

Vacation Bible School Curriculum - 2011

How Can I Help?

Getting to know the Mission and Service Fund

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Introduction:

In 2006, under the capable leadership of our minister, Rev. Jane Doull, Three Harbours Pastoral Charge began to write our own curriculums for our very successful week long Vacation Bible School (VBS). The first year we visited the planet Zorg, where communion was blue juice and gold fish crackers! In 2007 we travelled across Canada with Jesus by dog sled, train, and ferry. In 2008 we joined forces against bullying, inspired by a youth’s call to wear pink t-shirts. Rev. Connie McNamara joined us in 2008, and took on the challenge of continuing to create new and exciting curriculums, which we did with “It’s Easy Being Green” in 2009, complete with a trip to the local land fill site! In 2010, we highlighted volunteerism, with many invited guests who shared information about their all important volunteer roles in community. This year, Connie, as a member of the Maritime Conference Stewardship Committee, volunteered us (see she was listening in 2010!) to write a VBS curriculum which would help to raise the profile of Mission and Service; and which could be shared with Pastoral Charges throughout Maritime Conference and beyond.

We accepted the challenge to highlight, to celebrate, to explain, and to make more readily understandable to children, the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church of Canada; and have put together this VBS curriculum entitled, “How Can I Help?”. We hope that it will enable you to host a VBS in your Pastoral Charge which will allow children to have fun, to grow in faith, and to learn all about M&S.

Preparation:

Our goal is to help children discover how the M&S fund helps and supports people and initiatives around the world, across the country, and in our own local areas; and by doing this to discover, “How Can I Help?”. Creativity is key, so please regard this curriculum as a starting point which may be added to, changed, enhanced, and modified to make it your own!

Location and Timing:

You will need to find a location in which crafts, snacks, singing, and game playing will all be acceptable and encouraged. We use our church basement, which also has a stage which often comes in handy. The great outdoors is also a valuable asset during game time. The VBS as it is set up, runs for three hours each day for five days, plus a church service on the Sunday immediately following the VBS. We currently offer our VBS from 9:00 a.m. to Noon, the third week in July, which seems to work for us, but you may hold yours anytime that the children and the venue are available.

Team Work:

We have a wonderful team of six people who develop our VBS curriculums and then work hard before, during, and after the VBS to assure it’s success, and a pool of other people who share their time and their specific talents when called upon. Kitchen talents are put to use making

creative snacks, musical people are called in to help with singing, those with lots of energy are put in charge of games, and of course, the Minister tries hard to tie it all together with scriptural references and teaching moments. So gather together 4, or 5, or 6 people who are willing to support a VBS ministry in your Pastoral Charge, discover what skills they bring to the table, and put them to work. Don't be afraid to ask for help from others when needed for specific parts of the VBS, and remember to ask several older youth (aged 14-18) to come each day as helpers.

Research:

Our VBS curriculum will enable you to focus on M&S at the global level, the national level, and the local level using our daily suggested guideline, but you are required to make your own choices about which projects to highlight, because your location or your interest may well make particular projects pertinent to you!

Your research may begin with a look through the current and/or past Minute for Mission books, with a glance at a Mandate Magazine or two or three, or with some online surfing at such websites as the United Church of Canada website (www.united-church.ca/) where you can find links to M&S information, and www.youtube.com/unitedchurchofcanada where you can find hundreds of United Church of Canada youtube videos about M&S projects. Once you have done your research, you will need to choose a global project, a national project, and a local project, and learn all about them, for they will provide the impetus for your choice of crafts, foods, and games.

You will also need to know what kinds of events might be appropriate for your area and for the age and number of the children involved in your VBS, in order to plan a small event which will enable the children themselves to raise money for either M&S as a whole, or as a special gift for one of the projects they are learning more about throughout the week.

