

# KICKstart

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Connecting

Kids

with

Mission

An M&S Program for Children by Gabrielle McLarty

**THE DESIGN OF THIS** one-hour workshop offers children a hands-on opportunity to support in a concrete way outreach within or beyond their local church. Depending on location, people-to-people contacts may not be possible, but creating ways for children to see the impact of their compassion and generosity helps to instill in them a life-long pattern of reaching out and giving.

## THEME

Connecting children to the Mission and Service work of the church, encouraging children to live into God's call to love our neighbour as ourselves, and supporting children to more fully realize our impact on all our neighbours.

## PREPARATION

If possible, in the space where you will be meeting, provide pictures depicting various Mission and Service partners. Either tape these to the walls or project them. (Find photos online at [flickr.com/photos/unitedchurchcda](http://flickr.com/photos/unitedchurchcda). Under Albums, select Minutes for Mission 2014.)

Choose the option you will do in the Responding to the Theme section, and gather any necessary supplies as required for the activities you have selected. Additional

supplies you will need: name tags, felt pens, graffiti sheets.

If your space allows for gathering in a circle for a portion of your time, arrange chairs or floor cushions in a circle. Also, space permitting, set up activity option(s) in advance.

## GATHERING (10 minutes)

If your group is unfamiliar with one another, ensure children and adults have on name tags. Ask everyone to join you in a circle. Invite everyone around the circle to share their name and a sentence or two about some time they shared something with someone else. Once everyone has shared, ask if anyone has a story they might tell about a time they shared something with a complete stranger. Optional: Introduce the topic by reading *Jesse's Surprise Gift* by Laura Alary.

Introduce the theme by telling the children that today we are going to be talking about how God calls each of us to share and to act in loving ways toward others.

Lead the group in a short prayer of your own or use this one:

**Loving God, thank you for the many people in our lives. Thanks for all the things we have and are able to use. Help us to care for others and to be willing to share the things that we have. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.**

**EXPLORING THE THEME** (20 minutes)

Ask the children if they are familiar with any of the things that Jesus taught us about how to live. Encourage their various responses. Reflect back to them what you have heard.

If they have not offered suggestions, consider prompting them with questions such as: Do you think Jesus taught people to be selfish or to share? Did Jesus turn away from people who wanted his help, or would he reach out to them?

Once this conversation slows, share that one of the most important things Jesus taught us was to love our neighbours as ourselves. Ask the children how they show love to their neighbours as well as themselves. If they have no responses,

**OPTION**

- **1** Arrange for guest(s) from a local Mission and Service-supported ministry to share with children about the work they do. For a list of these ministries, organized by Conference, see pages 42–44.
- Invite the guest(s) to reflect on questions such as: Who are the people that you care for? Do you get to work with any children? How could children be involved in this type of work? Also ask that they leave some time for the children to ask them any questions they might have.
- If your guest is able to bring along any pictures or concrete objects from their ministry, this will enrich the children’s experience. If the guest has a visual presentation, the children’s attention is often held for a bit longer.
- Keep the presentation and question time to 10 minutes.
- Once the children have experienced the presentation, involve them in creating some type of gift that can be taken to the M&S ministry. If the ministry is involved in serving food, the children may be able to make sandwiches that could be shared. Be sure to check with the guest first. Sometimes food safety regulations make this option unviable.
- Creating a mural to decorate the outreach ministry space is often a good option. Possible supplies include mural paper, washable felt pens or washable paints for the more adventurous, magazines, scissors, and glue.
- If your meeting space is carpeted, it will be easier to create the mural by working on the wall or tables. If working on the wall, consider doubling the paper so markers won’t bleed through onto the wall.
- If you have children who like to write in your group, invite them to write a prayer that could be shared with those at the outreach ministry.
- Invite the children to make a gift to Mission and Service. Thank them authentically, for example, “Thank you for helping your neighbours and sharing your love with God’s world.”

ask if they think it’s only adults who are supposed to care for others. Encourage them to see themselves as a very important part of how God’s love is shown in the world. If the children are hesitant to describe ways they can do this on their own, ask if there are ways their families could care for neighbours.

**RESPONDING TO THE THEME** (20 minutes)

Introduce to children the opportunity they will now have to engage. These options are ones you will want to develop ahead of time and as much as possible will be hands-on, practical activities. The options below offer a few possibilities, but you will know your context best so may have your own ideas.

