



DIRECTOR GUIDE

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Printed in United States of America
Project Director: Mary Ann Weber; Designer: Reuben Graham

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SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

WELCOME TO PEACE LAB VBS!

Thank you for choosing *Peace Lab* for your vacation Bible school! We're pleased to offer you these materials. The five Bible stories in this curriculum will lead children on an amazing adventure in learning how to resolve conflicts, help others, and become a compassionate peacemaker. Those who participate—children and adults alike—will discover God's way of peace.

The Bible and Pope Francis's encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* teach many things about peace, much more than we could include in this curriculum. We pray that using this material will inspire you to discover even more about God's way of peace.

The writers deserve many thanks. Rebecca Pobe wrote the Early Childhood materials, Becky Degan wrote the *Worship and Drama Guide*, Anna Ralph wrote the *Bible Response Guide* and *Lab Book*, and Debbie Denlinger wrote the *Active Response* and *Creative Response Guides*. Thanks also to J. W. Sprunger for his contributions.

May God's peace be with you during VBS.

"Social peace demands hard work, craftsmanship. It would be easier to keep freedoms and differences in check with cleverness and a few resources. But such a peace would be superficial and fragile, not the fruit of a culture of encounter that brings enduring stability. Integrating differences is a much more difficult and slow process, yet it is the guarantee of a genuine and lasting peace.... What is important is to create processes of encounter, processes that build a people that can accept differences. Let us arm our children with the weapons of dialogue! Let us teach them to fight the good fight of the culture of encounter!"

**–Pope Francis,
Fratelli Tutti, #217**

"There is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. There is also a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter."

**–Pope Francis,
Fratelli Tutti, #225**

"For Christians, nonviolence is not merely tactical behavior but a person's way of being, the attitude of one who is so convinced of God's love and power that he or she is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone. Love of one's enemy constitutes the nucleus of the 'Christian revolution.'"

–Pope Benedict XVI

"To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence...."

Nonviolence is sometimes taken to mean surrender, lack of involvement and passivity, but this is not the case.... The decisive and consistent practice of nonviolence has produced impressive results."

**–Pope Francis,
Message for World Day of Peace, 2017**

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Peace Lab*, where children discover God's way of peace! Through learning how to resolve conflicts and figuring out ways to help others, children will learn how to be peacemakers in this VBS curriculum. The five Bible stories will lead children on an awesome adventure through the Bible, equipping them to follow Jesus as compassionate peacemakers.

Peace Lab is a Bible- and activity-based learning experience. There are several parts to the curriculum.

- Early Childhood is designed for ages 4–5. The *Early Childhood Leader Guide*, along with *My Book of Stories*, the student booklet, includes everything needed to lead this VBS component. It includes crafts, games, snack ideas, and other activities that will help young children learn how to be peacemakers. In addition, the younger children may participate with the older children during the Worship time, or have their own worship experience in their VBS space.
- The *Director Guide*, *Worship and Drama Guide*, *Active Response Guide*, *Bible Response Guide*, *Creative Response Guide*, and *Lab Book* are materials for grades K–5. The children will meet as one group for the Worship time, where they will see the Bible stories come to life during the daily drama. The children will be divided into smaller groups to rotate to the three Response times, allowing children to discover more about how to be peacemakers.
- Ideas for children in grades 6–8 are also included. The Worship time and the Active and Creative Response times are appropriate for this age group. The Bible Response time offers various additional activities for each day, and some are appropriate for junior youth. A short separate guide includes additional ideas to supplement the Bible Response time for this age group.

Each session plan includes the day's Scripture, Bible background, purpose statement, and Bible memory passage. Read over these sections so that you are familiar with the focus of the day. All VBS leader guides include this information so that the activities and discussions will reflect the day's themes.

Peace Lab is written as a five-day vacation Bible school program, usually completed over the course of one week. See page 6 for a daily session schedule chart that will help you plan. The suggested time frames can be modified depending on the time available for your Bible school.

If a five-day vacation Bible school does not suit your needs, there are other ways to use *Peace Lab*. On pages 27–29 there are schedules for the following:

- Midweek club or program over 10 weeks
- Weekend retreat

VBS OVERVIEW

SESSION	BIBLE TEXT AND STORY SUMMARY	PURPOSE STATEMENT	BIBLE MEMORY	FRATELLI TUTTI
1 Jesus	Matthew 5:9, 43-48 • At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his followers that peacemakers will be called the children of God. Later, Jesus shared that people are to love others.	Blessed are the peacemakers.	Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.	#215-217, 225 , 226-254
2 Abram and Lot	Genesis 13 • Abram and Sarai and Abram's nephew Lot traveled to a new land. There was disagreement among their herders about both parties using the best land for their cattle. To solve the argument, Abram suggested that Lot choose which land would be his, and Abram would go in the other direction.	Peacemakers find good ways to solve problems.	Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.	#29-31, 154-197, 223-224, 230-231
3 Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz	Ruth 1-2 • Ruth moved with her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Bethlehem. In order to support them, Ruth gleaned in nearby fields. Boaz, the owner of the farm, helped Ruth and Naomi by making sure grain was left for them.	Peacemakers help other people.	Romans 12:17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.	#37-41, 56-86, 128-129
4 Jonathan, Michal, and David	1 Samuel (18) 19-20 • King Saul was increasingly jealous of David. Saul's son Jonathan and his daughter Michal, who was also David's wife, tried to talk their father out of harming David because they believed it was the right thing to do.	Peacemakers speak up for what is right.	Romans 12:18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.	#226-227, 236-240, 241-245
5 Martha and Mary	Luke 10:38-42 • Martha was upset because her sister, Mary, sat and listened to Jesus rather than help with tasks around the house. Martha asked Jesus for help in solving the conflict between her and Mary and received a different response than she expected.	Peacemakers ask for help to resolve conflicts.	Romans 12:16-18	#47-50, 198-214 , 282

BIBLE MEMORY

Grades K-5; 6-8

- Day 1: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. —Matthew 5:9

The following days are portions of Romans 12:16-18:

- Day 2: Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. —Romans 12:16
- Day 3: Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. —Romans 12:17
- Day 4: If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. —Romans 12:18
- Day 5: Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. —Romans 12:16-18

Early Childhood

- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. —Matthew 5:9 (Younger children can learn just the first part of the verse.)

The Bible memory passages are from the *New Revised Standard Version*. You may use a preferred translation.

FORMAT AND DAILY SCHEDULE

The grade K–5 and 6–8 components of *Peace Lab* are designed for children to have both large- and small-group experiences. Small groups may be determined by age, or children may be placed in multiage groups. Most VBS programs will want to have three small groups so that children can rotate easily among the three Response times. However, if your Bible school has more than 50 children, you may want to divide into more than three groups. Instead of one Active, one Bible, and one Creative Response segment, you may want to have two of each running simultaneously so that all the groups can rotate through the three Response times.

