

Sunday evening 7:00-7:30: Large Group Activity

1. As students and adults enter the room, they are greeted warmly with a hand shake and a welcome. (Glad you are here. We are so happy to see you. Tonight is better because you are here, etc)

2. Leader explains that tonight is a night of great welcome for everyone who came...just like God welcomes us into a great way of living, of being a part of something wonderful.

Our Bible tells us that God called many people long ago and we believe God is still calling us, still speaking today.

3. "God is still speaking" wave.

Teach "God is still speaking" words for the wave activity. (Have the words printed on paper posted on the wall.)

Practice the "wave" around the group.

Hand out pieces of crepe paper to do the wave with. Practice wave with paper. Add words to the wave. Repeat the words several times in a row so the "wave" can circle the group several times.

Words: (Chant in a rhythmic style)

Like the waves of the ocean, like the waves of the sea

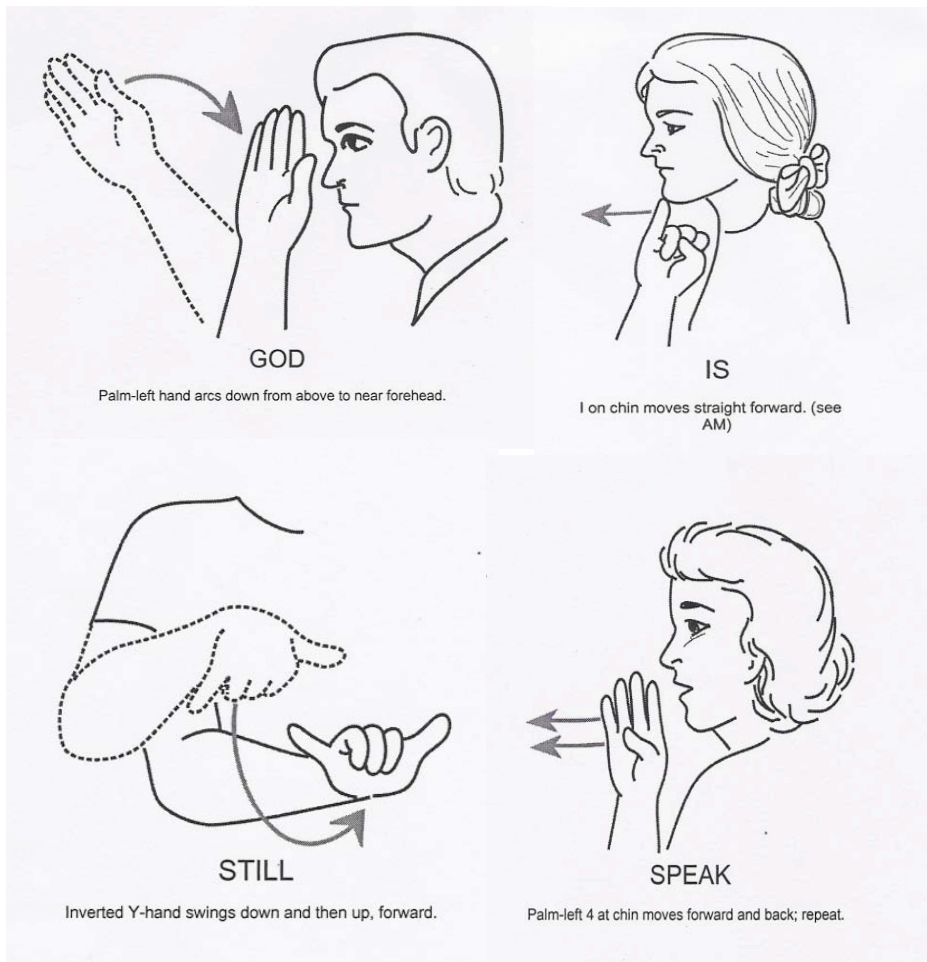
God is still speaking, speaking to me!

4. Commercial videos. Leader explains that the leaders in our church are showing commercials on TV to let everyone know that our church has open doors for all who want to be a part of our church family. Show the commercials to the large group.

