



# Welcome!

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GROWING  
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A living faith is so much more than simply believing in God. Jesus called all sorts of people to follow him to God, showing concrete ways to love God and one another. When we do these actions together, faith develops, lives change, and communities transform.



# Introducing a new curriculum for today's church.

- *Follow Me* centers around biblical practices
- **Practices** – verb, things Jesus did, said, or embodied. Things Christians have done over time.



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# Why Biblical Practices?

- Believing → Behaving → Belonging  
Shift to a new way
- Behaving → Belonging → Believing  
Practices form identity and transform
- Practices → Community → Faith



- 36 units, over three years, are based on practices Jesus did, embodied, and taught his followers.
- Each session explores an aspect of the practice through Bible study, how it's been practiced through time, and how practiced today.
- Personal, communal, worship, and global practices are included.
- Units are four sessions in length, except for a six-session unit each year, ideal to be used during Lent.

YEAR 1 PRACTICES (2021–2022)	YEAR 2 PRACTICES (2022–2023)	YEAR 3 PRACTICES (2023–2024)
<i>Available July 2021</i> <b>Follow Jesus</b> <b>Welcome All</b> <b>Confess</b>	<i>Available July 2022</i> <b>Honor Sabbath</b> <b>Pray</b> <b>Forgive</b>	<i>Available July 2023</i> <b>Take Up Your Cross</b> <b>Worship God</b> <b>Feed Others</b>
<i>Available October 2021</i> <b>Hope</b> <b>Baptize</b> <b>Live in Community</b>	<i>Available October 2022</i> <b>Announce the Realm of God</b> <b>Lament</b> <b>Do Justice</b>	<i>Available October 2023</i> <b>Do Not Fear</b> <b>Renounce Evil</b> <b>Comfort Those Who Mourn</b>
<i>Available January 2022</i> <b>Practice Spiritual Disciplines</b> <i>(6-sessions, ideal for Lent)</i> <b>Practice Joy</b> <b>Honor God's Diversity</b>	<i>Available January 2023</i> <b>Love God, Neighbor, Enemy</b> <i>(6-sessions, ideal for Lent)</i> <b>Celebrate Communion</b> <b>Break Boundaries</b>	<i>Available January 2024</i> <b>Use Spiritual Gifts</b> <i>(6-sessions, ideal for Lent)</i> <b>Share the Good News</b> <b>Serve Others</b>
<i>Available April 2022</i> <b>Sing a New Song</b> <b>Make Peace</b> <b>Practice Generosity</b>	<i>Available April 2023</i> <b>Make Disciples</b> <b>Practice Stewardship</b> <b>Walk Humbly</b>	<i>Available April 2024</i> <b>Heal the Sick</b> <b>Practice Gratitude</b> <b>Speak the Truth</b>



## Components

- **Congregational Guide**
- Colorful infographic poster (18" x 24") for each unit (set of 12 for each year) and a set of 12 Bible Basic posters (available separately)
- **Young Children Leader's Guide** (ages 3–5)
- **Multiage Children Leader's Guide** (ages 6–10)
- **Youth Leaders Guide** (ages 11–18)
- **Adult Leader's Guide**
- **Adult Reflection Guide**, which can be used alone or in group study









- Each practice is based on a foundational essay written by a biblical scholar.
- Essays explore four aspects or dimensions of the practice with biblical stories and show how the Christian community has lived it through time.
- Foundational essays guide curriculum writers for each age group.
- Preachers may use them to develop a sermon series.

## Foundational Essay

### WELCOME OTHERS

LYNNE BAAB

#### INTRODUCTION

If Christians are known for anything, it is how we welcome others. Greeters welcome visitors and members to worship with a smile and a handshake or hug. Churches enthusiastically proclaim that all are welcome to our worship community. We take extra efforts to make others comfortable, especially those who are new or visiting. Communal meals seem to happen all the time, providing an inviting space for all to share food and fellowship.

A helpful definition of Christian hospitality lays out the gift and challenge of this practice. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun writes, “Hospitality creates a safe, open place where a friend or stranger can enter and experience the welcoming spirit of Christ in another.”<sup>1</sup>

Welcoming others is certainly core to the Christian life. It is not always so easy to practice, however, even with those we love the most. It can be a joy, but it can also be a challenge to create that open, safe space, especially when people impinge on our own comfort levels or are different or feared. This essay invites you to reflect on various dimensions of welcoming others as we strive to follow Christ and practice welcoming others the way Jesus did.

At the very heart of hospitality is a commitment to welcome one another, those who are like us and those who are not. The God we learn about in the Bible and from our faith ancestors desires a loving relationship with us. This relationship goes both ways; it’s not just one sided. There are responsibilities for both parties. In the Old Testament, we learn about God’s continual establishment of covenants with people. God promises to be with people and protect them if they, in turn, protect the vulnerable (i.e., provide hospitality) in their midst. People continually fail to live up to their side of the pact, and covenant is broken. The prophets continually remind people they are not living up to their part of the bargain and may lose God’s favor. After some time and much grief, God approaches them again, offering to be their God if they will, in turn, protect others.

“Hospitality creates a safe, open place where a friend or stranger can enter and experience the welcoming spirit of Christ in another.”<sup>1</sup>

The “Foundational Essay” is included in each leader’s guide, the *Adult Reflection Guide*, and the *Congregational Guide*.

1. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 161.

### Four aspects of Welcome All:

- Welcome others as God welcomes you.
- See Christ in every person you meet—friend, stranger, enemy.
- Know your gifts of hospitality and encourage others’ gifts.
- Challenge “othering.”

## Worship Helps, for each session

- Scripture—each age-level’s Bible story passage
- Hymn and song suggestions—includes occasional choral anthems
- Liturgical actions—creative ideas to incorporate the practice into the worship setting
- Liturgies—prayers, litanies, and suggestions for various parts of worship

# Welcome Others as God Welcomes You

1

WORSHIP HELPS

CONGREGATIONAL GUIDE

**SCRIPTURE**  
Young Children: Genesis 1; Luke 18:15–17  
Multiage Children: Genesis 1:1–2:2  
Youth: Genesis 18:1–10  
Adult: Genesis 1–2:4a; Genesis 2:4b–25

**HYMNS AND SONGS**  
*GtG: Glory to God: Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2013)  
Note: Hymns and songs may also be found in other hymnals and songbooks, and at [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org).

**GOD WELCOMES US IN CREATION**

- ◆ “All Things Bright and Beautiful” (*GtG*, #20): *The diversity of creation is praised in this hymn.*
- ◆ “God of Great and God of Small” (*GtG*, #19): *God of all holds all together and is present to all.*
- ◆ “Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works” (*GtG*, #21): *We are welcomed into creation in this Dakota melody.*
- ◆ “O Lord, Our God, How Excellent” (*GtG*, #25): *Using a paraphrase of Psalm 8, God’s creation is praised.*

**WE WELCOME ALL**

- ◆ “Come All You People (Uyai mose)” (*GtG*, #388): *A calling song from Zimbabwe invites people to worship, in English and the Shona language.*
- ◆ “For Everyone Born” (*GtG*, #769): *God’s hospitality transcends the barriers created by human society.*
- ◆ “God Welcomes All” (*GtG*, #399): *Creating a setting of welcome, this song can be sung several times.*
- ◆ “Help Us Accept Each Other” (*GtG*, #754): *We seek to see one another as Christ sees us.*
- ◆ “Here in This Place (Gather Us In)” (*GtG*, #401): *All are welcomed and gathered for worship.*
- ◆ “I’m Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table” (*GtG*, #770): *This African American spiritual celebrates God’s welcome of all at the great feast.*
- ◆ “Let Us Build a House (All Are Welcome)” (*GtG*, #301): *All are welcome in our worship.*
- ◆ “We Gather Here in Jesus’ Name (Come, Share the Lord)” (*GtG*, #510): *As we share the Lord’s Supper, no one is a stranger, all are family.*

Note: [bit.ly](http://bit.ly) addresses are case-sensitive.

