

"Growing a Rule of Life" adapted for Children

Prepared by the Office for Congregations and Christian Formation of the Diocese of Ohio

The intent is to use the *Growing a Rule of Life* Lenten series prepared by the Brothers of the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE). While the original series was written for both groups and individuals, this is written solely for groups of children, ages 6 through 12. As teachers, you know your children and how best to adapt it for your group.

Main objective; to educate while still having fun and hopefully encourage children and adults to talk about the "*Growing a Rule of Life*" experience.

This series is written in six 1 hour sessions to help students explore how they might grow in relationship with God, through their relationship with themselves, others and creation.

Each week participants in the adult series will watch videos and answer questions as a group. For this series use one or two of the questions from the "Growing a Rule of Life" workbook for discussion and activity.

The adult facilitators guide suggests opening each session with the Song of Creation from the Book of Common Prayer. Each stanza ends with "Praise him and highly exalt him for ever" (BCP pages 88-90). There is a children's book entitled *Song of Creation* (available at Cokesbury) by Paul Goble where each stanza ends "Praise him and magnify him forever" which is the Rite One translation of the Song of Creation (BCP pages 47-49). Whichever version you choose to use, make a poster with the response to hang in your classroom and ask the children to pray with you repeating the response at the beginning of each class.

The guide also suggests setting up a "tool shed", an area set aside with additional resources that the students may enjoy. The goal is to use this as an opportunity to set up small prayer stations that the students may go to at the end of session or as time allows. The following are suggestions for stations but feel free to adapt to the needs and concerns of your group:

- On a post-it or on paper write or draw a prayer for the church
- Say a prayer for your family - create a picture frame
- Say a prayer for someone who is sick - make a get well card
- Pray for yourself - make an elastic bracelet spelling the word "pray" with letter beads
- Pray for a friend while making matching necklaces
- Pray for homeless - ask the participant to help make a tie blanket that can be given to a shelter. saying a short prayer with each knot. <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Fleece-Tie-Blanket>
- Say a pray while folding clothes for your parish clothing ministry
- If your parish has a food pantry, pack groceries while saying a prayer for the recipients.

The facilitators guide explains, "In this series we will focus on God as the chief Gardner of our soul, and we will seek out ways to grow into the fullness God desires for us. Just as stakes and lattices support the growth of young plants, so too can spiritual discipline support the flourishing of our whole being... The series is organized into six phases. In these phases, we look deeply at our relationships with God, with self, with others, and with creation." This program follows the adult Lenten series focus.

Supplies list:

- Bible
- Book of Common Prayer
- Tacks or tape for displaying art work
- Poster with the response for the opening prayer (will be need for each class)

Tool Shed Supplies

- Post-it notes (in different shapes, if possible)
- Pens and Pencils
- Materials for decorating picture frames
- Blank cards
- Stickers
- Markers
- Crayons
- Scissors
- Glue
- Beads for necklaces and bracelets
- Letter beads
- Cording necklaces
- Elastic string
- Fleece blanket kit
- Other items for your prayer stations, as needed

1st week

- Seeds of Creation seed packet (attached)
- Crayons
- Markers
- Pencils and Pens
- Posterboard or foam core
- Brass fasteners for attaching the posts and slats together

2nd week

- Paper or posterboard
- Markers
- Crayons

3rd week

- Jenga Game (with the ends shaded - 4 different colors)
- Paper or poster board
- Markers
- Crayons
- Materials for making mobiles. (The internet is full of ideas.)

4th week

- Balls of multicolor yarn (1 for each group)
- String art materials
 - Cardboard or wood circles or craft sticks
 - Embroidery string

5th week

- Fast germinating seeds (check online or with your local garden shop)
- Flower pots or paper cups
- Soil
- Fertilizer
- Water
- Clear plastic wrap

6th week

- Poster board or paper
- Magazines
- Scissors
- Glue
- Paper or posterboard
- Markers
- Crayons

First week of Lent: Rule of life Introduction

Opening prayer

- "The Song of Creation" teaching the response using a poster as described in the introduction. (5 minutes)

Getting Started (15 minutes)

- If your children do not know each other start by doing introductions.
- Distribute the attached seed packet drawing, ask the children to color the seed packet using the petals of the flower to describe themselves. i.e. Age, grade, favorite color etc.

What is a rule of life? (10 minutes)

As described in the adult materials, "The word 'rule' comes from the Latin word, regula, from which we get 'regularize' and 'regulate.' Keeping a Rule of Life is a way to regularize our lives in order to stay on an intentionally-chosen path. A Rule of Life is not just a set of rules; rather, it is a supportive framework to gently guide us on our way." Spend a few minutes talking about rules, what is good about them?, what is bad about them? and why do we need them?

