

GREAT BIG beautiful WORLD

Worship & Drama Leader Guide

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**Growing Up
Catholic**
A ministry of The Pastoral Center

Welcome to **GREAT BIG beautiful WORLD**

Great Big Beautiful World is a one-week Vacation Bible School (VBS) curriculum that embraces Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* and our call to care for our common home. It begins with the creation story in Genesis 2 and includes psalms, stories of Jesus, and the vision of a new heaven and new earth in Revelation. This comprehensive look at the biblical story reveals God's deep love for all of creation, including each child. *Great Big Beautiful World* invites children to see the ways God cares for the earth and challenges them to be part of caring for and preserving the created world.

Each day starts with relationship-building, joint worship, music, prayer, and a dramatic presentation of the Bible story. This is a time to SOW seeds of friendship, joy, generosity, and wisdom. These seeds will GROW as children explore, create, play, and learn about God's story at three response stations. In closing worship, children will be challenged to GO out into the world to care for the beautiful world God made.

SOW (35 min) <i>Children start in small groups and then gather for worship.</i>	GROW (90 min + snack) <i>Small groups rotate between three activity stations and have a snack.</i>	GO (10 min) <i>The large group gathers for worship and dismissal.</i>
Seeds of Friendship (10 min) (small group) Seeds of Joy (10 min) (large group, music, prayer) Seeds of Generosity (5 min) (offering) Seeds of Wisdom (10 min) (Bible memory, Bible drama)	Dig In (30 min) (Bible study) Create & Discover (30 min) (art and science activities) Sprout (30 min) (active games) Snack Time (15 min)	Songs Creation Care Cards Closing Prayer Dismissal

Items you will need from the VBS Boxed Set:

- *Worship & Drama Leader Guide*
- Worship & Drama electronic files
- Worship & Drama Area Poster

The **electronic files** include related teaching aids and materials. Each leader (Music Leader, Drama Leader, Small Group Leaders) should be given access to the relevant materials. The files includes the following:

- Sing-along videos and audio files for 7 songs
- Lyric sheet and sheet music for songs
- 7 PowerPoint Song Lyric Slideshows
- 1 PowerPoint Bible Memory Slideshow
- 3 PowerPoint Drama Slideshows
- 5 Worship Symbols
- Seeds of Friendship Instructions

- Offering Project
- Drama Scripts
- Tree Emblems

Media Connections are included in this guide and posted on the "Great Big Beautiful World VBS" board on the *Growing Up Catholic* Pinterest page for ease of use, organized by day. Additional songs, snack ideas, and offering-related videos are also included on Pinterest. See <https://pinterest.com/GrowingUpCatholic/great-big-beautiful-world-vbs>.

WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

Each day of *Great Big Beautiful World* has three major sections: **SOW** (opening worship), **GROW** (response stations), and **GO** (closing worship). The provided times for each worship section are approximate. They can easily be shortened or lengthened depending on your schedule.

SOW (opening worship, 35 minutes)

Seeds of Friendship (10 minutes): Children gather in small groups with a Small Group Leader and participate in activities designed to nurture relationships and introduce the theme of the day. There is a one-page Seeds of Friendship Instructions guide on page 53 of this guide and in the electronic files that summarizes the activities for the week. Copy or print one for each Small Group Leader.

Seeds of Joy (10 minutes): Small groups come together for worship, beginning with a Call to Worship that uses American Sign Language followed by singing and prayer. PowerPoint song lyric slideshows are available for each of the seven songs (electronic files).

Seeds of Generosity (5 minutes): Children are introduced to the needs in our world and are invited to respond by giving toward a local or international organization or project.

Seeds of Wisdom (10 minutes): Children practice the Bible memory verses, watch a dramatization of the Bible story, and reflect on the story together.

GROW (response stations, 90 minutes)

Small groups of children rotate through three response stations: **Dig In** (Bible activities), **Create & Discover** (art and science activities), and **Sprout** (active games). Each station is 30 minutes.

GO (closing worship, 10 minutes)

Small groups return to the worship area with their group leaders to sing, pray, and learn about ways they can care for God's creation. Each child will receive a **Creation Care Card**, which has ideas for at-home creation care. These cards can be found in the *Creation Connection* or *A Garden of Stories* student booklets. Leaders can model participation by doing the challenges at home and sharing their experiences with children.

Worship & Drama Leaders

The worship plan in this guide could be implemented by one leader, or the tasks could be divided in the following way:

- **Worship Leader:** Oversee all worship and drama-related leaders. Oversee Small Group Leaders, welcome the children, lead Call to Worship, Bible memory, and prayers each day.
- **Drama Leader:** Coordinate the dramas, find actors, design the set, create or find props, and arrange rehearsals.
- **Music Leader:** Choose and lead songs or coordinate a music team.
- **Technology Coordinator:** Set up the laptop, projector, and screen. Show the PowerPoint slideshows for Bible memory, drama, and chosen songs. Play MP3 or sing-along video versions of songs as needed. Troubleshoot problems that arise.
- **Creation Care Leader** (optional; could be done by the Worship Leader): Distribute Creation Care Cards to Small Group Leaders during **GO** (closing worship). Introduce and explain challenges on the cards each day.

