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Introduction

But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

—Ephesians 4:15–16

In a small way, this book's intention is to help the Body of Christ grow in understanding and “build itself up through love” at church or home. Celebrations, gatherings, and rituals help members of every generation find both individual meaning and common ground, all through the medium of direct experience, no matter the age of the participant. *Faithful Celebrations: Making Time for God in Autumn* offers a multitude of ideas for planning an event focused on a day in autumn (in the Northern Hemisphere) that will bring families together and build strong communities of faith, whether it is in the home or a congregational setting.

Through such occasions we can become better acquainted with our extended family—young and old together—in any setting. We can take steps toward making our congregation (or neighborhood) the warm, nurturing community we long for in our fragmented world. Older adults sometimes feel a sense of displacement in congregational life today, and younger people are increasingly looking

to a variety of sources for spiritual nurture and faith practice. Singing, praying, eating, and creating memories together enhances our well-being and makes our connections to one another stronger. Undergirding our experiences is the presence of God among us, nurturing us and working through us to help us grow in the knowledge and love of Christ Jesus.

Through community celebrations, we can experience Scripture and traditions in a fresh way that can give beauty and meaning to our daily lives. Within these pages you will find ideas to hold a theme-based event, or simply ideas to supplement other activities you have planned. This abundance allows you to choose only those activities that meet your congregation's or family's particular needs—and fit your timeframe. *Faithful Celebrations* will help you and your family, whether it be at home or at church, learn more and experience these particular late summer or autumnal days, both secular and sacred:

- Building a Church Family
- Back to School
- Labor Day
- St. Francis of Assisi
- International Day of Peace
- All Hallows' Eve
- All Saints' Day
- Thanksgiving

Because family relationships and community togetherness occur both inside and outside of a church setting, many of the Celebrations within this book have more *secular* or *popular-culture* roots. Here they are each presented from the perspective of “How does this occasion relate to my Christian faith?” This approach can be both enriching and rewarding, helping to make the connection of our faith with our daily life and the celebrations that have roots outside the Christian tradition. So often we have forgotten how secular events stem from sacred practices.

ALL AGES GROWING TOGETHER

Many of the formative experiences in life happen when several generations are together. In our society we tend to separate people by ages mainly for education and employment. In recent years, Christian formation programs have made this same separation of generations, but more and more religious educators are recommending programs in which adults and children learn together. It is a way to pass on faith—generation to generation. Old learn from young, and young learn from old.

Faithful Celebrations is designed to meet the need for generations to learn together. This approach requires that we venture beyond traditional learning methods into the world of experiential learning. Just as old and young alike can participate in vacations, trips, holidays, and family events together, learning more about our relationship with God can take place with all generations growing together. This may mean that adults work alongside children, helping them as well as listening to them as full partners in an activity or discussion. It means allowing children to experience things for themselves, not doing things for them but with them.

WHEN, WHERE, WHY, AND HOW

Finding time and resources to add another component to already full schedules, both in families and in congregations, can be a challenge. Within your community of faith, look to different groups who could successfully host an intergenerational gathering.

One promising lead might be to invite your youth organization to be in charge of leading one or more sessions. Consider also the possibility of asking different congregational organizations to host a given session. In a typical community of faith, consider using these ideas as:

- intergenerational and multi-age programming
- seasonal church gatherings for families
- primary Christian education material for a small church

- supplementary material for large Christian education programs
- supplementary material for classes in church-based schools
- home-study Christian education programs
- small-community or base-community Christian education
- supplementary material for family sacramental programs

In a home setting, families can use these activities for:

- family vacations and holidays
- neighborhood or community events
- home schooling and education
- gatherings of friends and families

Each chapter in *Faithful Celebrations* begins with an Introduction that includes background material and key ideas for each Celebration. Use this content to inspire your vision of what the event needs to be, for you, your planning committee, and your congregation or family. The pages that follow are organized by type of activity, such as opening prayer, story, craft, food, drama, music, game, or more. It will always conclude with a closing prayer.

Each activity or experience will include a very brief explanation for the leader, followed by a list of materials needed and step-by-step directions. The materials called for in this book are simple and inexpensive. Those common to most activities are:

- Bibles
- whiteboard, poster board, or flip chart with markers
- felt pens
- crayons (regular and oversized for young children)
- drawing paper
- glue
- scissors

From time to time links will be offered to supplemental online materials; there are also downloadable resources of craft patterns and templates available for free at www.churchpublishing.org/faithfulcelebrations2.

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

—*For Proper 9*, the Book of Common Prayer, p. 230

Name That Eraser!

This is a fun craft for children to decorate a pencil with their name on it to bring to school or use at home when doing homework.

Materials

- pencils, 1 per child
- pencil eraser heads (the ones that fit over the eraser part of a pencil), 1 per child
- string for beading, cut into 12" lengths, 1 per child
- scissors
- alphabet and other assorted beads
- white craft glue

Directions

1. Place an eraser head on a pencil.
2. Put a small amount of white glue around the base of the eraser head. Wrap a piece of string around the eraser head, smoothing out the glue as you go. Wrap enough string around it to cover most of the bottom half of the eraser head.
3. Cut off the string, leaving an 8" tail.
4. String the beads, spelling your name, on the string tail, and then tie a knot in the end to secure the beads.
5. Apply more glue to the string wrapped around the eraser head.
6. Apply extra glue to the string wrapped around the base of the eraser to make it extra secure.

PRAYER ACTIVITIES

Write Prayers for Peace

Invite members of your congregation (all ages) to write prayers for use and publication. Directions for each type of prayer are given below.