Congregational Guide: Worship Helps—Welcome Others as God Welcomes You

**CHORAL ANTHEM**  
◆ “For the Beauty of the Earth” by Philip Stopford

**LITURGICAL ACTIONS**

- ◆ Create a graphic design for the cover of a worship bulletin or slide for a screen of a word cloud with the word *Welcome* in many different languages, particularly ones spoken in your church and community.
- ◆ Incorporate the song “God Welcomes All” (*GtG*, #399) in worship each week. All age groups in the four sessions for this practice use it as an opening ritual. Try different methods such as using various rhythms, singing in a round, and adding rhythm instruments.
- ◆ As an opening for worship, show the YouTube video “Learn to Say Welcome in 15 languages” ([bit.ly/FMWelcome15\\_044](http://bit.ly/FMWelcome15_044)) or invite people to lead the congregation in saying “Welcome” in various languages.
- ◆ Regularly incorporate languages other than the dominant language of the congregation in the liturgy. Many congregations do this on Pentecost or World Communion Sunday. However, incorporating other languages with regularity makes it feel less novel and more integral. To make decisions about which languages to include, consider the following:
  - who is present in your congregation and what languages they speak,
  - languages that are spoken in your community and surroundings, and
  - mission relationships the congregation has in which other languages are spoken.
- ◆ Engage an American Sign Language interpreter as a regular part of worship leadership.
- ◆ Include a Minute for Mission to celebrate the ministries of the congregation that are specifically geared to welcome people to worship and fellowship, such as greeters, ushers, shepherds, and those who prepare for a time of fellowship.

## LITURGIES

*FOWWC: Feasting on the Word Worship Companion, Year B, Volume 2* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2014)

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

- ◆ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **And the Word became flesh and lived among us.** Let us worship God.

(John 1:1, 14)

This is the day the Lord has made. **Let us rejoice and be glad in it!** God made the world and welcomed us in it. **Let us welcome all as well.** Let us worship God.

Remembering God’s abundant welcome for us in creation, **Friend or stranger, enter and welcome.** Let us worship God together.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**  
**Living God, you created us to live in relationship with you, to love and serve one another, and to care for all your creatures. Yet, in the hardness of our hearts, we dismiss your commandments and seek to go our separate ways. Lord, have mercy on us. Redeem us, restore us, and re-create us, for the sake of Christ our Savior. Amen.**

(*FOWWC-B2*, p. 195)

◆ **Creator God, you breathed, and this world and all that is in it came into being. You called it good, very good. You welcomed us to this home and called us very good. Forgive us when we treat your creation like a doormat, dirty and forgotten. Forgive us when we close the doors and shutter the windows of our homes, our places of business, and our creation. Forgive us when we forget that our lives to those equally your very good creation. Forgive us when we are also very good and will always be welcomed by you. Create in us a renewed spirit of welcome for the world, for others, and for ourselves. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.**

**CHARGES AND BLESSINGS**

- ◆ Go out today and greet everyone you meet as a child of God, welcoming them as God has welcomed you.
- ◆ Brothers and sisters, go out in joy! Aim for restoration, comfort one another, find common ground, live in peace and harmony; and the God of love and peace will be with you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

(inspired by 2 Corinthians 13:11, 13)

- ◆ May God’s welcome be a place of shelter for you; may Christ’s welcome enfold you, and may the Spirit’s welcome create community among all. Amen.
- ◆ May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father [and Mother] of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Romans 15:5–6 alt.)

Follow Me Sampler



## Café Discussion Guide, for each session

- Café Discussion Guides provide a self-guided, brief (two-sided, single page) study for each aspect of the practice.
- These no-prep, easy-to-lead sessions are perfect for college and young adult groups, church council meetings, retreats, women's or men's groups, and informal social gatherings.
- Any participant may lead them with little preparation.

### Welcome Others as God Welcomes You

GENESIS 1:1-2:4A AND GENESIS 2:4B-25

CAFÉ DISCUSSION GUIDE

**1 GATHER**  
As you gather, read the other side of this page about the topic for today. Once gathered, spend a few minutes introducing everyone. Say this prayer or one of your choosing:  
*Dear God, thank you for your love, hospitality, and care. As you welcome us with kindness and compassion, may we welcome others. Amen.*

**3 FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE**  
Discuss the "Finding the Practice in the Bible" section on the back page.  
Read the two accounts of creation found in Genesis 1:1-2:4a and Genesis 2:4b-25 and discuss:  
a. How does God extend hospitality to creation, including humanity?  
b. How is humanity called to care for creation?  
c. React to the statement that we can show hospitality to others only because God has first extended hospitality to the entire creation.

**2**  
Prepare to respond in three minutes or less to one of the following discussion prompts. The person whose birthday is closest to June 1 goes first. When finished, that person invites another; and so on.

- Tell about a time when you extended hospitality to or received hospitality from someone. What made it memorable?
- Tell about a time when you felt unwelcomed or excluded.
- Why do you think we hesitate to welcome people who are different from us?
- Name some challenges and opportunities of welcoming and extending hospitality to people who are different from you.

**4** Fill in the diagram with the characteristics of a good host and guest, noting overlap between the two categories. Then go back and circle the aspects of being a host or guest that you do well. Draw rectangles around the aspects you would like to do better. Take turns naming something you wish to improve.

**5** List ways to extend hospitality this week.

Congregational Guide: Café Discussion Guide—Welcome Others as God Welcomes You

23

**6 CLOSING PRAYER**  
Before saying the prayer together, invite people to share any prayer request or concern with the group. Continue in prayer:  
*Dear God, we especially ask for your presence and love to be shown in all prayers expressed aloud and in our hearts. Open our eyes to see Christ in every person we meet this week. Help us to extend love and welcome to others as you extend it to us. Amen.*

24

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THIS GUIDE**  
If possible, distribute this sheet to participants before gathering. Be prepared to summarize the information on this page. Bring extra copies, some pens, and a Bible.

Congregational Guide: Café Discussion Guide

### Welcome All

CAFÉ DISCUSSION GUIDE

**UNIT OVERVIEW**

**WHAT DOES "WELCOME ALL" MEAN?**  
When Christians welcome others, they also welcome Christ. Christian hospitality is not simply about welcoming people who are similar. Rather, it is about welcoming all people: friends, neighbors, strangers, and even enemies. Hospitality challenges the practice of *othering* and proclaims that all people bear the *imago Dei* (image of God), belong, and deserve to be welcomed and celebrated.  
In this unit, we will explore four aspects of hospitality:  

- Welcome Others as God Welcomes You
- See Christ in Every Person
- Know Your Gifts of Hospitality
- Challenge *Othering*

**2**  
Prepare to respond in three minutes or less to one of the following discussion prompts. The person whose birthday is closest to June 1 goes first. When finished, that person invites another; and so on.

- Tell about a time when you extended hospitality to or received hospitality from someone. What made it memorable?
- Tell about a time when you felt unwelcomed or excluded.
- Why do you think we hesitate to welcome people who are different from us?
- Name some challenges and opportunities of welcoming and extending hospitality to people who are different from you.

**3 FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE**  
The practice of hospitality is displayed across the breadth of Scripture. In the ways God initiates relationship with humans from the stories in Genesis through the closing imagery in Revelation, hospitality is actually a mandate from God in the Hebrew Scriptures. Part of the covenant with God involves this mandate to care especially for widows, orphans, and the poor.  
Jesus modeled hospitality throughout his ministry, even though he was often a guest in others' spaces. The apostle Paul always opened his letters with words of hospitality and encouraged early Christians to welcome one another in the name of Christ.  
In this four-week study, we limit our focus to a few select texts from the Hebrew and New Testaments that help highlight four aspects of hospitality mentioned in the *Adult Reflection Guide*.  

One: Welcome Others as God Welcomes You  
In Genesis 1 and 2, God's abundant welcome is offered in the creation stories.  
See Christ in Every Person  
In Matthew 25, Jesus claims that we do unto him as we do for those who are poor, hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, imprisoned, or estranged. We are to see Christ in all persons.

Three: Know Your Gifts of Hospitality  
We consider people's differing gifts for offering hospitality as shown in the actions of Mary and Martha in Luke 10.

Four: Challenge *Othering*  
Finally, in Mark 7, we see how Jesus rejected others treating some as less than worthy of God's love.

Congregational Guide: Café Discussion Guide—Welcome All

21

**4** Following are some minimal preparation suggestions for the leader to do before each gathering. If possible, distribute the discussion sheets to participants before gathering, and encourage people to read the information on the back of this page as they arrive. Always bring extra copies of the guide and pens for newcomers.  