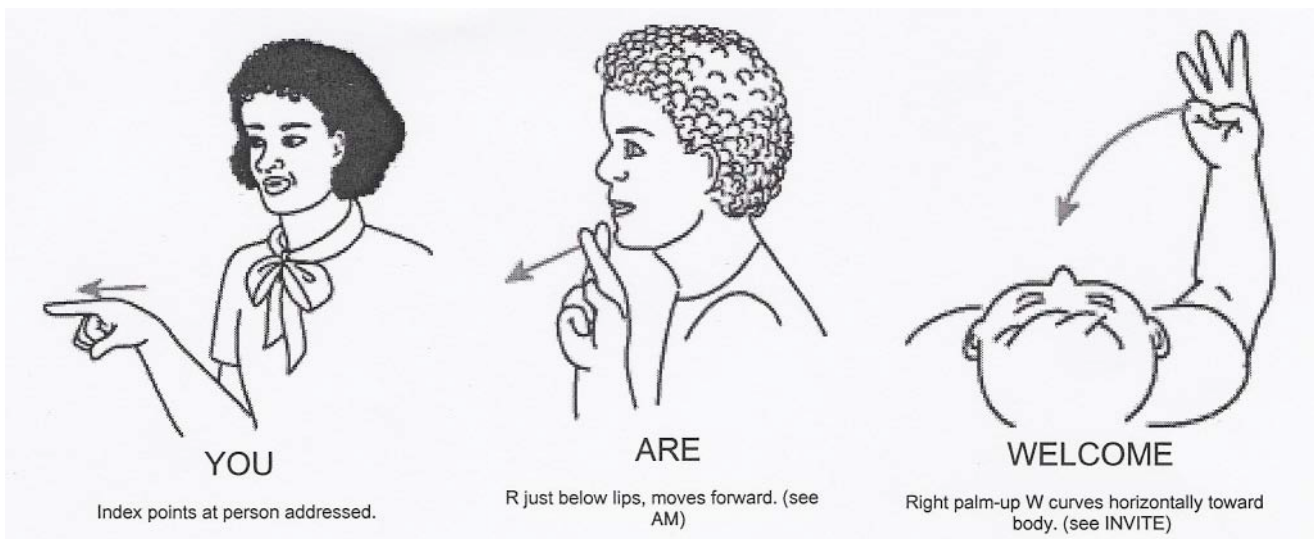
5. Teach sign language for: "You are welcome here" and "God is still speaking" and GISS.

6. Beach ball madness. Have several balls blown up. Each ball will have a message printed on it with permanent marker. (God loves you. God is still speaking, You are welcome here. Never place a period where God has placed a comma.) Invite the whole group to toss balls around until the stop signal is given. Leader calls out: "Who has God loves you ball?" That person stands. Continue with the other balls and phrases. After all four phrases are called, repeat the "free-for-all" tossing around, give stop signal, and call the four phrases again. If a very young child has one of the balls, give color cues to help them know to stand up for their phrase.

7. Divide into small groups to do small group games. Leaders of each small group get game supplies from table in large room and find a place to play the suggested games.