Several meeting times are included in each day: Gather, Worship, Respond, and Send. The schedule for a 2-hour-and-15-minute Bible school session is as follows:

1. Gather

(10 minutes)

Children gather in small groups with their Group leader to begin the day. The Group leader will take attendance, answer questions, and make sure everyone is ready for VBS. The Group leader will accompany the children to the various VBS segments.

2. Worship

(25 minutes)

All the groups gather in one area for Worship time. This large-group experience includes a call to worship, music, offering, and a drama to present the day's Bible story.

3. Respond

(30 minutes each)

Small groups rotate and participate in three Response stations each day. Activities focus on the Bible story themes; the Creative Response time includes a snack.

- **Active Response** (games and activities)
- **Bible Response** (Bible story discussion, student book activities)
- **Creative Response** (crafts and snack)

4. Send

(10 minutes)

Children meet in their small groups for a sending blessing and to be dismissed.

Modified schedule

If your VBS program allows for less time, here are scheduling options:

If you have 2 hours:

Gather—5 to 10 minutes

Worship—25 minutes

Respond—75 minutes

- Active—25 minutes
- Bible—25 minutes
- Creative—25 minutes

Send—5 to 10 minutes

If you have 1½ hours:

Gather—5 minutes

Worship—20 minutes

Respond—60 minutes

- Active—20 minutes
- Bible—20 minutes
- Creative—20 minutes

Send—5 minutes

If you have 1 hour:

Worship—15 minutes

Respond—45 minutes

- Active—15 minutes
- Bible—15 minutes
- Creative—15 minutes

MATERIALS FOR A SUCCESSFUL VBS

The *Peace Lab* box kit includes guides and resources you will need to plan and run a successful VBS program.

- Supplemental resources
 - Supplemental Bible Response activities for grades 6–8
 - Promotional materials: print invitation posters; use the blurbs as announcements in bulletins and electronic media
 - Logo: use for announcements, or print a large banner to place outside your church to advertise to the community
 - Letter to families
 - Name tags
 - Leader certificate of appreciation
 - VBS overview
 - Bible memory passage slide shows: use during the Worship and Bible Response times; pause the slides as needed so that children can read and memorize the words
- *Lab Book* is the student book that will be used each day during the Bible Response time. It is optional—but very helpful—to provide one for each child and Bible Response leader. Have extra copies available for other leaders and visiting children.
- *My Book of Stories* is for children ages 4–5. It includes illustrated Bible stories and activities. It is also optional—but very helpful—to provide one for each child and Early Childhood leader. Have extra copies on hand for other leaders and visiting children.
- *Active Response*, *Bible Response*, and *Creative Response Guides* direct the respective leaders in discussions and activities during these times. If you have more than one of each Response time, be sure to print extra guides.
- *Peace Lab* music collection adds songs to VBS. It will be used during the Worship and Bible Response times, as well as in the Early Childhood group. Songs are available in audio CD, MP3, and video formats. Be sure to have a music player on hand for each of these groups. In addition, some VBS programs purchase a CD or MP3 download card for each child to take home as a reminder of VBS.
- *Peace Lab* songbook includes song lyrics, simple scores, and motion instructions from the music collection. The motions are also demonstrated in the music videos.
- The Bible memory poster is used during the Worship and Bible Response times. Be sure to have enough on hand for these groups. You can order them from us or print them yourself.
- The invitation poster and postcard are used to spread the word about VBS. You may order additional items, or print a poster.
- Student participation certificates are given to each child on the last day of VBS. Print enough for everyone.

VBS PUBLICITY

Make a plan to let your church and community know about VBS.

- Put invitation posters in visible areas of your church and community. Distribute invitation postcards or flyers and ask parishioners to hand them out. Use the resource files to print your own posters and postcards.
- Create anticipation by placing announcements in your church bulletin and community newspaper. The included sample announcements can be tailored to fit your VBS program.
- Use the VBS logo alongside announcements or other publicity items.
- Create a large banner to place outside your church to advertise to the community. You have our permission to take the VBS logo to a local print shop for printing.
- If your church has the capacity, play the Bible memory slide show before Mass as people are arriving for several weeks before VBS. This is a good way to remind people about VBS and to encourage them to be involved.

VOLUNTEERS

Finding volunteers

Planning VBS is a big task, but it's also fun and rewarding. Gather volunteers to help you plan and facilitate the program. Here are some tips:

1. Prayerfully consider who can help. Ask God to show you people who can assist with VBS.
2. Figure out how many volunteers are needed. Become familiar with the curriculum, read the *Director Guide*, and look at the VBS location to help you determine the number of people you will need.
3. Assure potential volunteers that VBS is fun not only for children, but also for adults. Emphasize that there are a variety of ways to be involved, that involvement is only for the duration of VBS (not a long-term commitment), and that it's a great way to connect with children and adults in the community.
4. Let potential volunteers know that it's easy to help. They can help with one thing, such as preparing a snack one day, or they can help on an ongoing basis, such as leading a small group of children. There is something for everyone.
5. Don't forget to ask youth to volunteer! They can prepare games, crafts, and snacks; set up any electronic equipment that is needed; and accompany VBS leaders and children from one segment to another.
6. If you choose to install a permanent peace pole as part of the VBS (see later in this guide), the opportunity to coordinate this will attract a much different skill set and thus people who never may have considered themselves as church volunteers. Spread the word to find parents or other parishioners who are handy.
7. If you have some kind of peace and justice ministry in your parish, be sure to reach out to them. Members will probably be enthusiastic about helping younger generations learn about this topic.
8. Remind everyone that there is something they can do—pray! Request prayers as you plan, and request prayers during VBS.
9. Plan an orientation time so that volunteers can learn about the VBS curriculum. See page 9 for things to cover during orientation.
10. Take care of the volunteers during VBS. Send notes of encouragement and small treats for their efforts.
11. Be sure to thank all the volunteers after VBS. Host a meal to say thanks, and give them certificates of appreciation (files included).

Volunteer tasks

How can people volunteer?

- Serve as VBS staff: Program Coordinating Team member; Group leader, Worship leader; Active, Creative, or Bible Response time leader; or Early Childhood leader or helper
- Serve as prayer partners for the program
- Organize publicity for VBS (p. 8)
- Help with registration on the first day of VBS
- Serve as assistants to session leaders
- Help with snack preparations and cleanup
- Coordinating peace pole effort

Program Coordinating Team

This team is familiar with the entire curriculum and organizational structure. They are responsible for making decisions about leaders, content, facilities, publicity, promotion, leadership training, registration, and supplies.