- Have at least one Bible available at each gathering.
- Once gathered, lead the group through the numbered activities on the front page. Encourage questions and further investigation to find answers, although often there may not be one answer.
- Pray for all who may come and yourself, that the experience may deepen faith.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.

22

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## Intergenerational Session

- Each practice offers one intergenerational session to explore and practice the practice as a whole church.
- This session varies according to unit. It may be suggested to use it to kick off or wrap up the unit, or it may be your choice when to use it. It may be around a meal, a special season of the church year, a service opportunity, or in a Sunday school setting.
- The Intergenerational Session follows the same format as the age-level sessions



# Welcome All: The Big Table

LUKE 14:15-24

INTERGENERATIONAL SESSION



### GOAL

Participants will engage the image of the “big table” by discussing and interacting with the biblical story of the great banquet from Luke 14 and by comparing and contrasting this story with other types of meals and service.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- F Food
- G Game
- M Music
- NS Nature/Science
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



### PRAYER

Lord, help me to welcome all to this event, as you have welcomed me into this church. Make me aware of those who are excluded, and help me to extend the hand of friendship. Amen.

## WHAT IS THIS SESSION ABOUT?

How do we welcome all people, both within and outside of our families, the church, our community, and our nation? Hospitality often occurs around tables. Family and guests are welcome, bread is broken, and food is shared. God’s desire is that our tables be large enough to include many, to welcome the outcast, the stranger, and those who may be different from us. This intergenerational event is centered around a communal meal, just as the Bible story is.

## WHAT IS THE BIBLE STORY?

The parable of the great dinner is told by Jesus around a dinner table. It is a story about expected guests giving excuses why they can’t come, and the invitation being offered to those with disabilities, those who are poor, and those who do not expect an invitation. This story helps us explore the *all in “welcome all.”*

## HOW WILL WE CONNECT WITH THIS PRACTICE?

We are practicing God’s big, wide, expansive invitation and welcome and providing a place for all who show up, with room for more.

## WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN BEFORE THE SESSION?

- Make announcements well in advance, inviting people to the event and asking them to bring their favorite “comfort food” to share potluck-style. Ask attendees to make a sign to display with their contribution with their name, the name of their food, and the ingredients (for those with food allergies or sensitivities).
- Prepare coded name tags to correspond with tables indicating where people will be seated. Different colors or pictures of elements of creation could be used for the name tags and table designations. Prepare a space with tables set for a meal.
- Ask people of all ages to be greeters.

Depending on the choices you make:

- For “Welcoming All to Mission” on page 29, contact local agencies and ministries (and partners in other locations who could be present via video conferencing) that your church supports through financial contributions and volunteer service. Invite a representative from each mission partner to attend your event and let them know they will need to give a brief talk (no more than five minutes) several times to rotating groups about how their agency or ministry welcomes others (including children, if that is possible) to participate in their ministry. Explain that they will have an opportunity to recruit volunteers as well.



## Curriculum Connections

- Take note of what is going on in each session for each age level with these highlights from the curriculum.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

# Welcome All

### SESSION 1 YOUNG CHILDREN

**Welcoming God's Creation:** Children are invited to take a nature walk and spot different things that God created. As each one is named, everyone says, "God welcomes you, (*item*), and I do too."

**Welcoming in Other Languages:** The children learn how to say "welcome" in several different languages that may be heard in your church or community and are encouraged to greet people in these languages.

### MULTIAGE CHILDREN

**Depicting God's Garden:** Children are invited to consider the world God created for us and make a collage depicting its beauty.

**How I Am Welcoming:** The children consider how they are welcoming, how they struggle with welcoming others, and an action they can take in the coming week to be welcoming to others.

### YOUTH

**Watch a Video about Immigration:** Youth hear a youth describe her experience as an immigrant in the US.

**Review the Welcome Timelines:** Youth review a timeline of Christian denominations struggling to include welcome to others.

### ADULT

**Church Welcome Statements:** Adults create ideal welcome statements for their worshiping community.

**Sanctuary Offers Welcome:** Adults see how various denominations insist on welcoming all strangers.

**Know Your Implicit Bias:** Adults take an internet test to learn about their implicit biases.

### SESSION 2 YOUNG CHILDREN

**Role Play Charades:** Children act out scenes they heard in the Bible story from Matthew 25:31–46, as they see Jesus when they help those in need.

**Blessing Bags:** Children make bags with self-care items, snacks, and water bottles to be given to people in need.

### MULTIAGE CHILDREN

**Church Welcome Audit:** Children make observations about the church building and activities that welcome or need help welcoming people to your church.

**Christ In All We See:** Children work in small groups to make a poster or a slide show on a computer showing diversity in people and including welcoming words they have used in each session.

### YOUTH

**Differences Between Guests and Hosts:** Youth talk about being guests and hosts and the ways sometimes we are both guest and host.

**Those Who Welcome All:** Youth learn about abolitionists and watch a video about homelessness today.

**Welcome All:** Youth design ways to welcome all.

### ADULT

**Experiences of Hospitality:** Adults discuss inviting various people to their homes and their level of comfort with people who are different from themselves.

**Mr. Rogers' Clip:** Adults watch an interview with actor Francois Clemmons about his experience playing a black policeman who cooled his feet in the same pool with white Fred Rogers on a show in 1969.

**Local Opportunities:** Adults name vulnerable or marginalized people around their worshiping community and imagine ways of welcoming them.

Curriculum Connections—Welcome All  
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39

## Practicing the Practice At Home

- A two-sided reproducible page is provided for each unit to facilitate practicing with the whole family.
- Family conversation starters are also included.
- You can find this page in the [Congregational Guide](#), the [Young Children Leader's Guide](#), and [Multiage Children Leader's Guide](#).



## Practicing the Practice at Home

### WHAT IS "WELCOME ALL" ABOUT?

*Hospitality. Welcome.* These words are a part of our culture, but they often mean a beautifully set table or a "Martha Stewart" worthy meal. Here, we are not so worried about achieving the perfect "Instagram-worthy" holiday table, or the fanciest recipe (although those can, for sure, be a treat that will make guests feel special). In naming this unit *Welcome All*, we are grounding ourselves in the faith practice of hospitality; the idea of being intentional and authentic as we offer a genuine welcome to all God's people—both stranger and friend. As we open our hearts, our homes, our churches, and our capacity for friendship and community to not only those who are like us but also those who are different from us, we are affirming the worth of all of God's people. This is the very heart of the practice of hospitality.

#### STRANGERS TO FRIENDS

Perhaps as you or your children have been participating in this unit, *Welcome All*, you have noticed individuals, families, or children who you may have seen at church but don't know much beyond a brief chat in coffee hour. As a way to put the theory into practice, extend an invitation. Avoid the temptation to reach out just to people with children the same age or adults of a similar generation. Instead, why not:

- ➔ Gather in a park for a walk or picnic after worship to bring together families of all ages as well as individuals who may not have had an opportunity to spend time together outside of the church walls.
- ➔ Host a potluck dinner for participants in your group (or in your children's groups) for this session.
- ➔ Arrange to attend a free or low-cost community gathering as a church group (a street festival, community theater, concert, or art show).
- ➔ Adopt a "grand-friend." Many families are spread apart geographically, leaving grandparents and grandchildren, alike, missing out on regular companionship with another generation. If this is the case for your family, consider inviting an older adult in your congregation who has taken an interest in your children to be your "grand-friend."

#### SERVICE WITH A SMILE

It is often hard for families with younger children to find opportunities to be involved in community service. Things like construction-based projects and

many soup kitchens have minimum ages. Hospitality, however, is an area where children can excel and bring much joy to those being served. Consider seeking the following types of volunteer jobs (if you are not sure where to start, talk with your pastor or the chair of your church's mission committee or do some research online):

- ➔ Staffing a water stop at a road race is a wonderful one-off opportunity suitable for all ages. Children can not only hand out water to thirsty participants but also cheer them on with homemade signs, cowbells, and shouts of encouragement!
- ➔ Inquire about helping in the dining room at a local soup kitchen. While cooking and kitchen work is often restricted to teens and adults, there are many tasks to do, including setting tables, greeting guests, and even making centerpieces or placemats to brighten up the dining room. Often in the busyness of preparing and serving meals, there isn't much time to simply connect. Enter into conversation with guests, share stories or jokes—let the boundaries between guest and host come down for moments of human connection.
- ➔ Put your coloring and baking skills to good use for community first responders and church helpers. Purchase some simple cardboard bakery boxes that can be decorated with messages of thanks, and pack up homemade treats to be delivered to local first responders (fire, ambulance, and police) and/or church helpers (not just the pastor and musician, but also the secretary, custodian, and other "behind the scenes" workers).

