

In Search Of Christmas

A Collection Of
Congregational Resources For
Thanksgiving, Advent, And Christmas

Elizabeth Morris-Pierce
Stephen A. Berger
Eulonda A. Dreher
Russell W. Dalton
D. Andrew Richardson
Jeanne Mueller and Judith Hale Wood
Ellen and James Edgar

CSS Publishing Company, Inc., Lima, Ohio

IN SEARCH OF CHRISTMAS

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Table Of Contents

1. Come! See What God Has Done	5
A Thanksgiving Event For Children Jeanne Mueller and Judith Hale Wood	
2. A Chrismon Service	23
Ellen and James Edgar	
3. The <i>ABC</i>'s Of Christmas	39
Four Easy Programs For Christmas Worship Services Elizabeth Morris-Pierce	
4. The Angels' Point Of View	69
A Christmas Story In Two Acts Stephen A. Berger	
5. In Search Of Christmas	89
A Christmas Drama Eulonda A. Dreher	
6. Last Year In Bethlehem: The Story Of Eli The Shepherd	103
A Christmas Eve Service In One-Person Drama And Congregational Hymns Russell W. Dalton	
7. O Holy Night	113
A Service Of Story, Song, And Scripture On Christmas Eve D. Andrew Richardson	
Contributors	127

**Come!
See What
God Has Done**

A Thanksgiving Event For Children

Jeanne Mueller
and
Judith Hale Wood

Revised. Originally published in 1981 as *Come! See What God Has Done*, copyright © 1981, by CSS Publishing Company, Lima, Ohio (0-89536-508-1).

Contents

Introduction	8
Poster Ideas For Various Centers	9
Bless This House	12
Nature's Nook	14
God Gives; We Give Thanks	16
Food, Fabulous Food	18
Friendship And Fun	20
Wonderfully Made	21

Introduction

Come! See What God Has Done has been designed to make children aware of God's many blessings so often taken for granted. Experiences and activities included in this program focus on Families, God's World of Nature, Our Religious Heritage, Food, Friendships and Fun Times, and Our Bodies and Senses.

A guide sheet for each activity center includes:

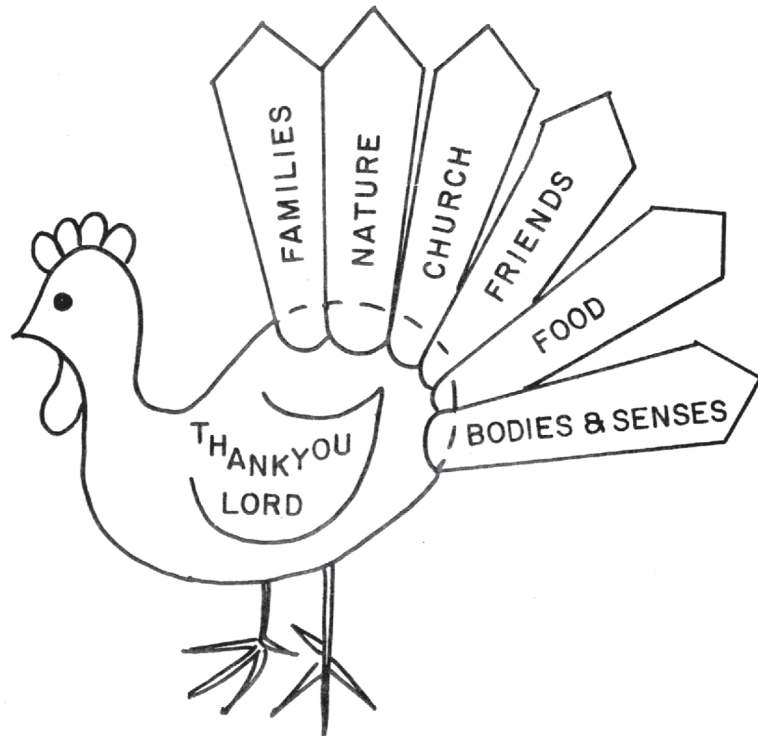
1. Activity center title with suggestions for creating an appropriate environment.
2. Scripture verse to be displayed on tagboard at the activity center.
3. Guided learning experience which provides an opportunity for the children to share their personal thoughts and feelings.
4. Several follow-up activities to choose from according to preference, time schedule, or available materials.
5. Closing prayer to be used with each group at the conclusion of the activity.

This Thanksgiving Event was developed to last approximately 75 minutes and to include children in kindergarten through grade six. The time period is adjustable, and older or younger children could be included. Although the Thanksgiving Event was designed for use with church school teachers and their children, parents could be invited to attend, thus making it an intergenerational event.