Small Group Leaders

The children will gather and then move throughout the day in small groups. Work with the Director as needed to find leaders for each small group of children. Group size will vary depending on the number of children and volunteers you have. Leaders will implement the Seeds of Friendship activities, which are designed to build relationships and connect to the theme of the day. (See page 53 in this guide and in the electronic files.) Then they will guide children to their response stations and back to the worship area for closing worship.

SETTING UP THE WORSHIP SPACE

Designate an area for each small group of children so they know where to go at arrival time. Depending on your space, this could be tables, a pew, or sheets/blankets laid on the floor. Each small group area will need a unique tree emblem printed from the electronic files as well as Seeds of Friendship Instructions and the specified materials for each day. Nametags are in the electronic files.

Refer to the *Director Guide* and the “Great Big Beautiful World VBS” board on the *Growing Up Catholic* Pinterest page for ideas about decorating to make this area look like a *Great Big Beautiful World*!

A stage or the church altar is best for presenting dramas. Information about staging and props is on pages 30–31 in this guide.

A laptop, projector, and screen are needed for showing song lyric slideshows, videos, and the Bible memory slideshow. You will also need a way to play song videos, MP3 files, or the audio CD if you won’t have live music. There is sheet music for every song if you wish to have someone lead songs on guitar or piano.

WORSHIP PREPARATION

SOW (opening worship) and GO (closing worship) have a variety of repeated elements. Prepare for the week by completing the tasks in the list. Many of these can be done by volunteers.

- Make tree emblems for each group (electronic files). Use the fruit trees (apple, lemon, orange, pear, cherry) for younger groups and the other types of trees (elm, maple, cedar, oak, chestnut, poplar, willow) for older groups. This emblem will be used to mark the meeting space for each group.
- Print nametags for each child (electronic files). If possible, print them on card stock and insert them in nametag holders so they can be reused from day to day.
- Make worship symbols for each day (electronic files). There are several options for mobile hangers to display the symbols provided (electronic files).
- Remove all Creation Care Cards from the *Creation Connection* student booklets and organize them by day.
- Distribute sets of Creation Care Cards to Small Group Leaders during GO (closing worship).
- Learn American Sign Language for these words: *creation, around, thank you, spirit, life*. Refer to www.signingsavvy.com and www.handspeak.com.
- Set up an offering display (electronic files). Count and record the amount of money collected.
- Choose and learn songs (electronic files).
- Practice readings and motions for songs.
- Rehearse the Bible story drama for each day.

General Supplies

- Media player with Internet connection
- Projector, screen
- Audio player
- Offering baskets and display
- Nametags (electronic files)
- Tree emblems (electronic files)
- Worship symbols (electronic files)
- Creation Care Cards (from *Creation Connection* student booklets)

WORSHIP SYMBOLS

Each day there is a unique worship symbol that is added to a mobile hanger. These symbols remind children of the focus for each day. Instructions and symbols are included in the electronic files, along with ideas for how to hang the finished symbols.

MUSIC

The theme song for VBS is titled “Great Big Beautiful World.” It is included in the electronic files along with six other songs for you to choose from. In addition to the sing-along music videos and audio versions of the songs, there is sheet music and a song lyric PowerPoint slideshow for each song. Additional song ideas are in Media Connections and are also posted on the “Great Big Beautiful World VBS” board on the *Growing Up Catholic* Pinterest page.

Some songs are used every day:

- The theme song “Great Big Beautiful World” is played to cue small groups to gather for worship, then later sung together.
- “God the Great I Am” is the offering song.
- “I Will Sing” is played to call groups back for GO (closing worship).
- “A Rightful Place” is the sending song. Motions are included in the session plan.

The remaining songs can be used in whatever way works best for your group.

OFFERING

Please see the Director Guide for ideas and recommendations for selecting one or more recipients for your offering.

Create a visual offering display that will keep children up to date throughout the week. The electronic files have ideas for displays, as well as video links and books to use to educate children about the suggested agencies, related issues, and ways children can help.

BIBLE MEMORY

The Bible memory passage is Psalm 52:8b–9:

I trust in God’s constant love forever and ever. I will always thank you, God, for what you have done; in the presence of your people I will proclaim that you are good.

Children will practice the verses using motions during opening worship. Use the Bible memory PowerPoint slideshow (electronic files) so children can easily read the verses. During the Dig In activity time, children will work on the verses again in other interactive ways.

DRAMA

There is a dramatic presentation of the Bible story every day. An extensive explanation of the drama, staging, props, and the scripts are in this guide, beginning on page 31. There are additional items in the electronic files, including PowerPoint slideshows that you will need.

DAY 1

GOD CREATES

Scripture Text: Genesis 2:4b–23

Laudato Si': #62-69, 75

Seed of Faith: God created a beautiful world.

Story Summary:

From the dust, God formed and breathed life into a person. Then God made every tree and a river that flowed from Eden. God planted a garden in Eden as a home for all created things. God gave instructions to care for the garden and to eat the fruit from every tree except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God made all the animals and brought them to the person to be named. While the man slept, God took one of his ribs and created a woman as a helper and companion.

