covenant Lord by keeping the Sabbath. In the past the eunuch could not be a part of the covenant community; there were also limitations on foreigners (Deuteronomy 23:1-8). However, the renewed covenant is extended to those who were previously unfit.

“The Lord responds to the needs of those who join his covenant. The eunuch is assured that he will have a remembrance among the people of God. His name will be remembered forever. The foreigner who has been kept away from the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem is assured that he, too, will be able to bring sacrifices and worship the Lord”.

The imagery provided in verse seven reflects on the temple. It expresses how the temple will be understood as the “House of Prayer” for all nations. Isaiah anticipates the new era in which Jews and Gentiles will worship God together.

Today, we live in a new era. We live within the new covenant offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Reflect on what that means for you personally:

How are you living within the new covenant with God?

How are you prioritizing Sabbath rest as you strive to live more like God?

How are you advancing the “House of Prayer?”

How can you participate in creating a safe place for all to know they are invited into the Kingdom of God?

Reference: VanGemen, W. A. Isaiah (1995). In *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*. Baker Book House.1995.

### **PRAYER TOPICS:**

- Pray for God to reveal the sacrifices He’s wanting you to make for His Kingdom.
- Pray with an attitude of celebration and thanksgiving for the sacrifices you have made for God’s Kingdom.
- Pray you will be open to welcoming the stranger.
- Pray your church will move in ways to create a more welcoming space for the stranger.
- Pray for unity within the Kingdom of God.
- Pray for a renewed and restored spirit of prayer within the Church.
- Pray the Church will be a safe gathering place for all to worship the Lord.

### **FELLOWSHIP:**

Barbeque Cultural Celebration

\*This event can be hosted easily outside or inside based on weather and setting.

### **Overview**

- Host a barbeque and invite men to bring a side dish which represents their culture. The corps should provide the meat/main dish.
- Encourage attendees to share about their dish and how it represents their culture. Lean into the idea of celebrating the diversity within the community represented at the event.
- Throughout the event, encourage a sense of community through music, games, and conversation around the tables.

### **Backyard Games**

- Cornhole
- Ladder Ball
- Horseshoes
- Washers

- Bocce Ball
- Jumbo Jenga

### **Preparation**

- Create an invitation for men within your corps and community
- Ask men directly to prepare side dishes
- Clean and decorate the gathering spaces
- Set up games
- Prepare the main dish and tables for side dishes
- Host the Event



Captain Brenna E. Lee  
Corps Officer, Corps Community Center, Bloomington, IN  
Administrator, Outpost, Brown County, Bloomington, IN  
Intercultural Field Advisor, Indiana DHQ  
USA CENTRAL TERRITORY



## THE GATHERING

### PROGRAM RESOURCES

*Prayer Stations and Group Activities*

*“...these I will bring to my holy mountain  
and give them joy in my house of prayer.  
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices  
will be accepted on my altar;  
for my house will be called  
a house of prayer for all nations.”  
The Sovereign Lord declares—  
he who gathers the exiles of Israel:  
“I will gather still others to them  
besides those already gathered.”  
(Isaiah 56: 7-8, NIV)*

*The following activities can be used as prayer stations or as group activities. This program is designed to bring out and celebrate diversity within a group. The instruction sections can be printed for each station or read as the group progresses together.*

---

**Tell me your story.** *“these I will bring to my holy mountain...”*

Prepare several copies of the attached story cards. If possible, play or set up a loop of the video [The Salvation Army]. {*The Salvation Army Soldier’s Testimony* (2016, April 27) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLGzQQ2ywyE> which is about 12 minutes long and features three testimonies.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** First, Peter chapter 3, verse 15, says, *“Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.”* Many of us have never taken the time to think through our testimony. Take some time to thoughtfully fill out the card. Do you remember when you first heard the story of Jesus? Who told you? Where were you? The story of Jesus reaches across all cultures and borders.

Your story matters. When scholars trace the development of the alphabet, it goes from Egypt with hieroglyphics through Sinai and right into the ancient kingdom of Mesopotamia. Not coincidentally, this is the same route that God led his people from slavery through the wilderness to a land he had promised them. On the way what did God do? He wrote down his Ten commandments for the people to follow. In a very tangible way, God is a god of writing, a god of stories. With each believer, God continues to write

his story. Spend a few minutes thanking God for your story and praying thoughtfully for three people with whom you can share your story.

---

**Celebrate each other.** “...give them joy in my house of prayer” (Isaiah 56:7-8, NIV)

At <https://centralmissions.org/partners-in-mission/central-territory-missionaries/> find a list of the current Central Territory Missionaries. Print the pictures and flags of the various countries in which they serve. Supply yarn in each color of each flag. For instance, missionaries serving in Great Britain will have the flag of Great Britain and yarn in red, blue, and white. This activity tends to work better if there is at least one example on the table. Cut three pieces of yarn 8-12 inches in length using the colors of the flag. Tie the three pieces of yarn together and tape the end to the table. Braid the three pieces together, creating a braid that represents that country. If there are members of your group from other countries, feel free to include flags from these countries as well. You might also want to include flags and stories from countries in the news.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Close your eyes and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you. Open your eyes and choose a missionary or flag. Trust the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Once you have made your choice, take three pieces (6-12 inches in length) of yarn that represent that country. For the USA, you might take a piece of red, a piece of white, and a piece of blue yarn. Tie the end of the yard together and tape that end to the table. Braid the three pieces of yarn. As you braid and think of your chosen place/people, pray one of these verses over and over:

**Romans 15:13, ESV** “*I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.*”

**Isaiah 12: 5, ESV** “*Sing to the Lord, for he has done wonderful things. Make known his praise around the world.*”

**1Thessalonians 5: 16-18, ESV** “*Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*”

**Philippians 4: 4-6, ESV** “*Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray for everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done.*”

**John 15: 10-11, ESV** “*When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!*”

Keep your braid as a reminder to pray for the blessing and joy of the people in these countries and those who are serving there.

