



Sabbath Practices Ministry Kit for Adults

Hospitality, Prayer, Service, Storytelling and Retreat

introduction

Adults encompass most of our living generations and many diverse life stages. In this ministry kit we will offer some thoughts on various stages of adulthood. You can also refer to the Young Adult Ministry Kit if you are working with college age or those adults just entering the independent stage of their lives. Individual faith practices may be something that lifelong Christians have engaged in most of their lives. The importance of communal practices may be ingrained in them but sharing practices with younger generations or renewing one's spiritual life in new expressions of church may be something new. Practices can be introduced to adults as a way they can share and pass on faith. In using the age specific ministry kits keep in mind that the idea is that practices are introduced with generations individually and with all ages together to form intergenerational faith communities. Use this ministry kit alongside the essential tools for each practice as you teach and guide the adults in your community. Many of the practices will be engaged in at the same time and naturally flow from age specific to intergenerational. Each of the 5 practices in this ministry kit have a section of things to consider, ways to engage and a resource list is provided at the end of the kit. The kit is meant as a guide and a launch pad for leaders.

Practicing Hospitality with Adults

Love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22:39

Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Romans 12:13

things to consider

The older we get, the more set in our ways we tend to become. We have certain ideas about what is appropriate, respectful, and expected. Therefore, we also tend to pass judgment more easily on people who do not dress the way we think they should for worship or children who are boisterous in expressing their joy or parents who prefer a gentler form of discipline than we this is needed. True hospitality may mean setting aside one's own preferences to fully welcome someone whose actions may look different than we anticipate. Be open.



Isms divide. Divisiveness is not hospitable. If they exist at all, it is difficult to hide them from people who experience them every day. Before we can offer hospitality to people from another culture, another generation, another sexual orientation, another economic



classification, another gender, we must first examine our prejudices and work through them. Immerse yourself in background work where you can come in contact with siblings in Christ who look different from you, under the guidance of a mentor who can help you interpret what you experience, and uproot the racism, sexism, ageism, classism, homophobia, and xenophobia that keep you from being welcoming to the “stranger” in your midst.

Hospitality requires that we think of others before ourselves. A hospitable version of the Golden Rule would read: “Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.” It is not hospitable to decide for someone else what they need. Hospitality asks what is needed, and seeks to provide that if it is healthy, thoughtful, and wise. Would you give a fancy painting to a person with no shoes? No. You would ask, and they would likely ask for shoes, and then you would ask for their size and the kind of shoes that would most benefit them, and that is what you would strive to provide for them. “What do you need?” and “How can I/we help?” are hospitable questions to ask when practicing hospitality.

engaging in hospitality

Read to children and to the visually impaired. Sharing a book offers opportunity for conversation that can start on neutral ground and lead to trust and shared confidence.

Write letters. Missionaries, service people, the homebound, or someone you think could use some encouragement. It’s rare and still absolutely lovely to receive a piece of mail that isn’t an ad or a bill! Take out a notecard (or make one) and send a note to someone who may be lonely or feeling down. Just let them know you’re thinking of them. If you don’t know what to say, offer an encouraging Bible verse.

Provide a meal. Take dinner to someone who is sick or lonely or juggling a lot of balls in the air (figuratively, not literally). If you have a gift for culinary delights, put it to use by taking a meal to someone undergoing chemo treatments or freshly home from surgery or who is not feeling well. Single parents who are running kids around might also appreciate a home cooked meal that they don’t have to prepare. What a way to show support! Ask your local Ronald McDonald House if they need meals for families in crisis. Also, pastors. Being respectful of dietary needs is fully hospitable. Ignoring dietary needs is a full-on fail.

Relieve a caregiver. Offer to sit with a terminally ill or post-op patient, a family member with dementia or other cognitive impairments, or small children. Caregivers need respite. Hospitality to caregivers acknowledges that what a caregiver may need most in addition to running important errands or going to an appointment, is to take a long drive or nap or sit in the park without talking. Before you give the gift of time, learn what is required, know your limits, and plan to go in pairs.



