

A large group of young people, mostly in their late teens or early twenties, are posing for a group photo inside a church. They are arranged in several rows, some standing on the steps of the altar. Many of them are making peace signs or other hand gestures. In the center of the group, a priest in white vestments is kneeling. The church has high, arched ceilings with red and white walls. A large crucifix is visible on the wall in the background. The overall atmosphere is joyful and communal.

YOUNG PEOPLE: YOU ARE THE CHURCH OF TODAY

Resource 4 – Belonging to community



“Dear brothers and sisters, the Church loves you! Be an active presence in the community, as living cells, as living stones.”

- Pope Francis

Scripture Passage: Acts 2:43-47 Life among the Believers

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.



Spoken Word

Unseen Connectivity *Marshall Davis Jones*

**It is when we are connected
that we are most alive**



Discussion Question:

Who or what do you feel most connected to?

Prayer: You give us others

Lord,
You give us others,
Who watch, when we sleep,
Who believe, when we doubt,
And keep praying,
When we are reduced to silence.

You give us others,
Who walk with us,
Who hope and fear with us,
Who are tired and do not fail us,
To whom we can turn
With our cares and our needs.

Source: YOUCAT Youth Prayer Book pg 58

You give us others,
Who stand with us before you,
Who ask you, and question,
And thank you,
And are always ready to serve you.

You give us others,
And entrust them to us.
We do not love you without them,
Nor are we loved by you without them.
Let us be a blessing to one another,
On our way to you.
Amen.

Prayer for our community

All loving God your mercy has no bounds
be with us as we gather today
and guide us in accordance with your will.
Shelter us with your protection
Give us the light of your grace
And help us always to seek your kingdom
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ

***Let us pray for those in our parish [community].
Response: God of community hear our prayer***

We pray for all people in our community. R
We pray for our pastor and leaders. R
We pray for all people in the Diocese of Auckland. R
We pray for our families and friends. R
We pray for the good work of others. R
We pray for all those who are sick or suffering. R
**Gracious God, hear all our prayers for those in our community.
Bless and guide us in our actions and be with us at all times.
We place our lives in your hands, now and always.
Amen**

Source unknown.



Our Mission as the Church

CREATIVE PRAYER | Visio Divina – praying with images

Opening prayer

Loving God, we give thanks for those gathered here today. We recognise and give thanks for each person in this community and especially the unique gifts and talents that they contribute to our community.

Romans: 12:4-5

For as in one body we have many members,
And not all the members have the same function,
So we, who are many, are one body in Christ
And individually we are members one of another.
We have gifts that differ according to the grace
given to us:
Prophecy, in proportion to faith
Ministry, in ministering
The teaching, in teaching
The exhorter in exhortation,
The giver in generosity
The leader in diligence,
The compassionate in cheerfulness.
Amen.

Note: exhort means to encourage

Instruction for Leaders

Before leading this creative prayer collate a selection of photos or images of your community (parish, ethnic community etc) and/or wider neighbourhood community.

Reflection

In the Auckland Diocese Pastoral Plan 'Fit for Mission' asks us to become "ever more loving communities of welcome, inclusion and outreach." In our reading for today the Romans are challenged to be transformed by the renewing of their minds so that they can discern what is the will of God.

Visio Divina

Spend some time looking at the images of community in front of you.
Select one image that speaks of community to you.
Notice any thoughts or feelings that occur within you.
How is God speaking to you through this image?
Does God speak to you about your own faith community through this image?
What gifts do you share in this community?
What gifts do others share in this community?
End your time of prayer by giving thanks to God for one or more communities that you belong to.

Closing song

All the People Said Amen - Matt Maher

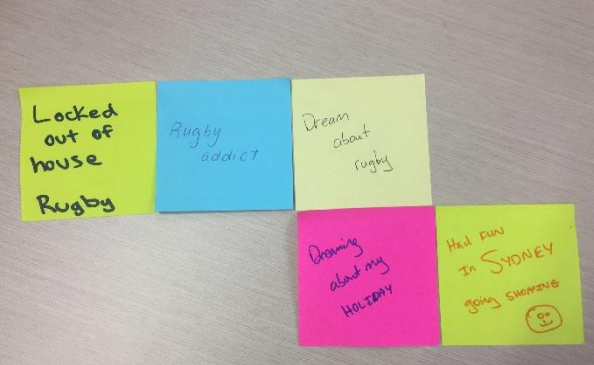
You are not alone, if you are lonely
When you feeling frail, you're not the only
We are all the same, in need of mercy, to be forgiven and be free
It's all you got to lean on but thank God it's all you need

Chorus:

And all the people said Amen
And all the people said Amen
Give thanks to the lord for his love never ends
And all the people said Amen.