---

**What can I give?** *“Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar...”* (Isaiah 56:7, NIV)

Set out a choice of temporary tattoos, a few small sponges or a roll of paper towels, and a bowl of water. Scripture quote tattoos can be bought online.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** In the Old Testament, sacrifices were literally burned and destroyed by the very act of sacrifice. To give a lamb to God, meant killing that lamb and losing any value that lamb might have had for wool or food. In the New Testament, this concept of sacrifice changed to mean giving something for God’s use. Paul explains it this way to the Roman believers:

*“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him”* (Romans 12:1, NIV).

Being a living sacrifice means that our sacrifice can be presented and used repeatedly, but it does not mean that our sacrifice is any less wholly given or used.

Next, the Old Testament act of sacrifice tangibly marked the worshipper. The altar at the temple burned continually. Anyone who was there would have been bathed in the smoke, the smell of which would have clung to them for some time. Moreover, in the inner part of the temple, stood the altar of incense upon which specially formulated incense burned. God specifically forbids using this incense for any purpose other than worship. *“Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the Lord.”* Exodus 30:37, *ESV*. In a real way, worship had a unique aroma that would have clung to those who had been in the temple long after they had left the temple complex.

What marks modern believers as being in God’s presence? The Apostle Paul wrote,

*“Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing. To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume. And who is adequate for such a task as this?”* (2 Cor. 2:15-16, NLT)

While we might not have any modern church cologne, it is still important for us to be marked by our time in God’s presence. As a symbol that we have worshipped today, choose a tattoo, and place it on a part of your body that will be easily seen (the back of your hand for instance).

---

**Where do we come from?** *“...a house of prayer for all nations...”* (Isaiah 56:7, NIV)

Affix a world map to a cork bulletin board or piece of cardboard. Supply a small container of colorful push pins.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Use the push pins to mark the places from which you believe your earliest ancestors came. You may have a detailed family history and be able to place pins in very specific places around the world. Perhaps you have the results from an at-home DNA test and know exactly where your ancestors came from even if you know very little about them. On the other hand, you may only be able to place pins in vague locations. You might know that your early ancestors were “African” or “Scandinavian,” but not know the exact place within those areas to put a pin. In this case, put a pin in the center of the region or as close as you know. Perhaps you have little to no idea about your ancestry, but you still know where you came from to arrive in this place at this moment. Go back as far as you can.

Meditate on what brought you to this place. Did you come from a family of faith? Are you here seeking a deeper faith? In the Wesleyan tradition, we believe in prevenient grace, the grace that goes before. This is God’s grace that reaches out to us before we have decided to follow Christ, perhaps even before we were aware of God. Take a few minutes to thank God for his prevenient grace in your life, for the way that God created you for this very moment through millennia of ancestors, prayers of believers, providential care, and the Holy Spirit.

---

**Shall we gather?** *“I will gather still others to them” (Isaiah 56:8, NIV)*

If individual prayer stations are set up, the instructions at this station should encourage whoever arrives to wait until someone else arrives. If doing this program corporately, a few moments of “waiting” should begin this part of the program. “Christ for the World” (Hallelujah Chorus #282) also has a lyric video available for download. Supply construction paper and markers.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Pause and wait until someone else joins you.

Read together (Isaiah 56:7-8 NIV)

The sad truth is that there is not always room for others in our worship.

We sometimes lack the patience to wait for others to join

or humility to consider differing viewpoints

or grace to allow for the imperfections and flaws of someone else

or we simply have not made room for others to join us.

We are satisfied with being a house of prayer, but not convinced enough to be a house of prayer for all nations. Some people need to hear our story and celebrate. What do we need to give to welcome them into our worship? What steps should we take to add more pins from more places to our map?

Sing together "Christ for the World"<sup>1</sup>

Before we leave, help each other to trace around their shoes with the provided paper and markers. It might be helpful for some to slip off their shoes and trace them that way. When you have finished, trade your paper with another person in your group. As you look at this footprint, pray these words:

Lord, I pray that you walk with [Name]. Guide each step they take as they seek to represent you to every person they meet. Amen.

Who first told you about God?	Who first told you about God?
What do you think God is like?	What do you think God is like?
When did you become a Christian?	When did you become a Christian?
What does being a Christian mean to you?	What does being a Christian mean to you?
On the back write the names of three people with whom you can share your story.	On the back write the names of three people with whom you can share your story.
Who first told you about God?	Who first told you about God?
What do you think God is like?	What do you think God is like?
When did you become a Christian?	When did you become a Christian?

<sup>1</sup> Available for download at <https://www.ministrytoolkit.org/portals/yhvumoah/ChurchinaBox>

What does being a Christian mean to you?

On the back write the names of three people with whom you can share your story.

What does being a Christian mean to you?

On the back write the names of three people with whom you can share your story.



Major AmyJo Ferguson  
Corps Officer, Grand Forks, ND  
Northern Division  
USA CENTRAL TERRITORY



## PROGRAM RESOURCES

No matter the size of your appointment or the makeup of those “on the inside,” we are called to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19a) and be a witness (Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria) to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

To do this, we must have some understanding of the circles we gather in and the circles we do not. Embracing the idea of intercultural living is to agree to be changed. To allow others into our circle and us to theirs, gathering in common, we learn to appreciate the differences.

The material presented here provides you with some ideas on how to get started incorporating a Cultural Awareness Week event in your Corps, and ideas for events or programs you could do. Thinking about a small Corps with limited leadership and budget, something here will encourage and inspire you. Bear in mind that this week is the second week in January, so some planning in the Fall would be beneficial.

As the Corps Leader, you can cast the vision for this event. However, knowing the answers to these three questions could help guide your thoughts:

- What cultures are represented already in my area of ministry?
- If there is diversity, do they gather together? Do they share in each other’s diversity?
- What cultures are inside my service area but outside my area of ministry?



### Culture

How do we define the word culture?