Diversity and inclusion in worship. Include music from different cultures in your worship service. Invite people who know the music to teach it to your congregation. Don't be afraid to sing in languages you don't know. There are often songs that can be taught with a little effort. Hire an interpreter to translate worship for those who are not familiar with the language or are hearing-impaired.

Educate about food allergies and differences in eating. Offer programs that discuss food allergies and dietary plans that vary from the USDA food pyramid. Vegans eat differently from vegetarians. A keto plan is different from a low-carb plan. Hold informed discussions about how your church potlucks can be more inclusive.



Practicing Prayer with Adults

“Pray without ceasing.” – Apostle Paul

to consider

Many people feel uncomfortable praying in front of others because they feel their prayers are not formal enough or they are self-conscious about the sound of holy words coming out of their own mouths. Pushing people to pray aloud when they are uncomfortable doing so will not make them more comfortable doing it, however, modeling fewer formal prayers with a conversational tone will often give reluctant public prayer leaders encouragement to try.



One of the most frequent reasons adults give for not having a consistent and meaningful prayer life is lack of time. The assumption is that to pray, one must set aside a block of time to reflect and perhaps even write out prayers if the prayer time is to be considered “official.” Prayer can be just as transformative on the go. It is habit that makes a prayer life, and like any habit, one simply needs to make it a priority to fit the new habit into one’s way of living. The rhythm of one’s prayer life will change with the rhythms of one’s life.

Prayer can be frightening for people. It requires vulnerability. It requires an openness to be changed. What if we get what we request? What if, because of prayer, we start to see a hot button issue differently? Once one understands that the point of prayer is not to change God, but to allow God to change us through regular conversation and relationship, some consider it safer to not pray. Be gentle in challenging that idea but be prepared to come up against it.

There is no one way to pray. You may have been raised with the “fold your hands and close your eyes” posture, but prayer looks different for virtually everyone who prays. You can pray with your hands out and your eyes open! You can pray on your knees or prostrate or with your arms up and your hands open. You can pray with music. (“The one who sings, prays twice.”) The work of your hands can be an act of prayer. You can pray as you hold yoga poses or dance or walk or lay hands on a sick child or even as you watch the news. Relax, and have a conversation with God. That is the essence of prayer.

engaging in prayer

Walk a labyrinth. There are generally three stages to walking a labyrinth: releasing as you walk to the center, receiving as you wait in the center, and returning as you leave the center to return to your normal routines. Walk the labyrinth with these stages in your



mind and prepare to be blessed by the experience. NOTE: If walking or moving through a labyrinth creates physical challenges for you, consider using a finger labyrinth instead.

Create and/or color a mandala. The word “mandala” is Sanskrit for “circle.” Creating a mandala with symbols, designs, and colors that are pleasing (and often symmetrical) helps quiet the mind for meditation. You can make your own mandalas or color one someone else has created. A search for mandala will help you find options online.

Praying the news/newspaper using the Thomistic Questions approach. As you read, ask “who, what, when, where, why, how, and what helps?” Pray slowly and listen for God to speak to you through what you are reading about how you might best pray for the issues in the world around you.

Daily Examen. At the end of the day, spend some time reflecting in prayer. Ask yourself what stood out to you in the day’s events and why, where you saw God in that moment or if God felt far away and why, how you felt about that and why. Seek forgiveness if needed. Give thanks for grace where it was evident. Look forward to the next day with prayers of supplication. Prayers of examen might also be prayed at the end of an event or a season or the year ... anytime you reflect and prepare to move forward.

Ignatian Imagination helps its practitioners enter into the stories of scripture as if they were full participants. Listen to a story from scripture as it is read aloud and imagine yourself in the midst of it. Take note of what you experience through your senses. Ask yourself how what you notice can inform your life experiences in the present moment.

Lectio Divina. Praying the scriptures. Lectio Divina, Latin for “sacred reading”, invites the reader to read a passage of scripture repeatedly and more slowly, and then to reflect on them, to consider their meaning for the reader’s life, and then to rest in the Word quietly before returning to regular routines.

Augustinian Transposition prayers invite the praying person to transpose words in the passage, inserting names and locations that are relevant to the reader in order to more clearly hear the passage as it relates to their particular situations.