### SPEAKING UP FOR THE OTHER

*Supplies: sturdy poster board and markers or pre-made signs (find examples at <https://www.letsbeneighbors.org/> or <https://hatehasnohome.org/>)*

In times when society seems polarized, there is always room for a message of love. Think about your family's values, what a welcoming message for your community might be, and, with those in mind, either purchase or create a sign sharing that for your lawn or a front window: "Jesus Loves You," "All Are Welcome Here," and signs decrying racism and hate are some great options.

### CREATE FAMILY RITUALS FOR WELCOME

As a family, think of things that you love to do and that you are good at. Could your gifts and talents be a way for you to offer hospitality within your congregation and beyond? Might your family even be known for these personal gifts of welcome? Unique ways you could offer welcome to others include:

- ➔ Planting a plant from your garden, like daylilies or hostas, to every new neighbor who moves in on your road.
- ➔ Giving receiving blankets for newly baptized members in your congregation.
- ➔ Hosting a barbecue for returning college students.
- ➔ Providing drawings to people who are hospitalized or staying in on a seasonal or monthly basis.

### WELCOMING ART

*Supplies: stretched canvas (one per family member), permanent markers or acrylic paint (for a lower-cost option, this could also be done on paper with craft markers)*

As a family, create a "word art" message of welcome, with one word per canvas to form a multi-canvas grouping that could be displayed in a front foyer, dining room, or other communal area. Depending on the number of family members, you could do a simple "Welcome All" (for a household of two) or a longer message for a larger family ("Welcome to the Johnson House"). Favorite Scriptures or hymn texts could also be included.

### FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

- ➔ What do we do in our own home to make a guest feel welcome?
- ➔ What kinds of guests have we had in our home? When you visited a friend or another family member's home, what is something they did that made you feel welcome?
- ➔ If Jesus were to come to our home, how could we make him feel welcome?
- ➔ Have you ever been to a place where the welcome was different from what you are used to? Maybe you have traveled to a different country or experienced a different culture that practices hospitality differently than you do? If no one in your family has experienced a different culture, try to find someone who has and would be willing to share about their experience of being welcomed in a new way.

"Practicing the Practice at Home" is also included in the [Young Children Leader's Guide](#) and [Multiage Children Leader's Guide](#).

admit our own mistakes so that we may draw closer to you. Amen.

## Children's Worship Leaflets

- For each session of the unit, there is a two-sided reproducible page which has ideas for practicing the practice, a puzzle or game, an adapted Bible story, and a coloring picture.

**Follow Me** **1 Welcome All**  
Biblical Practices for Faithful Living

**INTRODUCTION**  
God welcomes all of creation, and God welcomes us too! We can follow Jesus' example. As he welcomed children to come to him, we can welcome all we meet as God's children.

**WAYS TO PRACTICE "WELCOME ALL"**

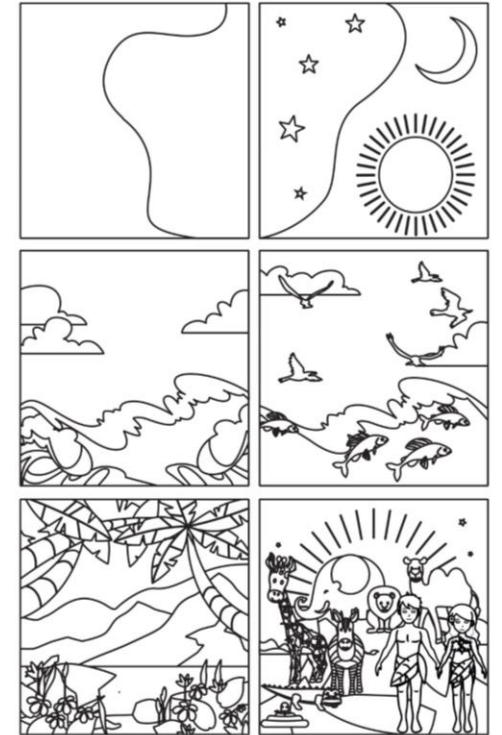
- Teach the children how to say "welcome" in several different languages that may be heard in your church or community. Encourage the children to greet people in the church and community who might know these languages when they see them during the week.
- Adopt a "grand-friend." Many families are spread apart geographically, leaving grandparents and grandchildren, missing out on regular companionship with another generation. Consider inviting an older adult in your congregation to be your "grand-friend."
- Take a look at the entrance to your home. Talk together about how it is welcoming or could be more welcoming to others. Consider changes you might make, such as adding lighting, trimming back foliage, or making a welcome sign for your front door.
- Take a nature walk or a walk around your neighborhood. Call out things that God has created. As each one is named, together say, "God welcomes you, (tree). I do too!"

**CLOSING**  
Go out today and greet everyone you meet as a child of God, welcoming them as God has welcomed you.

**CONGREGATIONAL GUIDE**

Congregational Guide: Children's Worship Bulletin—Welcome All  
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### GOD WELCOMES US. LET'S WELCOME ALL!



...ept over the  
...e be light," God  
...night. God  
...nd that was the

...water that  
...low in rivers,  
...the water  
...lay.

...em into  
...wers,  
...les. God  
...gs were

...he sun  
...d the

...spots, and others had  
...you name some of these land  
...we have named and all the others whose  
...God wasn't done yet. God created humans to be in  
...to continue to welcome all of God's creation.

...es God welcome you? How do you know?  
Many years after all these things were created, God's Son, Jesus, came to earth, and one of the things he made sure to do was to welcome children. "These young ones are very good," said God, as Jesus talked to them, hugged them, and blessed them and their families. We continue to welcome each other today through smiling, waving, and baptizing new people into God's community.



## Infographic Posters

- Sets of twelve 18" x 24" full-color posters that will be available in print or download.
- The Follow Me Set (12) includes one poster for each practice in a year.
- The Bible Basic Set (12) can be used with any Bible study group.
- Individual posters from the Follow Me Set or from the Bible Basic Set will be available in download format only

The sojourner who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the sojourner as yourself, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. —Leviticus 19:34, au. trans.

מִיָּחָרָא תִּסְנַחֲהָ (hakhnasat orchim)  
Ξενία (Xenia)

... since the spirit brought you here to me, do not try to please me nor spell me with lying words. It is not for that I will entertain and befriend you, but for fear of Zeus, the god of guests, and for my own pity." —Odyssey, 14.386-389

In Greek (Roman) tradition, all guests were under the protection of Zeus (Jupiter). In myths, the gods often visited homes in disguise.

Many points to the story of Abraham offering hospitality to the angels in Genesis 18 as a model of hospitality.

**Jewish Rules**  
It would be unusual to invite a Gentile into your home.  
Host provides:  
Achila (feeding)  
Shiyya (drinking)  
Linh (lodging)  
Guest, in turn:  
offers specific blessings  
follows family rules  
eats only the food offered  
The guest was protected as a member of your family.

**Hospitium**  
Water was offered to the guest to drink and to wash hands or feet.

**Greek and Roman Rules**  
Host provides:  
food a bath  
shelter protection  
Hosts should not question one's identity or purpose until after needs have been met.  
Guest, in turn:  
offers not to be a burden or threat  
shares news or stories  
reciprocates with a place to stay  
Greece: Guest token was sometimes given to a host as a sign of the relationship between the two families.  
Rome: Legally binding contract stated the relationship between guest and host. It was a significant social relationship.

**1st-Century Hospitality**  
Households were multigenerational and often multifamily.  
Only the most wealthy would have separate quarters for guests.

**typical Jewish house**  
upper room for eating and/or sleeping  
living and sleeping quarters  
workshop and kitchen  
courtyard  
Animals were kept in the courtyard and house.  
Women would leave their home once married and join their husband's household.  
Servants and enslaved people: Considered part of the household but held few, if any, rights.

**typical Roman house**  
workshops  
extra rooms  
office  
water  
shops  
courtyard  
atrium, where guests gather  
entrance  
kitchen  
dining area  
bedrooms  
shops  
In cities, many lived in apartments with other families crowded together.