The first hour is spent in ten-minute segments at each of the six activity centers. The final minutes can be a gathering together of the entire group for some singing and a closing prayer.

The Thanksgiving Event will function smoothly if each class is grouped together and moves as a class from center to center according to the time allowed.

At the beginning each child is given a paper turkey without any feathers. As each activity center is completed, the child receives a feather representing that particular activity which is stapled on his turkey. At the end of the Event, the turkeys should be complete with feathers.

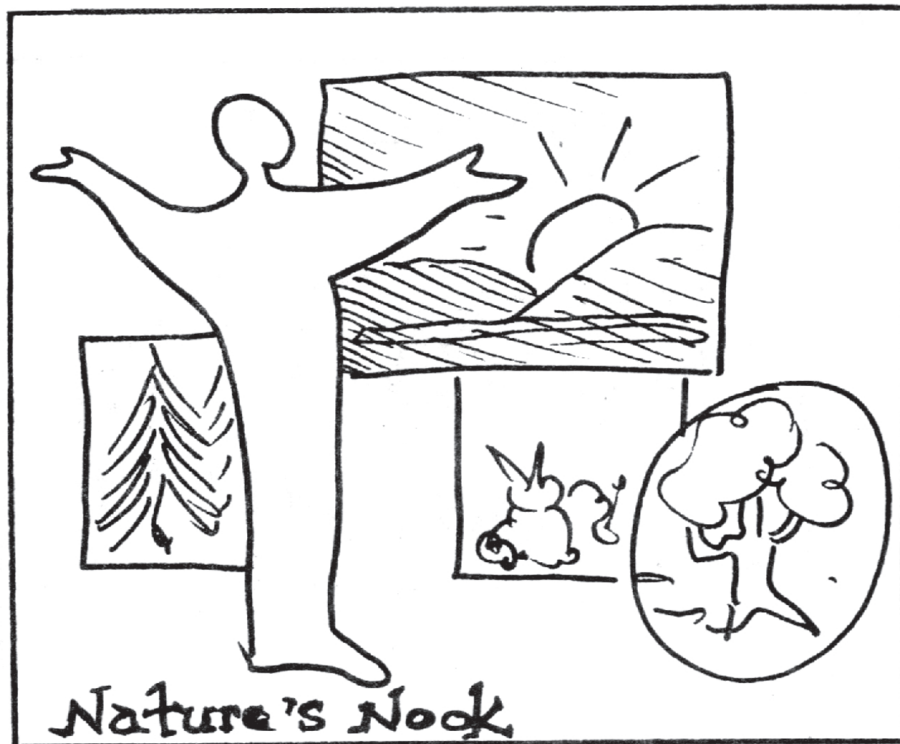


Poster Ideas For Various Centers

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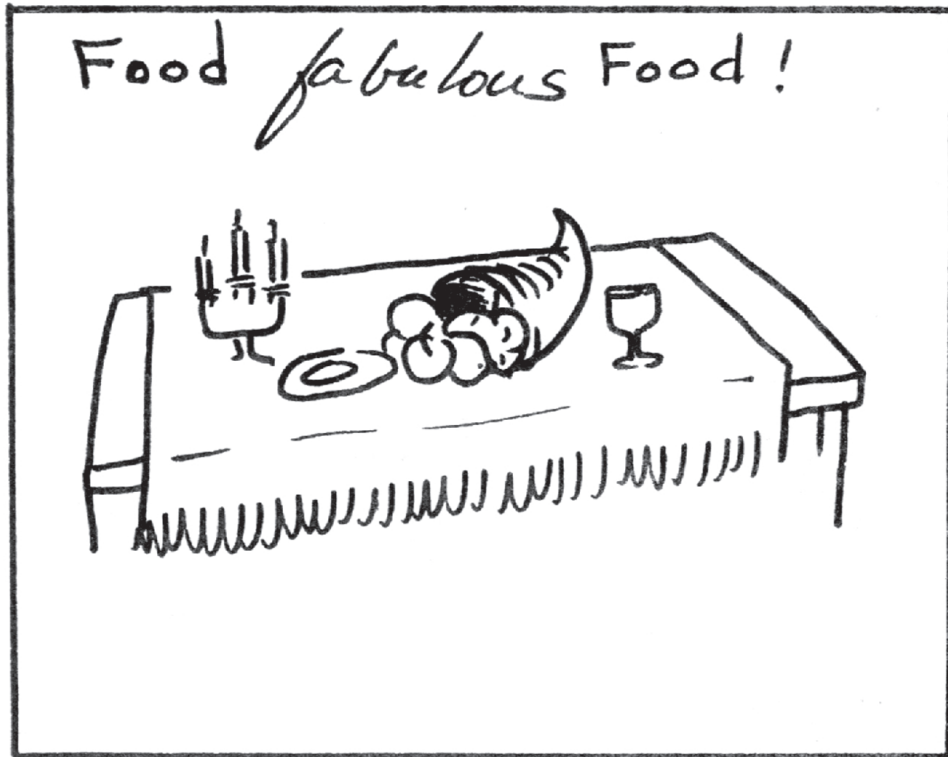
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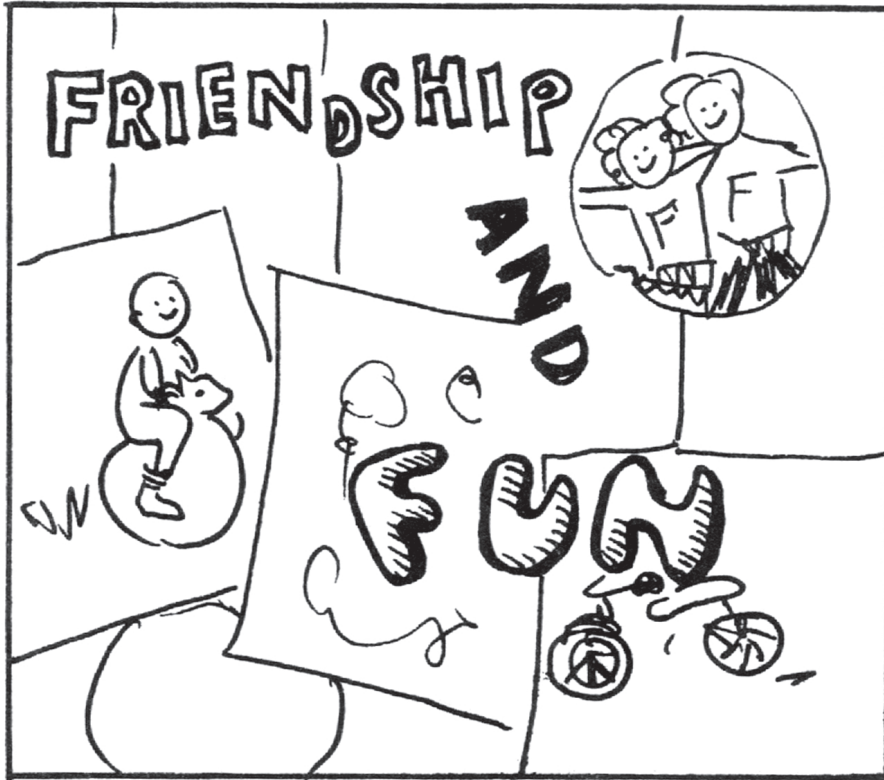
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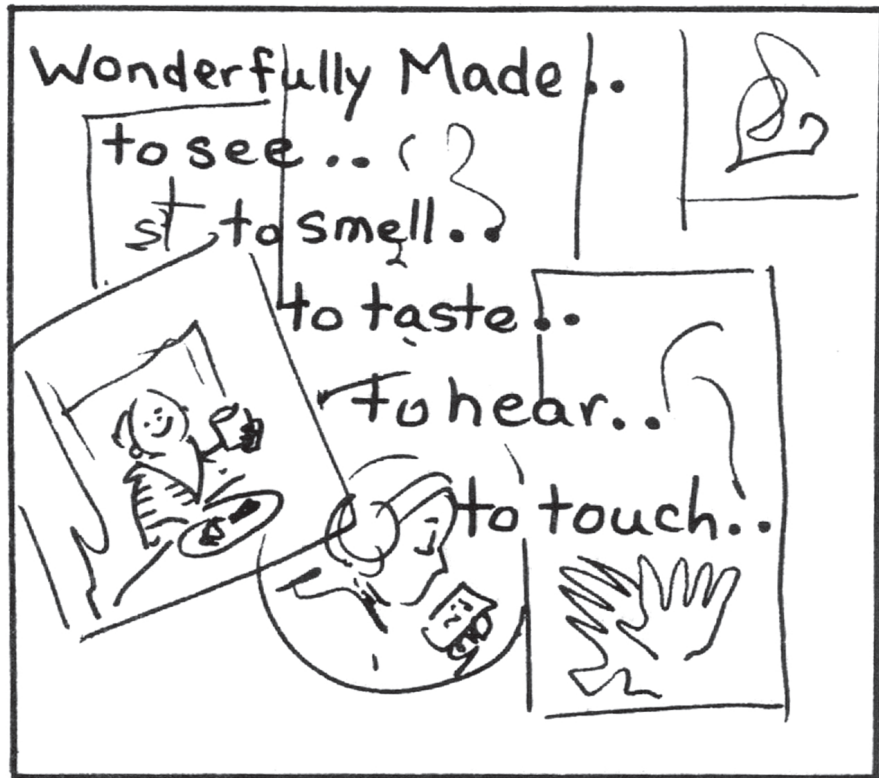
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V



VI



Bless This House

Description of Activity Center

On poster board display magazine pictures of families working and playing together.

