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VIRTUAL YOUTH EVENTS BASED ON MATTHEW 25:31-46

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Right now is a very difficult time for youth ministers, youth directors, and youth; because we cannot be together! After all, being together is a core element of youth ministry. We are a Christ centered community that plays, serves, shares, learns and grows together! Therefore, we have created some fun ways for groups to be together while being apart! These activities will engage your senses, teach youth some new skills, and hopefully lead to some fruitful discussions of what it means to follow Christ.

Matthew 25:31-46 is a passage that we are going to focus on while discovering some ways to be together while we are all still physically separated!

Jesus highlights six things that we can do as followers of Christ;

- feed those who are hungry
- give water to the thirsty
- welcome a stranger
- give clothes to those who need them
- care for the sick
- visit those imprisoned.

So, let's see how we can interact with youth using these six actions even during a pandemic!

Matthew 25:31-46 (NRSV)

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

FOR I WAS HUNGRY

Interactive Cooking Show and Discussion about Food Insecurity

Invite the youth to join you on zoom for an interactive cooking show where each participant will learn to make a dish!

Choose a simple recipe that has inexpensive ingredients and is typical for a household to have on hand. A great example is pasta, tomato sauce and cheese. Once you choose the meal - send an invite to your youth with a list of ingredients they will need, date, time and zoom number(which indicates they will need a laptop or ipad or iphone to participate).

Once the invite is sent, then look up some local stats for your area concerning food insecurity and hunger (typically this info is provided on county websites or even local food bank websites), plus local nonprofits that are seeking assistance through donations or offer safe volunteer experiences (think outdoor vegetable gardening).

For the event:

Welcome them to your "show" and make it fun! Lead the youth through the recipe, step by step, or, if there is a member of your church who is a great chef, invite them to lead!

As you finish, ask them to all sit down to share the meal together.

During this time you can share some of the statistics you discovered and ask them:

1. How many of you have food in your cupboards all the time? Explain that not all people do and define food insecurity to them.

2. Ask them if they are aware of any of the stats or you can set it up to have them guess what percentage of people they think are food insecure in your area - once again use techniques of engagement.

3. Share with them ways that they can participate in ensuring no one goes hungry. Perhaps start a food drive as a youth group, maybe they can help turn the soil for an outdoor garden as we approach winter.

End your time with prayer reminding us of the call to Feed those who are hungry.

AND YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT

FOR I WAS THIRSTY

Flavored Water Party to Discuss the Importance of Clean Water

Preparation: Drop off some flavored packets and a water bottle to your youth's home, (this might be a good time to use some other adult leaders to help drop off the supplies).

Alternative: if your youth are geographically spread out or there are too many of them - then invite them to bring their favorite drink to your zoom meeting and share why they enjoy that flavor.

Once you have the zoom time set - deliver the water packets (or invite them to choose from home). Next, research some stories that you can share about clean water from other countries or from Flint Michigan, including some stats.

For the event:

Welcome them to the meeting as you play a fun song about water (such as "Share the Well" by Caedmon's Call) or use an inspirational quote about water to begin a discussion: What does this quote mean to you? "Water is the soul of the earth" -W.H. Auden.

Have each youth take a turn showing their glass and sharing about their favorite flavor of water.

Share with them some stats about clean water.

Ask them questions about the story you shared, for instance: what it would be like not to go to the faucet and get clean water? Have they ever had to go without water?

Share with them organizations that dig wells for impoverished places. (Perhaps your church supports one, if not maybe that is something your youth can study more deeply and invite your church to join you!)

End your time praying for those who lack clean water and reminding us of the call to give water to those who thirst.

AND YOU
GAVE ME
SOMETHING
TO DRINK

I WAS A STRANGER

Welcome Home Painting Party

Preparation: Order a bulk amount of small canvases - think 4x6 size. You can purchase these at a dollar store or craft store and deliver them to your youth. You may need to deliver paint as well - so check with youth first - lots of folks have washable paints at home. (Use adult leaders, they can help with this!)

Find a local agency that is helping to place people into permanent housing. Habitat for Humanity may be building houses in your area, or there may be other ministries that work to place and support people in housing.

Invite the youth to a zoom meeting where you will each create a "Welcome Home" painting that will be given to people who are going from being homeless to being in their own home.

For the event:

Welcome them to the online event. You can ham it up by having an easel prepared and doing your best Bob Ross impression!

Explain that their "welcome home" painting can have different looks. It can be as simple as painting a background color and then painting "welcome home" on it. If they want to go all out, it can be elaborate with a house drawn on it, or a picture of a dining table, or a landscape scene.

If you are not personally gifted with painting, you can find someone in your congregation who might be able to lead the group and give some guidance to the artists! If you know staff who work at an agency that supports neighbors experiencing homelessness, invite them to join the party and talk about their work.