**Greetings**  
Peace  
Shalom (SHUH-lom)  
Peace be with you.  
Shalom aleichem (SHUH-lom ah-LAY-kum)  
Men and women would not touch in public.  
Upon entering a house:  
Host: God bless the one who arrives.  
Guest: God bless the one who is seated.  
Rejice!  
Chaire! (KHEYE-re-tay)  
Rejice!  
Chaire! (KHEYE-ray)  
Greeks preferred a handshake.  
Hi or Goodbye  
Ave (AH-way)  
Welcome or Farewell  
Salve (SAL-way)  
Romans greeted one another with a kiss (or kisses!).  
Simple courses were served by slaves, servants, or lower members of the household.  
Nine was considered the perfect number of guests for a dinner party.

**Jewish Menu**  
lentils, beans, cucumbers and onions, herbs, goat cheese, lamb, fish, grapes, figs, pomegranates, dates, almonds, pigeon  
Men and women ate separately.

**Roman Menu**  
puls (a porridge with vegetables), lentils and peas, cheeses, garum (a fish sauce), fish or mussels, pork or lamb, dried or fresh fruit  
Specialty Dishes: stuffed door mice, flamingo tongue  
Men and women dined together in Rome; children would also be included in special feasts.

Bring your knife! Fingers were your primary utensil, but guests would bring their own knife to the table.  
No chairs! People reclined when eating. Your place around a table reflected your social ranking and your relationship to the host.

Bread (לֶחֶם) was made from wheat, barley, or other grains and was prepared at home and baked in community ovens. In cities, dough would be prepared at home and baked in community ovens. The word for "bread" was interchangeable with the word for "food."

## Infographic poster for "Welcome All."

- This shows key aspects of Jewish, or biblical, hospitality and Roman/Greek hospitality in the same time period.
  - Foundational writings in Leviticus 19:34 (Jewish) and the Odyssey, 14.386-389 (Roman/Greek)
  - Expectations of hosts and guests
  - Homes
  - Family members and more
  - Greetings
  - Table service
  - Typical foods offered



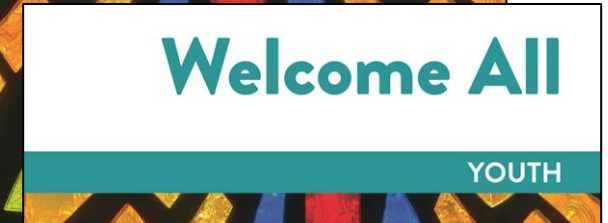
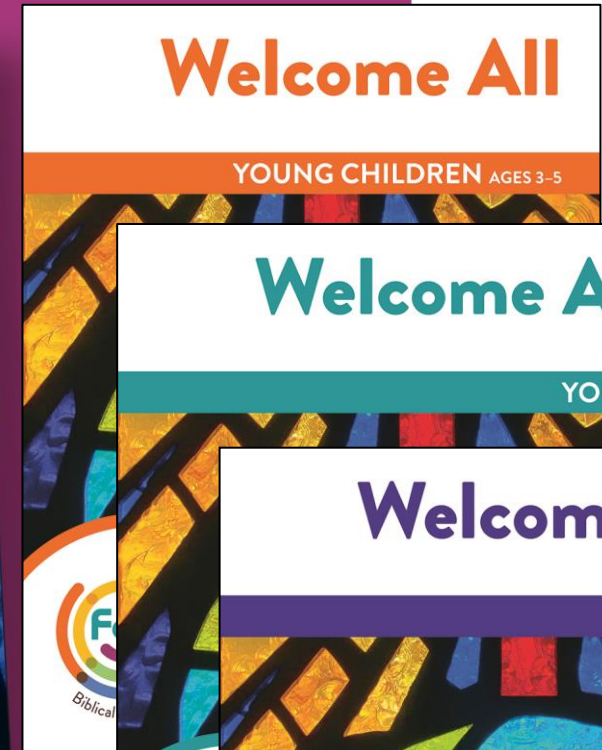
Let's take a look at a session. . .

All age levels:

**Young Children,**  
**Multiage Children,**  
**Youth,**  
**Adult,**

and the  
Intergenerational  
session in the  
**Congregational  
Guide**

follow the same  
format.





Young Children, Multiage Children, and Youth Leader's Guides all begin with information about the age level, activity symbols and their definitions, a note about supplies, and other items of interest for a leader.

Next, there is an overview of the practice, or unit asking these questions:

- What does this practice mean?
- What does the Bible say?
- How will this age group connect?

Information about the Infographic Poster is included here.



### THE BENEFITS OF A MULTIAGE SETTING

Multiage curriculum places spiritual development in a church family model and recognizes that age and development are not synonymous. It can appeal to all church sizes, with "family groups" spanning the various ages found in larger groups. There is the opportunity for the development of skills and character through encouraging disciples who support and care for one another; providing leadership and mentoring occasions; and supporting cooperation, rather than competition, as well as patience, tolerance, and compassion for those who are of a different age or ability.

### ACTIVITY SYMBOLS

Symbols indicate the type of activity at a glance. Leaders can customize sessions by using what works best for their participants.

- A Art:** invites creativity in hands-on arts and crafts.
- AM Active/Movement:** allows time for children to move their bodies.
- C Conversation:** allows time to talk and share thoughts, feelings, and questions.
- D Drama:** uses skits and role play to engage with the story/practice.
- F Food:** engages children in cooperating, measuring, and making foods to eat and share. Be mindful of food allergies.
- G Games:** allows for cooperative play.
- M Music:** engages children with music and rhythm.
- NS Nature/Science:** utilizes experimentation and the world around us.
- QC Quiet/Contemplative:** provides spaces and time for thought and reflection.
- S Service:** provides opportunities for children to offer help to others.
- T Technology:** uses an internet-connected device.
- X Extra Prep:** requires additional time or materials.

### INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Create an environment that helps children of all abilities experience God's grace by making a space of welcome and accessibility. You can adapt an activity by process, product, or environment: the way something is done, what is done, or the setting in which it is done. If you think a child may struggle with an activity, ask the question "How can I help this child be successful?"

*Adapting the Process:* Giving extra support to complete activities is an example of changing the process.

*Adapting the Product:* Having children make or do something different is an example of changing the product when the original plan is inaccessible for a child.

*Adapting the Environment:* Thinking about the room where you gather helps children feel welcome and included. Considering lighting, space, and furniture and displaying children's projects help children feel that the room is a place where they belong.

### NOTE ABOUT SUPPLIES

The following is a list of basic supplies used throughout this curriculum: Bibles, paper, mural paper, construction paper, newsprint, card stock, sticky notes, pencils, pens, markers, crayons, colored pencils, painting supplies, glue, glue sticks, scissors, tape, play dough, paper plates, cups, and napkins. Specific supplies are listed next to the activity where they are used.

Internet-connected devices are used throughout this curriculum to access music, videos, art, and websites.

### FLYAWAY BOOKS

Flyaway Books (flyawaybooks.com) is a children's picture book imprint from Presbyterian Publishing Corporation featuring books that reflect themes of diversity, inclusivity, kindness, compassion, self-esteem, and care for our world and that retell familiar religious stories in new ways. Books are available at [pcusastore.com](http://pcusastore.com).



## Welcome All Overview

### WHAT DOES "WELCOME ALL" MEAN?

Welcome all is the way we are describing the faith practice of hospitality. It is the idea of being intentional and authentic as we offer a genuine welcome to all of God's people—both stranger and friend. When we are intentional about welcoming *all*, we are affirming the worth of all of God's people. A commitment to opening our hearts, our homes, our churches, and our capacity for friendship and community to, not only those who are like us, but also those who are different from us is at the very heart of the practice of hospitality.

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

From the moment of creation, to the risen Christ walking unrecognized alongside his disciples, and even beyond to the early church, our Scriptures are full of stories of God's people practicing welcome. At the core of each reference to biblical hospitality is the idea that we welcome the stranger because we were once strangers (Exodus 23:9; Deuteronomy 10:19; Matthew 25:35; Romans 12:12–13; Hebrews 13:2). It is not a stretch to say that hospitality, especially to the stranger, is God's mandate.

