

JOURNEY IN... YEAR ONE

COMMUNITY MUSIC

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- In a Beloved Community, every individual both brings to and takes from the community something unique and valuable.
- We are more together than we are separately.

Lesson Materials

- Piano
- Tonal instruments
- Classroom set of hand drums
- Sheet of lyrics for "All God's Critters"
- CD or tape recording of music OR guitar and chords to accompany "All God's Critters"

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Unity is not something we are called to create; it's something we are called to recognize.

- William Sloan Coffin

The moving finger of God in human history points ever in the same direction. There must be community.

- Howard Thurman

Our lives extend beyond our skins, in radical interdependence with the rest of the world.

- Joanna Macy

...it starts when you say We and know who you mean, and each day you mean one more.

- Marge Piercy

- What do you bring to your church community? What parts of yourself do you offer up?
- What do you take away when you leave church? What are the blessings of this place and its people?

GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 2-3 minutes

- We'll grab their attention with echo clapping and echo humming. Start by asking the kids to repeat your clapping pattern as a group. Then try to hum a few notes, perhaps from a familiar tune such as "Twinkle, Twinkle". With older children, try a few notes at random. This activity helps focus each individual on the group.

NOTE: You might also help children focus by giving them the agenda for class. Let them know that you'll be doing four different things together and that in order to try them all, you'll need their help in listening closely and switching smoothly from one activity to the next.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

- Without a doubt, the drumming activity will have the most appeal. By saving it until last, you can keep it as a reward for putting positive energy and effort into the first three activities.
- You might want to have the hand drums in an area of the classroom that is clearly marked "Closed" until you're ready to use them.
- Since there are four activities in this lesson, feel free to extend some and shorten others, based on the response from the group of children. Be sure that the discussion explores all the possible metaphors as deeply

YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE HARMONY

🕒 5-10 minutes

- Using a piano, we'll introduce the idea of harmony. The children will find their own harmonies using instruments and voices. Harmony will be explored as a metaphor for being in healthy community with one another.
- Point out that on a piano, you can play a single note at a time or you can play several notes together. Sometimes the notes sound great together and sometimes they don't. Harmonies have different qualities. Play a single key on the piano and then try a few other keys with it, asking the kids each time if they like the sound. Try playing the notes as arpeggios and then as solid chords, so that individual tones can be heard in the harmony.
- With older children, you can ask if any music students have learned about intervals. They can perhaps share what they know about thirds, fourths, fifths and sevenths or about major and minor modes.
- Pair the children up and let each pair select one instrument. Give them some time to experiment in the following fashion: the first student picks a note and the second student plays a series of notes with it, and the two children decide which sound best together. They can share their playing with the larger group if you have time.
- Extend the metaphor to human voices. Introduce the notes of a major chord, first individually. Divide the group up and assign a note to each section. Sing (LA LA LA) the notes separately for practice and then together in harmony. If you'd like, you can contrast this with discord by asking the kids to sing out any old note without listening to the notes sung by other children. You can also ask them to try singing in harmony with their ears plugged.

Wondering Together

- What did you notice about singing in harmony?
- Can everyone sing the same note and still make harmony?
- What would happen if we didn't listen to each other?
- Which harmonies sound best to you, the ones with just two notes or more notes?
- How is singing in harmony like being in a community?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO

"ALL GOD'S CRITTERS"

🕒 10 minutes

- Distribute song sheets to the children. Emerging readers might benefit from a responsive pre-reading of the words. All age groups will benefit from hearing the song once through before singing.
- Singing along with a recording (or a guitar, if you choose) share in the fun song, "All God's Critters".

Wondering Together

- I wonder if you sing lower or higher?
- I wonder which singing animal you are most like?
- I wonder what would happen if one of the animals *didn't* have a place in the choir?
- I wonder if all people have a place in our church?
- I wonder how you invite someone to be part of something, even if they aren't the best at something or aren't just like everyone else?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY TWO

SONGS IN PARTS

🕒 10-15 minutes

- Older children may be less interested in listening to the CD than in learning a new song. Allow 5th and 6th graders to choose this activity if it helps with "buy-in". By learning a song in parts, we can explore another possible metaphor for living in community with one another.
- Teach older children a song that has at least three parts. *Dona Nobis Pacem* is a lovely, simple song and can be found in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Wondering Together

- What did you think of that experience? Was it hard? Easy?
- How might singing a song with different parts be like being in community?
- What special ideas or gifts do you think kids bring to a community like our church?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY FOUR

CALL AND RESPONSE DRUMMING

🕒 10 minutes

- Sit in a circle. Distribute the hand drums.
- Suggest that in a community, we sometimes learn from each other by listening closely and trying out other people's ideas and practices for ourselves. In strong communities, there is a balance of leading and following.
- Allow each child a turn at being the leader of the group, creating and playing a rhythm, which the group will play back to them in response. Repeat the rhythm at least twice, perhaps continuing to play it for a measure or two.
- Change leadership by moving around the circle.

Wondering Together

- I wonder how a drum circle is like a church community?
- I wonder how people become leaders?
- Did you have to be the leader to enjoy this drum circle?
- Did you like anyone else's rhythm as much as you liked your own?

- What if schools or families played in drum circles?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

⌚ 2 minutes

Hold hands, forming a circle. Have the children repeat each line after you, chorally.

In this community, we give and we receive.

May we go forth, now,

to share the bounty of our love.

- Sydney Kay Wilde