Garden Fence Activity (20-30 minutes)

Using the garden fence in the adult workbook as a reference, have the students create garden fences using poster board or foam core, explaining that fences provide protection and safety. What else can the garden fence provide? What would happen if we didn't have a fence around our garden?

If space allows, maybe in a hallway, display the fences for others to enjoy.

If time remains, explain about the tool shed and allow the students to enjoy that space.

Net Wt.

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Name:

Favorite
Ice cream

Favorite
Super Hero

Age _____

Grade _____

Favorite Color _____

Seeds of Creation

Second week of Lent: Relationship with God

Last week we built a garden fence and talked about why fences are important in our lives. This week we will begin to prepare our garden.

"Of all the elements of a Rule of Life, those dealing with our relationship with God are the most important. God is the source and the center of our lives as people of faith. During this phase, we will be exploring ways in which we can develop and grow our relationship with God in prayer. Prayer is our lifeblood. It is what binds us to God and God to us."

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

- "The Song of Creation" (5 minutes)

Garden Activity (30-40 minutes)

God loves you, God made you, God wants you to grow.

Give each student a poster board or a sheet of paper. Using markers or crayons ask them to draw a soil line on the lower portion of the paper.

In the area above the soil line ask the children to draw a self-portrait in the center of a flower or in the branches of a tree.

After this task is completed, spend sometime with the children talking about how important the soil is for plants to grow strong and healthy. Ask, "Who are those people that help you to grow?" Ask them to draw or write in the soil what that looks like for them. Some may see a root system while others just see the soil full of nutrients. Some may just want to write words and others may use a combination of things.

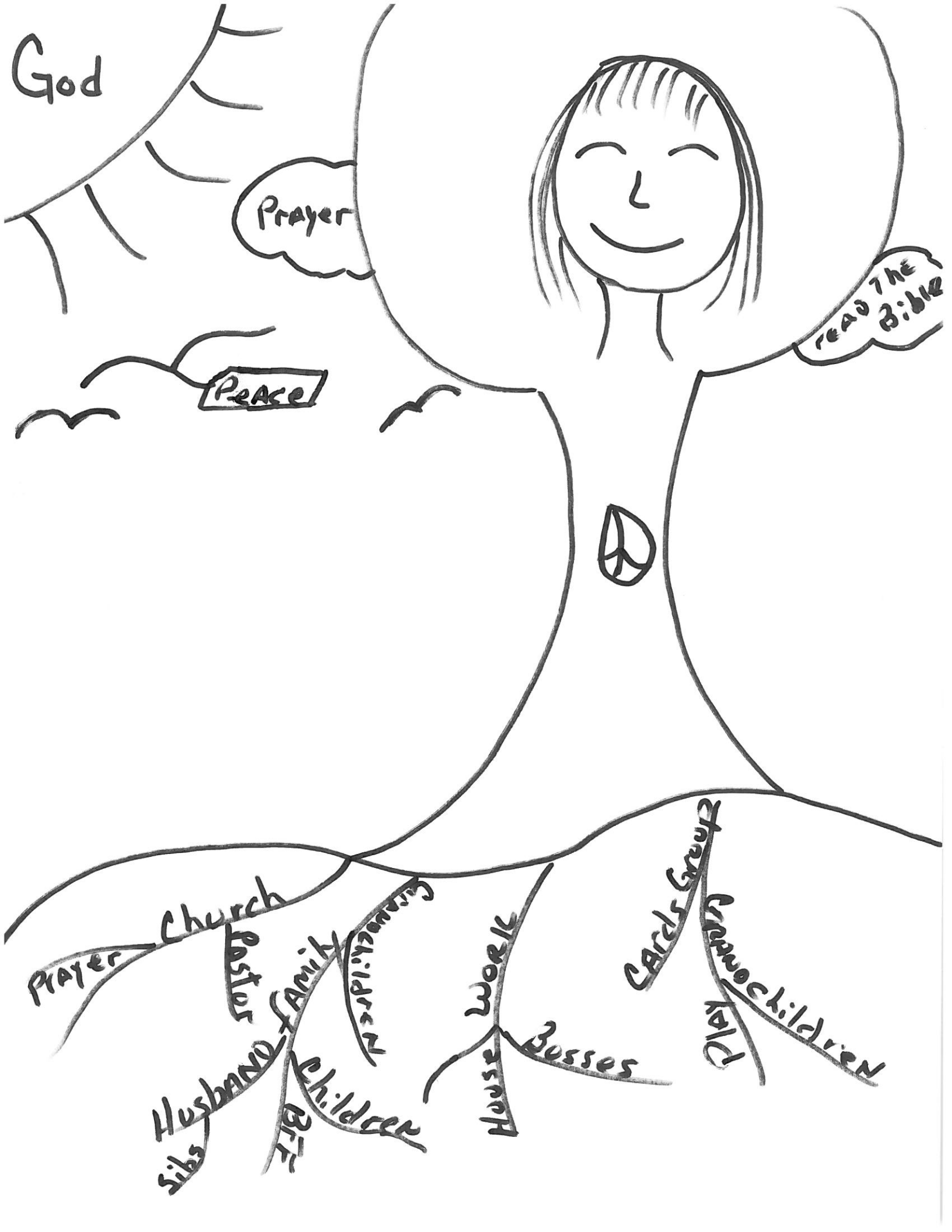
When everyone has completed this task...