Bible Essay:

As we prepare to share God's *Great Big Beautiful World* with children, we begin at the very beginning—in the book of Genesis. We are perhaps more familiar with the creation story from Genesis 1, where God speaks creation into being and pronounces it good, but we have chosen to focus on the second account of creation in Genesis 2. Here, we see a more intimate view of God's handiwork.

God's hands get dirty in this creation story! God forms a human being out of the dirt and breathes life into him. God creates trees and plants, and then rivers of water to nourish them. God plants a garden in Eden to be a home for the man and instructs him “to till it and keep it,” not to “dominate and subdue” it as some have wrongly interpreted before (*LS* #66-67). God invites the man to join in the creative process and gives him the fruit of all the trees—except for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

All is not good in this story, for God sees that the man is alone. God creates animals and brings them to the man to name, but none among these is a suitable partner for the man. So God creates a woman from a rib taken from the man's side. The man and woman live together in the garden, caring for and enjoying God's beautiful world.

Children can easily relate to a God who digs in the dirt, forming animals and people. They can imagine kneeling beside God, getting their hands dirty, and squealing with delight at what they create. Like a loving parent, God provides a safe and comfortable home for the man and woman and attends to their needs. As you dig into this story with children, help them to notice the many good things in this beautiful world that God has created.

Children are typically on the receiving end of caregiving. Parents, teachers, trusted adults, and extended family members care for children's daily needs. This story invites children to consider how *they* can become caregivers for creation. Just like the first person in the garden, we too have a responsibility to tend to the world God made (*LS* #68-69).

Day 1 At-a-Glance

Advance Preparation

- Read Genesis 2:4b–23 and the Bible essay for Day 1 on page 6 of this guide.
- Read the opening and closing worship plans (SOW and GO). Gather needed general supplies (electronic files) and day-specific supplies (below).
- Communicate with Small Group Leaders, the Worship Leader, the Drama Leader, the Music Leader, the Technology Coordinator, and drama participants about their roles and tasks.

	SUPPLIES*	TO DO
SOW <i>Seeds of Friendship</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Markers • Nametags (template on electronic files) • Seeds of Friendship Instructions (page 53 or electronic files) • Tree emblems, one per group (electronic files) • One piece of fruit per group • One stuffed animal toy per group 	<p>Make tree emblems from the electronic files for each group.</p> <p>Designate and mark a space for each group.</p> <p>Set out instructions and props for each group.</p>
SOW <i>Seeds of Joy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected songs and their lyrics slideshows (electronic files) • Projector and screen • Audio player 	<p>Learn the American Sign Language for “creation” and “around.” Search www.signingsavvy.com.</p> <p>Select and learn songs, including “Great Big Beautiful World.”</p>
SOW <i>Seeds of Generosity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering baskets • “God the Great I Am” and the lyrics slideshow (electronic files) • Offering video (suggestions on electronic files) • Projector and screen • Audio player 	<p>Read about the offering project on page 5 of this guide.</p> <p>Set up the offering display and have offering baskets ready.</p> <p><i>Optional:</i> Select an offering video to show.</p>
SOW <i>Seeds of Wisdom</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible memory slideshow (electronic files) • Projector and screen • Bible • Drama props • Fruit • Stuffed animal toys • Worship symbol: earth (electronic files) 	<p>Practice saying the Bible memory passage. Queue the Bible memory slideshow from the electronic files.</p> <p>Set up for and rehearse the drama.</p> <p>Create the Day 1 worship symbol of the earth from the electronic files.</p>
GO <i>Closing Worship</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A Rightful Place” and the lyrics slideshow (electronic files) • Projector and screen • Audio player • Day 1 Creation Care Cards 	<p>Learn American Sign Language for “thank you.” Search www.signingsavvy.com</p> <p>Remove the Day 1 Creation Care Cards from each <i>Creation Connection</i> student booklet.</p>

* In addition to general art materials

SOW

Seeds of Friendship

Be sure each Small Group Leader has the Seeds of Friendship Instructions for today (page 53 of this guide or the electronic files), along with a piece of fruit and stuffed animal toy. As children arrive, they can join their groups, put on a nametag, and participate in the suggested Seeds of Friendship activities. Remind leaders to choose children to bring up the piece of fruit and stuffed animal toy during the drama.

Seeds of Joy

When you are ready to begin large group worship, play the theme song “Great Big Beautiful World” video or audio. This will serve as a cue for small groups to clean up and prepare for worship.

Welcome the group to this first day of VBS. Say:

We are so glad all of you are here today to be part of learning about God’s *Great Big Beautiful World!* This week we will hear stories from the Bible about creation—the things that God made. We will think about how to enjoy God’s world and help care for all of creation as God does.

Introduce American Sign Language for the words *creation* and *around*. Demonstrate the signs while saying “God’s creation is all around us.” Invite children to join you. Encourage children to say this phrase and use the signs when prompted during the Call to Worship.