Other Details:

- *Advertising in the church bulletin, on websites, and with colourful posters is important. Sending personal invitations to children often helps to encourage their attendance.
- *If nearby Pastoral Charges, or churches of other denominations (remember to be ecumenical!), are not hosting a VBS, invite them to come along as well.
- *Healthy snacks are encouraged, but a cookie treat each day (provided by talented cookie makers in your congregation) is a great additive.
- *Name tags are helpful for children and adults alike, and can be passed out and collected back each day.
- *Ask for monetary donations from your Pastoral Charge people to purchase snacks and craft materials.
- *You will need a key board or guitar and someone to play it to teach the children several songs.
- *Have a photographer take pictures of each days activities, you will need them if you want to do a power point presentation.

Another Option:

Although we have not added a drama component to this year's VBS curriculum, we (that's the

children with a bit of guidance from the adults) have in other years wrote, practiced, and performed a great skit both during the Friday family celebration and during the Sunday worship service, so if you and the children have a flair for the dramatic, don't hesitate to work on a short play that will showcase the important work that M&S does in our church and in our world.

Monday - GLOBAL

Gathering:

Read a book to the children. We have chosen to read "The Carrot Seed" by Ruth Krauss, but you could read any other children's book that has as its moral or message the subjectmatter of the Mission and Service Fund which is serving, helping, assisting, and giving. Some suggestions are "The Little Engine that Could", "Yurtle the Turtle", or "The Lorax", but feel free to come up with ideas of your own.

Question:

What is Mission and Service? Ask for their own definition - you might be surprised by what you hear!

Offer this definition from the United Church website:

"The Mission and Service Fund is the unique way we as United Church witness to God's love, whether it be with overseas partners, in Canadian outreach, in hospital or university chaplaincies, in supporting small congregations, or in assisting intern ministers. It is not really possible to compare the M&S Fund to any charity - it is much bigger, more encompassing than any of these. It is the church. The M&S Fund represents our collective way to be God's presence in the world - to be the church, to love and serve, to seek justice, to live with respect in creation. It gives us a collective voice in advocating change, justice, and peace, whether through the Canadian government or in work with our ecumenical partners. The M&S Fund ensures that we are participating together in all of this work. Here are some fun facts about the Mission and Service Fund. M&S is a unified fund. We pool our money to fund all our work. M&S funds our operating budget for almost ALL the work we do as the United Church. Gifts are voluntary. Individuals and congregations must decide how much to give. M&S work includes ministry support, theological colleges, presbyteries and Conferences, core funding to 170 churches, chaplaincies, overseas personnel, global work, outreach work in Canada, justice and environmental advocacy, ecumenical partnership, partnership overseas, the work of the General Council Office, support for archives, and The Observer, and the list goes on. M&S is who we are and what we do. Without it, the United Church would not be. It's as simple as that."

Scripture Tie In:

We have chosen Matthew 15:1-9 (Seed and the Sower) to accompany our reading of "The Carrot Seed", but please chose a scripture appropriate to whatever book you have chosen to share with the children. We plan to paraphrase the reading each morning to make it more easily understandable, and since we have people on our team who love drama, we will share a very simplistic dramatization as the paraphrase is read aloud. Remember to have a quick discussion with them about what they heard and saw during the reading, and how it pertains to M&S.

Choosing an Event to Do this Week:

The ideas are limited only by your imagination. Try to make it an event which can happen on the Friday of the VBS or perhaps on the Saturday or Sunday, so that it is complete when the VBS is complete, and the money can be sent in to M&S. You could put on a yard sale, start a lemonade stand, set up a bake table or a new to you table, hold a tea/luncheon, put on a car wash, hold a craft sale, organize a brown bag auction, do a plant sale or a mystery plant auction (with the names on the bottoms of the containers so they will know later what they bought) - anything to give back to the community and to raise funds for M&S as they discover "How Can I Help?". Send a note home to the parents today, explaining the project, what will be required of the children, and where the fund will go. Include in the note that they are invited to come on Friday (an hour before end time) to hear some songs and share in some food and perhaps support the event if it is taking place on Friday, and that a commitment to attend the Sunday worship service would be appreciated, if possible.