### HOW DO CHILDREN UNDERSTAND "WELCOME ALL"?

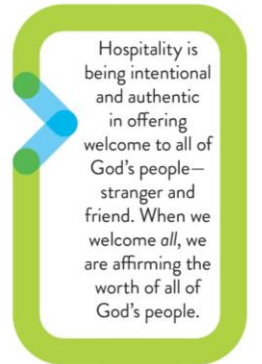
Children are often the recipients of warm welcome. From grandparents buying special treats to teachers creating a space where students feel special and recognized as individuals, we hope that the children with whom we minister carry an experience of what welcome feels like. From the playground to the lunch table, we also hope that children will be able to bring experiences of being welcomed out into their communities. Conscious of personal boundaries (that are especially important for children) around the idea of "stranger danger," we can still help our children consider how they can reach out past the comfortable to practice hospitality with those who are different from themselves.



### INFOGRAPHIC POSTER

First-century hospitality is the theme of the infographic poster for the *Welcome All* unit. It explores Jewish and Roman/Greek customs of welcome, such as the expectations of hosts and guest, common greetings, and table hospitality.

Infographic posters provide additional information to engage learners of all ages. All posters (18" x 24") are available for purchase—as a twelve-poster set (one of each practice each year) in print or download; or as individual posters, download only—at [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com) /FollowMeCurriculum.





The first page of each session begins with a session overview where you will find:

- The session title
- Scripture: Bible story passage
- Goal
- Activity symbols for easy referral
- A note about bit.ly web addresses
- A prayer for the leader
- Four preparation questions for the leader:
  - This session
  - The Bible story
  - Connect with this age group
  - Session Preparation

# 1 Welcome to God's World!

GENESIS 1:1-2:2



## GOAL

By hearing about God's care in creating a diverse and beautiful world, children will envision ways to embody that welcome in their interactions and participation in the life of the church and community.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Creator of all, as I prepare to share your word, create in my heart the space to receive the children's perspectives, so that together we understand this familiar text in ways that inspire us to share your welcome today, this week, and each day. Amen.

## WHAT IS THIS SESSION ABOUT?

Although the story of creation may be familiar, with hospitality and welcome as our lens, we will be coming to this story from a different angle. This story affirms the worth and belonging in each part of creation, and that is something to celebrate and lift up for our children.

## WHAT IS THE BIBLE STORY?

The creation story is actually told two different times in the first two chapters of Genesis. While Genesis 1 focuses on creation over seven days, with God creating every living thing and seeing that each was good, the second account's focus is on the humans that God created, placed in the garden, and entrusted with the care of everything. God's care was evident in the variety and diversity of each creation—most especially in the garden full of everything God's people needed. Is anything more welcoming?

## HOW WILL CHILDREN CONNECT TO THIS PRACTICE?

God's welcome is as abundant as God's creation is! In the session, the children will notice ways they have experienced welcome, and use those experiences to find ways to practice the same kind of welcome, both in our church and in their own daily lives.

## WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN BEFORE THE SESSION?

- Write the words to the song "God Welcomes All" on a sheet of newsprint. The words may be found in "God Welcomes All" on page 56.

Depending on the choices you make:

- Look at the church website, brochures, or kiosks, and note how these things show welcome. Could children's contributions enhance the spirit of welcome? Based on your choices for "Welcoming People to Our Church" on page 58, talk with your pastor or your church's evangelism or outreach ministries to see how these craft projects could be used.



The session format:

- Getting Started
  - This includes a common opening ritual for each session of the practice, and it is used (with possible variations) in each age level.
- Introducing the Practice
- Finding the Practice in the Bible
- Finding the Practice All Around Us (children) or Finding the Practice Then and Now (youth and adults)
- Practicing the Practice
- Following Jesus

Notes for the leader or alternative suggestions are found in the sidebar or in the text with an asterisk.



**GETTING STARTED**

Resource Pages 1 and 2  
Tape

**CONNECTING WITH CREATION**

Cut apart the pictures on Resource Pages 1 and 2 (on pp. 60–61) and tape them at the children's eye level in four corners of the room. Invite everyone, including leaders, to walk around the room and look at each picture, standing by the one that is their favorite.

Ask each person to share what they liked about the picture. (If this is a new group gathered for the first time, also have them share their name and grade.) Once everyone has shared, ask what the pictures might all have in common. Affirm any answers that make sense, but until someone mentions that they are all things that God created, continue to ask, "What else?" Invite everyone to move to the seating area in a way that is inspired by the picture (*floating, crawling, gliding, and so forth*). Tell the children that our next four sessions will focus on the theme of "Welcome All!"

**GOD WELCOMES ALL**

Display the words and introduce the song "God Welcomes All." If singing, use the *Glory to God* hymnal, #399, or listen to the tune at [bit.ly/FMWelcomesAll](http://bit.ly/FMWelcomesAll). Sing the song a few times so that the children become comfortable singing together. If you are not singing the song, invite the children to speak the phrases after you.

God welcomes all, /  
strangers and friends, /  
God's love is strong, /  
and it never ends. /

**INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE**

Newsprint  
Markers  
Colored construction paper  
Tape

**WORDS OF WELCOME**

Engage the children in conversation, using the following:

- ◆ When was a time you felt welcomed?
- ◆ When was a time you felt welcome?
- ◆ When was a time you felt welcomed?
- ◆ When was a time you felt welcome?

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Use newsprint to collect their ideas. Circle the words or ideas that came up the most. As a group, pick three to five words or phrases that describe welcome best. Have volunteers write each word on a sheet of colored construction paper. Display these in a visible area of your meeting space.

You will be building upon and revisiting the words of welcome throughout this unit. Keep them displayed or save them and repost them for each session.

**FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE**

**DEPICTING GOD'S GARDEN**

Read aloud the adapted Bible story from Genesis 1:1–2:2 on Resource Page 3 (on p. 62) or invite volunteers to read. Wonder together, using the following questions or some of your own:

- ◆ How do you think Adam and Eve felt to be asked to take care of God's creation?
- ◆ How do you think it would feel to come into this new place as the only people there?
- ◆ How do you think God felt about sharing the beautiful garden with Adam and Eve?
- ◆ If God is powerful enough to create everything and anything, why might God have needed to rest?

Provide magazines for the children to cut out pictures of things that might have been found in God's garden. Have the children glue the pictures on the newsprint to make a collage. While they are working, continue to wonder together about the story.

**FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US**

Choose one or both options.

**ROLE-PLAYING WELCOME: GETTING IT RIGHT AND MISSING THE MARK**

Tell the children that there are many areas of life where we have the opportunity to extend and/or receive welcome. Ask for volunteers to role-play scenes, each of which will be done twice: once to show not being very welcoming and a second time to show welcome. Use the following scenarios, or invite the children to make up their own:

- ◆ Going out to eat at a restaurant and being greeted by the hostess
- ◆ Getting lost on a hike in a park and asking another hiker for help
- ◆ Walking into a new cabin at summer camp where all the kids have been together for many years
- ◆ Trying to find a partner for the water balloon toss at a neighborhood party

Multiage Children Leader's Guide: Session 1—Welcome to God's World!

**"I'M GOING TO CHURCH . . ."**

Play a game based on the *I'm Going to Grandmother's House* game where participants have to name something that they are bringing that begins with the same letter as their first name.

In this game, there will be three rounds. Arrange the children in a circle, giving the following instructions before each round:

- Round 1: Name an attitude or quality that you will bring to church to be welcoming that begins with the same letter as your first name (for example, "I'm Lydia, and I am going to bring my best listening skills to church").
- Round 2: Name an activity that you love to do that you will invite people to participate in (for example, "I am Kamasu, and I am going to invite people to go sailing with me").
- Round 3: Name a treat that you will bring to coffee hour in the same number as your age (for example, "I am Ryan, and I am going to bring nine candy bars to coffee hour").

As the children share, affirm their answers and look for qualities, activities, and treats that could be brought to the communal life of the church to create an atmosphere of welcome.

**PRACTICING THE PRACTICE**

Choose one or both options.

**WELCOMING PEOPLE**

Invite the children to create church's evangelism, outreach space.

Choose one or more options:

- ◆ Decorate bags: Brainstorm with the children draw them out as they write the words "Welcome" on the bags. Give the bags and the children to use.
- ◆ Make notecards: Tell the children to make notecards to use for welcoming for the cards, "Please, come again!"
- ◆ Create a welcome sign for paper or newsprint.