Lead the Call to Worship:

Leader: God created the earth and sky.

All: *God’s creation is all around us.*

Leader: God created the rain that waters the earth, and the plants and trees that grow delicious food.

All: *God’s creation is all around us.*

Leader: God created the animals that crawl and run, the birds that fly, and the ocean creatures large and small.

All: *God’s creation is all around us.*

Leader: God created you and me and all people on the earth.

All: *God’s creation is all around us.*

Leader: Thank you God for this great big beautiful world. Amen.

Sing several songs, including “Great Big Beautiful World,” the theme song. Play the sing-along video or project the song lyrics from the PowerPoint slideshows (electronic files).

Seeds of Generosity

Introduce the offering project. Tell the children that donations collected during VBS will go to _____ (*name of organization*), and how this will help care for God’s creation (which includes people!). Provide background information or show a video about the organization to help children see the need and the work the organization is doing. Video suggestions are in the electronic files.

Place offering baskets on the front of the stage or pass them from group to group. Children can place their offering in the basket while singing “God the Great I Am.”

Seeds of Wisdom

Introduce the Bible memory passage (Psalm 52:8b–9) and tell the children they will be learning verses from a poem in the Bible called a psalm. Read the whole passage from slide 2 of the Bible memory slideshow from the electronic files while children listen:

Click to slide 3 and focus on the first line of the verse. Read it aloud together. Then say:

What does it mean to trust? (*to believe in something, to be sure about something, to know that something is good*) This verse reminds us that God’s love never, ever stops. We can be sure of that! No matter what happens, we can trust that God’s love continues.

Say the verse again together with motions:

I trust in the Gods constant love (*cross both arms over chest*)
forever and ever. (*Spin around.*)

Open your Bible to Genesis and explain that today’s drama is from Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Genesis tells the story of how God created the earth, the sky and land, and all parts of creation, including plants, animals, and people.

Explain that during the drama there will be a time for children to bring forward their group’s fruit and the stuffed animal. The people in the drama will help them know when it is time to do that. Make sure each group has designated children to bring these items forward.

Watch the Day 1 drama titled “God Creates.”

Responding: Notice with the children that the empty stage area has become a beautiful garden full of living things. Ask the children to think about all they heard and saw in the creation story.

- I wonder what it would be like to see so many new growing things.
- Imagine thinking of names for all the animals.
- I wonder what God is continuing to create in our world.

Invite responses from the group. Or have small groups talk together about the questions.

Show the Day 1 worship symbol, the earth, and hang it up. Tell the children that each day we will add another image as a reminder of each day’s Bible story.

Pray:

Loving Creator, thank you for the beautiful world we see around us every day. Some parts of creation are not healthy and need special care. As we learn about your world this week, show us how to love and care for your creation as you do. Amen.

Explain the schedule of the day and let the children know what activities they will be doing today. Remind children to stay with their leader throughout the day and let them know they will have a chance to visit every station.

Dismiss the children by groups to go to the **GROW** response stations, beginning with the youngest group if organized by age.

GO

Gather for closing worship. Play the song “Creation Sings” or another song from the electronic files as children are returning to the worship space. Have a volunteer hand each Small Group Leader a set of Creation Care Cards taken from the *Creation Connection* student booklets.

Choose one or two of the songs from the opening worship to sing again.

Ask Small Group Leaders to pass out the Creation Care Cards. Invite children to look at their card as you highlight several of the activities on the card. Invite children to choose at least one of the activities to do at home with their families.



Say a prayer of thanks. Introduce the sign for *thank you* and review the sign for *creation* learned earlier. Practice signing together as you say “Thank you, God, for your creation.” Lead the closing prayer, cuing children when to speak and sign. Pray:

Leader: Thank you, God, for plants and trees.

All: *Thank you, God, for your creation.*

Leader: Thank you, God, for all creatures on land, in the sky, and in the sea.

All: *Thank you, God, for your creation.*

Leader: Thank you, God, for creating us.

All: *Thank you, God, for your creation.*

Stand as able and sing “A Rightful Place” using motions (electronic files). Use the song lyrics slideshow (electronic files).

Close with a simple benediction, such as “Go in peace.”

Remind children to remove their nametags and leave them beside their group’s tree emblem so they can be reused tomorrow.



WELCOME TO THE DRAMAS!

Introduction

The Bible story dramas are the central part of each day's joint worship experience. The scripture themes are woven into the dramas, inviting children to enter into and interact with the Bible stories.

There are several helpful materials in the Worship & Drama electronic files:

- Drama scripts (for ease of emailing and printing)
- PowerPoint drama slideshows for use with the Day 2, Day 3, and Day 4 dramas

Characters

A list of characters is included with each drama. Try to recruit actors who are animated and comfortable on the stage. For continuity, the two gardeners and the hiker should be the same every day. Voice 1 and Voice 2 could be played by different people throughout the week. That would be a good opportunity to include older youth.

