

SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERINGS

2023 SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERING

SERVICE AND CRAFT/ACTIVITY PROJECTS

- Summer Friendship Gathering events lasts three evenings and each evening is divided into three parts: fellowship meal, worship time with a large group lesson, and small group discussion. On the last evening there is a closing worship service, which replaces the Large Group Bible Lesson and Small Group Discussion time.
 - On Days 1 and 2, there will be Small Group Discussion time, that may include a craft, service project or activity related to that day's Bible lesson.
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SERVICE PROJECTS

Each summer we include service projects to demonstrate our love for others. In Matthew chapter 22:37-39 a Pharisee asked Jesus; *“Which is the most important commandment?”* Jesus responded, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love Him with all your mind. This is the first and most important commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as you love yourself.”*



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- The Holy Spirit leads us to love God and each other. This year, we will again take an offering of non-perishable food items to help stock local food pantries. If your church has a food pantry, or has a relationship with a food pantry, your church is encouraged to distribute these items. If not, Connection Ministries will help with the distribution.
- Connection Ministries will provide labels for every food item with this year's themed Bible passage from John 12:26 (NIRV)
- "Anyone who serves me must follow me. And where I am, my servant will also be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."
- A table will be available near the registration table for collecting the food items on all three days of the Gathering. As you arrive each day, you can bring your food items to the table and label them.
- Help your friends with disabilities to also label their food items as well. On the third evening, these food items will be used for the offering during the worship service.
- You are encouraged to have two simple service projects for your Gathering on Days 1 and 2. These projects will take place within the small discussion group time, but only after the groups have first discussed and reviewed the Large Group Bible lesson together.
- In keeping with this year's theme "Called Out of Your Boat," these service projects can teach that Christ followers are ones that serve Him by caring for others around us. This may mean getting out of our boats, or our comfort zone, to join Jesus to accomplish His mission to the world.

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- One service project idea is creating individual cards for elderly church members, shut-ins, or church members in the hospital. The cards would include the SFG theme “Called Out of Your Boat” and the theme Bible verse.
- Adult friends and volunteers can color the cards and decorate with stickers. This is a simple service project that provides a meaningful connection with those church members who are not able to attend church, or who are in the hospital.
- Another service project idea is tying together fleece blankets as a small group. These blankets are then given to those church members who are elderly or in the hospital. We did fleece blankets a couple years ago at the Gatherings, and they proved to be very welcomed. You would need to collect fleece material (2 blanket sized pieces for each blanket) and cut beforehand strips in both pieces that would be tied together by the small groups. Perhaps a ministry in your church would donate the fleece materials. It is an easy, and warm, service project to do together!
- Assembling pencil boxes for children at a local elementary school could be another idea. Connection Ministries can also distribute pencil boxes to a local ministry called “Renewal Neighborhood Ministry” that works with tutoring students. A small group in your church could offer to donate supplies for the pencil boxes, such as pencils and pens, erasers, small notepads, stickers, etc.
- Another service project idea could be to make busy bags for small children who attend church on Sundays. Colorful bags are filled with crayons, stickers, simple coloring books, and a nonperishable snack.

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OPTIONAL CRAFT/ACTIVITY PROJECTS

- There will be a group activity on Day 1 and a simple craft on Day 2 that Connection Ministries has put together.
- The Day 1 activity is called A Net Full of Fish that will be done in each small group on the first day of the gathering. It will remind us that, like Peter we are all called to be “Fishers of Men” or (people).
- Connection Ministries will provide the needed supplies for the Net full of Fish activity including, paper fish, a boat, a net, paper clips and markers for each Gathering.
- There will be a big boat with a fishing net that will be placed in a designated area for each gathering.
- In our small groups we are going to talk about how we can be fishers of people. Have your group think of people they know who they can share the good news of Jesus.
- On day 1 there will be a bowl of fish in your small group to write down their names. It could be someone they want to pray for, invite to Friendship Group, or go with them to church, and so on?
- Our friends may need help writing names on their fish.
- Once everyone is finished with their fish, we are going to put them back in the bowl to be hung up on the net by their small group leaders.

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- On day 2 and day 3 there will be a big bowl of fish next to the boat and net that they can write more names and paper clip to the net.
- When all the fish are in the net, we can see the net full of people Jesus wants us to catch for Him.
- We will have this up during our Summer Friendship Gathering to remind us to pray for our friends.
- After day 3 you may take your fish home as reminder to continue praying for your friends to know Jesus.
- **The optional craft for the week will be done on Day 2.** We will make Jesus Makes Me Brave bookmarks to remind us to step out of our boats and trust Jesus to be brave in whatever situation we find ourselves in.
- Each Summer Friendship Group will receive a PDF template of the bookmarks. There will be eight bookmarks per page that can be printed on cardstock and cut out by individual Summer Friendship Group teams ahead of time.
- **The template is available on our website next to this video.**
- In Matthew 14:27 We see Jesus calling out to His disciples, “Be brave! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” Peter was brave. He asked Jesus, “Lord if it’s you, call me to come to you on the water.” “Come” Jesus said.
- Ask your group to think of something right now that Jesus is calling you to do. It probably won’t be walking on water, but it may be something hard. If they feel comfortable have them share with the group and/or they can write it down on the back of the bookmark.

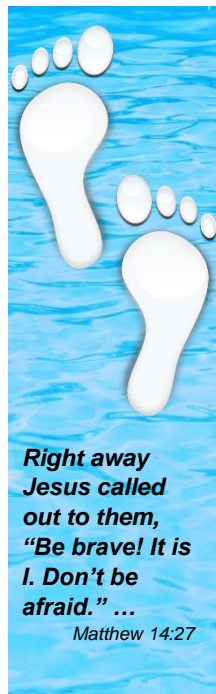
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- Like loving that person that is difficult to love. Maybe He's calling you to help your friend or housemate with something that you don't want to do, like a chore. Maybe He is calling you to pray for that person that has been unkind to you. It may be just getting out of bed each morning when it is painful.
- No matter how big or small his call is He gives us the courage to step out in faith and follow Him.
- Like Peter, sometimes our troubles seem too big, but Jesus is the One who can calm us in the middle of our troubles. It is Jesus who makes us brave.

SAMPLE BOOKMARK



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ADDITIONAL CRAFTS/ACTIVITIES

- Many Friendship groups enjoy craft and activity projects during the small group time to help reinforce the lesson.
- For additional craft ideas you may utilize your volunteers on your Gathering team, as some of your team members might have a talent of coming up with fun and creative crafts.
- Remember that our friends with disabilities are adults. The project should be completed in less than 10 minutes. And remember to first discuss the Bible lesson and have prayer time before starting the service project or activity as a small group.
- It is recommended that you do not use messy supplies like liquid glue or glitter. If glue is needed, consider glue sticks. Your group will be responsible for the craft supplies for the optional project.