Finally, the sky...

Begin by asking them to add items to their sky. Clouds, the sun, birds - whatever they would like. Now ask "How can prayer help us to grow in our relationship with God?" How does the Church help us grow in our relationship with God? After they have thought about it ask them to write or draw their answers in the sky scene they have created.

When everyone has completed their garden picture, ask those who would like to share. When finished sharing, move finished projects to the garden fence for all to enjoy.

With the remaining time, visit the tool shed.



Third week of Lent: Relationship with Self

In our time together last week we discussed how important the soil was in our garden to create a strong and healthy relationship with God. Today, we will talk about the importance of having the right elements for that relationship to grow. i.e. just the right amount of sun and shade or water.

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

- "The Song of Creation" (5 minutes)

Relaxation Exercise (5 minutes)

Begin the group with 5 minutes of relaxation exercises. If you have the space, ask the children to sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Guide them in breathing in and out very slowly. Ask them to continue breathing at a slow pace, slowly moving their heads from side-to-side, shrugging their shoulders up and down with each breath, shaking out their arms and fingers then moving down to their legs and toes.

Question and discussion time (10 minutes)

Questions that you might ask:

- What do you love about yourself?
- What does your relationship with yourself look like? Do you study enough?, play too much?, do you find time for friends, family and prayer?

Play Jenga (with the ends shaded - 4 different colors) (20 minutes)

Each color will represent a different item in their lives: church and prayer, school and chores, friends and play, and home and family. Each student should select one of the 4 items and should only pull the blocks with the color assigned to that item. After a few tumbles have discussion with the students about the consequences of too much or too little of those things. For example: too much play-grades drop, too much school work and relationships with God and family may suffer. Talk about how important it is to keep life in balance and how that can be difficult sometimes. How can prayer help us to bring balance into our lives?

Mobile Activity (20 Minutes)

Working in teams of 2, make mobiles according to instructions.

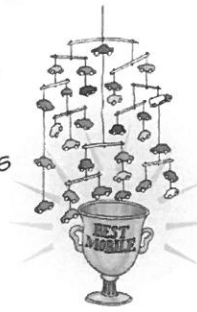
(<http://sciencenetlinks.com/afterschool-resources/balancing-points/>) Work in teams so that one can hold the mobile up for his or her partner while working to make the mobile balance have them take turns holding and building. When finished, hang the mobiles, if possible.

Talk about how hard it was to balance the mobile and what we can do to keep our own life in better balance.

If time permits visit the tool shed.

Balancing Points

Have you ever tried to make a mobile? It can be tricky if you don't pay attention to balance. The best mobiles have parts that are balanced and move freely.



If the parts aren't balanced, you can end up with a tangled mess, not a mobile! That's no fun! Want to learn the secrets of making one that balances just "right"?

Let's make a balanced mobile!

Here's all you need

- objects for your mobile*
- string, thread, or fishing line
- hanger
- rulers or sticks

*Use objects that can hang on a thread. Or cut shapes out of cardboard and decorate them.

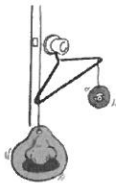
Here's what to do:

1. Tie an object on the hanger. If it balances, your object is at the balancing point.

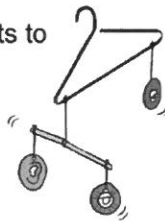


2. Slide the object to one side. Where do you add an object to make the hanger balance again?

3. How can you make a heavy and a light object balance?



4. Make a tier (level). Slide it off-center. Where do you add objects to balance it?



5. Use what you learned to make a well-balanced mobile!

Follow up

Do tiers make the mobile more stable or less stable?

Here's more about balance:

To be able to seesaw with a sumo wrestler, you must sit at the end of the seesaw. The wrestler must sit near the center. It's like putting heavy objects near the center of your mobile. (Try it!)

Which plastic bowl is easier to balance? (Try it!) The mass of the first one is at the same height as the balancing point. The mass of the second bowl is mostly below the balancing point. Tiers on a mobile put more mass below the balancing point.



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Using these squares, ask the students to make a balanced mobile.