Volunteer orientation

Meet with volunteers for an orientation before VBS to be sure that everyone understands their role and receives the supplies they need. The following should be covered:

- Introduce volunteers and clarify roles.
- Review overall schedule.
- Give an overview of the *Peace Lab* stories (p. 5).
- Assign rooms/spaces for each of the segments: Gather, Worship, Respond (Active, Bible, and Creative Response), and Send.
- Assign rooms/spaces for the Early Childhood component.
- Distribute and explain the schedule, a map locating all areas and activities, group lists, and record-keeping supplies.
- Walk from one area to another so that volunteers become better acquainted with the space and the curriculum.
- Give guides to the appropriate leaders: *Worship and Drama Guide*, *Active Response Guide*, *Bible Response Guide*, *Creative Response Guide*, and *Early Childhood Leader Guide*.
- Give an *Early Childhood Leader Guide* to each leader and helper for children ages 4–5.
- Give copies of *Lab Book*, one per child, to the Bible Response leader.
- Give copies of *My Book of Stories*, one per child, to the Early Childhood leader.
- Share a first aid policy that tells leaders what to do with both minor cuts and greater emergencies.
- Give additional supplies to Group leaders.
- Outline plans for the VBS dedication in the congregation, if one is planned.
- Describe closing celebration plans (p. 19), if one is planned.

Leaders

Leaders perform various roles depending on their assignment for the VBS sessions. Copy and fill in the leader assignment sheets (pp. 11–12) and hand them out to appropriate leaders and volunteers. Even if your pastor or priest won't be leading a particular segment of the VBS, ask him to visit the children during the week and participate when he can.

Gather

Group leaders are needed for each of the small groups. They will greet children as they arrive and travel with their small groups to the Worship time and three Response times.

Worship

The following leaders are needed for the Worship time:

- Worship leader—welcomes children to the Worship time and facilitates worship
- Music leader—chooses songs and leads singing
- Drama leader—casts actors and coordinates the drama, including props
- Bible memory leader—guides children in learning the Bible memory passage

Respond

The following leaders are needed for the three Response times:

- Active Response leader—chooses and leads games and other activities
- Bible Response leader—leads discussion of the Bible story and *Peace Lab* activities
- Creative Response leader—chooses and leads crafts and snack

Send

Group leaders dismiss the children at the end of the day.

Early Childhood leaders

The Early Childhood portion of vacation Bible school is designed to meet the needs and developmental abilities of children ages 4–5. The *Early Childhood Leader Guide* contains all the information needed to lead this portion of VBS.

LEADER ASSIGNMENT SHEETS

Group leader

Responsibilities

- Function as a guide and spiritual mentor for a group of children.
- Be aware of individual needs of group members as well as group dynamics.
- Greet children as they arrive at Bible school; take attendance.
- Accompany your group to the Worship time and the Active, Bible, and Creative Response times.
- Dismiss children at the end of the Bible school session.
- Attend staff orientation on _____ (day) at _____ (time).

Gather

- Welcome each child to Bible school and to your group. Learn each other's names.
- Take attendance.
- Briefly explain the daily schedule.

Worship and Response times

- Accompany your group to each of the activities.
- Assist other leaders as needed.

Send

- Remind children of the offering project and distribute any Bible school information that needs to go home. Encourage them to invite their friends and neighbors to Bible school.
- Offer a sending verse. You may use words from the Bible memory passage, or choose your own: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).



Worship leader

Responsibilities

- Lead five Worship times and coordinate those involved in worship. Use plans provided in the *Worship and Drama Guide* and songs from the *Peace Lab* music collection and songbook.
- Read the dramas in the *Worship and Drama Guide* to see how they coordinate with worship plans.
- Work with the Drama leader and musicians to plan worship.
- Work with the Bible memory leader to lead children in learning the Bible memory passage.
- Attend staff orientation on _____ (day) at _____ (time).



Drama leader

Responsibilities

- Coordinate rehearsals and direct the five dramas. Scripts are provided.
- Read the *Worship and Drama Guide* to see how the dramas fit into the worship service.
- Work closely with the Worship leader to plan worship.
- Find drama participants; copy and distribute scripts.
- Locate costumes and props for the dramas.
- Attend staff orientation on _____ (day) at _____ (time).



Response leader (Active, Bible, Creative)

Responsibilities

- Prepare and supervise daily Response times. Use the plans found in the *Active Response Guide*, *Bible Response Guide*, or *Creative Response Guide*. Choose activities that work best for your groups.
- Coordinate adult and youth volunteer helpers to assist with the activities.
- Gather supplies for the activities.
- Save copies of receipts and give them to _____ for reimbursement.
- Attend staff orientation on _____ (day) at _____ (time).



Early Childhood leader

Responsibilities

- Function as a guide and spiritual mentor for a group of children.
- Be aware of individual needs of group members as well as group dynamics.
- Greet children as they arrive at Bible school and take attendance.
- Lead the daily sessions as outlined in the *Early Childhood Leader Guide*.
- Coordinate adult and youth volunteer helpers to assist with the activities.
- Attend staff orientation on _____ (day) at _____ (time).



VBS DEDICATION

Plan a VBS dedication service. Here are some ideas of what to include:

1. Print the VBS logo in the parish bulletin. Introduce *Peace Lab* with provided publicity materials.
2. Use the VBS overview to introduce the Bible stories that will be covered.
3. Use the Bible memory slide show to introduce the Bible memory verses.
4. Print a list of volunteers in the parish bulletin, and invite the congregation to pray for them as they prepare for VBS. Remind the congregation to pray for them during VBS too.
5. Pray for the children who will participate, that they learn about God and grow in faith as they learn how to be peacemakers.
6. Pray that caring relationships and connections will be created during VBS.

OFFERING PROJECT

We encourage you to include an offering project in your VBS that suits the needs of your parish and will provide a means of stewardship for participants.

Recipients

Here are some ideas for where money can be directed:

- If you choose to install a peace pole (see later in this guide), contributions could go toward the materials and other associated costs to make it a reality.
- *Pace e Bene* is an excellent organization founded by the Franciscan Friars of California to promote peace and nonviolence. Learn more at PaceEBene.org.
- Heifer International works to alleviate poverty and build community by providing livestock and training through a “pay it forward” model. Being able to contribute one or more specific types of animals can particularly motivate kids. Learn more at Heifer.org.
- Catholic Charities USA is a remarkable organization serving those in need and advocating for justice. It also has member agencies in local dioceses. Learn more at CatholicCharitiesUSA.org.
- Catholic Relief Services is the international humanitarian agency of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Learn more at CRS.org.

The above organizations have particular campaigns and educational materials that can help you share about the work they are doing in engaging ways.

Offering visuals

Plan a visual way to recognize the amount of money contributed during VBS. Be sure to update the visual each day and point out the progress that is made. Be sure to thank children for their generosity!