End the event with a prayer:

"God, we remember our neighbors who are living without homes and pray that they are kept safe and supported on their path to housing. Help us to always welcome the stranger and inspire us to make them feel at home in our community."

Collect the finished products after the party and deliver them to local agencies who are welcoming people into their new homes!

AND YOU WELCOMED ME

I NEEDED CLOTHING

Three Ideas for Online Parties Related to Clothing

Ironing Party

Preparation: Make sure each youth has access to an ironing board and iron. Invite youth to find a couple of shirts that need ironing, and to collect five pieces of clothing that they are willing to donate.

For the Event:

Welcome them to the event and describe that they will be learning how to iron a shirt. Start with how to operate the iron, and that different types of fabrics call for different settings on the iron. Then, proceed to describing how to iron each part of the shirt, including front, back, sleeves, shoulders, and collar. Have youth take turns showing the group their freshly-ironed shirt!

During the party, talk with groups about local agencies that need our clothing donations, and how high quality clothing is very important, from protection against the weather to looking professional for a job interview.

End the party with a prayer for those who are in need of our support, and for agencies in the community that are working to support them.

Knitting Party

Preparation: Make sure your youth have access to a skein of yarn and a pair of knitting needles. (Chopsticks or pencils can work in emergency situations!)

If you, or someone from your congregation, knows how to knit, host a virtual party to teach beginner knitting with the goal of each youth knitting a scarf to donate for this winter.

Research where you can send the scarves, such as a local shelter. If there is already a knitting group at your church, this would be a great opportunity to have them involved in the event so they can get to know the youth and vice versa!

While the group is knitting, it's a good time to talk about the situation of neighbors who are experiencing homelessness, and the difficulties of getting through the winter months. If your youth are not familiar with agencies who are supporting those living on the streets, invite a staff person to join the zoom party and talk about their work!

Sewing 101 Party

Do your youth know how to sew a new button on their shirt? Do they know how to sew on a patch or close up a hole in fabric? Invite your youth to join a zoom event where they learn how to patch and fix their clothes, and then talk about the ways we are dealing with holes in our community systems that the church is working to mend.

AND YOU
CLOTHED
ME

I WAS SICK

Notes of Love Party

Preparation:

Compile a list of congregation members who are ill, recovering from illness, or in frail health. Often the church pastor or pastoral care committee will have this kind of list.

During this time of pandemic, you might also consider those who are putting themselves at increased risk, such as nurses and other essential workers. Be sure to get mailing addresses for the recipients, which often can be found in the church directory.

Set up a zoom time and share with the youth a list of items needed to write encouraging notes, such as:

- Blank note cards (which their parents may have in stationery sets, or they could make them with some card stock)
- Pens (or colored pencils)
- envelopes
- stamps

For the Event:

Once you begin the zoom meeting - share the list of names that you gathered and a little bit about who they are, especially if you know something about their history or their current situation.

You can ask each youth if they want to write a "Get Well Soon" card or a "I am thinking about you card", or maybe one of each! Give youth some pointers on helpful things to say and not to say. Then, have several minutes of quiet time, perhaps with some pleasant music playing, while they write their note cards.

Once the cards are written, show the youth how to address the letter envelope and where to put the stamp. (Many youth don't get much practice at this!) Then invite them to mail their cards off!

End the event with a prayer highlighting God's call for us to bring comfort to those who are sick or to remember those who are caring for the rest of us!

AND YOU CARED FOR ME

I WAS IN PRISON

Two Ideas:

Drive In Blessing!

During this time of pandemic, a lot of youth are feeling isolated from their classmates and usual life. During a developmental period when they are supposed to be building relationships with peers and practicing independence, a lot of youth are feeling confined and somewhat stuck in a metaphorical prison.

The last several events have been about teaching youth to think of others. The idea of this event is making sure your youth know that their church also cares for them.

Collect a group of adults who have interest in the youth of the church. Divide up the list of youth among the group and make plans for a short visit in that youth's driveway, using cell phones. That way the youth can see you, but everyone is socially distanced. Coach your adults on things they can talk with the youth about, such as:

- how school is going, (given the circumstances)
- things they like to do in their spare time (and things they would like to do once the pandemic is over)
- things or people they are worried about and would like prayer for

They can close their visit with a short prayer and letting the young person know that their church cares about them

Learning from Those In Prison

If you have a prison in or near your community, consider finding ways to learn about ministries that are in relationship with prisoners. Is there a prison chaplain that could meet with your group on a zoom call? Sometimes there are prison related enrichment programs, like prison choirs, art groups, or writing groups. If a prison in your area has such programs, inquire about the possibilities of arranging for one or more of the members of such a group to speak over zoom with your youth group.

AND YOU
VISITED ME