**FF-YM Zoom Gathering Notes from 7-2-2020**

**Did you know?** The 30th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act will be on Sunday, July 26th. This is a great opportunity for congregations to focus on that theme and work on “widening the welcome”! For help, check out the UCC Disabilities Ministries. They have a lot of information and resources: <https://www.ucc.org/disabilities_and_mental_health_justice>

Liz K at First Congregational Oshkosh is developing a **virtual mission trip** around the theme of diversity in their community. They will explore the struggles of being an immigrant, especially with the current COVID-19 situation.

* They will research their own family histories- why did their ancestors come here?
* Why do they have different populations in their community and did it affect these people to settle in that particular community?
* She will share the story of a relative who is an immigrant and came to this country to escape genocide.

Another focus will be on the environment. Here are some resources around environmental justice were shared during our gathering:

* The **Environmental Justice Foundation** has some great short films (some only a few minutes long, others about 10-12 minutes long) that can be shown to youth.

<https://ejfoundation.org/>

* Rev. Dr. Terry Gallagher is a UCC minister who is focused on environmental justice. He led a popular workshop at the Great Lakes Regional Youth Event at Elmhurst College in 2018. **Sustaining Creation** is his 8 session video series that is a “Faith Journey for Small Groups”.

<https://sustainingcreation.org/?page_id=38>

**Many in our group were looking for ideas to engage youth… if trying to gather outside:**

* Go on a hike
* Walk a labyrinth
* Have a campfire with appropriate spacing….individual s’mores kits could be packaged in resealable bags
* Meet in a large space (ie: parking lot) and sit in a circle in chairs (measure distance between chairs for appropriate spacing). Have everyone bring a sack lunch/dinner or order subs from a local restaurant.
  + Samantha has been doing this with her youth and she gives each youth a bag with a clipboard\*\*, markers, index cards, paper and dice. Her church packs lunches as a mission project so the youth use the markers and index cards to write notes to put in the lunches. (Youth could also write notes to be sent to those who are isolated, sick, etc…) The dice are used to play Tenzi. (Sam mentioned that it took the kids about 4 weeks of meeting before the youth began talking with each other the way they normally would.)
  + Other ideas for activities in a circle include:
    - Bingo
    - Trivia
    - Pictionary
    - Buzzword
    - Taboo
    - Charades
    - Scattergories

\*\* if you have the funds, 8X10 whiteboards could be used in place of clipboards

Here are some links to resources for games to play with youth:

* <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GaOzVigUNQR8NajutTZ1fXXSoO1gO2I6?usp=sharing>
* **Mad Gab** on Google Slide <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1pq84Tcuy66YjYdk4gMPZ0t6c8Y4m34vaY-ucB_2-IUE/edit?usp=sharing>
* **Scattergories** <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1CecfPMbB-AERJJR6LasN7YCucVISKG3iqDH4ayQjxuk/edit?usp=sharing>

Many of these games can be played online, too.

**Bingo Fun!**

* Some churches are doing Parking Lot Bingo…having families gather in the parking lot to play Bingo together. (Think family tailgating with bingo!)
* One church sent Bible Bingo materials home in activity bags for families to play.
* Backyard Bingo:
  + Make your own cards to send out
  + Have the players
    - listen for certain sounds (birds chirping, water bubbling or running, dogs barking, etc….)
    - Have them mark something they have seen (grass, rainbow, fluffy clouds, purple flowers, etc…)
    - What have they touched? Smelled? Tasted? (if it is safe to taste 😊)

(We seemed to have quite the “Bingo” theme going on last Thursday! 😊)

**Activities that can be done from home…for a variety of ages:**

Have youth (or families) do a **scavenger hunt with pictures**. They can send you pictures of the completed items on the list. The first to complete all items would win a prize. Or… you could provide a prize to anyone who completes the items by a certain date.

Another idea shared is to do **“Story Hour”** on Zoom or other online platforms:

* Jenn is doing a Racial Justice Story Hour and it is going really well. Books are read on Zoom and then there is a Facebook Group for resource sharing. (these are not being recorded to protect the privacy of youth who participate and due to copyright issues for recording)
* Liz is asking teens to read stories for the little kids in the congregation. They will be recorded on Facebook or some other platform.

First Congregational in Oshkosh has a **Kids & Family Activities page** on their website. Each day, Liz posts different activities:

* One day is games (ie: hula hoop games): For some outdoor fun…here are instructions for making your own hula hoops! <https://rubyhooping.com/how-to-make-your-own-hula-hoop/>
* Another day she might post recipes (ie: for the 4th of July she posted the recipe for Red, White and Blue Dessert).
* She asks them what creative things they are making and invites them to share a picture.

**VBS Updates/Ideas:**

Quite a few churches are trying a virtual or hybrid VBS this year.

Darci (Middleton, WI) is using the curriculum from Group Publishing. They are setting up 3 rooms with 3 sets and will record videos to post online. They are making their program available online for 2 weeks. The first week, Darci will post one video per day. The videos will then remain online through week 2. This allows families to do the lessons when it is convenient. They are sending packets with all of the hands-on elements to the families who are enrolled in VBS. This will include all of the activities and themed snack instructions.

Carmen (Marshfield, WI) is going to use the Bolt Curriculum. This is a 3 day program. <https://www.gocurriculum.com/bolt-vbs>

Carmen’s pastor is also doing an 8 week sermon series on the Beattitudes. Carmen has put together a Beattitudes Activity Packet that was sent out to the kids in the congregation.

Samantha (Louisville, KY) is using Illustrated Ministry’s Compassion Camp (a virtual/at-home VBS): <https://store.illustratedministry.com/products/compassion-camp>

There are 5 videos for each of the 5 sessions:

* The opening with Bible Story
* Slow movement yoga
* Craft lesson/activity
* Music
* Closing/Send off & Prayer

(I may not have this exactly right…so check out their website!)

Sam will offer this over 5 weeks. She plans to post one lesson per week. Every family will get a folder with the resources needed for use at home during VBS.

**Additional Curriculum Resources that were mentioned:**

**Sparkhouse** has summer curriculum, including:

* *Spark All Kids*/Year Green/Summer…for Grades K-5: <https://www.wearesparkhouse.org/store/search?ss=summer+curriculum>
* *ReNew: The Green VBS* for PreK-Grade 6: <https://www.wearesparkhouse.org/store/product/ITEM008146/ReNew-The-Green-VBS>

**Cokesbury** now has a curriculum called *Celebrate-Wonder*: <https://www.cokesbury.com/celebrate-wonder>

**Update on Michigan Conference UCC project for youth:**

I am grateful to Jenn for sharing a lesson she and her colleagues learned this past week. They originally were planning to launch a project for youth in the Conference called “The Experiment”. When they shared their ideas and received feedback, they became aware that the word “experiment” often has a negative connotation in Black communities. This was a valuable lesson to learn…something that many of us are, too often, unaware of. In response, they have decided to call their project **“The Exploration”**.

They are in the final stages of putting together packets that will be sent to youth in the Michigan Conference. They will be encouraged/challenged to engage in spiritual/faith practices and then reflect on their experience. Imagine if we each did this with the youth in our setting…

Hope to see you online on Thursday, 7/9/2020…. We’ll have more details about registering for the NYE2020 virtual experience that will take place on 7/25 & 726.