Here are some ideas for an offering visual:


- Purchase a large lab beaker, or create one. Get a large glass container and use a marker to write measurements on the side. Either put the money inside the beaker so children can see it or use a colorful marker to draw lines on the beaker to represent how much money was given.
- Make a Peace wall with each letter of the word representing one day of VBS. For example, Day 1 will be *P*. Get construction paper and cut out one letter *P* for each dollar given, and attach them to the wall. Day 2 will be *E*. Cut one out for each dollar given, and attach them next to the *P*. Review at the end of VBS and compare the days.
- One way to be a peacemaker is to smile. Draw smiley faces on a bulletin board or poster board, with each face representing a certain amount of money given.

VBS ENVIRONMENT AND DECORATIONS

In decorating your VBS space, you can focus on one or both of the following approaches:

Peace

Incorporate the following peace symbols and words throughout your space:

- The word “peace” in many different languages can emphasize the universal and international nature of peace. A list of translations can be found at <http://columbia.edu/~fdc/pace/> and a “flag” that incorporates many of them at <http://columbia.edu/~fdc/pace/flag.html>
- The internationally recognized peace symbol  can be easily found on flags, banners, artwork, and more.
- The dove is a Christian peace symbol that can also be found in many existing decorative items.
- Origami cranes are another symbol of peace. Learn more at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_Crane_Project. Consider decorating with them or having children create cranes that are added to the environment throughout the week. You could even use a mixture of origami cranes and doves.

Lab

You can also play up the “laboratory” aspect of the theme:

- Make the space look like a science lab. Put items such as beakers, flasks, funnels, test tubes, thermometers, magnets, petri dishes, and microscopes around the space. You could fill beakers and flasks with water mixed with different shades of food coloring. But be careful that fragile items are placed where they will not be disturbed.
- Leaders could wear lab coats.
- Science lab themed backdrops are available from some vendors. For example: <https://bit.ly/2Mb4006>. Try a web or Pinterest search on “lab decorations.”

PEACE POLE PROJECT

Consider leaving a lasting impression on your parish by installing a peace pole as part of your vacation Bible school effort. Peace poles display the message “May Peace Prevail on Earth” or simply “Peace” in various languages, and can be found planted in many churches.

You could purchase a ready-made peace pole, which would simplify the process. But ideally, the pole could be created by parishioners and children could participate in the process. A handy parent or other parishioner could be just the person who will get excited about this project and coordinate it for you.

Learn more about peace poles at these links:

- May Peace Prevail on Earth International: Peace Pole Project: <https://www.worldpeace.org/peacepoleproject/>
- Peace Pole Makers: PeacePoles.com / Peace-Pole.com
- Instructions on making your own: <https://www.peace-pole.com/make-your-own/> / <https://bit.ly/2IIqfs1>

PARISH FORMATION ON PEACE

This VBS is an opportunity to raise awareness about Christian nonviolence throughout your parish, beginning with your leaders and parents. Offer some formation to your VBS leaders in the weeks or months before the VBS so that they can have a deeper understanding of what our faith teaches about peace. Also talk to your pastor and/or adult formation leaders about offering parish-wide adult formation opportunities to coincide with your program.

Pope Francis' recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti—On Fraternity and Social Friendship*—is an excellent modern day reflection on issues of peace and issues of justice and human relationships. This would be a perfect time for your parish to offer study groups or other faith formation opportunities for adults to learn more about this important document. It would be fruitful reading material for adults in the parish.

Fratelli Tutti for Adults & Teens

The following tools will help you share Pope Francis' message in your community:

- *Free Tools to Share Fratelli Tutti with Your Parish*. Use this introductory webinar and leader guide as a good first step.
- *Fratelli Tutti Learning Kits*. This flexible set of tools can be bought as a bundle or individually. Use the Powerpoint Kit to give your own presentation. The Online Video Kit gives parish-wide streaming access to the author giving the presentation (also available on DVD). Play these at an event or share with parishioners. All kits include an event agenda, prayers, reflection questions, detailed talking points, summary, prayers, and more.
- *Fratelli Tutti*. Purchase Pope Francis' full document in paperback form (English or Spanish).
- *On Fraternity and Social Friendship: Group Reading Guide*. A plain English summary of the document with reflection questions, organized for small group discussion.
- *Walking Together in Friendship*. Small booklet with day-by-day reflections drawn from the encyclical.
- ...and much more!

Learn more at <https://pastoral.center/fratelli-tutti>

Adult Bible Studies

The following can be used as a basis for small group reflection on peace:

- *Threshold Bible Study: Peacemaking and Non-Violence*. The teachings of Israel's prophets and of Israel's Messiah offer the world a way out of its addiction to violence, weapons, and war. Proclaiming the peace of God's kingdom, Jesus tells his disciples to renounce hostile retaliation, learning to love enemies and struggle for justice with creative nonviolence.
- *Upside-Down Living: Violence*. We see it on the news every day. We see it in our neighborhoods. Violence is almost a fact of life, impacting the world, our communities, our friends, our families. How do people of faith respond? How do we get involved in speaking up for peace, in addressing the violence in our communities?

The above options are bulk-priced. Learn more at <http://pastoral.center/nonviolence>

Youth Sessions

If you have a team of youth volunteers, work with your parish's youth minister to offer them an engaging age-appropriate experience reflecting on peace before the VBS takes place. The following series come from our *In Real Life* all-in-one curriculum.

- *Fight Right: A Christian Approach to Conflict Resolution*. What is the best way to view and deal with conflict? Even if it's uncomfortable, even painful, conflict is a necessary part of the most loving, harmonious, and united relationships. It's not something inherently bad or dangerous. Today's youth are learning to see conflict as a positive force for transformation, and this Bible study can help them learn how to respond with skill and insight. It is through an appreciation of differences that we can bring life, excitement, and positive change to our relationships.
- *God Is a Warrior? Violence in the Bible*. Is the Bible friend or foe to the peacemaker? The Bible challenges us to be reconciled to one another and work for justice. So what do we do with the stories that seem to condone violence or even encourage it? In a world filled with violence, is following Jesus' Way of nonviolent confrontation realistic?

The above options are bulk-priced. Learn more at <http://pastoral.center/nonviolence>

Booklets

The following affordable booklets are easy ways to help adults or teens reflect on peace. Consider giving one of them to all parents whose children are participating.

- *Fatima at 100, Fatima Today: 10 Steps to World Peace*. Designed for personal reflection or small group use, this little booklet outlines the ten-step peace plan Our Lady of Fatima urged us to follow and encourages us to build on our relationship with the Lord. As low as 59¢
- *What Pope Francis Says about Peace: 30 Days of Reflections and Prayers*. Pope Francis has spoken often and passionately about both the need for peace in the world and our call to be peacemakers. This booklet invites us to find ways to make peace our hallmark in our daily lives. As low as 79¢

The above options are bulk-priced. Learn more at <http://pastoral.center/nonviolence>

PLANNING CHART

5 months

- Become familiar with *Peace Lab* curriculum. Look over all the materials.
- Select date and time for VBS.

