



TODDLER CHURCH

There are different ways you can use this session:

- As an hour long, stand-alone Pram/Buggy Service or Toddler Church service.
- Adapt to be included within a Parent and Toddler group, running for 20 mins.
- As a session, or number of sessions on social media, as part of keeping in touch with families.

During Toddler Church parents and carers will be in attendance and hopefully encouraging their children to engage. When delivering, please consider that parents and carers might also benefit from the service.

Things to consider

- Select the activities that are best suited to your group.
- Consider if you are meeting physically together, or if you are still socially distancing and are sharing the service online.
- You might be able to create 'Toddler Church in a Bag', where you can deliver some resources to your families, leaving them safely on the doorstep.

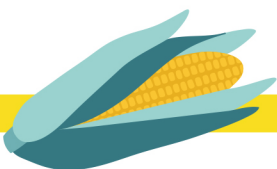
BIBLE PASSAGE

'Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created'. (James 1:17-18)

PREPARATION

You will need:

- create a farm setting with farm animals, diggers, farm vehicles. you may wish to place a waterproof sheet with bin bags underneath
- real or imaginary 'seeds' to scatter
- white confetti or tear paper to make snow
- a torch or a light from a mobile phone
- water for sprinkling rain, for example in a toy watering can
- juice or water and healthy snacks (if applicable)
- ask parents or carers to bring a chosen gift, something that is special to the children, to be displayed at the end of the session and returned





For the activities

Create a Harvest:

- Small pots or plastic cups, floral or gift wrapping ribbon, compost, cress seeds - or something simple that will grow fast and the families can eat.

Wayside flowers:

- Flower outlines drawn or printed onto paper, colouring pencils and pens or painting equipment, sticky tape and pipe cleaners

Make a night sky:

- Black craft paper, white paint, paint brushes, silver sticky stars or stars cut from white paper and glue

BIBLE STORY

After people have settled, dramatically read the verses from James 1:17-18:

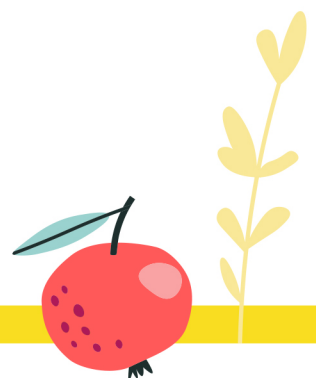
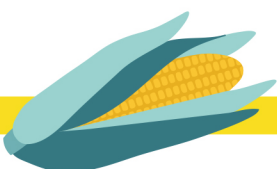
‘Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created’.

Discuss: What is the best present you ever received? How did you thank the person for the gift? Maybe you wrote them a letter, gave them a hug, bought them a gift, or gave them part of the gift back, if, for example, it was food or chocolates?

Remember to include the parents and carers in the discussion.

Ask: I wonder what are some of the gifts that God gives us? I’m going to tell you a story. Listen and see how many of God’s gifts you can find in the story.

Use this hymn by Matthias Claudius as a ‘story’ to reveal some of the gifts God gives us. Illustrate using the toy farm setting and other resources mentioned in the preparation.





Say

We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,

But it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand.

He sends the snow in winter,

The warmth to swell the grain,

The breezes and the sunshine,

And soft refreshing rain.

Do

Scatter 'seeds' over the 'farm'

Hold your open hand, palm down over the farm as a blessing

Sprinkle confetti over the 'farm'

Blow gently - invite everyone to join

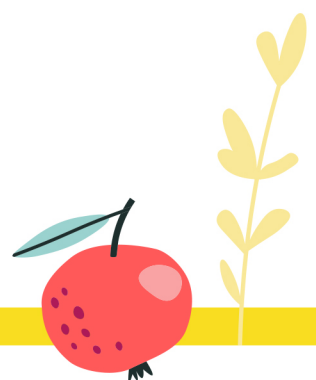
Shine a light from your phone - invite everyone to wriggle their fingers like rays of sunshine

Sprinkle water over the farm

Ask: How many gifts did we find?

Recap and count using the actions from the story: seeds, snow, sunshine, rain, God's love - ask if there are any others?

Say: There's a song which we are going to sing next which uses lots of actions. Help me tell the story by joining in.





Sing

All good gifts around us,

Are sent from Heaven above.

So thank you Lord,

Oh Thank you Lord,

For all his love.

