

2021 Year of the Family

Family-friendly Faith Exploration



united in prayer



To celebrate THE YEAR OF THE FAMILY, Providence Renewal Centre has assembled a variety of activities designed to:

- Inspire conversations
- Invite playful prayer
- Creatively 'waste time' with God
- Wonder as you wander
- Explore and discover, indoors and outdoors, alone, and together

The materials in the package are only suggestions. Use what appeals to you, courageously try others that appear outside your comfort zone and feel free to adapt any or all to your specific situation. Together, as we engage the world in which we *"live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28), we are united in prayer.

Wonder Box



Create an "I wonder...?" box, where anyone can place a "wondering" as they arise. Designate a time to open the "box" and to explore the topics together ... perhaps weekly.

Upside Down Sabbath

It has been said that Jesus' message *turns things upside down*. In scripture we read, *the first shall be last (Mt 20:16); the meek shall inherit the earth (Mt 5:5); valleys will be raised and hills made low (Lk 3:5; Is 40:4)*. This activity invites playful exploration of this concept.

- Start the day with a sit-down supper (consider slow-cooker meals that cooks overnight so Mom need not get up early)
- At lunch time, eat your fruit or dessert before your soup or sandwich
- For supper, have breakfast
- Wear an item of clothing inside out
- In the evening, share about the experience and perhaps (depending on ages) explore habits that could be "up-ended"



Share-ables Collection/Let Go Laundry basket



Designate a laundry basket or bin for the collection of share-ables
Invite contributions of "things" no longer needed but still in good shape
Allow others to "claim" items
Bless the things to be shared and gift them to a charity, second-hand store or others who might appreciate them

Memories Matter

- Pull out the pictures of times spent together or invite everyone to select 5-10 pictures from their devices to print
- Invite the creation of a collage of family times – individually or together. If created individually, consider gathering the collages and making an album
- Spend time sharing about the items in the collage(s)



Food for Thought



Experiment with cooking together as family prayer

Each member chooses an ingredient ... see what you can create that would be edible

Enjoy the time together, the laughter, the learning ... this is living prayer

Bless your edible creation and enjoy the meal

Vision Board

- Consider a corkboard or large piece of construction paper for this project
- Invite family members to post words and images (clipped from magazines or off the computer) that represent hopes and dreams for the future
- Set aside time to view the vision board together. Talk about it, ask questions, explore what is posted.



Praying with Playdough



Try this at the end of the day

Invite creation of something that captures the “best” part of the day, a time you felt close to God. Share.

Invite creation of something that represents the “worst” experience of the day, when you felt alone or without God. Share.

Craft a hope, an intention, for tomorrow or an invitation you learned from the first two creations. Share.

End by remembering that we are clay that God continues to mold. (*“We are the clay, You are our potter; we are all the work of your hand”* Isaiah 64:8) Notice God never discards the clay just re-shapes it.

For younger ages, craft animals or plants, use everyone’s creations to tell a story.

Help, thanks, wow



Use a whiteboard, blackboard, corkboard, or your refrigerator

Invite the posting of prayers of gratitude (thanks), prayers of request (help), moments of amazement/learning/surprise (wow).

This may become a communication center where even through everyone's busyness we can be aware of what is on the minds of those with whom we share a household

Something to talk about

Invite the sharing of a story – perhaps a different person shares each day/week

After the sharing, engage by inviting those listening to engage the conversation by stating what they:

- appreciated (what aspect or the story stirred/touched their heart),
- noticed (what they learned or an image that was of interest)
- wondered about (questions the story raised).



Not everyone has to respond to in all ways. Allow the storyteller to respond if they wish or just to receive the feedback.

Adventure building



Post an opening like "once upon a time" and invite the addition of the "next sentence" and allow the adventure to build during the week/month.

Or build a story with Lego where new pieces can be added by others in the household to grow the adventure.

Select a beginning day and an ending day so everyone will work toward the conclusion of the story before the time for sharing.



Discuss where you see God in the adventure/story, even if God is not named.

Rainy day drawing

Gather paper, pencil, crayons enough for everyone

- Set a timer, perhaps 10 minutes (more or less depending on ages)
- Draw “God”
- Share:
 - Describe what is in your drawing.
 - What do you like best/least about your drawing?
 - Tell why you chose the colors you used.
 - Share any surprises in your drawing that you saw only after time was up?



Other ideas:

- Draw or use playdough to craft emotions and feelings (sad, happy, anger, joy etc),

Wondering with Words



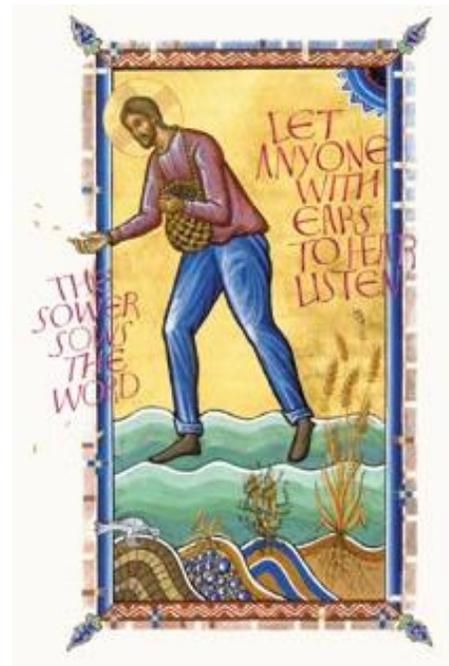
Use words to create an image.