Paper lunch bags or plain gift bags  
Crayons, markers, and colored pencils  
Blank notecards with envelopes  
Mural paper or newsprint

**HOW I AM WELCOMING**

Give every child three sticky notes and the following instructions:

- On sticky note #1, write or draw one way that you are great at welcoming others (such as I always say hello to my neighbors when we go for walks).
- On sticky note #2, write or draw one way that feels hard to be welcoming to others (such as I don't like it when people not in my friend group sit at our lunch table).
- On sticky note #3, write or draw one action you can take to be welcoming to others (such as I could make a point to ask the new person in my class to be my partner in gym class).

Have the children:

- Place sticky note #1 on one of the signs they made in "Words of Welcome" displayed around the room.
- Give sticky note #2 to you or another leader.
- Take sticky note #3 home with them as a reminder of a welcoming action to try to take in the coming week.

Encourage children to help those who need assistance with writing to add a description of their picture on the sticky note below the drawing.

**FOLLOWING JESUS**

Holding the children's sticky notes #2, encourage them to remember the area where it can feel hard to be welcoming, and keep that situation in their prayers. Comment that, although it may feel scary to think about changing the situation, remember that God made the whole world to welcome us, and we, too, can welcome others.

Pray the following prayer, or one of your own:

Creator God, we are in awe of all you created, and we are grateful that you created us to live in your world. There are so many ways that we are welcomed, and so many opportunities for us to be welcoming. We know you are with us as we welcome all. May we be challenged this week to go out with your word in our hearts and your love in our words as we welcome others. Amen.

Keep the signs with welcoming words from "Words of Welcome," page 57, for the rest of the sessions in this unit.

Three sticky notes for each child  
"Words of Welcome" signs from page 57  
Pens, pencils

Multiage Children Leader's Guide: Session 1—Welcome to God's World!

Supplies are listed in the sidebar.

Activity symbols are placed by each title.



When Resource Pages are used in a session, they are numbered consecutively and are found after the session.

Resources may be black and white reproducible or color pages.

An adapted Bible story, an imaginative retelling, is included in each session in the **Young Children Leader's Guide**, and when needed in the **Multiage Children Leader's Guide**. This story is also included on the Children's Bulletin found in the **Congregational Guide**.



## BIBLE STORY

ADAPTED FROM GENESIS 1:1-2:2

At the beginning of time, God created the world. Before God created the world, there was nothing but darkness, and a wind from God swirled around. In this darkness and wind, God decided that there should be not just darkness but also light. God separated waters and sky and land, and on that land, God created plants and trees. God made days and years and seasons. God made the sun and moon and stars.

From darkness and just a whisper of wind, God made a world full of so many different things—but God was going to do even more!

God created animals: fish that could swim, birds that could fly. God created every kind of different animal to walk the earth that you could even imagine! God welcomed all of these creatures, born of God's creation, to live in this wonderful world being created.

From darkness and just a whisper of wind, God made a world of so many different things and creatures—but God was going to do even more!

God created humans in God's own image and gave them names: Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were created by God to be partners and to work together. God told them to create families and care for all of God's creation: the birds and fish and creepy crawlies. God told Adam and Eve to tend the plants, to help them grow. And having worked so hard to create a world full of every kind of different thing God could ever imagine, it was time for God to rest.

From darkness and just a whisper of wind, God made a world of so many different things and creatures and people—but God was going to do even more!

In creating every thing and being, God created a diverse world, and then God welcomed people to care for this creation. Just as God welcomed people into God's beautiful creation, we, too, can welcome others into our lives, our community, and our church so that they, too, may know of God's love.



MULTIAGE CHILDREN LEADER'S GUIDE



The **Youth Leader's Guide** provides activity symbols to designate the type of activity included in the session, such as Art, Active Movement, Conversation, Drama, Game, Music, Quiet/Contemplative, Service, Technology, and Extra Prep.

Abstract Thinking and Concrete Thinking are noted to help leaders plan age-appropriate activities for wider range of cognitive development among youth ages 11–18.

#### EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS

- A** **Art:** invites creativity in hands-on arts and crafts.
- AM** **Active/Movement:** allows time for youth to move their bodies.
- AT** **Abstract Thinking:** allows youth to reflect on concepts, such as grace, faith, and hope. Younger youth may find this challenging while older youth are able to think about objects, principles, and ideas not physically present.
- C** **Conversation:** allows time to talk and share thoughts, feelings, and questions.
- CT** **Concrete Thinking:** focuses on the physical world and objects we can see. Generally, younger youth are more drawn to concrete thinking as their brains have not developed to grasp abstract concepts.
- D** **Drama:** uses skits and role-play to engage with the story/practice.
- G** **Game:** allows for cooperative play.
- M** **Music:** engages youth with music and rhythm.
- QC** **Quiet/Contemplative:** provides space and time for thought and reflection.
- S** **Service:** provides opportunities for youth to help others.
- T** **Technology:** uses an internet-connected device.
- X** **Extra Prep:** requires additional time or materials.





The **Adult Reflection Guide** may be used in an adult study group along with the **Adult Leader's Guide**.

The **Adult Reflection Guide** is also a great resource for individuals who wish to learn about a practice as a self-study or who are unable to attend group meetings.

Short introductory videos for each practice with the Foundational Essay author!





The **Adult Reflection Guide** begins with an overview of the practice and a note about how to use the guide.

## Welcome All

### UNIT OVERVIEW

Welcome all! Welcome if this is your first dive into the *Follow Me* curriculum. Welcome if you are returning to learn about a new Christian practice. In this unit, we will be learning about . . . well . . . welcome. Welcome is also known as *hospitality*, not the hospitality industry, but the Christian practice of showing hospitality to others.

“Hospitality is not optional for Christians, nor is it limited to those who are specially gifted for it. It is, instead, a necessary practice in the community of faith.”

Professor Emeritus of Christian Ethics Christine Pohl states, “Hospitality is not optional for Christians, nor is it limited to those who are specially gifted for it. It is, instead, a necessary practice in the community of faith.”<sup>1</sup>

As we prepare to learn more about the meaning of hospitality in the context of Christian faith, it is helpful to have a common definition in mind. The “Foundational Essay,” found on pages 10–18, offers this one: “Hospitality creates a safe, open place where a friend or stranger can enter and experience the welcoming spirit of Christ in another.”

Welcoming others is certainly core to the Christian life. It is not always so easy to practice, however, even with those we love the most.

It can be a joy, but it can also be a challenge to create that open, safe space, especially when people impinge on our own comfort levels or are different from us or feared. This *Adult Reflection Guide* invites you to reflect on various dimensions of welcoming as we strive to follow Christ and practice welcoming others the way Jesus did.

The practice of hospitality figures prominently in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. There is an expectation from the God who covenants with ancient Israel in the Old Testament, that the Israelites will welcome others—especially the vulnerable—the same way God has welcomed the Israelites. Jesus had a lot to say about hospitality as he had learned about it in the Hebrew Scriptures, and it was a central practice in his life and teachings. He was often dependent on the hospitality of others, and biblical accounts of his visits show how hospitality is sometimes more complex than a host inviting someone in for dinner. In fact, sometimes the host turns out to be the guest!

Define *hospitality* in your own words here:

The following pages explore four core aspects of Christian hospitality based on the “Foundational Essay” found on pages 10–18. They are:

- **Welcome others as God welcomes you**
- **See Christ in every person you meet**
- **Know your gifts of hospitality**
- **Challenge othering**

Each section begins with a common flow: An aspect is introduced; a biblical text or two show where it appears in Scripture. We then see how Christians have practiced this aspect in the past and present. Finally, some ways to deepen your own practice are suggested.

#### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

*Follow Me Adult Reflection Guides* are designed in a flexible way for users. Based on your interest and learning preferences, make this work for you. The goal is to deepen your knowledge and engagement of the practice and its connection to the Bible and the Christian life. There are several ways to use this guide, depending on your time and interest. You can read the “Foundational Essay,” which takes a deep, scholarly dive into the practice, and then dabble in the four sessions of this guide, selecting parts you wish to explore. If you choose not to read the “Foundational Essay,” spend time working through the four sessions here. If you study in a group, be guided by the Adult Leader’s Guide. Whatever approach you choose, make notes in this guide that you can return to over time.

Note: [bit.ly](https://bit.ly) addresses are case-sensitive.