4 months

- Estimate the number of volunteers needed for your Bible school (p. 8).
- Choose an offering project (p. 13).

3 months

- Choose Group leaders and contact volunteers (p. 8).
- Post VBS dates in local newspapers and online.
- Announce VBS dates, times, and themes in church bulletins.
- Determine meeting spaces and mark the locations on a map.
- Look at the supporting resources, including the publicity materials.
- Read through leader guides.
- Order extra *Peace Lab* DVDs/CDs for leaders (including Early Childhood).
- Print extra copies of the *Worship and Drama Guide*, *Bible Response Guide*, *Active Response Guide*, *Creative Response Guide*, and/or *Early Childhood Leader Guide* as needed.

2 months

- Finalize assignments for all VBS responsibilities. Set date and time for staff orientation.
- Post invitation posters in public places.
- Give copies of the *Worship and Drama Guide* and *Peace Lab* music and songbook to Worship and drama leaders.
- Photocopy registration form (p. 18) and letter to families (p. 20).
- Distribute leader guides to staff.

1 month

- Plan VBS dedication with pastor or worship committee (p. 13).
- Plan closing celebration (p. 17).
- Hold preregistration.
- Send out letters to families (p. 20).
- Divide students into groups based on registration.
- Make student lists.
- Order copies of booklets for each child: *Lab Book* for K-5 and *My Book of Stories* for Early Childhood.
- Order *Peace Lab* CDs and/or MP3 download cards children to take home.
- Hold staff orientation (p. 9).
- Schedule custodian or helpers to move furniture before and after VBS.
- Share attendance expectations with Creative Response leader so snacks can be planned.
- Locate a few extra Bibles for each age group.

During VBS

- Count offering.
- Record attendance.
- Meet briefly with staff after Day 1.
- Post daily announcements in a prominent place.
- Offer volunteers encouragement each day.
- Prepare for volunteer recognition.
- Prepare student participation certificates.
- Prepare for closing event.

notes:

RECORD KEEPING

Copy an attendance record (p. 19) for each Group leader. During Bible school, record daily attendance, average attendance, daily offering, and total offering. Prepare student participation certificates and have them available for Group leaders to sign on Day 4.

TIPS FOR THE FIRST DAY

- Post signs so that people will know where the registration table and other places are.
- Have greeters on hand in the parking lot and in the building to greet those who are not familiar with your church and its space.
- Post group lists for children at the entrance to the building. Print the lists with large letters to be easily read by young children. Provide names of the Group leaders and the locations.
- Prepare for late registrants. Have a table where several helpers are available to place children in groups. Write the child's name and name of the Group leader on a sticky note, which the children can use to find their group and leader. The leader will add the names to the attendance record. Give new class lists to Group leaders later in the session.
- Have parents or guardians of late registrants complete the registration form. If the children arrive without an adult, be sure to send the registration form home to be completed and returned the next day.
- Ask Early Childhood leaders to meet their children at the building entrance. They should gather the entire group before going to their meeting space.

CLOSING CELEBRATION

- Plan a closing program for family and friends. Use songs from the *Peace Lab* music collection and songbook and other favorites. Introduce the drama space and characters. Acknowledge the work of leaders, volunteers, planners, and helpers. Distribute student participation certificates.
- Invite family and friends to visit the Response spaces.
- Invite family and friends to contribute to the offering project.
- Use the next Sunday to bring VBS to the entire parish. Use songs and worship materials from the *Worship and Drama Guide* and *Peace Lab* music collection. Offer a snack to celebrate Bible school, perhaps one used during a Creative Response time.

REGISTRATION FORM



Registration Form

Please complete this form and return it by _____

Name of child _____

Address _____

Birthdate _____ Last school grade completed _____

Medical concerns/allergies _____

Name of parent/primary caregiver _____

Primary phone _____ Secondary phone _____

Home / Work / Cell

Home / Work / Cell

Emergency contact _____ Emergency phone _____

Home / Work / Cell

Church affiliation (*optional*) _____

Parent/guardian signature _____ Date _____



Registration Form

Please complete this form and return it by _____

Name of child _____

Address _____

Birthdate _____ Last school grade completed _____

Medical concerns/allergies _____

Name of parent/primary caregiver _____

Primary phone _____ Secondary phone _____

Home / Work / Cell

Home / Work / Cell

Emergency contact _____ Emergency phone _____

Home / Work / Cell

Church affiliation (*optional*) _____

Parent/guardian signature _____ Date _____

ATTENDANCE RECORD

Peace Lab attendance record.

Group _____ Leader _____

Name: _____ Day: 1 2 3 4 5

1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Peace Lab attendance record.

Group _____ Leader _____

Name: _____ Day: 1 2 3 4 5

1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

LETTER TO FAMILIES



It's time for vacation Bible school!

Place:

Date:

Time:

We welcome your children to *Peace Lab*, where they will discover God's way of peace! The five Bible stories in vacation Bible school will take children on an amazing adventure in learning how to be compassionate peacemakers.

Peace Lab is a fun-filled time of learning and experiences. Children will watch dramas, sing songs, play games, enjoy snacks, make crafts, and do other activities as they hear Bible stories and learn about peace.

Welcome to vacation Bible school!

—*The vacation Bible school staff*

BIBLE BACKGROUNDS

Day 1: Jesus

Today's Bible experience: Matthew 5:9, 43-48

Purpose statement: Blessed are the peacemakers.

The Bible verses for today provide a foundation for the rest of vacation Bible school. The Sermon on the Mount is familiar to Christians because it outlines things that Jesus wants to teach us. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus followed these teachings himself, giving us practical examples of how we can practice his words.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes. One of them is “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). This is not a passive ideal—it is active. Making peace requires action. What does active peacemaking look like? The second part of today's Bible memory passage—“for they will be called children of God”—gives a clue about what it means to practice peace.

Practicing peace means that we love others. We are to love those who are our friends, and we are to love those who are not our friends. We follow God's example to love others. This is not always easy to do.

The apostle Paul took what Jesus said about peace and included the ideas in his letter to the church in Rome. The Bible memory verses for Days 2–5 begin and end with Paul's encouragement to live a life of peace: “Live in harmony . . . live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:16, 18).

Throughout VBS, you will encounter stories of biblical characters who were active in making peace in some very practical ways. Children will learn from them, developing skills they can use to practice peace in their own settings. Encourage children to follow these examples and learn to make peace.

From Pope Francis:

This Beatitude makes us think of the many endless situations of war in our world. Yet we ourselves are often a cause of conflict or at least of misunderstanding. For example, I may hear something about someone and I go off and repeat it. I may even embellish it the second time around and keep spreading it... And the more harm it does, the more satisfaction I seem to derive from it. The world of gossip, inhabited by negative and destructive people, does not bring peace. Such people are really the enemies of peace; in no way are they “blessed.”