Day 1:

Gardener 1 (*man*), Gardener 2 (*woman*), God, God's helpers, Voice 1, Voice 2

Day 2:

Gardener 1, Gardener 2, Voice 1, Voice 2

Day 3:

Gardener 1, Gardener 2, Hiker, Voice 1, Voice 2

Day 4:

Gardener 1, Gardener 2, Hiker, Voice 1, Voice 2

Day 5:

Gardener 1, Gardener 2, Hiker, God

Costumes

The costume suggestions are simple for the drama. Feel free to adapt these or expand on them to suit your setting. Check a thrift store to find inexpensive solid-color shirts as needed.

- **Gardeners:** For Day 1, the gardeners should wear black pants and brown or tan shirts. For Day 2–5, the gardeners can wear overalls with the brown or tan shirt from Day 1 and work boots. They could also wear other gardening clothes, but it's helpful to include the same shirt from Day 1. Provide gardening gloves.
- **Hiker:** Hiking boots, a floppy hat for sun protection, and a large/full hiking backpack as if going on a long trip
- **God:** Black pants and purple shirt
- **God's helpers:** Black pants and black shirt
- **Voice 1:** Black pants and solid-color shirt (not purple, brown, or black)
- **Voice 2:** Black pants and solid-color shirt (not purple, brown, or black)

Props and Supplies

Each drama includes a list of props. Use the items listed or modify according to your available space and resources.

There are PowerPoint slideshows (electronic files) to accompany the dramas on Days 2–4, so be sure to have a laptop, projector, and screen available if you wish to use those. The placement of the screen will impact your set design, so keep that in mind.

It is recommended to play nature sounds as background during several of the dramas. For Day 2, the nature sounds are embedded in the PowerPoint slideshow.

Rehearsals

Plan several rehearsals that will take place a week or two before VBS. Distribute scripts in advance so that participants are familiar with their parts. Make it clear whether lines are to be memorized.

At the first rehearsal, provide pencils and printed scripts. Read through each drama without moving around to allow actors to become familiar with the stories. For subsequent rehearsals, read the script and incorporate suggested movements as well as movements that work for your space. Rehearse each drama several times. If using the slideshows for Day 2 and Day 4, be sure to include the Technology Coordinator in those rehearsals. Allow time at the end of rehearsals to give feedback and helpful comments.

Have fun with the dramas and make adjustments that will add meaning or that express the personality of the people who are filling the roles. Preparation and rehearsals will help the stories come to life, showing that you value the stories you are presenting to the children.

Set Design

Ideally, present dramas on a stage or on the altar in church. If presented at floor level, you may need to make some adjustments to stage instructions so children can see what is happening.

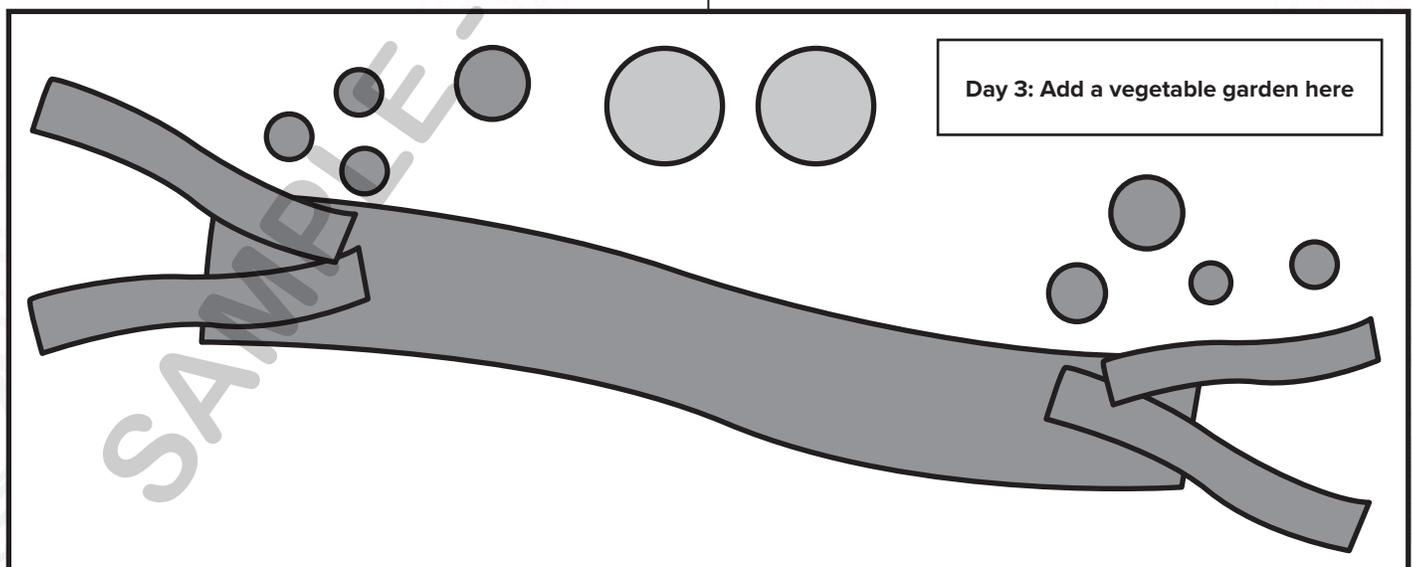
During the drama on Day 1, a garden is created using plants and cloth. The garden scenery remains on the stage for Days 2–5 with variations from day to day, including the addition of a vegetable garden area on Day 3. The set is not intended to represent the same garden each day, but each drama takes place in a garden setting. The dramas could be presented outdoors.