Scripture Verse

Come see what God has done, his wonderful acts among men. (Psalm 66:5)

Guided Learning Experience

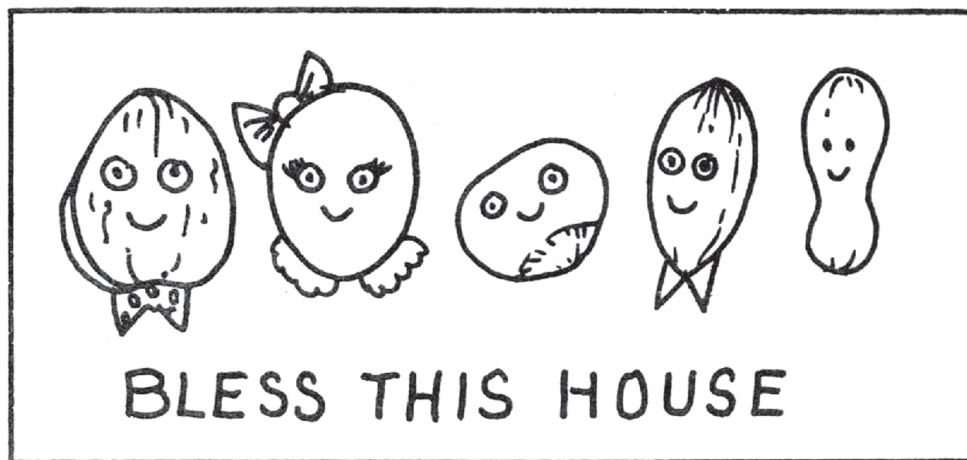
Discuss family life with the children by asking:

1. What are some things families do together?
2. What problems do families sometimes have?
3. What joys do families share?
4. Why do you suppose God gives us families?
5. What is special about your family?

Follow-up Activities

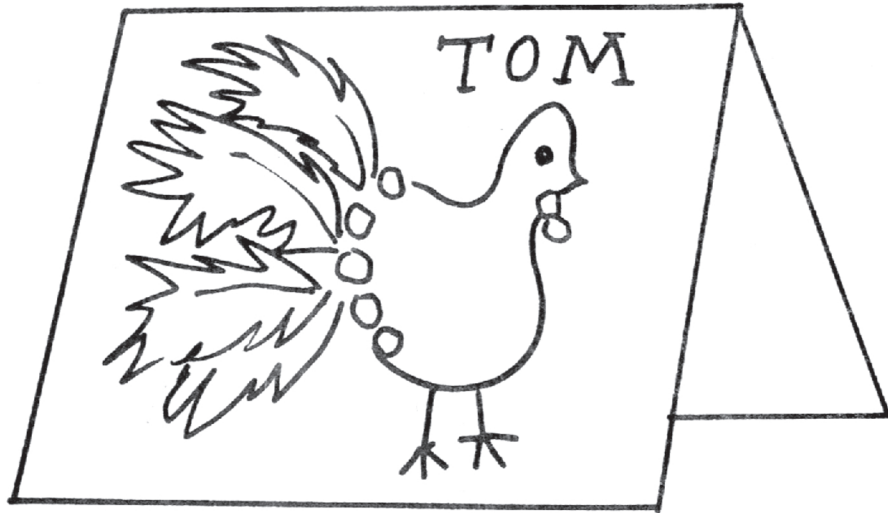
A. Nut Family Plaque

On a 6" by 8" piece of wood or heavy cardboard, glue a nut (walnut, pecan, almond, hazelnut, peanut) — one for each member of your family. With plastic eyes and bits of material and yarn, decorate nuts to be representative of your family. Add BLESS THIS HOUSE in alphabet cereal or alphabet noodles. Thank God for your family.



B. Indian Corn and Feather Place Card

Use a 4" by 6" rectangle of paper. Fold in half. Add turkey body, feathers for tail and peppercorn for eye. Glue on Indian corn and guest's name.



C. Thanksgiving Card

Make a Thanksgiving card showing something you are thankful for and add the following verse:

*My dad is good;
My mom is kind.
They are the best
That I'll ever find.*

Closing Prayer

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving us a family.
We thank you for moms who hug us, bake us cookies, and care for us when we are sick.
We thank you for dads who work hard every day, love us, and help us with our homework.
Help us to be a kind and loving member of our family. Amen.