If you're rich or poor, well it don't matter
Weak or strong, we know love is what we're after
We're all broken but we're all in this together
God knows we stumble and fall
And he so loved the world he sent his son to save us all

Blessed are the poor in spirit
who are torn apart
Blessed are the persecuted and the pure in heart
Blessed are the people longing for another start
For this is the kingdom
the kingdom of God



Connecting Stories:

SESSION 1 - ICE BREAKER

The goal of this activity is to find common experiences or themes between people. This activity works best in small groups of 6-8 people.

Materials: Pens, post-it notes (or other slips of paper)

SETUP FOR CONNECTING STORIES

Each person must share at least one item that connects to the other mini-stories. The longer the chain of items that can be created, the better. Write down a few words on a post-it note to keep track of each part of the story. The first player begins by sharing an interesting memory or experience that they have. For example, one player can say: "One time, I accidentally locked myself out of the house. So then I spent the entire day at the park playing rugby." Any other person can tell a related story that has any similar themes or elements to the previous story. For example, the next person can say, "I am a total rugby addict. I spend part of every weekend playing rugby and sometimes I am asleep I even dream about rugby."

The next player, based upon the previous story shared, can say something related, such as: "I don't sleep much at night because I play lots of computer games until early morning."

Any person can then add to the story, by saying something like, "I also love computer games."

To help the group remember each part of the story, write a few words on a post-it note for each part of the story chain. The more interesting or funny the story, the better.

At the end of the game, the group with the longest connected chain of stories is the winner. You may ask the group to share the entire story with the whole group. This activity is a fun way to get people to share stories, while helping people learn similarities or common interests.

Debrief:

- How easy or hard was this game? Why?
- When we learn about others in our community we build relationship. Why do you think building relationship is important?



Belonging commonalities and unquities

SESSION 1 – ACTIVITY

A group activity in which people identify common things that make people feel welcome when they join a community.

Materials: Two sheets of paper and a pen for each group.

Dynamics:

1. Form groups of five to eight people and give them two sheets of paper and a pencil or pen.
2. The first part of the activity is Commonalities, where each group compiles a list of the things they have in common which would make them feel welcome to a community (there is a sample list to the right). In order for the idea to make it on the list, it must apply to **everyone** in the group. Encourage participants to go deeper. After about 5 minutes, have one person from each group read their list.
3. Then, depending on your goals for the session, you can have half of each group rotate to another group for Uniquities or you can leave everyone in the same group. On the second sheet of paper have participants record unquities, meaning that each item applies to **only one** person in the group. The group tries to find at least 2 unquities for each person. After 5-7 minutes, you can have each person say one of their unquities or have a person read them one by one, having others try to guess who it was. (You want to encourage participants to go beyond the superficial, avoiding those things that people can readily see or already know eg if somebody is in the music group then they wouldn't say that music is one of their gifts).
4. Take a few minutes to make a list of how each person could contribute to the community that you belong to.

Ideas of what makes people feel welcome here are some ideas to get people started...

They know my name.

They spell my name right.

They ask me what I want to be called.

They take time to talk to me.

They recognise my moods.

They listen to me.

They smile at me.

They take an interest in what's important to me.

They ask me to help.

They let me help.

They recognise when I'm gone and follow up to make sure that I am OK.

They share my ideas with others [e.g., John had a good idea for ...].

They are honest with me.

They include me.

They appreciate my contributions.

When they ask for my opinion, they incorporate it.

They welcome me back no matter what.

They trust me.

They can disagree without making me feel "put down."