Offering:

Each day there may be a collection taken to which both the children and the adults contribute, if you feel it is appropriate and acceptable. It too will be donated to the M&S fund in keeping with our theme.

Planting Time:

In keeping with the reading of "The Carrot Seed", we have chosen to plant flowers and herbs outside on a table - some for the children to take home at the end of the week, and some for a plant sale on Sunday after church. We will be planting them in recycled pudding and yogurt containers or peat pots from dollarama. If this does not go along with the book you have read at the beginning of the day, simply skip this option.

Music Time:

Each day there will be a bit of time (anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes depending on what else is included on any given day) spent learning several songs or hymns which will be sung by the children on Friday when their parents/guardians come to a celebration, and on Sunday during the Church service. May we suggest:

"What Can I Do?" MV#191

"Go Make a Difference" MV#209

"We Are Marching in the Light of God" VU#646

"What Does the Lord Require of You" VU#701

"He's Got the Whole World In His Hands"

"Like a Waving Flag"

"Kum Bah Ya"

"Put Your Hand in the Hand"

"They Will Know We are Christians By Our Love"

"All God's Critter's Got a Place in the Choir"

Snack: (remember food allergies and hand washing!)

Start with a 'blessing' either sung like "Johnny Apple Seed", or a simple repetitive grace.

Serve healthy snacks such as crackers and cheese, fruits and vegetables with dip, and real fruit juice. Each day try to include something that ties into the M&S project you are highlighting, for example because we know on our Pastoral Charge that we are going to host former United Church Missionaries to Haiti on Monday, we will serve something from Haiti such as pineapple, avocados, guava, and coconut, as well as the usual.

Introduction of the Global M&S Project:

If possible, invite someone who has served in or has a connection to a global M&S project, to speak to the children about their experiences, but if all else fails, research a partnership endeavour and the country in which it takes place and present it yourself. If you want to, you could even video the presentation and show a clip of it at the Sunday worship service.

Craft Time:

Tie your craft in to the country of origin of your global M&S project. For instance, since we are dealing with the country of Haiti, we have chosen to make bead anklets or bracelets or pins during craft day today. Remember to research your country of choice on the internet, there is always native craft ideas available online. In addition, a mural coloured and drawn on “end of roll” paper from a local newspaper or paper mill, can be used each day to supplement craft time, and then hung on Sunday in church. Homemade play dough is also a great additive for younger children to use during craft time if their attention grows short. Other suggestions are crayons and paper, glue and dirt on paper, or cornstarch goop.

Game Time:

Each year we have an enthusiastic person who takes the children outside to use up some of their energy! You can continue to highlight the M&S Fund and your chosen global project during this time (either indoors or outdoors) by choosing a game from the country you have chosen, or by making a well known game take on elements of what you are trying to teach. You could have a Scavenger Hunt using items that represent either M&S or the country of origin for your global project. You could have a Pass The Wet Towel Race and speak about the way that M&S supports the drilling of wells in countries where there is a lack of clean water. Regardless, there are many games which the children will enjoy, so try a Three Legged Race, or Duck, Duck, Goose, or Kick the Shoe or a Hoola Hoop Contest, or any other game that may be old or new!

Homework:

“How Can I Help?” - ask the children to tell one person about the global project that they learned about today, and then report back the next day about the person’s reactions or questions. AND/OR bring in something that pertains to the event you are going to put on this week, for instance, bringing something in for a new to you table.

Tuesday - NATIONAL

Check in of homework:

Just a quick conversation about what they told and what was said to them by the person they told. AND/OR a gathering up of the items brought in.

Scripture Tie In:

We are using Luke 9:10-17 (feeding the 5000) paraphrased and with a simplistic dramatization, because it will pertain to our choice of National project, the National Food Grain Bank. Please base your choice of scripture on your chosen project, and remember to have a quick discussion with the children about what they heard and saw in the scripture lesson that ties in to Mission and Service.

