

Come all you people... Exploring the Multiage Learning Environment in *Seasons of the Spirit* Resources

Aim

To experience and reflect upon multiage (MA) learning in the *Seasons of the Spirit* resources.

Preparing the Space

- ! Pray for all who have come together to create and then experience the *Seasons of the Spirit* resources. Thank God for all the gifted risk takers here at this event who have gathered to worship, serve and learn on their journey in Christ and with Christ. Remember all who wait for us back home.
- ! Bring sample learner materials for the MA level. This design takes elements from the session for September 1, 2002 gearing them specifically for teachers and leaders. This design may be adapted to work with any session.
- ! Make copies of the photocopiable learner's pages for the session for each participant.
- ! Print out the words to the opening and closing prayer copied out on large paper.
- ! Bring *Behold: Arts for the Church Year* and copies of the posters "Chilean Arpillera" and "The Banquet."
- ! Arrange for a space or room that can accommodate the MA learning environment.
- ! Create a worship centre – a small table (low if possible), a covering in the colour of the liturgical season (green for Pentecost), a Bible open to the focus scripture and an attractive container with cross-shaped nametags on yarn and markers.
- ! Bring a CD player and *Seasons of the Spirit* audio music CD.

For activities in Gather:

- ! Arrange the worship centre in your space so that it is visible, accessible and distinguished from the rest of the space. It could be in a corner or on the opposite side of the rest of the zones. Set the table for the season and if possible affix the poster "Chilean Arpillera" to the cloth with pins or tape so that it hangs down. Set the CD player in a convenient location.
- ! Cut a cross shape from a sheet of poster board and then cut it into six pieces to make a simple puzzle.

For activities in Engage:

- ! Enlist the aid of someone to read the story "Take a Risk," giving him/her a cross nametag that says Peter and perhaps a cloak or shawl. Time permitting encourage them to practice. Encourage them to read with feeling and expression.

For activities in Respond:

- ! Art Zone – a table laid out with materials for creating a group arpillera. Read the information on arpilleras. For the training session this should include a background like a piece of green fabric or poster board, a cushion or a cross shape. Bring pre-cut people and animal shapes, stickers, beads and items from nature like small stones, feathers, seeds, shells, words cut from newspapers. Bring fast drying glue or a glue gun.
- ! Outreach Zone – a table with cross – shaped writing paper, pens, pencil crayons, envelopes
- ! Quiet Zone – set up a corner with some picture books that relate to the themes of the season and then for this session, copies of a bibliography for participants, shades of dark construction paper and pastels.
- ! Cyber Zone – set up a computer or laptop with access to power, *Seasons of the Spirit* CD-ROM.
- ! For a training session enlist the aid of three or four helpers to facilitate these zones. If not the instructions for each zone could be reproduced on card stock and set up for self-directed responses.

A. Gather (5 minutes)

Play “Come All You People” as the group enters.

Welcome the participants, inviting them to put their name on one of the crosses and join you in sitting on the floor. Enjoy listening to the music and even singing along! Briefly explain that given the nature of the MA setting which will be unfolding, that we will be working experientially with reflection times woven throughout the session. Recommend to the group that they try to experience the lesson flow and content without papers.

Look very deliberately around the circle and thank everyone for making this journey. Ask them to imagine if they will that they bring all whom they serve into this circle and all their hopes and dreams for this new adventure in learning. Invite one of your fellow learners to light the candle as you gather in prayer.

Creator God:

To you we give our thanks and praise (*fold hands over hearts*)

For you our joyful hands we raise (*reach up*)

We reach out into your world full of choices (*reach out one and then the other*)

Sharing your Word with our ringing voices (*touch mouth or gently exhale*)

Be with us now and always (*fold hands over hearts*)

Amen.

Remain silent for a moment and then from where the learners are sitting ask them to take note of the surrounding space, the arrangement of the zones and the kinds of preparations that have gone into this session.

! What elements of multiage learning can be readily viewed by entering the space?

What has been the effect of the singing and worship that we have just experienced?

Cross Puzzle Activity: Scatter the cross puzzle pieces on the floor, saying that together they will make a very familiar shape. Encourage the group to help each other put it together.

How does this activity begin to invite the learner into reflection on what it means to be community?

What kind of community can we imagine is going to emerge in this kind of learning setting?

B. Engage (15 minutes)

Gather in a circle and invite one of the participants to hold the Bible open to Matthew 16. We are going to experience a story about a small community who accompanied Jesus on his travels. Invite another participant to wear the shawl and the nametag that says Peter and expressively read the story from the resource sheet “Take a Risk.”

! What are some of the benefits of this kind of storytelling in the MA environment?

! If we were doing this story in our home setting who would we enlist to play the role of Peter?

! How can we relate some of our experiences in our shared teaching ministries to what Peter learns about the cross?

! What would be some of the risks that your faith community would take in moving from graded lessons to MA?

Exploring the Story Further

Explain that at this time learners could break off according to age or interest to continue engaging with the story in order to relate it to their lives. For today's session the first choice is creating a Community Cross out of the newsprint cross glued to poster board. The other choice is the resource sheet "Cross Carriers". Depending on the size of an MA classroom the leader may need to direct attention to the younger learners while the more independent ones tackle the resource sheet.

