

Using Storybooks with Boundless Love

Objectives:

1. Engage children in seeing God's love in the world around them.
2. Build relationships between the youth going to the ELCA Youth Gathering and children in preschool and elementary.



Introduction:

Who doesn't love to hear a story? Colorful storybooks are an easy way to introduce an idea to children and then use it as a jumping off point for further exploration. In the Gathering Curriculum, youth are asked to think about a time when they experienced God's boundless love. In this activity, they can help younger children see God's love in the world around them and know that God loves them the way they are. This could be done during an education hour, during a children's message, or during another kids' program time.

Materials:

- Favorite storybooks that center on God's love – Some suggestions: **This I Know: See God in the World He Made** by Clay Anderson and Natalie Merheb (centered around the song "Jesus Loves Me"), **When God Made You** and **When God Made Light**, both by Matthew Paul Turner, and **The Berenstain Bears: God Loves You** by Mike Berenstain, but there are plenty of others!
- Blank paper
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils

Outline of Activity:

1. Have your youth group pick a book or books to read to small groups of younger students about God's love. One or two students to 3-5 younger students is a good balance. (Helpful Hint: Pairing up a more confident teen and a shyer teen to lead a group together will be helpful. Have them take turns reading the book and leading a conversation.)
2. Have the students practice their storytelling beforehand and come up with some basic questions to ask children based on the book chosen and the time allotted.
3. On the day of the storytelling, have students break into small groups in a circle on the floor (appropriately following your COVID protocols). Have them read the book, showing the pictures to the students as they go.
4. Once the book is read, the student leaders can ask the children which part of the story they liked best. Have teens share what they liked best as well. *God's love is*

everywhere and for everyone! It is boundless! Follow up with other questions as time allows.

5. After the group has discussed the question(s), pass out coloring materials. Have students draw where or how they see God's love in the world. Have them share their pictures after everyone has completed their drawings.
6. Have all the groups sing "Jesus Loves Me" to end the session.
7. A further suggestion would be to post the pictures in the church and online for others to see.