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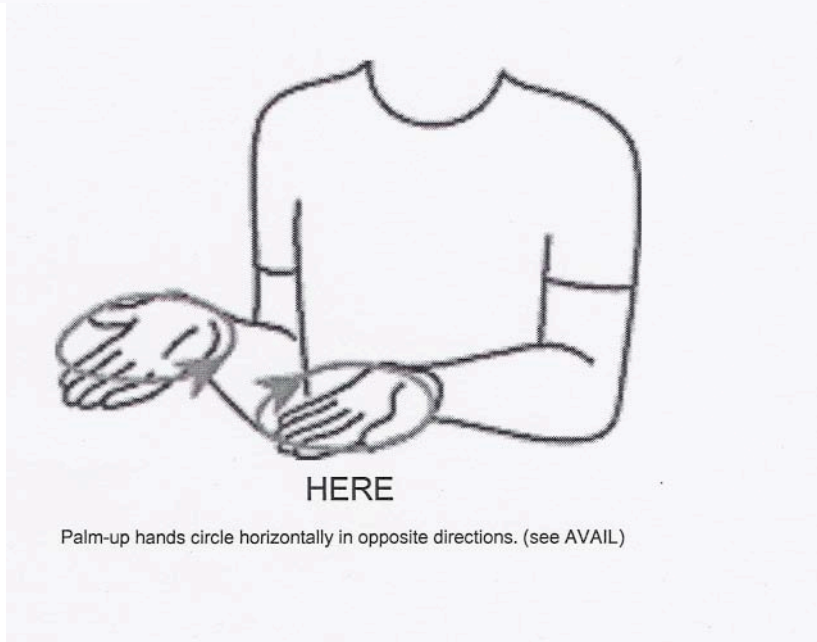
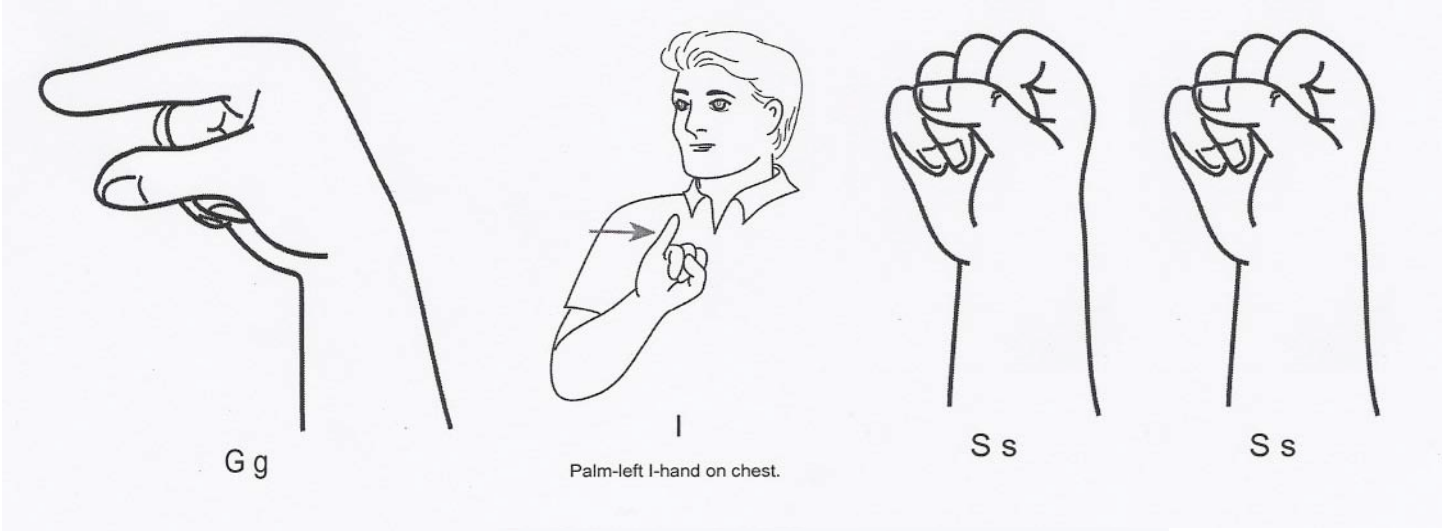


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Sunday evening 7:30-8:00: Small group games

The purpose of these games is to help the students learn each other's names, to have fun, to establish a sense of "community" with a group, and to be creative.

Supplies for these games can be found at the supply table. Select games that are of interest to you and the students.

Parachute games

The parachute is really a sheet.....just pretend.

These games are especially designed to help the students learn each other's names and to work together.

For the younger groups,

Place a ball in the center of the sheet and call a student's name. Everyone works as a team to roll the ball to the named person. Repeat until all names have been called.

Place a ball in the center of the sheet and ask the group to work as a team to make the ball go around in a circle. Shout out "switch directions" to reverse the circle.

The group holds the sheet and lifts and lowers the sheet. As the sheet goes up, call two names of people to switch places. The named people let go of the sheet and run under it while it is in the air. Repeat until all have had a turn.

For the older groups,

Place a ball in the center of the sheet and call a student's name. Team work rolls the ball to that person. As the names are learned, call the names quickly so they have to remember and respond quickly to get the ball to the named people.

Place a ball in the center of the sheet and ask the group to work together as a team to roll the ball in a pattern: circle, square, cross, triangle, first letter of their name. Ask the group to challenge themselves to think of a shape to create.

Scavenger hunt

The purpose of this game is to share the concept that God is still speaking to us through nature. Reinforce this idea throughout the hunt. A series of clues are printed for the leader or students to read. They are to hunt for the object in the nature center to find the answer. There are two sets of clues, an easier one for the younger students and more difficult ones for the older students. (Original clue rhymes were written for use in the nature center in which our VBS met. Write clues to fit your VBS setting.)

For the younger groups:

Read the clues so all the students can hear. Help them discover what the clue might reveal and where they might find it in the big nature room. Give extra clues as the students need them. Clues are on the next page.

For the older groups:

Ask the students to read the clue to the group if they are willing. Encourage them to think together to solve the clue and to find the answer in the big nature room. Clues are on the next page.

Bag Games

Help the children understand that sometimes a message from God is a surprise to us. There is always something new to learn, to do, and to listen to. Reinforce these points while doing the activity.

For the younger groups:

There will be a paper bag full of a variety of items and an empty paper bag. One student will turn their back to the group. The leader asks one child to quietly take one item out of the filled bag, silently show it to others, and then to put the item in the empty bag. The one child will turn back to the group, put their hand into the bag and try to guess what the item is. The group can respond together with yes or no answers.