Community Storytelling

Draw the participants' attention to the Chilean Arpillera. This image has been employed as a window into and out of the texts we will visit this season. Explain the background of the medium, the origins of the form. Look at it together. The theme of community is a recurring one throughout the season.

Agricultural contexts abound in Jesus' parables.

- ! What examples of everyday living in community do we see in this image?
- ! Are we able to detect any risky behaviours?
- ! What can we say about the nature of community and especially the community that Jesus calls us into in relation to the techniques employed in creating the arpillera?
- ! How can we apply this to the creation of our multi-age community?

In the MA curriculum there will be ample opportunity to deeply explore the building of community within and outside our church walls. The creation of a collective arpillera is outlined each week with suggestions for items to add in order to weave the learners' response to the story.

C. Respond (15 minutes)

Learners are invited to integrate their experience through several choices that have been designed to appeal to differing ages, interests and abilities. Invite the members of the group to choose a zone from the following offerings.

- ! Explain that in a church setting it would be desirable for there to be a leader for each zone. Where can we draw upon these leaders?
- ! What would be some of the advantages in recruitment in this type of model? Disadvantages? How would these be overcome?

Art Zone: Community Storytelling

In the small community of Jesus disciples Peter learns that to be a follower he will need to get involved with others to take risks in reaching out. Look again at the Chilean Arpillera and note the interactions between the figures and their surroundings. Using the background provided, decorate a small figure and affix it in relation to other figures and symbols. What is the unfolding story you see?

Questions for self-reflection: What insights have you gained into the forming of community as it has occurred in this zone? What are its applications for your context back home?

Outreach Zone: Reaching out to another

Look together at the image of the cross in Behold on page (xx) Note the life-giving quality of the cross in both image and colour. It draws the eye. It invites us closer as if the arms of the cross were God's arms, Christ's arms reaching out to us and to all creation in an embrace. Using the materials provided write a message of love, thanks, encouragement or support that reaches out to someone here at this event or at home.

Questions for self-reflection: In what other ways can the MA setting promote outreach?

What are the possibilities for making links with other members of the community?

How do we uphold children as servant in our community?

Cyber Zone: Explore the SOS CD-ROM

When we take up the cross we choose to get involved in our world. We are called to engage with people and ideas to continue learning and growing in God's way as taught by Jesus. As teachers and leaders we continue to be life-long learners as well! Learn more about arpilleras by investigating the "Interactive Arpillera" on the website. Have a look at "Ask the Rabbi" in the Action Zone and consider with him some of the questions that have been posed. Make notes for further consideration at home.

Questions for self-reflection: What are the possibilities for technology in your home setting.

Who would you enlist to help? How would you respond to those learners who always gravitate to this zone? We often hear in the media about the isolating properties of computers. What are the possibilities to be outward looking in this kind of zone?

Quiet Zone: Cross Meditation

The cross is an important symbol for followers of Jesus. In our daily journey we need to remember to take time out to nourish our spirits and refresh our souls. You are invited to take some time for yourself here to go over your notes or look through some of the books brought to this event. You may listen to quiet music. You may look at the poster *The Banquet*. Notice the cross shape in the mandala, the sacred circle. With the materials provided draw and colour your own cross. Tuck it into your book as a reminder of the cross we all carry in the service of others.

Questions for self-reflection: Why is it important to offer time for quiet in the MA setting? Thinking of your own context where would you be able to set up this type of zone? What other kinds of activities could be going on here?

D. Bless (10 minutes)

Invite all the learners to join you at the worship centre, bringing with them any products of their response times. Explain that we are now drawing our time together to an intentional close where we participate in a blessing and a sending forth. Invite them to set their works around the table, making a very brief comment about their experience of the zones. Remake the cross puzzle out of the smaller pieces reminding them of the formation of this small community of followers from the diverse persons gathered! Ask the learners to take off their name crosses and place them reverentially around the candle. Mention that in the lessons for this season a similar ritual occurs. In the lessons the ritual of collecting the nametags symbolically gathers the class and recognizes it as a community made up of many wonderful, gifted and loved individuals made more so in their worshipping learning and serving!

Take a moment in silence to look at the worship centre and the Chilean Arpillera. In some time we will not only leave this space but also we will journey back to our homes. The weaving of God's community continues creatively stitched together in love, prayer and service to others. Ask the group to close their eyes picture their home community and stitch it onto the Chilean Arpillera to create a faith-filled tapestry of hope for God's inbreaking reign.

Let us pray.

Holy One:

You have woven us your colourful strands
together into a tapestry of light and life
on the warp and woof of
Christ's all embracing cross.

We give thanks.

Amen.

Ask the learners to take up the cross nametag of someone else in the group. Tell them that as we listen to a closing song that they are to find it's owner and ever so gently place it around their neck, saying, "Name, take up your cross and follow Jesus. May God bless you on your journey. Amen"

Listen to "Let us Put on the Clothes of Christ".

E. Reflect

What was your experience of being a learner in the multiage setting? How does learning contribute to teaching and leading? How can this resource feed and nourish our leaders and teachers? As a teacher and leader what will some of the joys and challenges be in implementing this resource?