The online Webster-Merriman dictionary defines it as follows:

*“1a: the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group”*

*“also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time”*

“ . . . ”

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Culture. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved May 31, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>

If you do not know the cultural makeup of your immediate community, you can google search for information, or your Divisional Headquarters Development Department may be able to supply you with a Percept Report based on your zip code. This can give more demographic information than you could imagine.

### Planning Your Project

You are familiar with the 5 Ws (and 1 H) that should be asked of every project or event. Who? What? Why? When? Where? How? For Cultural Awareness Week, some of these questions are already answered for you. Some have more than one answer. Every Corps will approach this differently. This material is intended to speak mostly to those who are not confident in planning events or struggle with “adding one more thing” to a stretched calendar or limited resources.

Begin by asking yourself some questions:

QUESTION	POSSIBLE ANSWER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Cultural Awareness Week</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When do I want to do it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• January 9-15, 2023</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do I want to do it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because I must (LOL!) No, really because it can gather us into opportunities to share God’s love.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do I hold it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin with your Corps space.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do I want to accomplish?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will depend on who you want to impact. Is this to be an internal event to bring diverse cultures within your Corps into more loving and accepting relationships? Is this to bridge “Corps” and Social Service programs? Do you want to help the internal Corps understand the changing demographics of your immediate external community? Do you want to celebrate diversity?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who do I want to impact?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once you have decided what you want to accomplish with this focused event, it will become clear who you want to impact.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do I want to impact them?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once you know who your target audience is, you will be able to</li> </ul>

	determine how you want this event to impact them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who do I have to help me?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only you can answer this, but your answer should determine how and what you plan. If you do not have any lay leaders, consider who you could gather around you to accomplish your goal.</li> </ul>

First, determine whether your focus will be internal or external.

- Internally, do you want to help diverse groups know more about each other’s culture?
- Expanded internally is to bridge non-connected aspects of ministry in a common space. For example, helping Corps members understand the needs of food pantry recipients where the demographic is from a predominantly different culture.
- Externally, does your immediate community look different from your Corps demographic? Are there any barriers to break down?
- Expanded externally, your Corps people and community are all aware of each other, gather in healthy ways, and you just want to celebrate the wealth of the healthy cultural diversity you have.

When you have decided your focus, you can determine who can come alongside you. Corps members, teens, staff, and outside groups. Brainstorm and think creatively.

When you have your team (even if there are just a couple of you), decide on the activity.

Do not be over-ambitious if this is your first Cultural Awareness event. A simple successful event well done will have more effect than a complicated disaster! (Speaking from experience). Recognizing your strengths and weaknesses allows others to rise to the occasion and take leadership. Encourage those who may feel inadequate to participate. Check-in as plans progress but do not micromanage. The result of a good event is more important than everyone “doing it your way.”

The plan starts with deciding what to do. In no order of importance here are some suggestions:

- Food Fair
- Food Truck Event
- Taste of (insert food, country, or anything else you would like)
- International Arts Festival
- International Music Festival
- Family Night incorporates diverse cultures

- Fashion Show
- Game Night
  - Playing games from other cultures
  - Game Show type night to learn from each other
- Celebrity Cook-Off
- “What Are You Afraid Of” in gathering with another culture? Meeting emphasizing the aspect of safe space for genuine inquiry (3 Practice Circle model)  
Henderson, J. & Hancock, J. (2022) *What Are You Afraid Of*.  
<https://www.3practices.com/contact>
- Awareness Night (more of an internal event to help Corps members understand their wider community if they are cautious of “new” neighbors)
- Town Hall Meeting (a panel who would field questions about the community)
- Cookery class
- Sharing greetings and customs

Any of these activities can focus on specific Corps groups such as youth night with parents, sharing multigenerational activities, or gathering with diverse groups to build cultural awareness and understanding.

The idea of growing cultural awareness allows for a growing understanding and respect for all cultures. It should focus on the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms that can help develop deep relationships referenced from The Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning website, <https://springinstitute.org/whats-difference-multicultural-intercultural-cross-cultural-communication/>



Major Claire A. Grainger  
 Administrator for Program, Adult Rehabilitation Center, St. Louis, MO  
 Intercultural Ministries Coordinator, ARC Headquarters  
 USA CENTRAL TERRITORY

## Kolacky Recipe (Polish cookie)

### Ingredients:

8 ounces of cream cheese  
2 sticks OR 1 cup of butter  
2 cups of flour  
Solo (brand) fruit filling(s) (1 can equals 30 cookies)  
Powdered sugar

Light color baking sheet  
Toothpicks



The cream cheese and butter must be at room temperature, not cold; otherwise, the dough will break off into small pieces.  
Shortcut: warm the cream cheese unwrapped for 20 seconds and the butter 15 seconds in the microwave oven.

### Steps:

With an electric mixer, cream butter, and cream cheese. Slowly add flour every 10-15 seconds and if available use potato masher by hand afterwards. Pull apart and roll the dough in your hands. Make "baseball" size dough shapes and wrap individually in a tightly sealed sandwich bag. Refrigerate for two hours.

Roll out the dough (very thin) in a square shape. Add ½ teaspoon of jelly per kolacky. Fold in a triangle and insert toothpick and pinch sides so the jelly stays within the pastry. Bake at 400 degrees for about 8-10 minutes. Do NOT use a dark baking sheet, the dough will burn.

Remove from oven when then the bottom of the kolacky is light brown in color and cool on rack. Add a little powdered sugar using a sifter.

The recipe makes about 30 pastries.

## Peach Bosnian Recipe



4 large eggs  
1 1/4 cup granulated sugar  
1 cup oil (use sunflower)  
1 tablespoon vanilla sugar  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
1 tablespoon Greek Yogurt or Sour Cream  
Pinch of salt  
5 cups flour  
Filling  
Cookie crumbs (from peach halves)  
1/2 cup ground walnuts  
Orange juice (as needed)  
3 tablespoons peach jam or preserve  
Nutella (optional)  
Color + Sugar Coating  
Red Food Dye  
Yellow Food Dye  
1 cup milk, divided equally into 2 dishes  
Additional sugar for rolling, about 1 cup

In a large mixing bowl, beat the eggs, granulated sugar, vanilla sugar, and vanilla extract for about 1 minute on high speed until the mixture is light in color and has thickened. Reduce speed to medium and add in the oil slowly.