Debrief :

- Take a moment to think about what the number one way that makes you feel welcome to a community... what would that be?
- Think about your own youth group/ faith community. In what ways do you make new people feel welcome?
- Sometimes we think that we are making people feel welcome, but that's not their perspective. Can you share any examples of what others have told you about why they feel welcome in your youth group / faith community?
- Why do you think that we had you do the unquities activity? (A: to recognise that everybody has unique gifts that are of value in a community)



Breaking in

SESSION 2 - ICE BREAKER

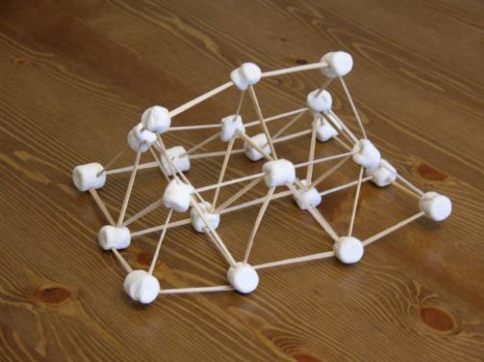
Dynamics:

1. Invite participants to stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder.
2. Take one person out of the circle (Person A).
3. Begin by explaining to the group that their only task is to ensure that Person A does not get into the centre of the circle. Participants may hold hands or put arms around each other to make the circle tighter.
4. Person A (the outsider) tries to get into the circle through spaces between people, while everyone else tries to keep them out. Caution participants to be gentle when blocking the outsider.
5. When the outsider gets into the circle, stop the game and ask for another volunteer. As a variation you can have two or three outsiders at one time.
6. Once you have done this two or three times change the game so that one person is in the centre of the circle and the other participants must make that person feel loved and welcome. The goal this time is to make that person feel included.

Debrief:

After playing several rounds, ask:

- What did it feel like to be an outsider?
- Did anyone want to let the outsiders inside the circle? Did you let them slip in? Why or why not?
- Have you ever felt like an outsider in real life? When? What was it like?
- In contrast how did it feel when you were the person inside the circle and all the participants were making you feel loved and welcome?
- Have there been times in your life when you went somewhere new and you were made to feel *really* welcome? What made this feel so special?



Building Community

SESSION 2 – ACTIVITY

A group activity in which participants experience common roles that people might play in a community.

Materials: For each group: 40 pieces of spaghetti, 50 marshmallows, 1 piece of paper, 1 pen, 1 set of cards (see Appendix 1), 1 blindfold

Dynamics:

Instruct participants to get into groups of SIX, each group has one person A, B, C etc in their group. Each person receives their card and their “gifts”.

Part 1:

Each person is given a minute to read their card. They are asked to take on the position/attributes written on that card (eg to put the blindfold on or to take a seat). At this stage they are NOT allowed to disclose what they can and can't do. Each person in the group may only use the item that has been allocated to them. Can they build a tower with the item (gifts) that person has? Most people will not be able to do much.

Part 2:

Now instruct each group to work together BUT they must retain the attributes that are on their card. The challenge is to build the strongest/tallest tower using the gifts provided. All members of the group must be part of the process of building.

To play:

The noisiest people in the group will have the most ideas, but are not allowed to talk or help with the activity, so the only way to present their idea to the quietest people is through body language. The quietest people in the group will have their chance to speak a lot, they are not allowed to help with the activity but they can tell those who is doing the activity what to do. The blindfolded people can't see what they are doing but they can listen to instructions given by the quietest people. The quietest people will tell the blindfolded people where are all the gifts are, and what to do.

Debrief :

- Take a moment to think about the number one way that makes you feel welcome to a community... what would that be?
- Think about your own youth group/ faith community. In what ways do you make new people feel welcome?
- Sometimes we think that we are making people feel welcome, but that's not their perspective. Can you share any examples of what others have told you about why they feel welcome in your youth group / faith community?
- Why do you think that we had you do the uniqueness activity? (A: to recognise that everybody has unique gifts that are of value in a community)



Circles of my multi-cultural self

SESSION 2 – GOING DEEPER...

Description: The circles activity engages participants in a process of identifying what they consider to be the most important dimensions of their own identity. Stereotypes are examined as participants share stories about when they were proud to be part of a particular group and when it was especially hurtful to be associated with a particular group.

Required Items: Circle Handout (see Appendix 2). 1 pen for each participant.

Dynamics:

1. Ask participants to pair up with someone they do not know very well. Instruct participants to write their names in the middle circle. They should then fill in each satellite circle with a dimension of their identity they consider to be among the most important in defining themselves. Give them several examples of dimension that might fit into the satellite circles: female, athlete, Catholic, brother, educator, Filipino, rugby player, middle class, etc.
2. In their pairs, have participants share two stories with each other. First, they should share stories about when they felt especially proud to be associated with one of the identifiers they selected. Next, they should share a story about a time it was particularly painful to be associated with one of the identity dimensions they choose.
3. The third step will be for participants to share a stereotype they have heard about one dimension of their identity that fails to describe them accurately. Ask them to complete the sentence at the bottom of the handout by filling in the blanks: "I am (a/an) _____ but I am NOT (a/an) _____." Provide your own example, such as "I am a Catholic, but I am NOT closed to people of other faiths." "I may be blonde, but that doesn't mean that I am dumb". Allow 8-10 minutes for participants to complete all three steps, but remind them with 2 minutes remaining that they must fill in the stereotype sentence.