Friends and Play

School
and
Chores

Home
and
Family

**Church and
Prayer**

Fourth week of Lent: Relationship with Others

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

- "The Song of Creation" (5 minutes)

Opening Reading (5 minutes)

"Spirituality is never a private affair. It always brings us into connection with others. We are called by Jesus to be in relationships of love, and to be loving toward others, even our enemies." (*Growing a Rule of Life participant workbook*)

Think about your past week, who are the 'others' in your life? ie. the new kid at school, the cashier, your mailman. How did you interact with them? ie.. a smile, a wave, a conversation.

Creating our relationship web (20 minutes)

We are all connected, directly and indirectly, like a web, through God's Creation.

Find a space large enough for your group to make one large circle or smaller circles of 4 or more. Give each group a ball of multicolor yarn. You will then ask a question and throw the ball of yarn to someone else across from you holding on to part of the yarn. The person you threw the ball to will then hold a part of the yarn and answering the question will throw it to a person across from them and so on until everyone has had a turn. When all questions have been answered, ask the group to slowly lower the web to the floor and if space permits leave it on the floor the remainder of class. Talk about the web and how everyone is interconnected.

Sample Questions:

- Who do you feel most connected to in your family?
- Which person would you like to feel more connected to at school?
- How did you connect with your friends?
- When do you feel connected to God?
- How do you feel connected to others outside of your circle?
- Who at church did you feel connected to this week?
- Where do you feel connected to God?

String Art Project (20 minutes)

Ask the student what their personal web would look like (family?, friends?, classmates?, strangers?, church members? 'others?') and using the material provided create their own string art web to hang on the garden fence. If you need inspiration visit these websites:

<http://earlylearning.momtrusted.com/2013/04/easy-geometric-string-art/>

<http://www.freekidscrafts.com/string-art-decorations/>

Visit the tool shed if time remains.

Fifth week of Lent: Relationship with nature

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

- "The Song of Creation" (5 minutes)

Questions (5 minutes)

- What are your favorite things to do outside?
- What part of nature do you most feel connected, and why?

Scripture reading - The parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-8) (10-15 minutes)

"That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (NRSV)

- What happened to the seeds?
- Why do you think Jesus tells us this story?
- How does this story relate to you?

Planting our Garden (20-30 minutes)

Ask the kids what a seed needs to grow. Use their answers as a way to explain how to plant, water, and care for the seeds you will give them. However, choose seeds that will germinate quickly, if possible. Seeds can be purchased at any garden store. You can give the same seeds to each student or choose an assortment.

Give each child a flower pot or a paper cup and seeds. If using pots or blank cups have each child decorate and write their name on the pot or cup. Ask them to fill the pots with soil and fertilizer. Sometime the fertilizer is already in the potting soil and if it is, point it out to the children explaining what it is. Each child can then add the seeds and when finished, add water. If possible, ask the children to put their pots in a window or near a light source and leave them there until next week. It might be helpful to cover the pot loosely with plastic wrap to keep moist.

- Why do we add fertilizer and water to our plants?
- Why do we put them in the window?

Visit the tool shed if time remains.

Holy Week: Living in Rhythm

"A personal Rule of Life is not a rigid law but a constitution that helps hold together the many elements of the whole self." (*The Rule as a Guide to Personal Reflection*)

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

- "The Song of Creation" (5 minutes)

Review of last week and questions (10 minutes)

Ask the students to look at the plants from last week. Have they sprouted? If so, why do you think that happened? What do plants need in order to grow? What do we need to be healthy and happy?

Grow Collage Activity (20 minutes)

Give each student a piece of paper, some magazines, scissors and glue and ask them to cut out pictures of the things they need to grow. For example, food, water, family, exercise, prayer, church, God. Have them create a collage from the pictures. Invite them to share with each other why did they choose this or that?

How I Grow Activity (20 minutes)

On a different sheet of paper, ask the student to draw a self-portrait, including their body, leaving room to answer the following questions:

- What do they need to do daily, weekly and seasonally for their bodies to grow? Using the plant as an example, daily watering, weekly fertilizing, seasonally pruning.
- What do they need to do daily, weekly and seasonally for their relationship with God to continue to grow? i.e. daily prayer, weekly church, do volunteer work.

Invite the students to share.

Closing Poem

Growing Stronger In Jesus

By Raymond Sides

Blessed and happy are all of God's children, who do not walk in this world's sinful ways;
But delight in reading and meditating on God's word, which teaches them not to stray.

God's children flourish as trees on a river bank; with roots that run fast and deep,
While growing into precious fruits, which are holy, sanctified, and sweet.

God's fruits that have grown in all His children's lives, will never fade away,
And They encourage their Christian brothers and sisters to grow stronger every day.

God's children will grow stronger in Jesus, as they study God's word, believe, fast, and pray,
And they will help lost people, by showing them how to walk in God's holy and righteous way.

- See more at: <http://www.christart.com/poetry/poem4800.htm#sthash.lePNfCvi.dpuf>

Visit the tool shed if time remains.

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