Nature's Nook

Description of Activity Center

Collect and display some pictures showing the beauty of God's natural world. Arrange any of the following for the children to explore: seeds, insects, pine cones, acorns, gourds, pumpkins, Indian corn, thistles, wheat, pods.

Scripture Verse

I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the wonderful things you have done.
(Psalm 9:1)

Guided Learning Experience

If you could pick your favorite season, which one would it be? Why?

For the following activity, speak slowly so that the children will have an opportunity to paint a mental picture.

CLOSE YOUR EYES and think about a time in summer when you were so very hot. Your skin was all sticky and sweaty. Then think of how you felt when you jumped into a cool stream of water — how cool you felt.

Now think about wintertime. It has snowed and the tree branches and bushes are covered with snow. Icicles hang from the roof. Your nose and cheeks are so cold that they tingle. You have lots of fun sledding and making snowballs.

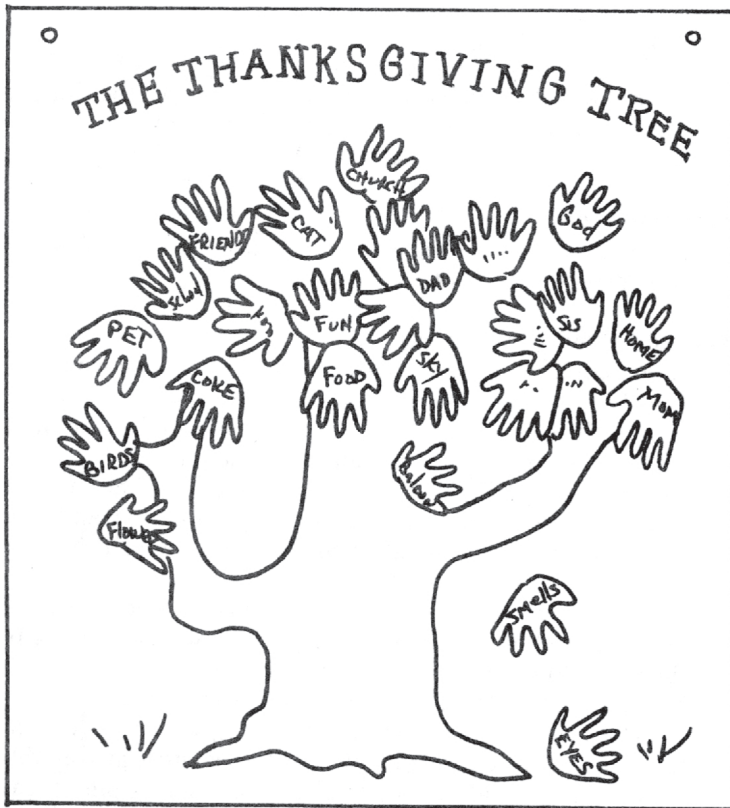
Think again of autumn. The sun is warm. The leaves on the trees are bright red and yellow. The leaves on the ground rustle as you walk in them. You have raked and raked and have a huge pile of leaves. Then you and a friend jump and roll in the pile of leaves. What fun!

Think of one more season — it's spring. Some days the ground is still frozen and hard. You've seen two birds building a nest in the tree outside your window in preparation for the baby birds soon to come. Pussy willows are in bloom in your yard. And then it happens! One day you see a tiny green shoot appear in the garden. Several days later — there are purple and yellow crocuses blooming in your yard.

Most of the things we have thought about are gifts from God — things that we can't buy; things that God gives us — water, sunshine, birds, and trees.

Can you think of three other things that God gives you that you can't buy?

Suggested Activities



A. Thanksgiving Tree

Draw around your hand three times on colored paper.

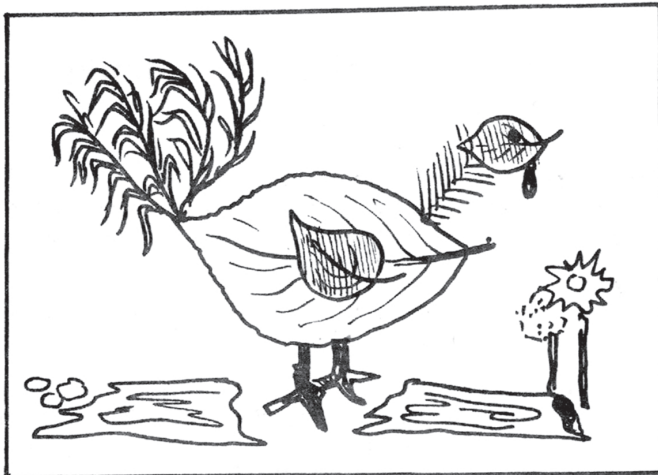
Print what you are thankful for on the hands.