Probe the group for reactions to each other's stories. Ask whether anyone heard a story she or he would like to share with the group. (Make sure the person who originally told the story has granted permission to share it with the entire group.) Advise participants that the next step will involve individuals standing up and reading their stereotype statement. You can either simply go around the room in some order or have people randomly stand up and read their statements. Make sure that participants are respectful and listening actively for this step, as individuals are making themselves vulnerable by participating. Start by reading your own statement. This part of the activity can be extremely powerful if you introduce it energetically. It may take a few moments to start the flow of sharing; so allow for silent moments.

Debrief :

- How do the dimensions of your identity that you chose as important differ from the dimensions other people use to make judgments about you?
- Did anybody hear somebody challenge a stereotype that you once bought into?
- If so, what?
- How did it feel to be able to stand up and challenge your stereotype?
- (There is usually some laughter when somebody shares a common stereotype such as "All guys are messy" or "Guys are better at driving than girls". I heard several moments of laughter. What was that about?
- Where do stereotypes come from?
- How can we eliminate them?

There's something about Mary

Mary, a member of the Church.

When Bishops from all over the world met for the Second Vatican Council they were very aware of what is known as 'devotion to Mary'. Many expected to write a separate statement on Mary within the context of their statement on the Church. Others were concerned that this direction could lead to significant distortion that would remove Mary even further from scripture and liturgy, compromising the Council's emphasis on the Eucharistic liturgy as the "source and summit" of all Christian living.

In order to make it clear that Our Blessed Lady is, like the rest of us, a member of the Church (community), not outside it and not above it the Bishops included their statement in Lumen Gentium (Chapter 8)

(http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html).

Mary is understood primarily as a member of the church, one of us, a fellow pilgrim on our journey to God, who has walked our walk and models for us atunement to God, fidelity and discipleship at its best. The document roots Mary in scripture, making ecumenically sensitive reflections on her role and function. Mary is not unique in her fidelity to God's will but models what all disciples are called to do: listen and respond to God's word.





Praying with scripture in a group

TOOL

HUNGRY FOR GOD

WANT TO HEAR GOD?

www.livingtheword.org.nz

Hearing and Living the Sunday Readings

FORM A GROUP

A Catholic Scripture Website providing weekly scripture and prayer resources for individuals and small groups.

facebook twitter

www.livingtheword.org.nz

facebook: facebook.com/livingthewordnz

twitter: twitter.com/livingthewordnz

email: contact@livingtheword.org.nz

LIVING THE WORD

Sharing with others is obviously better with a group. Sometimes when nothing seems to 'speak' to us, another person's sharing gives us a fresh way of looking or understanding the text. Of course its OK to pray with scripture by oneself, but feel inspired to join with friends over an early breakfast, a coffee in a cafe, a friends flat, your parish church, a park bench, uni. library, school classroom, anywhere where you can find a place with some space to read, write and share.

Download the readings for the coming Sunday from:

<https://livingtheword.org.nz/>

Each group should listen to the readings and then pick one or more of the questions to discuss.

INSTRUCTIONS

Download the document and spend 10 minutes reading

Read through a reading slowly once

Read through the reading a second time and with a pen circle or underline a word or phrase that strikes you

Read through each reading following this process

Finally, notice which words or phrases are particularly meaningful for you. Consider why

10 minutes Writing

Spend time reflecting on one or two ideas that strike you most from the readings

Writing or drawing is an active response to God's word – it is so easy to sit silent without claiming a word spoken which demands a response (think of always being silent with your friend!)

Begin writing what struck you. What did you hear? What is your response? Is there a new attitude, action, decision that you are invited to live?

End by writing a short prayer thanking God for what you heard and help to 'live the word'

10 minutes Sharing / Praying

If you are with friends, share in groups of 3 taking 3 minutes each saying what spoke to you in the readings.

Encourage each other to own up to an action that they feel called to live in their lives.

Conclude by saying a prayer individually or together

Living community | what can I do?