Think of the **Adult Reflection Guide** as a workbook or journal. It has the same flow of the session as other age groups but is filled with information about the practice, engaging adults through study, reflection questions, space for writing or drawing, and suggestions for practicing the practice.

Available in print and an ebook will be available via Amazon

ONE

## WELCOME OTHERS AS GOD WELCOMES YOU

GENESIS 1:1-2:4A;  
GENESIS 2:4B-25

In his life as a Jew and frequently the history of a people, we can welcome the place to be good. God affirms humans, Adam and Eve, and had a place for them. We belong to God and are loved and are vulnerable.

6

### GETTING STARTED INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

#### HOSPITALITY DEFINED

Consider the following definitions of hospitality by two theologians:

"Hospitality is the practice of God's welcome by reaching across difference to participate in God's actions bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis."<sup>2</sup>  
—Letty M. Russell

"A life of hospitality begins in worship, with a recognition of God's grace and generosity. Hospitality is not first a duty and responsibility; it is first a response of love and gratitude for God's love and welcome to us."<sup>3</sup>  
—Christine Pohl

To ponder:

- How have you felt welcomed by God?
- Reflect on a moment in your life when you witnessed hospitality as expressed in one of the definitions above. Write any words or phrases that come to mind here:

7

#### GOD WELCOMES US

Meditate for a few minutes on these words to this song or say the words out loud.

"God Welcomes All" in *Glory to God* hymnal, #399, or [bit.ly/FMWelcomesAll](http://bit.ly/FMWelcomesAll)

God welcomes all, strangers and friends; God's love is strong and it never ends.<sup>4</sup>

8

## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

#### GOD WELCOMES US IN CREATION

Creation stories are a common feature in religious communities from all different cultures and time periods. They are found in monotheistic and polytheistic religions. The purpose of creation stories within communities of faith is not to provide a scientific account of the beginning of the world, but rather to express humanity's relationship with the God(s) they worship and what their place in the world is.

The creation stories of the Christian faith are found in the first two chapters of the book of Genesis. They, like many other religious creation stories, speak of a God/higher power who created a beautiful world and invited humanity into it. We welcome others because God first welcomed us.

Read Genesis 1:1-2:4a and respond to these questions:

- In what ways are God's actions in the story welcoming? How does this story make you feel welcomed by God?
- Are there limits placed on who is welcomed? Do you think it is right to place limits on whom you welcome? Why or why not?
- Are there any boundaries placed on the hospitality God offers? Is it good to have boundaries when you practice hospitality?

8

Think about both stories.

- How does having both stories deepen our understanding of God's hospitality? What would we lose if we had only one of them?

Why are we looking at the creation stories to understand Christian hospitality? Because one could argue that creating the world and inviting humans to be a part of it was the greatest act of hospitality ever done. God chose to share the world that God created with humanity.

9

#### FINDING GENESIS 2:4B-25

Much of the Hebrew Testament (what many Christians call the Old Testament) was handed down orally from generation to generation. When it was finally written down, no chapters or verses were assigned. They were added centuries later. Sometimes a verse contains the end of one sentence and the beginning of another. So, when it says the text is Genesis 2:4b-25, it means chapter 2 of Genesis, from the second part of verse 4 through verse 25.

9

2. Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 19.  
3. Pohl, *Making Room*, 172-73.  
4. © 2008 WGRG, Iona Community (admin. GIA Publications, Inc.). All rights reserved. Used by permission.



Write a welcome statement for a church you would like to be part of:

**SANCTUARY OFFERS WELCOME**  
 Church ministries of hospitality vary widely, depending on the gifts of members and needs of all, from providing a meal to homeless people to opening their building as a sanctuary to immigrants facing deportation.

The following link, [bit.ly/FMPCUSASanctuary](http://bit.ly/FMPCUSASanctuary), introduces you to some of the history of the sanctuary movement in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and includes some short videos about a woman who sought sanctuary and one Presbyterian

**KNOW YOUR IMPLICIT BIASES**

Sometimes, we may not know something is a barrier for us, either because of our own lack of exposure to certain cultures or because of biases we may hold unconsciously.

What is your comfort zone when it comes to socioeconomic class issues? Take this "Hidden Rules" quiz developed by Dr. Ruby Payne and find out: [bit.ly/FMPayneQuiz](http://bit.ly/FMPayneQuiz).

What implicit biases do you hold? If you are interested in exploring this topic, online tests can identify some of these. If you take one of these tests, you may or may not agree with the results, but, hopefully, it will challenge you to reflect on the biases you hold without even realizing it. One example of these tests is Project Implicit from Harvard University ([bit.ly/ProjectImplicit](http://bit.ly/ProjectImplicit)).

When used with group study, the **Adult Leader's Guide** reflects the flow in the session.

**FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW**

Welcoming others as God has welcomed us has always been a core practice of Christian faith communities. When we gather in worship, we give thanks to a welcoming God and extend welcome to all. Let's focus on two ways churches show hospitality: through clear welcome statements and through offering sanctuary to support people who especially need hospitality.

**CHURCH WELCOME STATEMENTS**

Mission statements or other statements of welcome are often printed in worship bulletins and other printed materials about the church. Words that are spoken in worship also reflect the kind of welcome a church seeks to extend to others. Consider the following welcome statements from two churches.

"United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all."

[www.firstcongucc.com/ucc](http://www.firstcongucc.com/ucc)

"This church welcomes all to our services of worship and into the full life, leadership and ministry of this church. We are an inclusive community that embraces all people regardless of race, ethnic background, age, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, social or economic situation, marital or family status, biblical interpretation or political persuasion. We welcome all in love as Jesus Christ welcomes all of us. We celebrate that we are all God's beloved children with gifts to share for the just and peaceable reign that God intends. We believe in living out our faith and ministry by loving, learning, giving and serving each other and the world, and by being a place for everyone to meet God, no matter who we are or where we are on life's journey."

[bit.ly/FMCorydonPres](http://bit.ly/FMCorydonPres)

- How do these welcome statements make you feel about the church?
- What does each statement tell you about that church's understanding of who God is?

**PRACTICING THE PRACTICE**

You certainly already practice welcome to others in your life. This is a moment to reflect on that practice and consider how to deepen it. Our approach in this unit will not be one of practicing a different kind of hospitality with each lesson, but rather improving our readiness for welcoming others. We begin this first session by doing some self-reflection on gifts needed to practice welcome and learning about our implicit biases. Future sessions will focus on learning about "the other," building skills, and, finally, practicing hospitality with others who are different from you.

**HOSPITALITY SELF-EXAM**

Spend a few minutes reflecting on gifts that are necessary to practice welcome. Use the space below to record your responses.

- List various behaviors, skills, and traits that are beneficial for practicing hospitality, such as being a good listener, flexibility, or cultural sensitivity.
- Go through the list and put a check mark by those you think are your strengths.
- Circle those you think you need to work on. (Remember, not everyone who practices hospitality has to be an extrovert or comfortable meeting new people. There are different ways to practice hospitality; doing this exercise may help you stretch outside your comfort zone and also identify what types of hospitality you prefer to engage in.)



**FOLLOWING JESUS**

**SUMMARY**

In this session, we spent time reflecting on a fundamental aspect of "Welcome All," or hospitality. We can welcome others only because God first welcomes us. Because of God's wildly inclusive love, we are able to practice that sort of divine love with others. We saw how God first created and welcomed humans and all creatures to this world. We looked at how churches show welcome to others. We thought about the gifts needed to practice welcome and some challenges we all face, called implicit bias.

Before we look at the second aspect of "Welcome All"—"See Christ in Everyone"—take a few moments to think about everything you have learned in this lesson and how it informs what hospitality means to you. Then watch the YouTube video "Carrie Newcomer-Room at the Table" ([bit.ly/FMNewcomerTable](http://bit.ly/FMNewcomerTable), 3:57).

Write or speak a prayer, asking God to help you make room in your life to welcome others.



## How to Order

1. Check out the special size packages for small scale or large scale use, as well as our individually-priced guides.

Order additional Adult Reflection Guides and the Infographic Posters or Poster Sets, as needed.

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**Adult Reflection Guides:**

- These can be ordered individually. Order one *Adult Reflection Guide* for each adult participant.
- Bulk pricing is available: 10 or more for \$7/guide, 25 or more for \$6.50/guide.

**Infographic Poster Sets:**

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#### Key Takeaways

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