Cut out the hands and past them on the tree.



B. Nature Collage

Children combine natural materials to create a collage and add the scripture passage from Psalm 9:1.



C. Gourd Creatures

Children can use natural materials (berries, acorns, cranberries, popcorn, dried flowers), markers, feathers, and buttons to create a Gourd Creature.

Closing Prayer

God, our Creature, we thank you for the beautiful and wonderful world you have created. Especially we thank you for the seasons, for sunshine and rain, for trees to climb and streams to play in. Help us to care for and wisely use these gifts you have given us. Amen.

God Gives; We Give Thanks

Description of Activity Center

Appropriate items related to this center would include a Bible, the church hymnal, a cross, the communion cup, and bread.

Scripture Verse

Let us come before him with thanksgiving and sing joyful songs of praise. (Psalm 95:2)

Guided Learning Experience

Help the children to think about giving and receiving and what God has given to his people.

1. What is the neatest gift you have ever received?
2. What is the nicest gift you have ever given?
3. What do you think is the greatest gift God has ever given?
4. What is the greatest gift you can give God?

Talk with the children about the symbolism and meaning of each of the items displayed.

Suggested Activities

A. Pyramid of Thanks

In each section of the pyramid, the children should place something which reminds them of their religious heritage. Suggestions include a picture of their church, a cross, a Bible, and a picture of Christ. (Pattern for pyramid is included.)

B. Give Thanks Centerpiece

Each child traces his/her hand on folded construction paper. Cut them out, leaving the middle fingers attached. Print or have available a copy of the grace printed below to add to the hands. Encourage the use of the grace at mealtime.

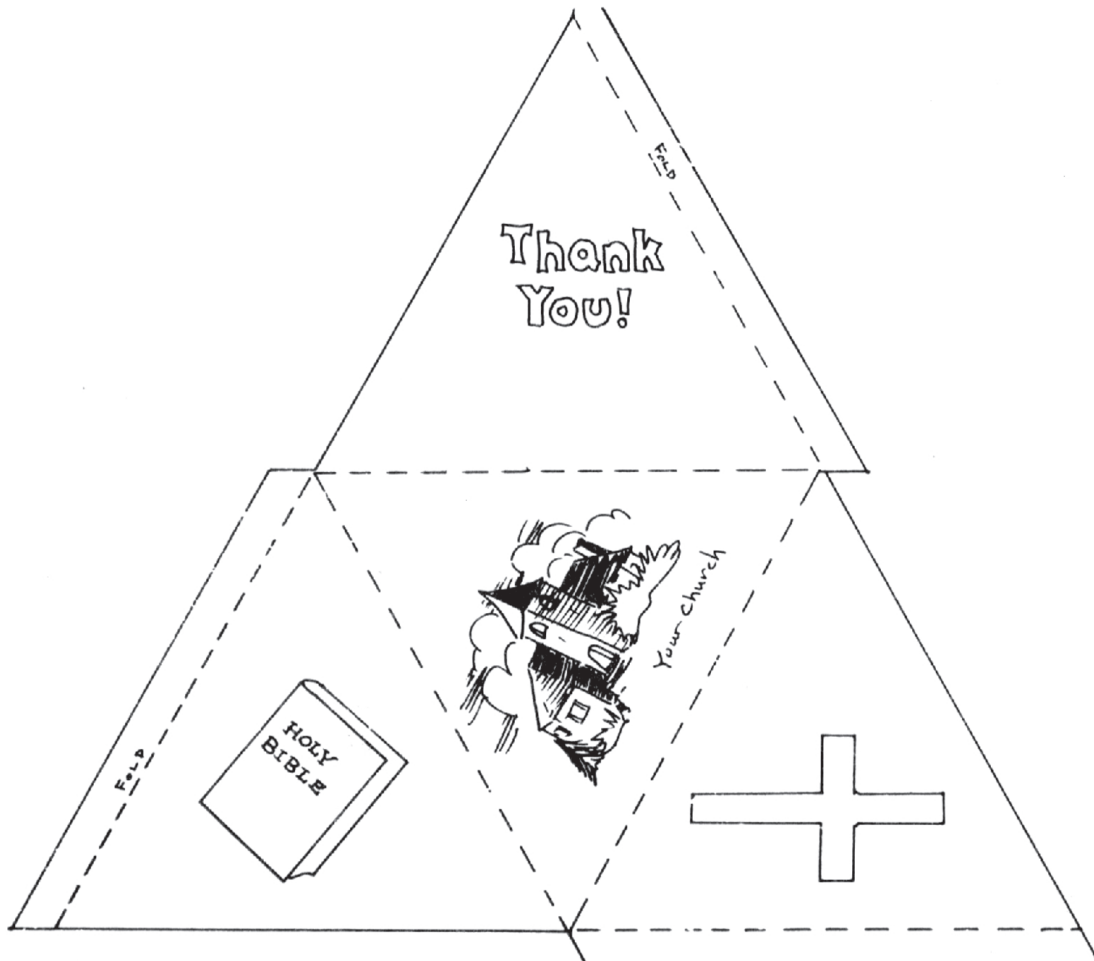
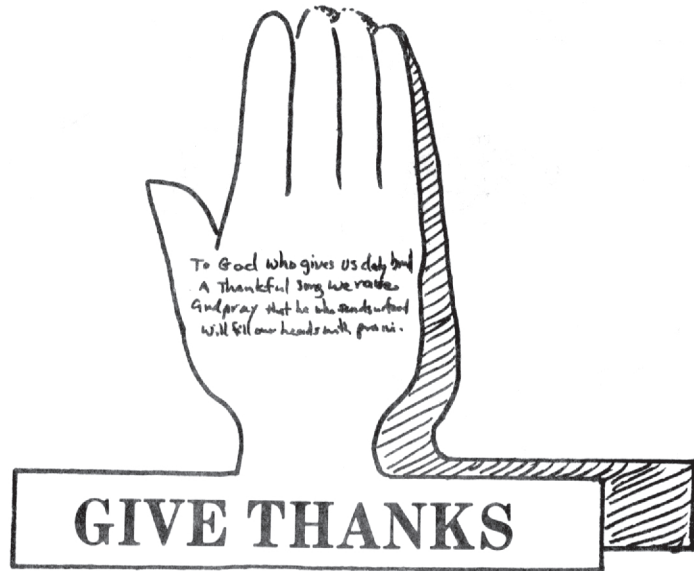
*To God who gives us daily bread
A thankful song we raise,
And pray that he who sends us food
Will fill our hearts with praise.*