After the oil has been added, mix a few seconds to combine. Then add in the Greek yogurt and salt, mix, and then add in the baking powder. Mix well to combine everything and turn off the mixer. Set the mixture aside.

Preheat your oven to 300 F. Line a baking sheet (or multiple baking sheets) with parchment paper and set aside.

To the liquid batter, add in the flour, one cup at a time, and stir with a spatula for as long as you're able to. Then, use your hands to knead the dough until you've used up all the flour. The finished product will be a very soft, smooth dough. It should not stick your hands. If it's sticking, add a little more flour until it no longer sticks.

Once the dough is ready, use your fingers to break off pieces of the dough and roll it between the palms of your hands to form a smooth ball with no cracks.

If you want to ensure all of your peaches look identical in size, you will need to weigh each ball of dough. I never skip this step and my peaches always look perfect. I make each ball 10 grams.

Place all of your rolled balls onto a baking sheet, spacing them out slightly. They will spread a little bit when they bake.

Once you've filled up a baking sheet, press each ball very gently on top, to flatten the top. Very gently!

Bake at 300F for 20-30 minutes until the bottoms are lightly browned. The tops should remain light in color. Don't overbake them.

When baked, transfer the cookies to a cooling rack or flat surface. Repeat the above steps until you've used up all your dough.

Let the cookies cool until comfortable enough to hold. Then turn the cookie over and use a knife to carve out a small hole in the middle of the cookie over a mixing bowl. Don't carve out too much, for reference see the photo above. Save all of the cookie crumbs/carved out pieces in the bowl, you will be using them to make the filling.

Set aside and repeat this process with all remaining cookies, making sure to save the carved-out portion of the cookie.

When all of your cookies have been baked and carved out, prepare the filling.

#### Filling

Using your fingers, break up the cookie crumbs and carved out pieces as much as possible. Then, add in the walnuts, peach jam/preserves, and orange juice as needed. You will use just enough orange juice to make the mixture slightly wet and soft. It should not be liquid. Around 3-4 tablespoons should be enough.

If you'd like a Nutella version, simply substitute Nutella for the peach jam! It's even more delicious!!!

Mix well with a spatula and using a small spoon, fill each peach half with the filling mixture. Then join the 2 halves together to make 1 peach cookie. Wipe off any excess filling coming out of the sides, using the end of a spoon. Set aside.

#### Color + Sugar Coating

Separate the milk into 2 small bowls. To one bowl add in enough drops of yellow food coloring to achieve your desired shade. In the other bowl, add in the red food coloring. The amount you use will depend on the brand of food coloring. Use 1 or 2 cookies to test out the strength of the color. Then add more if needed.

I use McCormick Food Coloring and have to use 7-10 drops of yellow and around 10-12 drops of red. Once you have your colors, gently hold the peach cookie with your pointer finger and thumb. Place it on the surface of the yellow milk and roll it between your fingers so that you only dye the sides of the cookie yellow. Then, dip the top and bottom of the cookie in the red. Place the dipped cookie on a paper towel to slightly dry (about 1 minute) and then using your other dry hand, roll the cookie in sugar. Place on serving dish. Use one hand for dipping and one for rolling in sugar. Repeat the dipping and sugar-coating steps above with all the remaining cookies.

Store leftover cookies in an airtight container.

## Green Papaya Salad ( Taam Mak Houng) or Som Taam Laos Recipe

### Ingredients:

The whole green papaya - young papaya: 1 cup

Fish Sauce: 1 tbsp

Fermented Fish sauce ( pa deak): 2 tbsp

Sugar: 2 tsp

Fermented shrimp sauce ( Ka pi): 1 tsp

Cherries tomatoes: 5 tomatoes (sliced)

Lime juice: 3 tbsp

Garlic: 2 cloves

Fresh Chili pepper: as you like it to be spicy (two to four flesh peppers)

Peanut: 2 tbsp for topping

MSG (if prefer) 1 tsp

### Steps:

You will need Mortar pestle grinding cookware for this.

Prepared green papaya: Peel out the skin, then slide it thin about 2-3 inch long make like noodles.

Prepare sauce: Smash garlic and peppers until it turn in to paste and then added Lime juice, Cherries tomatoes, Sugar, Fish sauce, fermented fish sauce (Pa Deek), fermented shrimp sauce (Ka pi), lastly put green papaya in and mix (smash) it together make sure they are mix together really good and then taste to your preference then sprinkle peanuts on top to serve and enjoy!



## Mackerel Run Down Jamaican Recipe

Mackerel Run Down is an old-time Jamaican favorite. Served with “food” which typically means boiled yellow yam, fried or roasted breadfruit, boiled or fried dumplings, boiled green bananas and fried plantain. Try my Mackerel Run Down recipe.

INGREDIENTS :2 pounds pickled boneless mackerel

- 2 Cup Coconut Milk or 1 Can Coconut Milk
- 1 Cup Water
- 1 Large Onion, chopped fine
- 2 Garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 Stalks Escallion, chopped fine
- 2 Large Tomatoes, chopped fine
- 4 Sprigs Thyme
- 1 Scotch Bonnet Pepper, chopped fine (optional)
- 1 tbsp Vinegar
- Salt
- Black Pepper

METHOD: To remove some of the salt from the mackerel, soak in water overnight or boil in hot water for 30 minutes. (A combination of this can be done if the mackerel is still salty.) Drain the water off the mackerel and cut it into small pieces.

1. Combine milk and water in a frying pan and boil until it looks oily.
2. Add the mackerel and cover the pot. Cook for 10-12 minutes on medium heat.
3. Add and stir the onion, garlic, scallion, tomatoes, scotch bonnet pepper, thyme, and vinegar.
4. Add Salt and Pepper to taste
5. Lower the heat and simmer for 10 minutes.
6. Serve with green bananas, yam, roast breadfruit, and dumplings, if available.