Peacemakers truly “make” peace; they build peace and friendship in society. To those who sow peace Jesus makes this magnificent promise: “They will be called children of God” (Mt 5:9). He told his disciples that, wherever they went, they were to say: “Peace to this house!” (Lk 10:5). The word of God exhorts every believer to work for peace, “along with all who call upon the Lord with a pure heart” (cf. 2 Tim 2:22), for “the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (Jas 3:18). And if there are times in our community when we question what ought to be done, “let us pursue what makes for peace” (Rom 14:19), for unity is preferable to conflict.

It is not easy to “make” this evangelical peace, which excludes no one but embraces even those who are a bit odd, troublesome or difficult, demanding, different, beaten down by life or simply uninterested. It is hard work; it calls for great openness of mind and heart, since it is not about creating “a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority”, or a project “by a few for the few”. Nor can it attempt to ignore or disregard conflict; instead, it must “face conflict head on, resolve it and make it a link in the chain of a new process”. We need to be artisans of peace, for building peace is a craft that demands serenity, creativity, sensitivity and skill.

Sowing peace all around us: that is holiness.

— *Gaudete et Exsultate: On the Call to Holiness in Today's World*, 87-89

Day 2: Abram and Lot

Today's Bible experience: Genesis 13

Purpose statement: Peacemakers find good ways to solve problems.

In this story, Abram and Sarai are on a journey to find a place to settle their family and livestock. They are wealthy, having accumulated silver, gold, and lots of livestock. Abram's nephew Lot is with them, and he also has livestock and tents. Their prosperity also brings conflict. The conflicts are not between Abram and Lot, however, but among those who work for them. The herders disagree over the land that will serve as pastures for their flocks.

Abram does not like the tension among the workers, so he speaks with Lot. Abram suggests that the two men no longer travel together: Lot should choose which way he will go, and then Abram will choose the opposite way.

Lot chooses the most desirable land, the plains of Jordan, which are lush and green. He settles near the city of Sodom. Abram settles in the other direction, near Canaan, in land that is rocky and hilly. Abram is gracious in allowing his nephew to choose the better land and gracious in accepting Lot's choice. Abram finds a peaceful way to solve the problem of the arguments among the herders.

Their choices affect their families and descendants for years to come. Verse 13 foreshadows that things might not go very well for Lot and his descendants in that area. Meanwhile, Canaan would become synonymous with good, desirable things.

God speaks with Abram, giving a blessing to Abram for being a peacemaker. God promises that all the land Abram can see will belong to Abram and his descendants. God also promises that Abram will have many descendants, too many to count.

Children know about conflicts. A practical example many children face is to have only one treat, such as a cookie, to share with a friend. One child breaks the cookie into two pieces, and the other child chooses which piece to eat. The conflict is settled peacefully.

From Pope Francis:

We can aspire to a world that provides land, housing and work for all. This is the true path of peace... for a real and lasting peace will only be possible "on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation..."

— *Fratelli Tutti*, #127

It is neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict which builds harmony within and between peoples, but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace.

— Angelus, September 1, 2013

This dialogue is what creates peace. It is impossible for peace to exist without dialogue. All the wars, all the strife, all the unsolved problems over which we clash are due to a lack of dialogue. When there is a problem, talk: this makes peace.

— August 21, 2013

Day 3: Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz

Today's Bible experience: Ruth 1–2

Purpose statement: Peacemakers help other people.

The book of Ruth begins with disasters. There is a famine in Bethlehem, so Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons move to the land of Moab. While they are there, the sons marry Moabite women. Then Elimelech dies. Later, the sons also die. Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem. One of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, insists she accompany Naomi.

The book of Ruth is a story of women living in a man's world, a story of relationships and love, and a story about helping those who are foreign and vulnerable in a strange land.

Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth face two problems when they arrive in Bethlehem. One is that they do not have a way to support themselves. Widows relied on family or charity for their needs, or were forced into prostitution. The second problem is that though there is now plenty of food in Bethlehem, it is still difficult to access. How are two widows who have journeyed from Moab expected to survive?

Ruth goes to the fields to glean. She gathers leftover grain that field workers have left behind. Ruth catches the eye of the owner of the farm, Boaz. Boaz is a relative of Elimelech's. When he discovers that Ruth is Naomi's daughter-in-law, Boaz tells the workers to be sure to leave some grain for Ruth. He invites Ruth to join him and his workers at mealtime, and she eats until she is full. Boaz tells the men to leave her alone. Even though Ruth is a foreign widow, she is not to be harassed while in his fields.

Ruth continues gleaning until the end of the harvest. Today's story ends there, but we know that Ruth and Boaz eventually marry. They become David's great-grandparents. (The Day 4 story is about David.)

Though the story is usually told from the perspective of Ruth, it is Boaz who acts as a hero in this narrative. Ruth is a foreigner from Moab. There are stories in the Bible of hostility between Moab and Israel (see the book of Numbers). Yet Boaz does not allow these divisions to keep him from helping Ruth. He practices what is written in the religious laws: "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan" (Exodus 22:21-22).

Children have classmates and neighbors of various backgrounds; we live in multicultural societies. The story of Boaz helping Ruth is a relevant one as we consider how to develop relationships and friendships with those around us. There are many ways we can learn to be peacemakers by helping others!

From Pope Francis:

The story of Ruth is an ancient story that is being replayed by millions of migrant families today. Pope Francis wrote extensively about the Christian responsibility to love our migrant neighbors in his encyclical Fratelli Tutti.

Complex challenges arise when our neighbor happens to be an immigrant ... We are obliged to respect the right of all individuals to find a place that meets their basic needs and those of their families... Our response to the arrival of migrating persons can be summarized by four words: welcome, protect, promote, and integrate.

— *Fratelli Tutti*, #129

Day 4: Jonathan, Michal, and David

Today's Bible experience: 1 Samuel (18) 19–20

Purpose statement: Peacemakers speak up for what is right.

Sometimes it's hard to speak up for what is right. There's a lot of drama in today's story, yet what is striking throughout it is that the siblings Jonathan and Michal practice peace by saying the right thing, even when it is difficult.

David is just a shepherd when he is anointed to one day be king. His actions against Goliath help Israel defeat the Philistines. David goes on to win more battles, and his popularity soars. As this happens, King Saul becomes hostile toward David.

This puts Saul's children in a difficult position. Saul's son Jonathan is David's close friend, and Jonathan loves David "as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1). Saul's daughter Michal marries David. It is Jonathan and Michal who work to keep David safe when Saul threatens him.

Saul decides to kill David, and Jonathan is devastated. He is so distressed that he finds the courage to speak with Saul about it, reminding Saul that David has done many good things for Israel. Jonathan asks Saul, "Why then will you sin against an innocent person by killing David without cause?" (1 Samuel 19:5). Saul relents, and David is safe.