Franciscan Embodiment prayers are “doing” prayers where the pray-er puts hands and feet and muscle strength to their prayers and seeks to follow the example of Jesus in every way.



Practicing Service with Adults

Service to the world in Jesus' name is a tangible reminder that we are Body of Christ, and as such, we are privileged to serve our neighbor every bit as much as we are called to serve as Jesus served.

things to consider

Your mission committees and session set the stage for a healthy practice of service. Engage in study and discernment around mission and service that enhances partnership and coming alongside the community. Discern the organizations your church engages in and look at their policies, beliefs and practices.



Consider the practice of service in your faith community and outside your faith community.

Many service agencies are only open limited hours in the middle of the day on certain days of the week to minimize overhead costs. Working adults are not always available to participate in service projects with these agencies. Ask if the opportunity exists to take your younger adults or the whole group in during off hours, so that working adults may more fully share in the experience.

Older adults may be limited in their ability to do heavy lifting. Be sure to check with the director of your local agency to see what kind of work they need, and with your volunteers to assess their fitness for tasks. It is not uncommon for agencies to be housed in buildings that are challenging for older adults to maneuver. Be sure to ask about steps and inquire about a drop off point or elevator for people who may find climbing stairs daunting.

Older adults often need some time to get their bodies moving in the morning. Scheduling a mid- to late-morning (rather than early morning) start time ensures more of your older adults might be able to participate. Limit your work time to not overtax your crew.

engaging in service

Commit to be a Matthew 25 Community. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) there is a movement for all communities to engage in the Matthew 25 vision. This can bring a focus to your community of faith.



Serve on a board or local government. Service to the community may also mean serving on a board or local government council and offering a calm presence, a listening ear, and a voice of reason.

Stand up for justice. The world needs people who will give voice to the voiceless, stand up for the marginalized, and fight the good fight for the manifestation of the common good. Facilitate advocacy groups in your faith community to address social justice issues as they arise in your communities and our world.

Service to one another. Send college care packages to students just before finals week. Check with campus ministries or recent college graduates for names and ideas. The same idea can apply to older adults in care facilities.

Engage in Service Intergenerationally. Adults often have organizations that are near and dear to their hearts. Encourage them to take a look at where they serve and how they can introduce a new generation to service.

Partner with Local and National Agencies and Organizations. Here are some ways to engage locally and nationally:

- Create birthday bags with enough balloons and party hats to hold a small party for a child in need. Add a cake mix and icing, a box of candles, and party invitations. Take the bags to a local food pantry or shelter.
- Sew pillowcase dresses, cut out shoes or make masks for medical personnel and the community or fleece blankets for shelters
- Prepare Gifts of the Heart, Hygiene, and School kits for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. This ecumenical ministry helps bring hope out of chaos for many recovering from disastrous situations.
- Volunteer with Special Olympics. Volunteer to help with set-up or coach or referee.
- Work with Habitat for Humanity to build a home in your community.
- Organize food drives and meal packing events in partnership with a community organization. All ages can participate in these kinds of events.
- Sew handmade quilts for children around the world who have lost one or both parents. Quilts Beyond Borders has distributed quilts to children in twenty-five countries!



Practicing Storytelling with Adults

Storytelling fosters community in people of all ages, but particularly in adults and older adults as they hold the collective memory of their generations.

things to consider

Some stories need to be factual, and therefore, may be gently corrected communally as needed. Some stories are more about feelings and life experience, and the details are less important than the overall message. Listen for the difference, so you know when it is appropriate to facilitate communal correction and when to validate feelings and a message.



The number one recognized fear is public speaking. Creating an environment that is safe and welcoming is critical to the encouraging the sharing of personal stories. Set guidelines for everyone involved, and work at building trust before asking people to be vulnerable in sharing their stories with others.

Intergenerational storytelling provides opportunities to shape values in a new generation. Encourage adults of every age to share their stories to helping younger generations learn from them and grow in their own resolve.