Credit: <https://jamaicans.com/rundown/>



## Jerk Pork Jamaican Recipe

Pork shoulder marinated in Jerk Sauce and cooked to perfection. Jerk Pork is best when grilled over branches of pimento (allspice) wood, but tasty even when cooked over charcoal.

**INGREDIENTS :**

- Jerk Sauce – Buy or Make your own
- 5 pounds Pork Shoulder (cut up)
- Pimento (all spice) branches or aromatic wood

**METHOD:**

1. Rub the meat with the sauce.
2. If using a pork shoulder, make shallow cuts and rub in.
3. Marinate overnight.
4. Grill at the lowest possible setting over a low fire until done.
5. Pimento (allspice) branches (this is what is used in Jamaica) mixed with charcoal is best.
6. If not try to use an aromatic wood in the barbecue grill to enhance the flavor.
7. Chop meat into pieces, and serve traditionally with hard-dough bread

**Jerk Sauce Recipe**

Next to reggae music, “Jerk” style cooking is Jamaica’s most famous export to the world. Jamaica’s gift to the world, the versatile Jerk Seasoning (Sauce) is the perfect flavor-enhancer for chicken, pork, ribs, or fish. Allspice (pimento) and the Scotch Bonnet pepper combine to create a hot time for your taste buds! Here is a simple Jamaican Jerk Seasoning Recipe (Sauce).

**INGREDIENTS :**

- ½ cup Pimenta ( allspice berries)
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- 6-8 garlic cloves
- 4-6 Scotch bonnet peppers (habanero peppers can substitute)
- 1 tablespoon ground thyme or 2 tablespoons thyme leaves
- 1-2 bunches scallions (green onions)
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoon soy sauce to moisten

**METHOD:**

1. Put content in a food processor or blender and liquefy
2. Pour sauce in a Jar and keep refrigerated.
3. The sauce will keep forever if kept refrigerated
4. To increase spiciness blend pepper and pimenta and add to sauce the hot peppers at any time.

Credit: <https://jamaicans.com/jerk/>





## Call to Worship

### As We Come In Prayer Before You

“As we come in prayer before You  
We with gratitude would say:  
Thank You, Father, for the family  
Where each member learns to pray.  
Even we, Lord, Your dear children,  
Know what family life can mean  
When each one keeps close beside You,  
And the love of Christ is seen.

For our special Army family  
We would bring our thankful prayer  
And we, humbly, Lord, would ask You  
Now to keep us in Your care.  
As You guide and lead us forward  
Help us every day to pray  
For each other, and our leaders  
Serving in your world today.

In our prayers we must remember  
That our family is worldwide,  
For all people are Your children  
And the ones for whom You died.  
So no selfish prayer we offer  
But to You we gladly bring  
All who live here on this planet;  
May we serve You as our king.”

(Alan Bateman. (2015). South Shields. [hymn], In Salvation Army song book, no.743.  
The Salvation Army National Headquarters.

## Special Music/Solo Options

- “Yahweh” by WorshipMob ft. Cross Worship  
[Jesus Co. WorshipMob]. (2021, May 14). *Yahweh* [Video]. YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTKPeu118G4>
- “Let There Be Love Shared Among Us” SB #1007
- “Pray” by The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir

### Scripture Reading

“...these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” The Sovereign Lord declares - he who gathers the exiles of Israel: “I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.”  
(*NIV*, Isaiah 56:7-8).

### Pastoral Prayer

Lord, we thank you for this day and for the opportunity to gather in this place. We humbly bow before You this morning seeking Your will and Your perfect understanding of Your Word. Father open our ears, and our hearts so that we might be in tune to listen to Your Spirit and may we be compelled to be obedient to Your will and Your ways.

### Responsive Reading

#### Lord Direct Me

Leader: If I can teach and lead, serve and encourage, care and visit, and plan  
and create,

All: Lord, direct me.

Leader: If I can make a visit to the sick, the elderly, the lonely, or welcome  
the newcomer to my neighborhood,

All: Lord, direct me.

Leader: If I can show concern for the security and well-being of the family next door,

All: Lord, direct me.

Leader: If I can make home a place of love, communication, and mutual helpfulness,

All: Lord, direct me.

Leader: If I can be a part of a prayer team for salvation of sinners, and the growth  
of the Corps,

All: Lord, direct me.

Leader: If I can help to lead my community to be loyal to our nation's highest ideals  
of freedom and justice,

All: Lord, direct me.

Leader: If I can live by my needs, and not my wants, so that others will not be  
denied Christ's Gospel,

All: Lord, direct me.

Leader: If I can be exemplary, honest, and trustworthy in our world today,

All: Lord, direct me.

Leader: If I can work for peace and friendship to impede division and violence in  
our society,

All: Lord, direct me.

Leader: If I can show the spirit of Christ as I walk through the doors of opportunity that open to me,  
 All: Lord, direct me.  
 Leader: Leader I want to be like You, faithful and true. I want to declare Your name and shout Your praise for the nations to hear,  
 All: Lord, direct me.  
 Leader: I will make Your house a house of prayer and welcome all who gather here,  
 All: Lord, direct me.