Use your own words, a poem or prayer written by someone else, or a scripture passage.

You may create a collage of words, a spiral of words, a tree of words, or select a single word/phrase/passage to “illuminate.”

That is what the creators of the hand-crafted Saint John’s Bible call illustrating biblical texts.

Visit www.saintjohnsbible.org for more information.



Journal with God

Commit to writing at least three sentences each day:

- something you are thankful for,
- something that puzzled you, and
- a wish for tomorrow.

At the end of the month, re-read your entries. Do you notice any patterns, learnings?

You may decide to keep the words or to release them to the shredder.

Let your pen be your prayer partner as you converse with God.

Senses Alive

This is an invitation to encounter what has been referred to as “the first Bible” by taking a walk outside. You can do this alone or together.

- No expectations, pack only an openness to experience
- Engage your senses. Let the sounds, smells and sights of the natural world hold your attention
- Remember, you are a member of this earthly community, this creation



What do you see? What sees you?

What do you hear? What hears your movement?

What do you smell?

What tastes are carried in the air? What memories do they conjure?

Let the air touch you – describe the experience. Touch a leaf, a tree, a stone etc, describe its many textures, temperature, etc listen to the touch.

Take time to share your discoveries, experiences. You may suggest everyone collect an item for sharing from walk time – it could be an item from nature or a photo of something noticed.



Picnic with parables



Jesus often taught outside - on hillsides or in valleys.

Pack snacks, a blanket, and the bible. Set off to a favorite spot (your backyard, deck, a park etc.)

Read one or several of Jesus’ parables. (Chapter 13 of the Gospel of Matthew has several parables from which to choose)

How do you hear the words of scripture differently while outdoors? What do you notice?

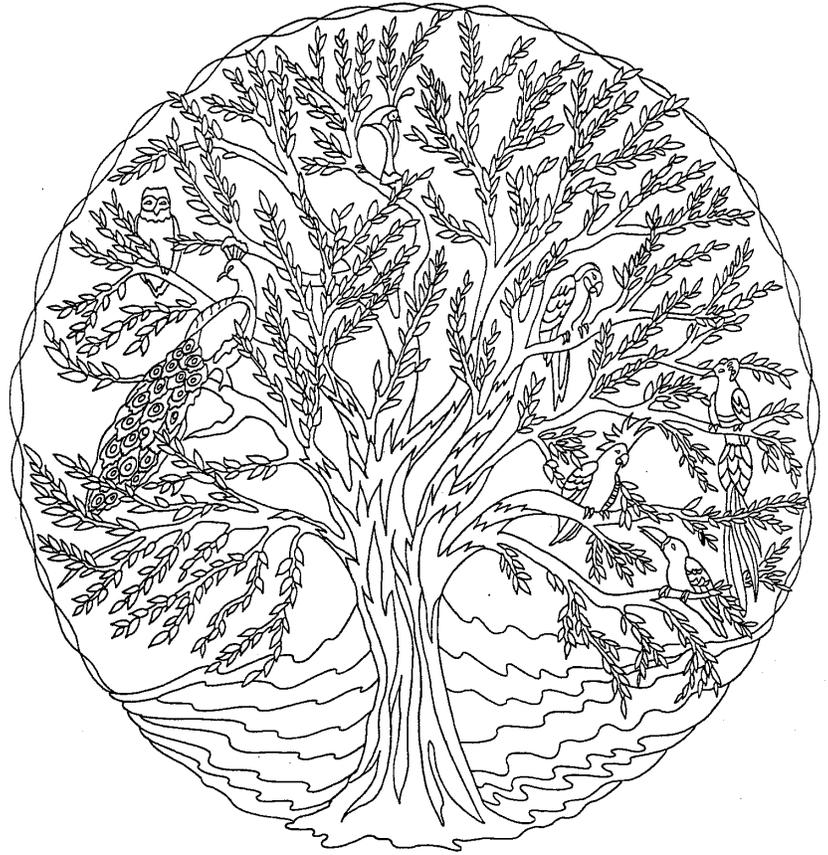
Try creating a modern-day parable or updating an existing parable.

Mandalas

Coloring is a great way to spend time together. Mandalas are designs created to inspire connection to God.

Color the tree design provided.

Consider creating your own and sharing with others the “learnings” from the creation process. (Google “how to draw a mandala”, there are lots of videos to guide you.)



Labyrinth walking

Walking a labyrinth is praying on the move. There are several outdoor labyrinths in Edmonton and area including one at Providence Renewal Centre. During Covid, people of a single cohort are welcome to visit. The mindful, silent walk to the center and back again invites slowing down and living one step at a time.



You can also create a paper labyrinth and let your fingers do the walking. (Google has instructional plans, videos to guide you.)