C. Church Symbol Silhouette

Cover an area with newspapers. Cut an arch-shaped panel from dark construction paper. Children choose a cardboard pattern of a church, cross, or folded hands. Place the pattern on the paper and, using thinned white poster paint in a spray bottle, "spatter paint" the symbol.

Closing Prayer

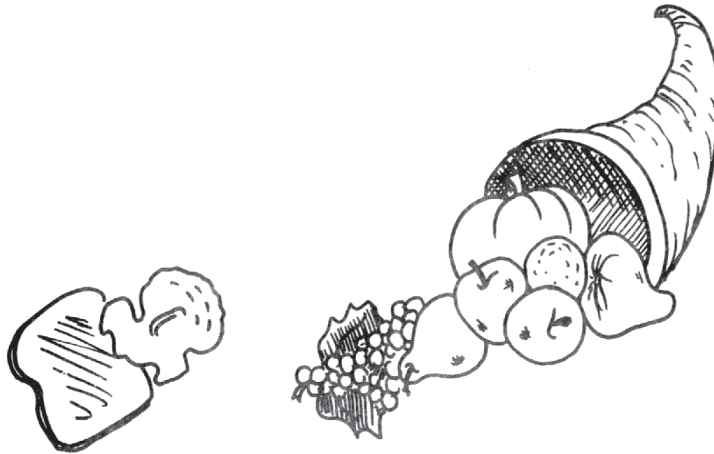
Loving God, we thank you for our church, for our teachers and pastor who help us learn about you and your ways, and most of all, for sending us your Son Jesus who taught us to love one another. Help each of us become the best person we can be. Amen.



Food, Fabulous Food

Description of Activity Center

A cornucopia filled with fruits makes an ideal centerpiece for this center.



Scripture Verse

The land has produced its harvest; God, our God, has blessed us. (Psalm 67:6)

Guided Learning Experience

Ask what the cornucopia represents and then begin the conversation about food by asking:

1. What is your favorite place to eat?
2. What is your favorite food?
3. What is the most special meal you can remember?

Listen to this story and be ready to tell how you would feel if you were the mother, the father, or God.

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Terrible Liz. Her name was Terrible because she was terrible. When she played, she always insisted on her own way. When she left her room, it always looked like a disaster area. If she met you outside she would say, “Where did you get those horrible looking pants?” or “What in the world did you do to your hair?”

But the time she was at her worst was at mealtime. After her dad had worked hard at his job, after Mom had gone grocery shopping and cooked dinner, Terrible Liz could be heard to say, “Oh, no, not that stuff again,” or “You know I hate string beans, why do you fix them?” or “Yuk, I’m not eating any squash!” or “Why can’t you ever fix something I like?”

Well, that’s the way Terrible Liz talked and acted. Let’s think about some people that Liz didn’t consider.