(Talmadge, V., & Salvation Army. (1988). *Exploring worship* (p.197). Salvation Army Supplies)

Praise and Worship Music
Salvation Army Songbook, Hallelujah Choruses and Worship Songs
"Lord Of The Church, We Pray For Our Renewing" SB #817
"Christ For The World" SB #917
"O Church Arise" SB #819
"Raise Up An Army" HC #39
"Take My Life/ I Am Yours" HC #196
"Come, Now Is The Time To Worship" SB #332
"The Lord's Prayer" - Hillsong Worship
"Build My Life" by Brett Younker, Karl Martin, Kirby Kaple, Matt Redman
Living Hope by Phil Wickham
"Fill Me Up/ Overflow" by Tasha Cobbs
"O Come To The Altar"
"Jireh" by Elevation Worship & Maverick City
"Revelation Song" (multilingual)
[Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale] (2017, March 10). <i>Revelation Song (multilingual)</i> . YouTube <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpcvT7K6U3g&amp;list=PLJxgCQcrS9nzGfuPwz-mxaXuxwqX764I5&amp;index=53">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpcvT7K6U3g&amp;list=PLJxgCQcrS9nzGfuPwz-mxaXuxwqX764I5&amp;index=53</a>
"Living In The Overflow" by People & Songs ft. Charity Gayle & Joshua Sherman

Benediction
<p>May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV, Romans 15:5-6)</p>



Lieutenant Shanell R. Johnson  
Kroc Center Officer for Congregational Life  
Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center (Chicago Area Command) Intercultural  
Field Advisor, North and Central Illinois Division  
USA CENTRAL TERRITORY



## The Bill Booth Theatre Company



## **THY KINGDOM COME**

A Choric Reading of Matthew 6:9-13

Adapted by Joe Caddy from "OUR FATHER" by *Barbara D'Arcy*

---

**READER 1:** "This, then, is how you should pray"

**ALL:** **OUR FATHER...**

READER 2: who reigns over the heavens

READER 4: as well as under the bridges,

READER 1: who knows our hearts and understands our thoughts

READER 3: No importa el idioma ("No matter the language")

**ALL:** **HALLOWED BE THY NAME**

READER 2: Holy

READER 3: Santo ("Holy")

READER 2 & READER 3: HOLY

READER 3: is your name

**ALL:** **THY KINGDOM COME**

READER 1: ...to those who hunger for righteousness,

READER 2: to those who thirst for justice.

READER 4: and to those who simply just hunger and thirst

READER 1: To the homeless

READER 2: To the lonely

READER 3: Los abandonados (or "The abandoned")

**ALL:** **THY WILL BE DONE**

READER 3: For the powerless

READER 4: For the voiceless

READER 1: For the sorrowing

**ALL:** **ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

READER 4: Give us just what we need for today

READER 1: But enough to share with our sisters and brothers.

**READER 3:** Perdónanos, Señor (“Forgive us, Lord”)  
**READER 2:** Forgive us our sins  
READER 4: our fear of risk,  
READER 1: fear of loss or of sharing our wealth,  
READER 4: Forgive our reluctance to follow where Christ leads.  
**READER 2:** as we forgive those who sin against us

**ALL: LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION**

**READER 3:** into pride  
READER 4: into self-righteousness;  
READER 1: into denial of the truth.

**ALL: BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL**

READER 4: from our complicity in the selfish use of power,  
READER 3: and the oppression of others  
READER 2: and in the destruction of community.

**ALL: FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM,  
THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER**

READER 1: Amen

Please click this link If you would like to access the script.  
<https://youtu.be/VwX5WtbsCic>



## GOD'S PACK FAMILY!

*"So I will bring them to my holy mountain and make them happy in my house of prayer. The offerings and sacrifices they give me will please me, because my Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:7, ERV).*

How many of us have seen shows on TV or our tablet about wolves? Can you remember some things about the ways they behave? They hunt together, eat together, and live together. They are a family. They also don't want other wolves around that aren't part of their family, their pack. That's because they don't trust the outsiders not to hurt them or steal their food. Or they just don't like them around, so they do things to drive the strangers away from their area. It's as if they say, "Hey! You are not a group member, so get away! We don't know you, and you make us uncomfortable."

Sometimes, people behave like that. Maybe when they get together to have fun, or maybe when they just want to hang out. Sometimes at church too. And we also know that it can get weird when we go to a place where we don't know anyone. And if you are like me, that makes me a bit scared too. That makes me want to get away from that place because I don't know if they will ever like or accept me.

But God isn't like a pack of wolves in the wilderness. He isn't worried about protecting His territory from strangers and does not want to push anyone away. Why? Because He loves us all and wants you and me to come together to be with Him. He wants us to all be His family members so that we can worship Him together.

Yes! You heard me right. He created us to worship Him, and in Isaiah 56:7 in the Bible, a prophet named Isaiah spoke with God's permission to let everyone know that no one was a stranger to God. Everyone was good enough to be a group member if they wanted to join. God told them that He would make that possible if they would do what he asked. And what did he want from them? Righteousness! That is another way to say that He wanted them to do all things right for the right reasons as He told them.

It's like being kind to others; not letting others feel like we don't care about them; maybe it's showing respect to others; and not pretending that we don't see them.

So, righteousness does not mean that we are perfect. It means that we want to do what God expects of us every day. We allow Him to help us get better at that. He wants us to respect His rules to stay away from sin. And sin means anything opposite to what God wants from us or for us.

One of the problems Isaiah had been telling God's people that they were not very open to others who were not like them. These people were different from them in many ways.

But the biggest difference was that the strangers – which he called foreigners – were not blood relatives of God's people.

They were strangers on the outside. Well, until God explained that wasn't ever really the truth. He told them that the outsiders were group members because they would live righteously too. Anyone and everyone who listens to God and does all the good things He tells them is a family member. And when they follow Him, God would bless them to be winners in life. He would give them the best life; it would make them want to love and worship God even more. And He would provide them with honor and respect that no one else could.

God told the insiders that they had it all wrong. No one is an outsider when we all do what God wants. He wants us to worship Him. We do this when we give him our attention and find ways to show him that we care about how He feels. That happens when we show Him respect and pray for his kindness to make us kind and His love to show us how to love. Those are the offerings and sacrifices He's talking about in our scripture verse. Then we discover that God has gathered us together when we do these things. He brings us together to be a pack. And we can worship Him in ways that won't show anyone as different. And no one will have the time to notice that we aren't like them on the outside because God's love would make us alike on the inside.

When we feel we don't belong, remember that God sent Jesus to die for us. And God would do everything to bring us back to His family, to His house, to His church. All we must do is love Him back and ask Him to help make the ways we think and act to be like Him. Do that, and you will see that you have a place in His family. Our Scripture verse says that he will bring all nations together. That means everyone who wants His righteousness. No exception! Those on the inside of His pack and those on the outside who want to join.

