

SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERINGS

2025 SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERING

SERVICE AND CRAFT/ACTIVITY PROJECTS

- Summer Friendship Gathering events last 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
- A table will be available near the registration table for collecting the food items on all three days of the Gathering. As friends and volunteers arrive each day, they can bring food items to the table and help with the labeling.
- Help our friends with disabilities to label their food items as well. On the third evening, these food items will be used for the offering during the worship service.
- You may have an additional service project that your gathering would like to do. This should be done during the small group discussion times after the groups have prayed and discussed the Large Group Bible lesson together.
- These service projects are important to teach our friends that Christ followers are people that and care for those around us. This is a way we live for Jesus. In giving to others, we are bringing the hope of Christ. Take time and pray for the recipients. Pray that they will come to know and trust in Jesus too.

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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 and the Bible verse for the week.
- 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. This is a great way to wrap them in a big hug.
- You would need to collect fleece material (2 blanket sized pieces for each blanket) and cut beforehand strips in both pieces around all four sides. The two sides would then 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.
- You may also want to choose a service project of your own. It will be important to choose a project that can be completed quickly and is not childish.

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- There will be a craft project on Day 1 and Day 2 that are included on this note sheet with the supply list and a picture of the finished project.
- There will also be an activity called “Walking with Jesus” that will be completed ahead of time and displayed for all three days.

Day 1 – Day 3: “Walking with Jesus” Feet



Connection Ministries will supply the cardstock-colored feet with the Theme Bible verse already placed.

- The “Walking with Jesus” feet shows that because we have been raised up with Christ, we belong to Him and can walk with Jesus every day. This is one of the key points for Day 3.

God raised us up with Christ...

That's because we belong to Jesus.

Ephesians 2:6

- Wall puddy for attaching the feet will also be provided by CM.
- Each Friendship Group will be responsible for taking the Friend's and Volunteer's photos ahead of time. These photos should be printed **wallet-size**. Each photo is then placed on the individual foot prior to the Gathering.
- Before the Gathering begins on Day 1 Volunteers and Connection Ministries staff can help hang the feet on the wall starting at the registration area and extending to the large group area.
- Friends can take their “Walking with Jesus” feet home after Day 3.

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The Day 1 – “Dry Bones, Rise Up!”

Connection Ministries will provide the supplies for all Day 1 craft. They will be in a bag in your table tubs.

Supplies: 1- Piece of black cardstock 5 ½” x 4 ¼” (half sheet of 8 ½” x 11”)

1-Skeleton head printed on white cardstock, pre-cut

7-Q-tips

Glue stick

“Rise Up and Hope” sticker

Steps:

1. The black card stock should be placed so that the smaller sides (4 ¼”) become the top and bottom of the project. Place the “Rise Up and Hope” sticker at the top of the cardstock.
2. Using a glue stick, place the skeleton head below the sticker.
3. Make a vertical line with the glue stick below the center of the skeleton head and attach a full Q-tip. This will be the skeleton’s spine.
4. Break a tip off 4 of the Q-tips and then bend each in half to form the bend in the arms and legs.
5. Position the arms and legs as desired, using a glue stick to adhere.

6. Break the 2 remaining Q-tips in half, so you now have 4 pieces. These will become the skeleton's ribs.
 7. Position 2 "rib pieces" per side of the skeleton's spine and adhere with the glue stick.
- Volunteers will want to talk about the story of dry bones and how God, through Ezekiel raised up the bones to live.
 - Ask friends how God has raised them up again when they have felt like dry bones. By His Word (the Bible) he works through the Holy Spirit to revive us and give us hope again.

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Day 2 – “Lazarus Come Out!”

Connection Ministries will provide the gauze to wrap the Lazarus mummies, googly eyes, and the Bible verse.



We are asking groups to supply the toilet paper rolls. Connection Ministries has extra toilet paper rolls if you find you don't have enough.

You may need to help friends wrap their Lazarus mummy with the gauze and assist with adding the eyes.

Supplies needed: 1 toilet paper roll
2 self-adhesive eyes
24" gauze strip
Glue stick
"Rise Up & Believe" sticker

Steps:

1. Place the self-adhesive eyes about $\frac{3}{4}$ -1" from the top of the toilet paper roll.
2. Start at the bottom of the toilet paper roll with your gauze strip, and begin wrapping around the toilet paper roll, going upward toward the eyes. (You may need to use a glue stick to adhere the gauze to the roll when starting the project)
3. Once you reach the eyes, be sure to stop the gauze wrap below, and then continue to work the next wrap above the eyes so you can see them.
4. Once you have reached the top of the roll, adhere the gauze strip to the inside of the roll with a glue stick.

5. Place the “Rise Up and Believe” sticker at the bottom of the toilet paper roll, over the gauze body of Lazarus. Note: The sticker may need to be adhered at each end of the sticker with a glue stick.

- During this craft time volunteers may ask the friends, What are some things that sometimes get you wrapped up and unable to walk in the freedom Jesus wants for you?
- Give examples of things in your life that you need the help of others. Also, you can talk about how we can help one another.
- Encourage our friends that when we trust and believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, He can raise us up again too, just like He did with Lazarus.

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- For additional craft ideas you may utilize the creativity of your volunteers. Please be sure the craft or activity will connect with the theme of the Gathering. One craft/activity is recommended per night as you will have limited time in your small groups.
- Remember that our friends with disabilities are adults. The craft projects should be completed in less than 10 minutes. Also remember to first discuss the Bible lesson and have prayer time before starting the service project or craft 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 **optional projects**.
- Thank you for your willingness to be a part of this year's Summer Friendship Gathering. If you have any questions or need information you can email us at connect@connection-ministries.org or call our office 317-646-5067.