Storytelling may also be difficult for people when the prompt causes painful memories to resurface. While that may be healing and necessary, it is not up to lay people to decide for someone else how that should look. Be sensitive to someone saying they do not want to share their story, and privately encourage them to seek pastoral care or professional guidance if they seem distraught. Offer comfort as they seem comfortable receiving it, and reassure the storyteller that regardless of their story, they are beloved children of God.

engaging in storytelling

Write and share spiritual autobiographies. These note the times and places where you have met God, the people and events that have shaped your beliefs, and the ways in which you have grown on your faith journey.

Psalm 23. Use this psalm as a template, tell about your places of plenty, your dark valleys, enemy encounters, and being bathed in grace.

Scrapbook your faith stories. This is a process of collecting pictures or symbols that are meaningful. The term for this is “faithbooking,” and it is a wonderful way to share



your faith story and also to create a legacy you can leave behind for those who come after.

Learn and make use of the Jewish practice of Midrash.

Intergenerational Storytelling and Story Acting. Model for children the joys of listening and sharing in storytelling with others. Use storytelling prompts like “Storymatic Rememory,” FaithTalk, Word Teasers: Faith Edition, and Table Topics for sharing life stories. Use storytelling prompts like Storymatic and Story Cubes to create fun stories collaboratively with friends.

Create sand tray stories. Use miniatures in a tray of sand as a means to facilitating the storytelling process with others. The storyteller creates a picture with whatever miniature objects he or she chooses, and then tells the story at hand. The storyteller may be given spiritual or scriptural prompts to create the story, and the audience may be permitted to ask questions or just receive it. It is insightful and interesting, and it’s also fun!

Theological storytelling. Engage in this as you explore popular music, movies, television shows, art, and even everyday occurrences through the lens of the theological process outlined in a book by Robert Kinast (see resources below). N.A.M.E. what you see/hear/experience and share your stories.

Act out or sing Bible stories. Create the scripts. Assign the characters. Build the sets. Telling the stories of scripture as a means to sharing our faith is both an honor and a privilege. Plays and/or musicals/cantatas are great ways for people of all ages (but particularly adults) to engage in storytelling! Incorporate Bible study in the process!



Practicing Retreat with Adults

“Jesus said, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’”
Mark 6:30

things to consider

One of the most frequent reasons adults give for not taking time out is busy-ness. Retreat is necessary to the spirit. It is habit that makes for spiritual growth and renewal, and like any habit, one simply needs to make it a priority to fit the new habit into one’s way of living. Mary Ann McKibben Dana, author of *Sabbath in the Suburbs*, speaks of “sevening yourself:” taking one day for retreat every seven days, one weekend every seven weeks, one week every seven months, and one month every seven years. Mark it on your calendar. Plan around it.



There is no one way to retreat. Retreats might last a week or a day or an hour. They might be peaceful and calm or adventurous and exciting. They might be for an individual, a couple, a family, a small group, or a whole congregation. The primary goal is to separate from daily responsibilities and live into connection with God. That will look different for every person, every family, every group.

Some retreat centers are housed in buildings that are challenging for older adults to maneuver. Be sure to ask about accessibility and a drop off point or elevator for people who may find climbing stairs or maneuvering ground that is not level daunting.

When planning a get-away retreat for adults, remember to ask about food allergies and dietary requirements and to pass that information on to the people responsible for meal preparation. Also ask about medications that require refrigeration and make accommodations for that whether in a communal refrigerator everyone can access or in dorm sized refrigerators in individual rooms.

It may be difficult for parents of young children to get away, so consider providing childcare at a family retreat or babysitting at the church for daytime/evening retreats.

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. One sure-fire way to make retreat a regular practice is to attend worship, setting aside time away from regular life and focusing on relationship with God and with community.

engaging in retreat

Camp and Conference Facilities. Check with any of the Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Centers for programming that meets the needs of adults. If none is



available, ask if the camp director could recommend a retreat leader, or explore potential leaders from the national office, or professional organizations such as the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators or Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network.

Schedule a regular Bible study or small group book study in a public space.

Choose a book or topic of general interest and invite communal conversation throughout the study. Encourage participants to bring friends!

Plan digital retreats for parents of young children. Consider scheduling a mini retreat after the little ones are in bed. Young adults are highly tech savvy as a rule, and can maneuver a Zoom call with little effort, making digital retreats an optimal way to get people together on a regular basis to talk about topics that have communal relevance with minimum disruption.