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Activity 1. Get-to-know-you-better exercise.**

The leader can engage the group in a question game to help everyone learn something about others they didn't know about. If the group is large, the leader can create small teams to take turns with each question. Divide the groups by age/grade levels.

- Can you – or anyone in your group – count to five or ten in a language we don't speak normally?
- What is your favorite kind of food, and why?
- If you could visit another country, where would you want to go, and why?
- What's the funniest thing to happen to you?
- Do you – or anyone in your group – have a unique way to celebrate a holiday?
- What makes you happy, and do you know a clean joke?

- Do you know the names of all the kids in your group? (Allow them to do that before answering.)
- Do you know a story that Jesus told or a miracle he did in the bible?
- What do you like most about having a family?
- How could we help a stranger feel welcome?

When the teams all answer, go over the questions to see if anyone can remember someone else's reply. The point is to get everyone to learn something new about the participants, and for everyone to have group involvement. The leader could let the group know about this first, then they could use points to make the game competitive. Or give a small prize to everyone for participating.

### **Activity 2: Composite story.**

Divide the kids into small groups, by age or grade levels. Have them come up with a story idea about meeting a new friend. The story should be no more than seven to ten sentences. The group can brainstorm together, but each person gets a turn to add a sentence to the story. It's okay if the story is silly, but the point is to get them to think creatively about ways to engage a new kid in the group. Leaders should also guide the groups' composition.



Major Michele Graham  
Corps Officer, Corps Community Center, Iowa City, IA  
USA CENTRAL TERRITORY



# WE ARE FAMILY!

Focus: God invites everyone to join His family.

Idea: We include everyone in God's family when we all live righteously in our faith communities and extend his love to others.

Scripture: Isaiah 56:6-8, ERV

## INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt like a stranger or an outsider? The one who did not fit in and was not part of the family?

It is possible for us to feel uncomfortable in an unfamiliar group. We feel unsettled because the inside joke went over our heads. Everyone laughs and we feel uneasy. Perhaps you felt that way on the first day at a job, with a group of friends of a friend, at a wedding or your kid's friend's birthday party. Maybe you were at a conference. Maybe at a church meeting.

Most people are extremely uncomfortable being an outsider. And why do we feel that way? Because we don't know if we'll be accepted. We don't talk like them, dress like them, think like them, or like what they like. Perhaps we don't feel we belong there. We do not feel like a member of their family.

## MAIN FOCUS

Such circumstances are usually tricky because new or would-be members must follow the rules and meet expectations if they want inclusion. Often, if the newbie does not have an advocate in the group they wish to join, the road to that acceptance is daunting. Sometimes impossible. At times, the group shows tolerance thinly veiled as approval when the reality is the opposite. The new person does not seem to have a part to play in the group dynamic.

The challenge for the new person is to break through a cultural barrier. If we are the group's in-people, it is not difficult to show superficial friendliness. But to embrace the new person without skepticism means that we must override our defense mechanism. Who can blame anyone for their reservations? We protectively guard what we hold sacred: the familiar, the known, the comfortable. It is natural to safeguard ourselves, our group and family, even when it excludes the outsiders looking in.

Our scripture comes from the book of Isaiah 56: 6-8. It says:

*"Some foreigners have chosen to follow the Lord. They do this so that they can serve him and love his name and be his servants. They keep the Sabbath as a special day of worship, and they will continue to follow closely my agreement. 7 So I will bring them to my holy mountain and make them happy in my house of prayer. The offerings and*

*sacrifices they give me will please me because my Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations." 8 The Lord God said these things. The Israelites were forced to leave their country, but the Lord will gather them together again. He says, "I will bring them back together again!" (ERV)*

What does that have to do with being a family?

Well, think about a family reunion. A gathering! We come together to fellowship and recount fond times. We laugh, eat, and sing together. We celebrate community! That is what healthy families do. But what about a stranger that arrives uninvited? Should we care if they do not look like we do, or talk like we do, or eat chicken off the bone as we do? Should we accept that person? Should I fully invite that person into our ring of trusted familiarity?

Our scripture's backstory is that God spoke to His people through Isaiah the prophet. He told them they'd fallen out of favor with God because Israel tended to do the opposite of what He wanted from them. Furthermore, God would allow Israel's enemies to punish them for their immoral disobedience. But they would not stop displeasing Him. So, God exiled them for about seventy years, and their enemies eventually took them far away to present-day Iraq, six hundred miles from home. During that time, a new generation came about, and God's people reformed. Through Isaiah's prophecies, God assured them that their dire circumstance, the result of turning from Him, would not last. And they would receive eternal blessings if they learned to obey Him going forward when they returned home.

Isaiah preached God's words to His people. He urged them to practice justice and righteousness and to keep the Sabbath. Those who obeyed the word of the Lord would find favor with God. When they returned to their homeland, God told them to make sure that everyone was well-behaved, followed the rules to do their best to keep His commands, give Him priority, and worship Him fully. Then, He would provide them with joy. He would restore them fully and favor them with righteous blessing.

That is tremendous!

However, there were rules and expectations such as Sabbath-keeping. They must include God's Day at the top of the short-list scheduler. They must create that specific time from everything and the distractions of life, to routinely offer Him their undivided time and attention. It would be a lifestyle, not just a weekly activity.

*"Tell the Israelites this: "You must follow the rules about my special days of rest. You must do this because they will be a sign between you and me for all generations. This will show you that I, the Lord, have made you my special people" (Exodus 31:13, ERV).*

I propose that this warning extends to you and me today. God calls us to prioritize Him. He calls to our attention that we should make Him the centerpiece of our weekly plans. A family that invests in the ways of God will develop strong and healthy members and

communities that fulfill His will. That is how we stay on the road to relationship-building with God.

God also specifically told His people that they need open-mindedness in viewing others who were "not like them." A critical part of that message was the call for justice in relationship with others in God's fellowship community. True godliness comes only through God's character, which happens by knowing and consistently applying God's word. God called His people to invite the foreigner into the family, those people who the Israelites thought were supposed to remain on the outside as the fringe people.