1. How do you think Mom felt after she had shopped and fixed dinner?
2. Why did Dad go to work?
3. Where did the food come from?
4. What things did Terrible Liz do to show that she wasn't thankful to her parents and to God?

Suggested Activities

A. Turkey Shapes

Cut turkey shapes from bread with a cookie cutter. Children can spread them with peanut butter that has been thinned with milk. Decorate with raisin eyes and jelly tails.

B. Harvest Bowl

Children may help prepare the fruits and mix them.

- 2 apples peeled, cored, and diced
- a bunch of grapes
- 2 handfuls of nuts
- 2 handfuls of raisins
- granola cereal

Mix fruits and nuts. Add 2 tablespoons of honey. Sprinkle with granola.

C. Pilgrim Cornbread

The Indians introduced corn to the Pilgrims. Cornbread has become a traditional Thanksgiving dish.

- 2 cups cornmeal
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- 1 egg beaten
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons of oil
- 2 tablespoons of sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt

Sift dry ingredients. Add milk, oil, egg, and sugar. Mix well. Pour into greased 8-inch square pan. Bake at 400 degrees for 35 minutes.

Closing Prayer

God, our provider, help us to be thankful for all the food you have given us, not just those foods we like. Help us to remember that there are many in our world who go to bed hungry. We thank you for our food and also for the people who work so that we may eat. Amen.

Friendship And Fun

Description of Activity Center

A collage of children's faces can be displayed with sports equipment, games, and dolls. Add a graffiti board that is titled, A FRIEND IS ... Since this center involves a storytelling experience, plan a special area such as a tent or blanket in a quiet corner.

Scripture Verse

Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children! (Matthew 5:9)

Guided Learning Experience

Stir up children's thinking by asking:

1. What makes a good friend?
2. What qualities of a good friend do you have?
3. What can you tell about people by just looking at them?

Have children add their own thoughts and feelings to the graffiti board.

Suggested Activity

The public library has a wealth of good books/stories about friends and friendship. A highly recommended story with a Thanksgiving theme is *Cranberry Thanksgiving* by Wende and Harry Devlin (Parents Magazine Press, 1971).

Cranberry Thanksgiving is a delightful tale of two friends, Maggie and Mr. Whiskers, and a famous cranberry bread recipe. If using this story, be sure to serve some cranberry bread or muffins to the children after the story is told.

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, we thank you for all the special friends we have, for the good times we have playing and sharing with our friends. We know so well how we like our friends to treat us. Help us to be patient, kind, and loving, not only to our friends but also to those who are unfriendly toward us. Amen.

Wonderfully Made

Description of Activity Center

Display a large sheet of white mural paper with this adapted verse from Psalm 47:1 — “O, you children, Clap your hands, Praise the Lord!” Children are to paint one of their hands with various colors of poster paint and then press them on the mural paper to make a collage of handprints.

Also display the Wonderfully Made poster which can be used to introduce the activities.

Scripture Verse

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart. (Psalm 9:1)

Guided Learning Experience

See if the children can name their five senses. Ask them to share with one another:

1. The sweetest/foulest smell they have ever smelled.
2. The hottest/coldest thing they have ever felt.
3. The prettiest/ugliest thing they have ever seen.
4. The loudest/softest thing they have ever heard.
5. The best/worst thing they have ever tasted.

God has given us wonderfully created bodies that we often take for granted. Think of how difficult life would be if part of one’s body didn’t function properly. We should care for our bodies by seeing that we eat properly, exercise regularly, and avoid things (drugs, alcohol, tobacco) that can harm what God has given us.

Suggested Activities

Prepare the following “sense testers” for the children to experience and then identify.

A. Smell

In small bottles place several drops of peppermint extract, some peanut butter, coffee, vanilla extract, and vinegar for the children to smell.



B. Hear

Tape the following sounds for the children to recognize: a zipper, a door slamming, a telephone ring, a motor starting up (car).



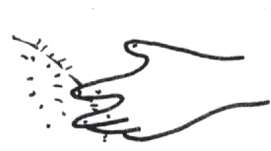
C. Taste

Provide each child with a small taste of each of the following to be identified: salt, lemon, banana, celery, and M & M’s.



D. Feel

In small paper bags place the following items: some cotton, a spool, a cookie cutter, a sponge, and a rock. Staple the bags shut and number them. Have the children feel the bag and identify the contents.

**Closing Prayer**

Dear God, our Creator, you have provided us with a wonderfully-made body. Help us to use our mouths to say kind things, to use our hands in loving and helpful ways, to use our eyes to see beauty in your world, and to use our ears to hear pleasant sounds. May our hearts be filled with love and our actions show that we are truly your children. Amen.