Offering:

Checking the Plants:

If you have chosen to plant, you will need to check them everyday to see if they need water and to see if they have grown!

Music Time:

Snack Time:

All the usual stuff, along with corn and soya snacks because of our National M&S project choice.

Introduction of the National M&S Project:

As already, stated, we have chosen to highlight the National Food Grain Bank, but we will not deal with it exclusively, we will still share information about other national M&S supported projects such as chaplaincies in hospitals and universities, assistance for families who have people incarcerated, childcare programs, parish nursing, food banks, Church congregations, or anything else that is supported by M&S in Canada that you discover in the Minute for Mission book, Mandate Magazine, or online.

Craft Time:

Craft suggestions for today are:

- Decorate T-Shirts, using a computer printed iron on of the M&S logo on the front, and “How Can I Help?” on the back. Computer printable iron on sheets are available at most craft stores or business supply stores. You may want to use fabric markers or paints (make sure they are the kind that will not come off in the washer) instead of the iron ons to add the logo and theme as well as hand prints or other designs to the t-shirts.
- Make games that would entertain kids in cars on drives to hospital or prison.
- Make popcorn balls to eat (remember our choice is the National Food Grain Bank).
- Make a picture book about a hospital visit.
- Make collages about what food makes a meal or about what a days meals would cost.
- Work on your mural and play with playdough.
- Make paper crafts from recycled materials.
- Use potato carved stamps and painting.
- ... check with people in your community who might know how to do scrap booking or knitting or make dipped candles from old melted candles or do other crafts and may be willing to come in and teach a new craft to the kids.

Game Time:

Homework:

“How Can I Help?” - ask the children to bring in an item to donate to the local food bank, or a book or toy to be used in the Sunday School.

Wednesday - LOCAL - FIELD TRIP DAY

* Today is a day we always set aside for a road trip. We have used a bus for this when it was available and not cost prohibitive, but we have also used a group of vehicles as long as they are properly insured and parents/guardians have signed a permission slip for their child. We make the day of it, so we leave soon after 9:00 a.m., and plan for lunch and a treat on the road as well as time spent at our location of choice. This year we are going to head out to the Tatamagouche Center (which is only 15 minutes from us and receives M&S support for some of its various programs) and then on to Camp MacLennan (which although it does not receive M&S funds, it is representative of other places that do). We will have lunch at the camp, learn about camping the UCC way, and then stop for ice cream on the way home, arriving back at our church by 4:00 p.m. for parent/guardian pick up. You can learn more about M&S supported ventures in your own local area and plan a trip to see our M&S dollars at work.

Check in of Homework:

Checking the Plants:

If you have chosen to plant, you will need to check them everyday to see if they need water and to see if they have grown!

Scripture Tie In:

We are using Psalm 23 (still waters and green pastures), using a paraphrase and dramatic interpretation. Psalm 23 is in tune with walking the labyrinth at the Tatamagouche Center and with visiting the camp, so please chose a scripture that will represent where you choose to go on field trip day!

Offering:

Load into the bus or vehicles remembering to bring things like sun screen, bug repellent, wet wipes, etc.

TAKE THE TRIP AND ENJOY!

Thursday - MUSIC

Scripture Tie In:

We are using Psalm 100 in three of its versions - paraphrased from the Bible, James Taylor's "Everyday Psalms" version, and Linnea Good's song in VU #820. Once again, discuss what your choice of scripture may have to do with M&S.

Offering:

Checking the Plants:

If you have chosen to plant, you will need to check them everyday to see if they need water and to see if they have grown!

Introduction of M&S Support for Music:

There is a Minute for Mission from the 2010 Minute for Mission book which details the ways in which M&S supports music in the church and community, use this. Then, try writing a song by making new words for an older tune like Happy Birthday or even a well known hymn.

Music Time:

Last opportunity to practice the music you have been learning all week before the Friday presentation and the Sunday worship service.