But not for long. Saul's anger continues to grow. He sends soldiers to David's house to kill him. Michal understands the grave danger David is in. She does what is right and helps David escape through a window.

Saul again makes plans to kill David. Jonathan and David develop a secret code. David will hide in a field and Jonathan will go there to shoot arrows. If Jonathan shoots his arrow far, it will mean that David needs to leave. Jonathan has another conversation with Saul and speaks up for David. But in the end, Jonathan has to shoot his arrow far. David leaves, and the two friends never see each other again.

The violence and murderous schemes in this story can be disconcerting. We don't want children to think that Saul's action and schemes are okay. They are not—and they should not be glorified in any retellings of the story. Instead, the emphasis should be that despite Saul's jealous anger, Jonathan and Michal found the courage to do and say what is right.

Children will understand the dilemma that Jonathan and Michal faced. They know that life is difficult and that sometimes it takes courage to do the right thing. Remind children that they may need to seek an adult's help if they want to address a difficult situation. Together, children and adults can work toward peace.

From Pope Francis:

[T]rue love for an oppressor means seeking ways to make him cease his oppression.... Forgiveness does not entail allowing oppressors to keep trampling on their own dignity and that of others, or letting criminals continue their wrongdoing.

— *Fratelli Tutti*, #241

[W]hen you feel uncomfortable, please speak up immediately.... My advice is that when something disturbs your peace, speak immediately.

— September 9, 2019

Dear young people, you have it in you to shout. It is up to you not to keep quiet. Even if others keep quiet, if we older people and leaders... keep quiet, if the whole world keeps quiet and loses its joy, I ask you: Will you cry out?

— March 25, 2018

Day 5: Martha and Mary

Today's Bible experience: Luke 10:38-42

Purpose statement: Peacemakers ask for help to resolve conflicts.

This well-known story about Mary and Martha is unique to the book of Luke. The story is of a sibling rivalry that has cultural implications. We infer from reading about Martha's many tasks that she wants to prepare a meal for Jesus, a usual hosting responsibility for women in her day and culture. Mary, however, chooses to ignore social boundaries and instead does what men of her day do—visit, talk, listen, and learn.

At first glance, it seems that this story does not fit a peacemaking theme. We usually hear this story as an example of following Jesus—it's important to stop our usual tasks and spend time with God, listening, learning, and growing in faith.

Yet a second look shows that conflict lies at the very heart of the story. Martha believes she is doing what is expected of her and that Mary is not. How does Martha handle this? She asks for help! Her tone suggests that Jesus would agree with her—after all, women should be helping with preparations.

Sometimes conflicts are larger than what we can handle on our own. Sometimes we need to ask for advice and help in solving a situation. This is what Martha does.

Jesus' response does not necessarily help Martha. Instead, he agrees with Mary. It is time for Martha to stop working so that she can sit and talk with him. This is the better part. This goes against Martha's cultural expectations; unfortunately, we do not know the outcome of the story. Did Martha stop her work and sit with Jesus and Mary? Or did Mary begin to assist Martha in the preparations?

This story about siblings is one that many children will relate to. They might think of their own siblings, cousins, or friends with whom they sometimes have disagreements. When the disagreements get too large for them, children will run to an adult for help, saying something like, "Mom! Dad! Make him stop teasing me!" (or whatever the offense may be). The frequency of this may sometimes annoy adults, but it's important for children to recognize that sometimes it is good to ask someone else for help in finding a solution that works for everyone.

From Pope Francis:

Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word "dialogue". If we want to encounter and help one another, we have to dialogue.

— *Fratelli Tutti*, #198

I want to ask that we all walk together, to take care of one for the other, take care of each other, do not hurt each other, take care of yourselves, take care of your lives. Take care of the family, take care of nature, take care of children, take care of the elderly; that there may be no hate, no fights, leave aside envy, do not speak ill of anybody. Dialogue among each other, so that in all of you may live the desire to care for one another.

— March 19, 2013

INVITE CHILDREN TO FAITH

Peace Lab is an invitation for children to discover God's way of peace. VBS will be a time of adventure as the children hear Bible stories, learn about God, and discover how to be peacemakers. They will have opportunities to develop their faith through the Bible stories, worship, songs, games, crafts, and other activities.

Vacation Bible school is an excellent time to learn to know families in your parish and community. Connect with parents and caregivers as you invite children to VBS, and be sure to greet parents and caregivers as they bring their children to Bible school. Share with the families about the experiences the children have during VBS. If the children are not part of a parish, this is a good time to invite their families to make your church their faith home. Invite all families to a closing celebration (p. 17) so that they can find out what the children did during VBS, as well as strengthen their connection to your congregation.

As you prepare for VBS, read the Bible stories and pray for the children who will attend, as well as for their families. Think about ways to talk about faith and a life of following God.

Day 1

Today's story is an introduction to peacemaking and provides a foundation for teaching children about peace. These verses contain practical ways to follow Jesus and the peace he taught. But even though Jesus' teachings are practical, they can be difficult to practice! That's why it's important to desire to follow Jesus every day. Share with the children that they can decide to follow Jesus and the things he teaches. Children can pray and ask Jesus for help in following him even when it's difficult to do so.

Day 2

This story seems to go against human nature—Abram allowed Lot to choose first which land he would like to settle his family in. Most people would selfishly choose first, with the other people having to work with what is left over. Abram's actions, however, were a peaceful resolution to a potential conflict. Children know about conflicts, and most children grasp that conflicts have consequences. Invite children to think about how a decision to follow God and resolve problems peacefully may have positive outcomes for them.

Day 3

Helping those around us is one way to be a peacemaker. In today's Bible story, Boaz helped Ruth, and Ruth helped Naomi. Helping each other is a good way to live life peacefully with those around us. Sometimes we help others;

sometimes others help us. Ask children to recall times in their lives when they've been on either the giving or receiving end of helping. Give thanks to God for these times as we follow Jesus by being peacemakers.

Day 4

Sometimes following God and being a peacemaker is difficult. It certainly is in today's story, in which Jonathan and Michal spoke up for David. Their speaking with their father could have had dire consequences; Jonathan and Michal did not know if their words and actions would be helpful for David's safety. Yet God was with them in the drama that took place; God sustained them. Following God sometimes means that things are difficult. Sometimes we need to ask others for help. Through it all, God continues to be with us. Explain that following God means that God is always present, even during difficult situations.

Day 5

We don't often think of this story as a conflict story. Yet Martha did have a conflict: she wanted Mary to help her. Fortunately, Martha knew that she needed to rely on Jesus to help her solve this problem. We don't know how the conflict worked itself out, but we do know that both Martha and Mary heard Jesus say that it is best to spend time with him. Following Jesus means that no matter how busy our day, we take time to be with him as we grow in our trust and faith.