Daylong retreats in your building. Invite groups with a common interest to plan daytime retreats in the church fellowship hall to engage in quilting or scrapbooking or tossing bags. Encourage a check in to list joys and concerns, offer a devotional, and pray for each other before they begin.

Outings as retreat. Meet at a local art gallery, pottery barn, ceramic store, winery, or wood shop, and learn a new skill together. Remind potential participants that we are all made in the image of the Creator; therefore, we are creative. It's fun to learn something new in the safety of a group of friends. Give thanks for the opportunity to be renewed.

Host a Spirituality Center. Plan to have prayer stations on a particular theme. Offer a number of prayer activities set up around a space with lit candles and quiet music playing, so people can spend time in prayer.

Teambuilding retreats. These aren't just for youth! Ropes courses and team activities increase communication and build relationship. Make time to talk about how partners and groups work through their processes in order to better understand how those processes might be applied to other challenges. You'd be surprised at the number of older adults that will participate as well with a little accommodation.



Where can I learn more?

Books

Making Faith-Sense: Theological Reflection in Everyday Life by Robert L. Kinast. Liturgical Press, 1999.

The Burning Word: A Christian Encounter with Jewish Midrash by Judith M. Kunst. Paraclete Press, 2006.

Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with Holy Time by MaryAnn McKibben-Dana. Chalice Press, 2012.

Prayer and Temperament: Different Prayer Forms for Different Personality Types, revised edition by Chester P. Michael and Marie C. Norrissey. The Open Door, 1991.

The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation edited by John Roberto. LifeLong Faith Associates, 2015.

God's Echo: Exploring Scripture with Midrash by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. Paraclete Press, 2007.

Midrash: Reading the Bible with Question Marks by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. Paraclete Press, 2013.

Curriculum

[Love An Other](#) by Denise Anderson. Theocademy.

[Call to Mission, Leader's Guide](#) & [Call to Mission, Participant's Guide](#) (Being Reformed Series). Congregational Ministries Publishing, 2010.

[Learning to Honor Sabbath](#) by Nancy Ferguson. The Thoughtful Christian, 2010.

[Into All the World: Participating in God's Mission, Leader's Guide](#) & [Participant Book](#) (Being Reformed Series). Congregational Ministries Publishing, 2011.

[Living the Gospel of Peace: Tools for Building More Inclusive Community](#). Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Mission Agency.

[How We Think About Prayer](#) by Donald K. McKim and Carol Wehrheim. The Thoughtful Christian, 2009.

[The Basics of Prayer](#) by Donald K. McKim and Carol Wehrheim. The Thoughtful Christian, 2009.

[Into the Light: Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament](#) by Lynn P. Miller. Presbyterian Women, 2020.

[Rememory](#). Storymatic Studios. (Game)



[Rory's Story Cubes.](#) Zygomatic. (Game)

[Table Topics: Questions to Start Great Conversations.](#) Ultra Pro International, LLC.

["The Things that Make for Peace" Adult Bible Study.](#) A Season of Peace, Presbyterian Mission Agency.

[Word Teasers: Faith Edition.](#) Big Ideas in Youth Ministry.

Online Resources

["Become a Volunteer."](#) Special Olympics.

["Community Garden Guide."](#) Natural Resources Conservation Service., U. S. Department of Agriculture.

["Daily Examen."](#) Ignatian Spirituality.

[Directory of Retreat Centers.](#)

["Draw a Mandala Freehand!"](#) blueprint.

["Gift of the Heart Kits."](#) Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

[Habitat for Humanity.](#)

["Matthew 25 in the PC\(USA\): A Bold Vision and Invitation."](#) Presbyterian Mission Agency.

["Lead with your Best Welcome."](#) Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, 2018.

[Little Dresses for Africa.](#)

["Preparing for and Responding to Human-Caused Disaster."](#) Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, 2020.

[Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network.](#)

["Refugees Welcome: Boundless Hospitality Across Cultures."](#) Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, 2018.

[Sole Hope.](#)

["Make to Give: Protective Face Masks."](#) Jo-Ann Stores.

[Quilts Beyond Borders.](#)