Here is a paraphrase of God's mandate: "Listen up, everyone! If you thought that Isaiah's words were for you [Israel] only. Guess what? They are for all my people. The foreigners are my people too; therefore, they are your family, and that is how it is going to be. Yes, you heard right! The non-Israelites, those outside our covenant community."

God also said to his "fringe" people, "You need to stop saying that you don't belong. Why? Because you belong to Me. We are family! And since you want to worship and please Me sincerely, no more are you an outsider."

That sounds like God is the outsider's advocate, the member who gives the newcomer a tour of the clubhouse and explains the rules. But God is not just an advocate; He is THE ADVOCATE! And Isaiah's lengthy book shows that God has some wonderful things in store for His people: Salvation, Restoration, Inclusion, Community, and Blessings.

It was in God's original plan to bring them all full circle. No outsiders, no strangers, no cast-offs, no them-vs-we. Everyone on the inside! That included the foreigners, the strangers, and even the oddballs.

But let us go further with this conversation.

Eunuchs! What about them? Well, God spoke up for them specifically. Why? Because they were the ones least likely to join the family. No respectful Israelite would think to include a eunuch in their group. Eunuchs were the guys with missing body parts. Deuteronomy 23:1 explains that eunuchs were not fit to enter the Temple. They could not worship in the Temple. They could not offer sacrifices in the Temple. They could not be part of the family and that was how it was until God fixed that problem.

Isaiah 56: 3-5 says:

*3 Some foreigners will choose to follow the Lord. They should not say, "The Lord will not really accept me like the rest of his people." A eunuch should not say, "I am only a dry piece of wood. I cannot have any children." 4 They should not say that because the Lord says, "Some eunuchs obey the laws about the Sabbath. They choose to do what I want, and they follow my agreement. 5 So I will put a memorial stone in my Temple for them. Their names will be remembered in my city! Yes, I will give those eunuchs something better than sons and daughters. I will give them a name that will last forever! They will not be cut off from my people (ERV).*

Salvation. Restoration. Inclusion. Community. Blessings.

If anyone had a reason to rejoice, that would be the eunuchs because the LORD fixed their spiritually broken and missing parts. His kingdom was for them too. Isaiah affirmed that God would bring to the center those previously marginalized. God did not stop at inviting them to His mountain. He gave the eunuchs the privilege of His joy in His house of prayer, says verse seven. Now, that is a billboard-size invitation from God to be part of His family. We, who are already within the inner circle, have the tremendous responsibility to reach out to others to tell them that God loves them and does not care if they have missing or broken parts. All they need is a heart for God and the heart of God. We should tell them through our actions, compassion, and love to convince them that it is true.

God gave His word through Isaiah, His servant. It is a straightforward message for all times, even now. And if we listen to God's word, He will speak to us.

### **APPLICATION**

So how do we process that? Well, God created us to be family. It does not matter if you look different or act differently. If we all understand God's rule of righteousness – and that means to do the right things at the right times for the right reasons, as God instructs through the bible and His Holy Spirit – we are good.

And if God sat next to you and asked, "So, are we family?" What would you say? What would you do if He told you to hug that one person with whom no one wants to sit? What if He told you to stand and defend the group's "outsiders" and advocate that they join your family? Our family!

Let us be that brother, sister, father, mother, cousin, son, daughter, or friend to someone on the outside, looking in. That is what God wants for us and from us. If you have neglected your role to advocate for those left on the outside, God is willing for you to make that right with Him today.

For those on the outside, feeling forgotten or dismissed, but wishing for inclusion, God says to you today, "Stop feeling that way! I love you so much that I sent Jesus, my Son, to die for your sins. To make things right. He did that, and everyone who believes in Him is not outside His family anymore. They will have life to the full, forever, giving Him the Sabbath of their hearts and the sacrifice of their praises."

Galatians 3:28 records that, *"There is [now no distinction concerning salvation, neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you [who believe] are all one in Christ Jesus" (Amplified Version).*

Amen!

You may be old enough to remember that timeless gospel goodie with a chorus line that says:

*I'm so glad I'm a part of the Family of God,  
I've been washed in the Fountain, cleansed by His Blood!  
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel along (this sod),  
For I'm part of the family,  
The Family of God.*

Today God says to our family, "Come! Live with Me rightly and you are all welcome. I am your advocate. Do not be a stranger. You belong, for I will bring my people together again, and I will gather all who love Me. All of them because we are family!"

Please click this link If you would like to access the sermon.  
<http://www.salvationarmymedia.org/caw2023.html>



Major Keith Graham  
Corps Officer, Corps Community Center, Iowa City, IA  
Intercultural Field Advisor, Western Division  
USA CENTRAL TERRITORY

## REFERENCES:

NIV (New International Version), Essentials Study Bible: Easily Grasp the Fundamentals of Scripture through Lenses from 6 Bestselling NIV Resources (2013). [E-book]. Zondervan.

MacDonald, W. (1995). Believer's Bible Commentary [E-book]. Thomas Nelson.

Sailhamer, J. H. (2012). NIV Bible Study Commentary [E-book]. Zondervan.

Tyndale NIV Life Application Study Bible, Third Edition (2020). [E-book]. Tyndale House Publishers.

## BIBLE SOURCES

Biblegateway. 2000. "BibleGateway.Com: A Searchable Online Bible in over 150 Versions and 50 Languages." Biblegateway.Com. BibleGateway. 2000. <https://www.biblegateway.com/>.

"What Does Psalm 91:1 Mean?" BibleRef.com. <https://www.bibleref.com/John/1/John-1-1.html>

### ***The Holy Bible—Versions Quoted:***

Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

The Holy Bible, Easy To Read Version. ERV Copyright © 2006 by Bible League International

The AMPLIFIED Bible, Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987, 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved. Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)

**The Salvation Army  
Intercultural Ministries Department  
USA Central Territory**