The diagram below is the suggested stage setup. Circles indicate trees and plants. The two large circles represent the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Strips indicate blue cloth rivers—one main river with four branches extending from it.

The set is written as if many kinds of real plants will be used. Alternatives or additions:

- Use artificial plants, vines, and flowers purchased from a craft store (or a mixture of live and artificial plants).
- Include artificial Christmas trees.
- Create trees and plants out of paper or cloth.
- Draw trees and plants on a large backdrop, then set real and artificial plants on the floor.
- Refer to the Decorations section on the “Great Big Beautiful World VBS” *Growing Up Catholic* Pinterest page (<https://pinterest.com/GrowingUpCatholic/great-big-beautiful-world-vbs>), for additional ideas for creating your own plants, trees, waterfall, animals, and props.

There are PowerPoint slideshows for several dramas. If you plan to use those, you’ll need to take that into account when placing your props.



DAY 1

GOD CREATES

Scripture Text:

Genesis 2:4b–23

Summary

This drama starts with an empty stage and transforms it into a beautiful garden. It depicts the creation of the first people and animals. The children in the audience bring forward pieces of fruit and stuffed animal toys to contribute to the scenery.

Characters

- Voice 1
- Voice 2
- God
- God's helpers (*two or three people to act as stagehands during the drama*)
- Gardener 1 (*man*)
- Gardener 2 (*woman*)

Props

- Brown, tan, or gray blanket or sheet
- Five long strips of blue cloth or blue paper
- Variety of small potted trees or plants
- Large bowl(s) for fruit
- Two large trees
- Small hand shovel
- Different kinds of whole fruit (*one piece of fruit for each group of children*)
- Stuffed animal toys of all kinds (*one for each group of children plus two or three more*)
- List of the fruits given to the groups (*for Voice 1 and Voice 2*)
- List of the stuffed animal toys given to the groups (*for Voice 1 and Voice 2*)

Preparation

Each small group of children needs to have a different type of fruit and a stuffed animal toy. Make a list of the types of fruit and the types of animals so that Voice 1 and Voice 2 can refer to it during the drama. When cued, the children will bring up the pieces of fruit and place them in a bowl(s) and place the stuffed animal toys along the front of the stage.

Pronunciation of the River Names

- Pishon [Pee-SHONE]
- Gihon [Ghee-HONE]
- Tigris [TIE-griss]
- Euphrates [You-FRAY-tees]

(The stage is empty except for Gardener 1 who is crouched down in the middle of the stage, covered by a brown, tan, or gray blanket. The garden plants and trees should be set up offstage in the order they will be taken onstage. Voice 1 and Voice 2 stand on opposite sides of the stage.)

Voice 1: This is a story from the book of Genesis, the very first book of the Bible.

Voice 2: This is how the heavens and the earth were created.

Voice 1: On the day God made the earth and the heavens, there were no plants on the earth.

Voice 2: There were no grassy fields; nothing had come up out of the ground.

Voice 1: God had not yet made rain fall on the earth . . .

Voice 2: . . . and there was no one to do the garden work.

Voice 1: A stream rose up from the earth and watered the ground. *(God walks to the center of the stage and lays a long blue cloth across the stage.)*

Voice 2: God formed a human from the dust of the ground. *(God walks to the crouching Gardener 1 under the blanket and pretends to form/mold the person.)*

Voice 1: God breathed the breath of life into the human's nostrils . . . *(God breathes onto the blanketed Gardener 1.)*

Voice 2: . . . and the human became alive! *(God carefully pulls Gardener 1 out from under the blanket, and Gardener 1 begins to move arms and legs and jumps around happily.)*

Voice 1: God planted a garden in a place called Eden, in the east, and that is where God put the human God had formed.

(God's helpers begin to bring in a few potted plants, flowers, and vines. God helps arrange the plants on one side of the stage. God leads Gardener 1 around the garden.)

Voice 2: God made all kinds of beautiful trees and plants grow from the ground. *(God's helpers continue to carry in different plants from off stage and place them around the stage. God leads Gardener 1 around to look at plants, smell them, touch them, and admire them.)*

(During this time Voice 1 and Voice 2 can ad lib, saying the names of some of the trees and plants as God's helpers bring them out. If possible, use names of plants familiar to the children and plants that grow in your area. For example, "Look at the ferns God created" or "God created oak trees.")

Voice 1: God made all kinds of fruit trees grow and each tree provided delicious food. God made apple trees *(child from the apple group brings apple to the stage)* and orange trees, *(child from the orange group brings orange to the stage)* and banana trees *(child from the banana group brings banana to the stage).*

(While children are bringing the fruit, God and God's helpers go off stage and bring in two large trees, setting them in the middle of the stage.)