**OPTION**

- **2** Invite the children to raise funds for Mission and Service *and* for a project from the *Gifts with Vision* giving catalogue—one dollar for M&S and one for a Gifts with Vision project. (See Mission and Service at a Glance at [stewardshiptoolkit.ca](http://stewardshiptoolkit.ca) and [giftswithvision.ca](http://giftswithvision.ca).)
- A possible process for an “Education for education” project follows:
  - If you have Internet access at your location, invite children to go online and discover some facts about education on a global basis. If you don’t have Internet access, provide them with the following information:
    - Of the 67 million primary school-age children who do not attend school, 53 percent are girls.
    - Worldwide, nearly 80 percent of primary school-age children attend school. In countries in the two-thirds world, this figure is around 66 percent.
    - Worldwide, only 49 percent of children of secondary school age actually attend school. Of those who do not attend, 52 percent are girls.
    - The world’s functionally illiterate people include more than 130 million children who do not attend school; 73 million of them girls.
- Sources: [crin.org](http://crin.org), [unicef.org](http://unicef.org), [childinfo.org](http://childinfo.org)
- Once the children have some concrete information to share regarding education, invite them to come up with some of their own values regarding education and why they think it is important.
- Next, share this with others. Invite adults, and have the children offer a presentation followed by a request for donations. Or prepare a brochure to be distributed along with a request for donations. Or prepare an audio visual presentation that could be shown at a congregational, presbytery, Conference, wider church, or community gathering. When asking for donations, mention the project that the children have chosen. You can also make your gifts for M&S and your Gifts with Vision online at [giftswithvision.ca](http://giftswithvision.ca) or mail to Gifts from Children for Mission and Service, The United Church of Canada, 3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300, Toronto, ON, M8X 2Y4. You will receive a tax receipt and thank-you letter.

**OPTION**

**3** Have the children prepare cookies that can be served at a congregational event. As they are doing this, highlight the importance of being willing to share things we might rather keep for ourselves. To do this activity, you will need access to a microwave as well as a hand-washing station. If you are able to bring containers of necessary supplies and have the children do the measuring as well as stirring, their experience will be enhanced.

**No-Bake Cookies**

**Ingredients:**

- 18 large marshmallows                      1/3 cup corn syrup
- 1/3 cup margarine                              1 cup chocolate chips
- 2 1/2 cups crisp rice cereal                1 3/4 cups rolled oats

In a large, microwaveable bowl mix marshmallows, corn syrup, margarine and chocolate chips. Microwave on high for one to two minutes. Remove from microwave and stir. Add crisp rice cereal and oatmeal; stir again. Drop on a wax-paper-lined cookie sheet using a teaspoon. Place in the fridge for 15 minutes or fridge freezer for five minutes if your timing is tight. This recipe makes two dozen cookies.

**OPTION**

**4** Talk with children about how there are members within their congregation who are in nursing care homes, hospitals, or at home and who are not feeling well. Invite them to create cards for them.

If possible, arrange for the children to help deliver the cards or if this is not possible, let them know that arrangements for delivery will be made. (Your ministry staff or lay visitors will know which people to connect you with.)

**Note:** If the children aren't helping deliver the cards, if possible, connect them with those who will be doing the delivery. Outreach and pastoral care are ministries for all ages.

**Card-making supplies**

- construction paper, washable felt pens, scissors, glue, stickers, embellishments (buttons, silk flowers, gems)
- For young children, you may need to help with printing phrases such as: Hope you feel better soon. Have a great day. Get well soon. We miss you at church. If children are just learning to print, offer one of these phrases or one of your own for them to copy onto their cards. If you know ahead of time the names of the people the cards will be going to, these can also be added.



**PLANNING FUTURE STEPS** (6 minutes)

Keep the connection to Mission and Service strong by sharing stories from *Minutes for Mission* and learning about the people and communities who are our neighbours. Provide opportunities for the children to give regularly for M&S and for the church to thank them for helping their neighbours. Share your ideas and photos with Mission and Service staff at [ms@united-church.ca](mailto:ms@united-church.ca).

**EVALUATION** (2 minutes)

Post two graffiti sheets on the wall, and invite children to write or draw pictures showing what they enjoyed doing during the past hour and what they could have left out. If you want to further develop outreach ministry with children, also consider posting a sheet to ask for their suggestions for further gatherings.

**CLOSING** (2 minutes)

Invite children to gather back together. Thank them for their participation in the time you've spent together. If they have future plans for being together, offer a brief reminder of that plan. Close with a prayer of your creating or this one:

**God, you care for everyone and everything. Thank you for reminding us that we too need to be caring and compassionate. Be with us as we continue to be a part of your loving actions in the world. Bless all our neighbours. Help us to be generous toward others with our time, actions, and money. Bless all our gifts to Mission and Service. In your name we pray, Amen.**

**Gabrielle McLarty** enjoys helping to develop outreach opportunities for children and youth at Crescent United Church, Surrey, British Columbia.