Snack Time:

Definitely sing your “grace” today, and then share in healthy snacks and a cookie or two!

Craft Time:

Today as you highlight M&S support of music, make a few musical instruments (maybe they can be used during the Sunday worship service!). Try making rain sticks using paper towel rolls and dried beans, split peas, or rice (full instructions can be found online), or soap box shakers, or paper plate tambourines, or plastic container drums. Another suggestion is to make a picture frame with kleenex box tops (remove the plastic!), decorate them, and add a picture that has been taken of each child during the road trip the day before and printed.

Game Time:

Homework:

“How Can I Help?” - ask the children to bring another item for your project, or have them write down one thing they learned about Mission and Service this week.

Friday -

Check in of Homework:

Scripture Tie In:

We are using Micah 6:8 (what does the Lord require of you?) paraphrased and dramatically presented, because it sums up why we give to the M&S Fund. Discuss what connections the children can make between the reading and what they know about M&S.

Checking the Plants:

Craft Time:

Today we simply finish up anything that is left undone - get the mural ready to put up, and

perhaps drawing on the side walks at the Church with side walk chalk, which can be left and seen by people on Sunday when they come to Church.

Display the crafts around the room.

Get ready for your event if it is to take place today - New to You Table or Brown Bag Auction or other event.

Parents/guardians arrive - an hour before you end.

Put on a mini concert of songs.

Have the parents/guardians take part in the event if it is happening.

Provide food for a small reception for the parents/guardians.

Crafts stay on display for the Sunday worship service.

Sunday Service -

*Everyone's Sunday worship service is a bit different in style and content, but we suggest a very informal service today, one which the children help to organize and, of course, take part in. So here is a list of options you can consider when planning your VBS concluding worship service:

- Begin with Linnea Good's "Stand on the Rock" - done over many times!
- Sing the songs that the children learned all week, perhaps some as children's choir pieces, and others as congregational hymns.
- If you videoed a part of any guest speaker's presentation, perhaps you could play it on a laptop through a digital projector onto a screen.
- If you have internet access or have downloaded a youtube video or two, you could play them on the big screen as well to show the congregation some of the things our M&S dollars support.
- Use the same scriptures today that you used during the week - paraphrased and dramatized so everyone can see and hear it the way the children saw it and heard it.
- Instead of a sermon by the Minister, show a power point presentation (laptop/digital projector/screen) so that everyone can see the fun that filled the week, and remember kids love to see themselves on the big screen!
- Try to have Communion if possible - we suggest using MV#195 "Long Ago and Far Away" for the Communion hymn - have the children serve the elements - and see if you can tie them into the projects you chose, for example we plan to use Mango/Guava/Passion fruit blend juice to recall our guest Missionaries from Haiti, and corn chips to represent the National Food Grain Bank.
- Remember to use the instruments you made this week to accompany some of the songs this morning.
- If your event is taking place this morning after church, such as a tea or an auction or a new to you table, make sure it is set up and ready to go and encourage people to stay after church and participate.

**Every year the best compliments that we get on our creative and inspirational VBS come from the children who say, "I wish we could back again next week!" We hope you get those same comments, and we would like to receive your comments - tell us what works for you, how you adapted it, what you liked or didn't like, and send pictures too if you want - we would love the

feedback!**

Biography:

This Vacation Bible School Curriculum was put together by a tremendous and talented group of people on the Three Harbours Pastoral Charge of the United Church of Canada serving Fox Harbour, Malagash, and Wallace on the beautiful North Shore of Nova Scotia, as well as the marvelous Minister from the neighbouring Pugwash Pastoral Charge.

We are:

Darlene MacNeill - patient, particular, and peaceable

Joanne Nolet - lively, laughter, and loyal

Prudy White - creative, casual, and confidant

Marjorie Perrott - generous, gracious, and grandmotherly

Colleen Thompson - musical, motivating, and mindful

Rev. Connie McNamara - determined, dedicated, and demonstrative

Rev. Meggin King - organized, orator, and original