For the older groups:

There will be a few bags with an unusual mix of items in them. The students can make a choice as to what to do with the bag. Provide a bag for each group of 3 or 4 students. Each group then decides to use the items as props to tell a story or they can decide to create a game out of the items found in the bag. Give each group a few minutes to prepare and then ask them to present the story or game for the other group(s).

Color Me Proud

The purpose of this activity is to help the students recognize and remember the identity colors of the God is still speaking theme. The colors are red, black and white.

Each group will have a large sheet of paper, and markers. Ask the students to list as many things as they can think of that are the colors of red, black, and white. Challenge them to extend their thinking and to connect the colors they see to the colors of the God is still speaking banners, etc.

Monday evening 6:30- 7:00: Large Group Activity

For the large group activity, a photo shoot of the human GISS comma will be taken. Before the students arrive, map out the shape of a comma on the lawn (stakes and rope work well, or get the water soluble spray paint gardeners use to outline beds). During the large group time, adults and children will gather along the outline of the giant comma. If you have a large group of participants, fill in the center of the comma. Post a photographer at a high point to take the picture of the human comma. We used a digital camera.

If there is time after the photo shoot of the “comma people” the following rap can be taught. Alternate the verse with whispers and shouts.

God is still speaking speaking, speaking,
Speaking in a whisper or a shout.
God is still speaking speaking, speaking,
Speaking to us no doubt!

Lyrics by Cliff Aerie. Permission to use with this resource in all UCC settings.

Monday evening Games during rotation small group activities

The games for Monday emphasize the story of the Lost Coin and its message and the feeling of celebration. Emphasize that 1. it is worth our time to search for important things, 2. when we are with God we are found, 3. when we find the lost, it is great to celebrate. Select the games that fit the age of the group. With each game, emphasize the important message of the Lost Coin story and celebration.

Select games that interest you and your group. There is not enough time to play all the games described.

Bracelets

For all ages: Have groups do this so they will be able to have a collection of three bracelets by the end of the VBS.

There will be containers of yellow beads and elastic strings for students to make a yellow bracelet to represent the gold of the coin in the Lost Coin story. Talk about the story as the children string a bracelet to go with the red, white, and black bracelet made the night before. Encourage them to wear both bracelets the next night because they will be making a third bracelet on Tuesday.

Hidden Coins

For all ages

Partner the students in pairs. One half of the group hides their eyes or leaves the room while the other half hides the coins around the room. After coins are hidden, invite the “seekers” to come back to find the coins. Encourage them to work in their pairs. The group that hid the coins can give clues like “You’re getting warmer” or “You’re getting colder” as the seekers look for the coins. Trade jobs for a second round of the game.

Texture Tubs

For the younger students

There will be three tubs of textures and 3 bags of coins to hide in the textures. (We used rice, sand, and foam pellets.) Divide the group into 3 smaller groups. Each group hides coins in a texture tub. Rotate groups so they search for coins in a tub that has coins hidden by another group. Repeat 3 times so the children get to hide and find coins in each tub.

For the older students

There will be a 3 tubs of textures and a bag of felt coins with words printed on them to hide in the textures. (Prepare yellow felt coins by printing "Lost Coin Story" words on felt coin-shaped circles with permanent marker.) Place the tub in the center of the group and ask two or three of the students to dig in and find words. After each person finds 3 words, it is their turn to watch others find words. As they find words, encourage them to create a message about the lost coin story.

Ring on a Rope

For all ages

This is an old fashioned searching and guessing game. The group sits in a circle. A circle of rope with a ring on it is held by everyone except a person in the middle of the circle. The challenge is for the group to pass the ring from hand to hand around the circle secretly while the person in the middle tries to keep track of the ring. The leader will call GO to start the passing and call STOP at some point. The person in the middle then tries to guess who has the ring hidden in their hand. If the center person guesses correctly, he/she trades places with the person with the ring in the hand. It is ok to switch directions and cause distractions to make the challenge more fun.

Join the Group

The message here is that there is a safe place for everyone to be in the UCC. Give each person a "game piece" such as a comma, a small figure, a cross, a symbol that represents them individually, etc. Everyone might have the same piece or each person could have an individual piece. Select one person to be the first one to hide their object while the others are not looking. Call the group together and explain that each person is to quietly find the hiding place and secretly add his/her game piece to the hiding spot. When the last person finds the hiding place, everyone rejoices that the whole group succeeded in finding a place together.

Tuesday Night Games during rotation small group activities

The games for Tuesday emphasize the story of Samuel who was called by God. At first Samuel did not believe his ears. As members in the United Church of Christ, we believe that God still speaks to us today. It is our job to listen and then to act. It is important to take the time to listen so we understand what God calls us to do. Each game has a listening component. Reinforce the connection of listening skills in the games to the story of God calling Samuel and others.