Materials

- paper
- pens and/or pencils
- optional: chalkboard, whiteboard, or newsprint (with chalk or markers)

Acrostic prayers (small children)

On a piece of paper, write the first name of the child with each letter being a line of the prayer, then let the child (helping as necessary) write a line beginning with each letter, for example:

Jump up and down
 Every day
 Never forget to smile
 Never forget to laugh
 You can be a peaceful person.

Haiku prayer (older children)

Haiku is a Japanese, unrhymed, short, three-lined, seventeen-syllable poem with a line-pattern of five syllables, then seven syllables, then five syllables, usually about nature, for example:

The world is peaceful
 When people share their stories
 Help us to listen

Song as Prayer

Hymns are also prayers, and there are many that speak of peace. Have a “hymn sing” with old favorites or learn some new ones. Possibilities include:

“Lord, make us servants of Your Peace” (*The Hymnal 1982*, #593)

“Ubi Caritas” (*Taizé* and also *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #831)

“He’s Got The Whole World in His Hands” (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, #217)

“I’ve Got Peace Like a River” (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, #201)

“What does the Lord require?” (*The Hymnal 1982*, #607)

“We are marching in the light of God” (*Wonder, Love, and Praise*, #787)

“Peace before us” (*Wonder, Love, and Praise*, #791)

“We shall overcome” (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, #227)

DRAMA

Who Am I?

This is a version of “What’s My Line?” to guess who the costumed characters represent.

Advance preparation

- Several weeks before your event, ask 5–6 participants, older children or teens, to role play saints at your All Saints’ Celebration. See the calendar in the Book of Common Prayer (p. 19–33) for a list of many saints celebrated by the Church, and suggest that the participants research their saint online using Wikipedia or another source such as *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* (New York: Church Publishing, 2016).
- Help them come up with ideas for costumes for their saint characters.

Materials

- Book of Common Prayer
- Bible
- costume components
- chairs
- *optional*: long table

Directions

1. At the Celebration, provide a separate area to seat each “saint” or seat all the “saints” together as a panel at a long table.
2. Invite others to interview these “saints” to determine their identity and what they did to proclaim the good news.
3. The “saints” should be prepared to answer a variety of questions, from the most serious: “Were you killed because you followed Jesus?” to the silly: “What’s your favorite food?”

Beatitude Skits

Bring the Beatitudes to a modern day situation and act out what these pieces of scripture mean for today.

Materials

- Bibles

Directions

1. Read aloud Matthew 5:3–10 to the participants. Divide the group into eight smaller groups and assign one of the Beatitudes to each group.
2. Ask each group to devise a skit showing a present day situation illustrating the assigned Beatitude.
3. Encourage each group to plan a role for every group member. Allow 10 minutes for preparation, then ask each group to present its skit to the reassembled group.

RECIPES

Fruit Gobbler

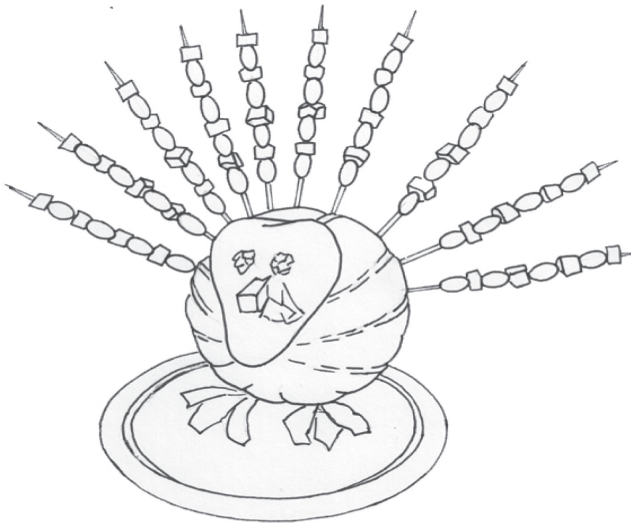
This treat is both easy to assemble—and delicious to take apart. All ages can participate in the creation of this colorful and yummy centerpiece for your Celebration.

Ingredients and materials

- bosc pear (head)
- melon (body)
- cheese (beak and tail feathers)
- red pepper (snood, feet, and side feathers)
- raisins (eyes)
- grapes (tail feathers)
- bamboo skewers
- toothpicks

Directions

1. Stabilize the melon body by cutting a shallow slice off the rind to form a flat base.



2. Using a section of bamboo skewer, attach a bosc pear head to the melon, as shown.
3. Cut a cheese triangle beak and red pepper snood. Attach both, along with raisin eyes, to the head with sections of toothpick.
4. Cut red pepper feet and set them in place.
5. For tail feathers, skewer cheese cubes and red grapes, then insert the skewers as shown.
6. Pin pepper side feathers in place with toothpicks.

Harvest Blessing Snack Mix

Each ingredient in this snack mix symbolizes something associated with the harvest season of Thanksgiving.

Advance preparation

Invite each family, couple, or individual coming to the Celebration to bring one of the items listed below.

Ingredients and materials

- large bowl
- Bugles: represent the cornucopia or horn of plenty
- pretzel twists: represent arms folded in thanks and prayer
- candy corn or popcorn: during the first winter, the pilgrims were each allotted only five kernels of corn per day because food was so scarce
- dried fruit: Thanksgiving is the celebration of the harvest
- peanuts or sunflower seeds: seeds represent the potential of a bountiful harvest for the next season if they are planted and well tended. (*Note:* Make sure there are no nut allergies among your participants.)

Directions

1. As people arrive, have them add their contribution to a large bowl.
2. Mix, share and enjoy!