CREATE A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

General discipline tips

Dealing with unwanted behavior can be discouraging, especially for volunteer teachers. Determine a plan of action before you begin.

- Pray for yourself, that you will be able to show unconditional love to each child.
- Pray that everyone will experience God's love and protective care in your classroom.
- Be prepared. Have supplies on hand; know the step-by-step plan.
- Be consistent yet firm with expectations and guidelines during VBS.
- Be prepared to stop the session and correct unwanted behavior at the beginning so the children know you are serious about your role as leader.
- Observe the children's learning preferences and accommodate them as often as possible. When children can succeed at learning in their best ways, disruptions are reduced.
- Expect children to be responsible for their actions.
- Practice forgiveness.
- Be ready to apologize when you do or say something inappropriate.
- Communicate effectively. Before giving instructions, wait until everyone is quiet and attentive. Speak clearly and slowly, making sure everyone understands.
- Celebrate with the children and enjoy learning with them. Let them know you are happy being with them.
- Seek help for children with special needs. Ask a youth or adult to give extra loving care to children.
- Seek counsel from other leaders and parents if you do not know how to handle a discipline problem.

Active and easily distracted children

- Give clear instructions and make sure the child is listening to you.
- Look directly at the child.
- Establish a consistent routine.
- Explain what is happening: "When we finish story time, we will go to ____."
- Warn children when a preferred activity is coming to an end.
- Offer short and simple activities.
- Be positive and affirming.
- Involve movement as much as you can.
- Assign tasks such as handing out and collecting supplies.
- Arrange the classroom so the child is not sitting near windows or hallways.
- Seat the child away from heaters, fans, or air conditioner vents so that the noise is not a distraction.
- Reward even the smallest success with a wink, smile, or pat on the arm.
- Do not use putdowns or reprimands.
- If a child uses medication, do not refer to it.

Make church a safe place

God calls us to create communities of faith where children, youth, and adults can be nurtured in their faith without any stumbling blocks. To provide safe sanctuaries, we must be aware of the risks in our world and put in place abuse prevention policies and procedures that help us manage the risks as we minister to children.

Here are some of the issues to discuss with leaders:

- Procedures for picking up and dropping off children.
- Have two adults present in every classroom and ministry setting.
- Ensure all classroom doors have windows, or leave doors partially open.
- Procedures for taking a young child to the bathroom.
- Education of safe touch and personal boundaries.
- CPR and first aid procedures; be sure to have well-equipped first aid supplies.
- Keep children safe while playing inside or outside your church.
- Background checks of all volunteers and church staff.
- Procedures for reporting child abuse.

Train all leaders and volunteers on these issues and procedures, including those who are under age 18.

Be sure to follow all Safe Environment Guidelines of your parish and diocese.

MIDWEEK PROGRAM PLAN

You can use *Peace Lab* for a 10-week program. Here's a sample plan to help you get started. Sessions are 1 hour each.

Day 1: Jesus

Session 1

- Gather (10 minutes)
- Worship and drama from Day 1 (see *Worship and Drama Guide*) (20 minutes)
- Divide into three groups, each doing one Response: Active, Bible, Creative (see guides) (20 minutes)
- Send (10 minutes)

Session 2

- Gather (5 minutes)
- Sing worship songs (CD and songbook) and practice Bible memory passage (10 minutes)
- Groups do two remaining Response times (20 minutes each)
- Send (5 minutes)

Day 2: Abram and Lot

Session 3

- Gather
- Worship and drama from Day 2 (see *Worship and Drama Guide*)
- Divide into three groups, each doing one Response: Active, Bible, Creative (see guides)
- Send

Session 4

- Gather
- Sing worship songs (CD and songbook) and practice Bible memory passage
- Groups do two remaining Response times
- Send

Day 3: Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz

Session 5

- Gather
- Worship and drama from Day 3 (see *Worship and Drama Guide*)
- Divide into three groups, each doing one Response: Active, Bible, Creative (see guides)
- Send

Session 6

- Gather
- Sing worship songs (CD and songbook) and practice Bible memory passage
- Groups do two remaining Response times
- Send

Day 4: Jonathan, Michal, and David

Session 7

- Gather
- Worship and drama from Day 4 (see *Worship and Drama Guide*)
- Divide into three groups, each doing one Response: Active, Bible, Creative (see guides)
- Send

Session 8

- Gather
- Sing worship songs (CD and songbook) and practice Bible memory passage
- Groups do two remaining Response times
- Send

Day 5: Martha and Mary

Session 9

- Gather
- Worship and drama from Day 5 (see *Worship and Drama Guide*)
- Divide into three groups, each doing one Response: Active, Bible, Creative (see guides)
- Send

Session 10

- Gather
- Sing worship songs (CD and songbook) and practice Bible memory passage
- Groups do two remaining Response times
- Send

WEEKEND RETREAT PLAN

You can use *Peace Lab* during a weekend retreat as children's programming, or as intergenerational activities if used during a church retreat weekend. Sessions are 90 minutes each.

Friday evening—Day 1: Jesus

- Gather; Worship and drama (see *Worship and Drama Guide*) (25 minutes total)
- Response activities: Active, Bible, Creative (see Response guides) (20 minutes each)
- Send (5 minutes)

Saturday morning—Day 2: Abram and Lot

- Gather; Worship and drama (see *Worship and Drama Guide*)
- Response activities: Active, Bible, Creative (see Response guides)
- Send

Saturday afternoon—Day 3: Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz

- Gather; Worship and drama (see *Worship and Drama Guide*)
- Response activities: Active, Bible, Creative (see Response guides)
- Send

Sunday morning—Day 4: Jonathan, Michal, and David

- Gather; Worship and drama (see *Worship and Drama Guide*)
- Response activities: Active, Bible, Creative (see Response guides)
- Send

Sunday afternoon—Day 5: Martha and Mary

- Gather; Worship and drama (see *Worship and Drama Guide*)
- Response activities: Active, Bible, Creative (see Response guides)
- Send

EVALUATION FORM

Your thoughts are important to us; they help us plan future vacation Bible school curriculums.

We encourage you to submit your opinions online at GrowingUpCatholicVBS.com (More > Leave Feedback) or send this completed form to VBS Evaluation, The Pastoral Center, 1212 Versailles Ave, Alameda, CA 94501.

Parish _____

Your name (optional) _____

Email _____

Address _____

City _____ Province/State _____ Code _____

Please checkmark your role in the program:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Director/Coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Music Leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drama Leader/Participant | <input type="checkbox"/> Active Response Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Bible Response Leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Response Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ |

Rate the leader guide(s): great good fair poor didn't use

Rate the student booklet: great good fair poor didn't use

Rate the songs and videos: great good fair poor didn't use

This worked well for our VBS:

Changes that would make VBS materials more usable:

Additional comments:

Thank you!