Do

Count on fingers and spread arms out in front and to sides

Point up and spread hands as if to catch something

*Sign 'thank you' (with a flat hand place fingertips on chin, then move hand down and away from the signer) and 'Lord' (point your index fingers up to the sky)**

Repeat

Spread arms up and then down to sides and then make a heart shape with hands

*For more information visit www.signbsl.com/

Say: So we have counted these gifts (recap the gifts) and here are some more gifts that God gives us:

Say

He only is the Maker of all things near and far;

He paints the wayside flower,

He lights the evening star;

The wind...

...and waves obey him,

By him the birds are fed;

Do

Make the sign for the Lord

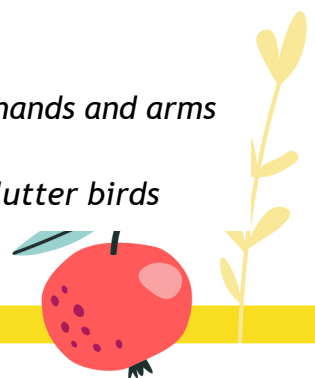
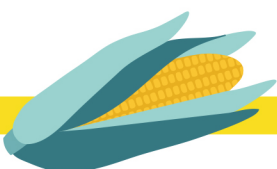
'Smell' the flowers

Look up and 'twinkle' your hands to the sky

Blow very hard - invite everyone to join in

Make waves with your hands and arms

Interlock thumbs and flutter birds





Pause and look around everyone slowly, then say slowly and dramatically:

Say

Much more to us, his children,

He gives our daily bread.

Do

Hug yourself and smile and include everyone

Say 'nom nom' and pretend to eat bread

Say: So how many more gifts is that?

Repeat the following words with their actions: flowers, stars, wind, waves, birds and food!

(If you are running this session online this might be an appropriate time to finish. You can encourage families to follow up with suggested craft activities or use any resources you've delivered to them. Give a date to re-join so people can show and tell, or upload their creations to your toddler Facebook page.)

ACTIVITIES

Create a Harvest

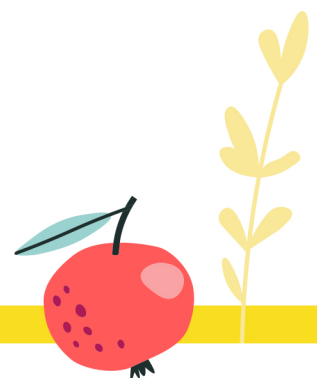
Decorate pots or plastic cups like little gifts with a ribbon tied around the middle. Add compost, plant seeds and add a splash of water.

Paint some wayside flowers

Colour in or paint the flower outlines. Stick pipe cleaners to the flower heads to make a bunch of flowers the families can take home to put in a vase.

Make a night sky

Create a night sky on black paper with sticky star shapes, or flicking white paint - if you are brave enough!





PRAYER TIME

Invite everyone back together again - offer some juice or water and a healthy snack if appropriate.

(If you are having a second online session it could restart at this point, with a celebration of the things people have created.)

Look at what everyone has created and recount the gifts we have talked about.

Say: We are going to say thank you to God now for his gifts and all the bright and good things you have made.

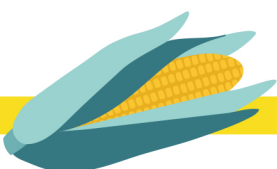
Slowly say

We thank you, then O Father,
For all things bright and good;
The seed time and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food.
We have no gifts to offer,
For all your love imparts.
But that which you desire now;
Our humble, thankful hearts!

Do

Put hands together as if praying
Indicate all the things
Point to the farm
Hug self, put hand on heart, mime 'eat'
Hold open hands in front of you
Make heart shape with hands
Raise heart shape to above your head

Sing the song again with the actions and while you do, if the families are physically with you, invite the children and their parents or carers to bring their chosen gift and place it at the front of the room, like an 'altar' to say thank you to our good God for all his goodness.





Reassure them that they will get their gifts back. Remind them how we thank friends and family for gifts, sometimes sharing something of the gift they gave us? Explain that this is a bit like that.

You might want to go a bit further referencing the 'first fruits' and offer the idea that when we show kindness and generosity to others, we are showing a little bit of what God is always like.

(If you are sharing online, invite the families to create their own 'altar' to give their chosen gift as a response to what they have learned about God's goodness and how it can be shared through them.)

BLESSING

When the response time is over, remind the families of the blessing sign from the story, your open hand floating over the farm.

Suggest that the families might like to bless each other by holding hands over one another - adult to child and vice versa also child to child and adult to adult.

If you are together, ask everyone to collect their precious gifts, unless they want to leave them there. Remind them about their craft items.

You can extend the session with some more of your favourite songs with musical instruments too.