Select games that interest you and your group. There is not enough time to play all the games described.

Listen Up!

For the younger students

In this game you will use a tape player, a cassette, picture cards, and game markers. Tell the children they will hear some very interesting sounds. Ask them to listen closely so they can guess what the sound is. As they guess as a group, ask one student to put a marker on the picture of the item or to raise a card if the sound picture is on it. Give clues as needed. (We borrowed a commercial sound identification game from a local preschool for this activity.)

Samuel Says

For the all students

This is the old fashioned game of Simon Says but we will use Samuel Says. One person is a leader and stands in front of the group. The rest of the group lines up along a line facing "Samuel." When Samuel says "Samuel says to hop on one foot," all the students need to hop forward. Samuel then gives another order, "Samuel says stop." All the students should stop. If Samuel says, "Walk backwards" without saying Samuel says first, whoever follows that order goes back to the line. The first person to get to the end line is the next Samuel.

For the younger students, the adult leader might need to give the "orders" and do some practices before the actual game starts. Take care with their feelings.

For the older students who are familiar with this game, let them be creative in their calls and have lots of fun with their listening skills.

Surprise Pops

For all students

In this activity you will need a sheet to cover the floor or table, an air pop corn popper, and cups. Review with the students how God often surprises us with God's call. Seat the children around the popper at a safe distance from the popper. Place kernels in the popper but do not use the plastic shoot. Simply let the kernels pop and try to catch them with the cups. Every time a kernel pops, the students are surprised!

Keep It Going!

For older students

The students will stand in a circle. One person will pull a word card out of a bag. The words in the bag are related to the Samuel story. The goal is to toss a ball back and forth among students while spelling the word. Example: SAMUEL would take 7 tosses to complete the spelling of the word. If a ball is dropped or the word misspelled, the students start again until they can complete the number of tosses to spell the word successfully. If they are really good at this, see how many times they can spell the word before there is a miss in spelling or tossing the ball.

Suggested words to spell:

Samuel, servant, Hannah (Samuel's mother), Eli (the priest Samuel went to serve), Priest, Bible, faithful, Promise (Hannah made a promise to God), listen, answer, Here I am, Speak, Israel. (If the students complete all these words, let them choose words of their own to finish up the game.)

Telephone

For all students

In this game, the students sit in a circle, close enough to each other so they can whisper in the next person's ear. The first person starts the message; the second person whispers to the third, etc, until the message goes all the way around. The last person to get the message says it out loud to the group. The first person states what the real message was.

For the younger students, use simpler messages with content that would be familiar to them.

For the older students, encourage them to challenge each other. There are some suggestions below for messages to be used. These will be on card that the older students can draw from to get ideas.

Sample Samuel messages:

Speak God, your servant is listening.
Samuel loved God and did what God asked.
Here I am.
God, I am listening.
Be a faithful servant of God.
How many ways can God speak to us?

Tuesday Night 7:30-8:00

Large Group Activity

Adults and students all gather in the large activity room.

As people enter the large room, the youth who have been assistants give everyone a “high five” and welcome them warmly. They also will hand out comma stickers to everyone.

The leader asks “Who are welcome here?” Students call out answers. (We are! I am! Everybody!)

Show TV commercials.

Have students show the adults:

Sign language messages.

Wave and chant

God is still speaking rap

Show the group the digital picture slide show (pictures have been taken throughout the VBS sessions and put into a computer slide show that can be projected on screen or wall).

Thank everyone who participated in the GISS VBS and encourage them to take the next important step of inviting people to join us as we listen to the messages God is still giving us today.

Musical closing. The large group will sing Kum Ba Ya tune with new words that are posted on the wall. Review the posted words to the Kum Ba Ya tune.(See below.) Randomly select 3 students to come forward. Dim the lights. Give the first student a small flash light to shine upward and hold during the first verse. At the second verse, pass the flash light to the second student. At the third verse, pass the flash light to the third student.

Speak to me my God
Speak to me.
Speak to me my God
Speak to me.
Speak to me my God
Speak to me.
Oh God, speak to me.

I will listen God,
I will listen.
I will listen God,
I will listen.
I will listen God
I will listen,
Oh God, I will listen.

I will go my God,
I will go.
I will go my God,
I will go.
I will go my God,
I will go.
Oh God, I will go.

Turn up the lights, thank the group for coming, and dismiss them to meet their rides. As they leave the room, give each child and adult the list of family volunteer opportunities in the community they could participate in and a GISS bank.