Voice 2: *(Continue naming trees from the prepared list until all pieces of fruit are in a bowl on the stage. Gardener 1 can help encourage children move to the front and arrange the fruit in a bowl.)*

Voice 1: *(after all children are seated)* In the middle of the garden, the Tree of Life grew.

Voice 2: And another tree was beside it—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

(Gardener 1 looks at each of the trees, then sits down between the trees to relax.)

Voice 1: A river flowed out of Eden and watered the gardens, and then the river divided and became four smaller rivers.

Voice 2: *(God and God's helper lay out a blue cloth.)* The first river was the Pishon.

Voice 1: *(God and God's helper lay out a blue cloth.)* The second river was the Gihon.

Voice 2: *(God and God's helper lay out a blue cloth.)* The third river was the Tigris.

Voice 1: *(God and God's helper lay out a blue cloth.)* The fourth river was the Euphrates.

Voice 2: Then God put the person in the garden of Eden to till the ground and care for the garden.

(God hands the small shovel to Gardener 1 and shows him how to dig. Gardener 1 pretends to dig in the garden around one of the plants.)

Voice 1: And God said, “You may eat the fruit from every tree in the garden *(God brings Gardener 1 some fruit from the bowl)*, **except** for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. *(God points to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and pantomimes “no.”)* If you eat the fruit from that tree, you will die.”

(Gardener 1 moves close to look for fruit on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but then God looks at Gardener 1 and shakes head “no.” Gardener 1 moves away and goes back to digging.)

Voice 2: Then God said, “It’s not good for the human to be alone.” The human needs a partner. And God formed every living creature—all the animals of the fields and the birds of the air. God brought the animals to the person.

(God's helpers bring God two or three stuffed animals and God places the animals near Gardener 1.)

Voice 1: And the person named each of the animals and cared for them.

Gardener 1: *(ad libs naming animals God has brought)* I think I will call this one [bear]. . . . This looks like [dog]. . . .

(God's helpers cue one child from each group to bring their group's stuffed animal toy to Gardener 1. Gardener 1 will then give each animal a name and set it in the garden.)

Voice 2: *(after all animals have been brought to the stage and children have returned to their groups)* But God saw that among all of these animals none would be a good partner for the gardener. So when the gardener was in a deep sleep, *(Gardener 1 lies down to sleep)* God created another person who was just the right partner for the gardener. *(Gardener 2 enters. Gardener 1 wakes up and looks at Gardener 2 with surprise and delight.)* The gardeners worked and played together in the garden God had made.

(Gardener 1 and Gardener 2 do a little dance. Gardener 1 shows Gardener 2 how to dig.)

Voice 1 and Voice 2: This is how God created the heavens and the earth!

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

Worship Symbols

Simple option: Enlarge and print the symbols in color. Glue them to foam board and hang using one of the methods described on the right.

Advanced option: Enlarge and print the symbols in color. For Day 1, simply mount it on foam board. For Days 2–5, mount the circles on foam board. Use a box cutter or utility knife to cut out all the white space for a finished product similar to this:

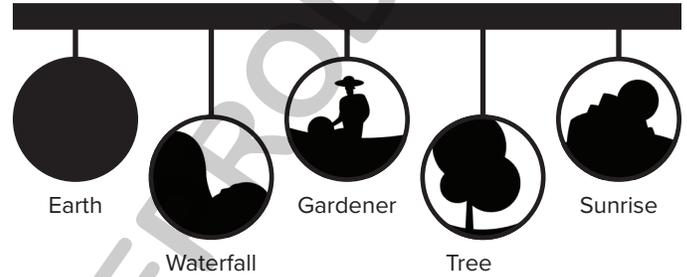


Displaying Worship Symbols:

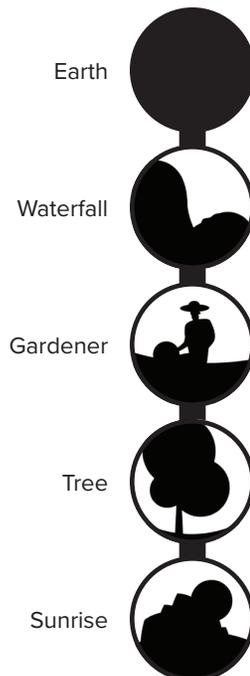
Choose a display option that will work for the space and materials you have.

On a wall: If you chose the simple option for printing and mounting the symbols, they could be taped on the wall in a row or column.

Horizontal: Suspend a long stick or dowel or mount it on the wall horizontally. Hang each symbol down from the stick using strings of different lengths.



Overhead: Staple screen material or chicken wire to a used wooden picture frame. Screw a cup hook into each corner of the frame. Attach strings of equal length to each hook and bring together in the center to make a knot. Hang the picture frame horizontally in the worship area. Hang the symbols down from the chicken wire/screen materials using strings of different lengths.



Vertical: Stand a large stick on end. Put nails in the wood and hang the symbols on the nails.