Going to the next level



Learn more:

Can a Christian be a radical individualist?

321. No, a Christian can never be a radical individualist, because people by nature are designed for fellowship. Love is the central commandment for all Christians, through it we profoundly belong together and are fundamentally dependent on one another. "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". (Mt 22:39)
[1877-1880, 1890-1891]

Going deeper: Pope Francis: "The Church needs lay people who "dare to dream."

Catholic laity can transform the world:

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/for-pope-francis-the-catholic-laity-can-transform-the-world-86987/>

[bracket numbers refer to Catechism of the Catholic Church]



Do more:

How can you (or your faith group):

- Ensure your community is one of welcome, inclusion and outreach?
- Welcome new and returning members?
- Engage the families of Catholic school pupils?
- Share the resources of your community?

What may be challenging or daunting for a youth group, parish, ethnic community or school by itself may be more manageable when done in collaboration. Who can you collaborate with?

[Source: *Fit for Mission* Pastoral Plan]



Live more:

As a group can you plan and implement one mission activity that speaks to ONE of the following:

- Mission in pairs or small groups or use new technologies to communicate? The goal is to reach out:
 - Who is currently excluded from your youth or faith community? How might you invite/welcome them to join you?
 - How well do you know others in your faith community?
 - How much inter-generational interaction is there in your faith community?

Appendix 1 | Session 2

Person A	Person B	Person C	Person D	Person E	Person F
<p>You are blind – please put on a blindfold after reading this card.</p> <p>Your gift is 25 pieces of spaghetti.</p> <p>In part 1 of this game you are not allowed to communicate in any way with other members of your group.</p> <p>In part 2 of this game you may receive and follow instructions from other members of your group. You may speak.</p>	<p>You have lost your voice. You may receive instructions from other members of your group but you are not allowed to talk.</p> <p>Your gift is a piece of paper and a pen.</p> <p>The challenge for you is to make a tower. You may only use the gift that you have (no sharing with other people in part 1).</p> <p>In part 1 of this game you are not allowed to communicate in any way with other members of your group.</p> <p>In part 2 of this game you may use body language to communicate with others.</p>	<p>You are paralysed. You are unable to move. please take a seat and stay in that one location.</p> <p>Your gift is 15 pieces of spaghetti.</p> <p>The challenge for you is to make a tower. you may only use the gift that you have (no sharing with other people in part 1)</p> <p>In both part 1 and part 2 of this game you may read and you may use your voice. You may not move.</p>	<p>You are deaf. People must give you instructions in writing or by sign language.</p> <p>Your gift is 30 marshmallows.</p> <p>The challenge for you is to make a tower. You may only use the gift that you have (no sharing with other people in part 1)</p> <p>In part 1 of this game you are not allowed to communicate in any way with other members of your group. In part 2 of this game you may use body and/or sign language to communicate with others.</p>	<p>You never learnt to read or write. You can follow instructions read to you by other members of the group.</p> <p>Your gift is 20 marshmallows.</p> <p>In both part 1 and part 2 of this game you may read and you may use your voice.</p>	<p>You are the leader of this group. It is your job to find out about each person in the group and co-ordinate their efforts to complete the task. You may not touch any gifts.</p> <p>Your gift is organisation skills.</p> <p>Be aware that in part one of this game some people will be unable to communicate with you.</p>

Appendix 2 | Session 2 Circles of My Multicultural Self

This activity highlights the multiple dimensions of our identities. It addresses the importance of individuals self-defining their identities and challenging stereotypes.

Place your name in the center circle of the structure below. Write an important aspect of your identity in each of the satellite circles -- an identifier or descriptor that you feel is important in defining you. This can include anything: Samoan, female, sister, sports junkie, student, Catholic, scientist, geocacher, computer games junkie or any descriptor with which you identify.

1. Share a story about a time you were especially proud to identify yourself with one of the descriptors you used in the diagram.
2. Share a story about a time it was especially painful to be identified with one of your identifiers or descriptors.
3. Name a stereotype associated with one of the groups with which you identify that is not consistent with who you are. Fill in the following sentence:

I am (a/an) _____ but I am NOT (a/an)

_____.

(So if one of my identifiers was "Catholic," and I thought a stereotype was that all Catholics are inward looking, my sentence would be:

I am a Catholic, but I am NOT inwards looking. I want to do what is right for the whole community.

Adapted from: http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/circlesofself_handout.html