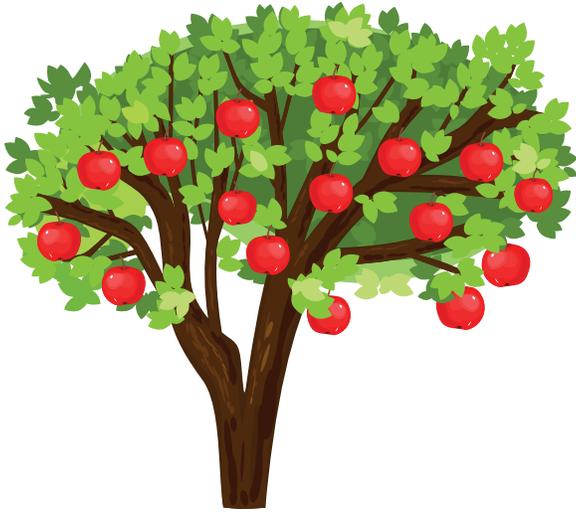
Customizable Tree Emblems

Print out tree emblems (a different tree for each group) on card stock. Use fruit trees for groups of younger children so they are easily recognizable and the other trees for older children. Attach each emblem to a table number holder and give one to each Small Group Leader to mark their gathering spot for opening worship. Search Pinterest for “Rustic wood table number holders” for ideas on making or purchasing these holders. Emblems could also be attached to the end of a stick. Stand the stick in a small terra-cotta pot and fill around the stick with play dough so it remains upright.

Additional ways to use the emblems:

- Tape the chosen emblems from the following pages to poster board and write group members’ names next to their tree. Post chart paper in the entryway as families arrive so children can find their assigned group.
- Print small versions of the fruit tree emblems for younger children. Give one to each younger child as they arrive to help them find their group in the worship area.
- Use the tree images to make individualized, reusable nametags for group members. (Each member of the Elm Group would have an elm tree on their nametag.)
- Shrink or enlarge the images as needed for your purposes.

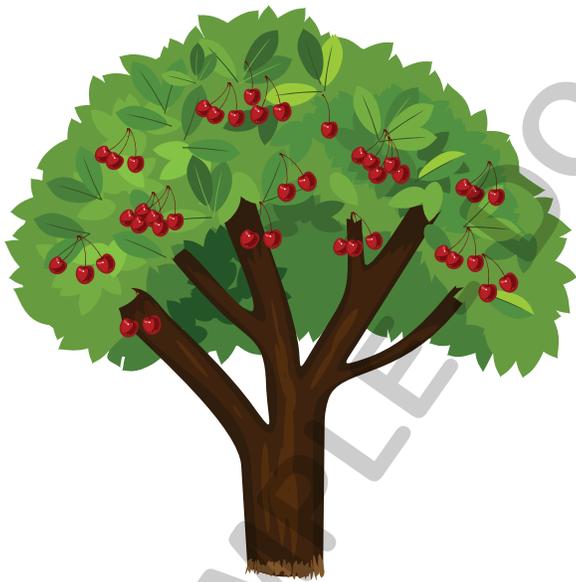




APPLE



CEDAR



CHERRY



CHESTNUT



SEEDS OF FRIENDSHIP

Instructions for Small Group Leaders

Day 1: God Creates

Supplies: tree emblem and holder, one piece of fruit, one stuffed animal toy

To do: Set out your tree emblem in the provided holder.

Circle talk: When most children have arrived, pass the stuffed animal around the group and introduce yourselves. See if children know the type of tree on your emblem. Ask children to name trees or plants that grow in your area. Hold up the piece of fruit. What types of fruit grow on trees? Tell children that the stuffed animal and piece of fruit will need to be carried up to the stage during the drama. Choose two children to carry them up when instructed.

Day 2: God Tends the Earth

Supplies: tree emblem and holder, bowl of water, small stones

To do: Set out your tree emblem in the provided holder. Early arrivals can pile up the provided stones. Set out the bowl of water.

Circle talk: When most children have arrived, ask each child to choose a stone and place it in the bowl of water. Encourage each child to share one reason why the earth and God's creatures need clean, healthy water (so plants can grow, for drinking, to cool off, for rain, for ocean habitats, etc.).

Day 3: God's Kingdom Is Like a Seed

Supplies: tree emblem and holder, several different seeds per person

To do: Set out your tree emblem in the provided holder. Set out a bowl of seeds.

Circle talk: When most children have arrived, have children choose a seed and guess what will grow from that seed. Talk about the things seeds need to grow (soil, water, sunshine). Invite children to talk about their experience with planting seeds or plants they have seen at different stages of growth.

Day 4: We Are Like Trees

Supplies: tree emblem and holder, leaf

To do: Set out your tree emblem in the provided holder.

Circle talk: When most children have arrived, pass the leaf around the group. The person holding the leaf can name one thing he or she knows about trees and one thing from creation she or he are thankful for.

Day 5: A New Creation

Supplies: tree emblem and holder, crayons, paper

To do: Set out your tree emblem in the provided holder. Set out paper and crayons.

Circle talk: Have each child (or the whole group) draw a picture that includes a river and a large tree. Invite conversation about experiences of being near a river, fountain, pool, or trees. What do children enjoy most about being outside?