

PRAYiNG **BY** **NUMBER**

**20 Creative
Prayer Lessons
& Activities**

VOLUME TWO

PHYLLIS VOS WEZEMAN

Dedication

To my longtime friend, Mildred Morrison ...

... whose life of dedication to God is an inspiring lesson in prayer! P.V.W.

Acknowledgment

Thanks to Jude Dennis Fournier for collaborating on the lessons and activities in the book, *Praying by Number*.
























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Jude and Phyllis thrive on finding unique bakeries, coffeeshops, and dessert cafes – purely as settings for planning projects!

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Contents

 Overview 5	 Names of Jesus..... 43
 Meal Time Prayers..... 7	 Jesus' Passion..... 45
 Evening Prayer 11	 Body Postures 47
 Psalm 23..... 15	 Creation 49
 24 Hours 19	 Growth Chart..... 51
 Feast Days..... 21	 Symbols..... 53
 Letters of the Alphabet 25	 Spontaneous Prayer 63
 Books of the New Testament 27	 Prayer Chain 67
 Promises of God 31	 Wilderness Experiences..... 71
 Syllables 35	 Resources 75
 Pieces of Silver 39	 About the Author 77
 Prayer Guide..... 41	

Overview

Prayer is _____. Fill in the blank. This timeless, yet timely, question has been pondered by teachers and students throughout the ages. And, this seemingly simple statement has been completed with answers ranging from a single word to multiple volumes. Webster defines prayer as “the act of praying; an entreaty, supplication; a humble request, as to God; any set formula for this.” Commentators and theologians call prayer communicating with God, opening one’s life to God, engaging oneself in the purposes of God, and total immersion in the holy presence of God.

Prayer is a vital part of the Christian life. Therefore, it is a subject worth studying. We learn about prayer in many ways. By turning to Scripture, we discover how people in the Old Testament and the New Testament talked with and listened to God. We glean insight into prayer by reading stories of the saints, and we gain instruction about prayer from people of faith today. Perhaps our best guide to learning what prayer is, however, is to actually pray. And, that’s what this book provides—twenty prayer opportunities for classes at church and school and for families at home. All lessons are designed to help participants explore and experience various aspects of and approaches to prayer.

This book furnishes twenty lessons based on the topic of prayer. Instruction takes place through participation as students explore and experience inviting, informing, and inspiring activities that are used to impart information and ideas. As a unique feature and a fresh approach, each lesson involves a number, from one to twenty, that becomes the focus for the experience.

Methods used to teach the subject matter incorporate architecture, art, banners/textiles, cartoons, creative writing, dance, drama, games, music, photography, puppetry, and storytelling.

Provided in an easy-to-use format, each lesson is organized into three parts:

- **Goal** states the purpose of the activity,
- **Gather** lists the materials required and suggests steps for advance preparation,
- **Guide** contains complete directions for accomplishing the task.

Prayer is for people of all ages—children, youth, and adults. While these designs are intended for young people in classroom settings, they may be easily adapted for use in small and large group worship, education, outreach, and nurture opportunities. They are ideal for parochial school programs, Sunday school classes, worship centers, children’s church, vacation bible school, mid-week ministries, kids’ clubs, intergenerational events, before and after school care programs, youth groups, retreats, confirmation classes, family devotions, home schooling, and more.

As you use this resource, may you be as eager and as open as Jesus’ disciples were when they pleaded, “Teach us to pray.” As teachers and students prepare and participate in activities, may your prayer life be enriched by discovering—or re-discovering—ways to talk with and to listen to God. As you carry the information and insight from the classroom to the world, may the power of prayer be reflected in your daily life.

21 Meal Time Prayers

Goal

To use art and creative writing to make table tent prayer kiosks to emphasize the importance of giving thanks before each meal—21 per week.

Gather

- Construction paper, one large sheet for every two students
- Paper, ruled
- Pencils
- Pens
- Resource sheet
 - "21 Questions Game"
- Scissors
- Tape, clear

Advance Preparation

- Duplicate copies of the resource sheet
- Cut 12" x 18" construction paper in half vertically.

Guide

Since this prayer lesson involves the number 21, invite the participants to try to answer 21 questions related to numbers. Distribute a copy of the resource sheet to each participant. As an alternative, verbally ask the questions of the group. Invite the students to guess the number that corresponds with each statement.

Twenty-One Questions

1. Letters of the alphabet [26]
2. Days in a week [7]
3. Digits in a basic zip code [5]
4. Hours in a day [24]
5. Sides on a stop sign [8]
6. Cards in a deck [52]
7. Wonders of the world [7]
8. Days in a week-end [2]
9. Items in a baker's dozen [13]
10. Days in February in a leap year [29]
11. Fruit of the Holy Spirit [9]
12. Minutes in an hour [60]
13. Quarts in a gallon [4]
14. Fingers and toes [20]
15. Days and nights of the great flood [40]
16. Persons in the Trinity [3]
17. Days in a traditional work week [5]
18. Seconds in a minute [60]
19. Inches in a yard [36]
20. Players on a baseball team [9]



For number twenty-one, ask the learners if they can guess what most people do three times a day. Many answers may arise, but “eat” is the correct response for this lesson. Ask the students to name the three meals people eat each day—breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Challenge the group to figure out how many meals most people eat in a week. Of course, the answer is 21: three meals a day times seven days a week equals 21.

Allow time for the learners to share their favorite foods and meals. Explain how important it is to be thankful for God’s gift of food. Ask the pupils to name one thing people should do before each meal. The answer is pray. Emphasize the importance of meal time prayers as a way to give praise and thanks to God for all of our gifts.

Tell the group that in this prayer lesson they will be writing meal time prayers and making table-tent kiosks as a way to remember to thank God before breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Distribute the ruled paper and pencils. Ask the students to write three prayers: one each for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. For example:

Breakfast Prayer

Dear God, thank you for this new day in which to give you praise. Help me to think of you often throughout the day, so that I may be mindful of all that you do for me. Bless the morning and all that it holds and bless this food so that it may give me the nourishment to work hard today. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Lunch Prayer

Good and loving God, I have completed half of my day and I stop now for a moment to thank

and praise you. Be with me as I continue the rest of this day and help me if a problem becomes difficult. My mid-day meal is set before me; I ask your blessing upon it that it will give me the energy I need to finish my day. I ask this in the name of Jesus, who is my friend. Amen.

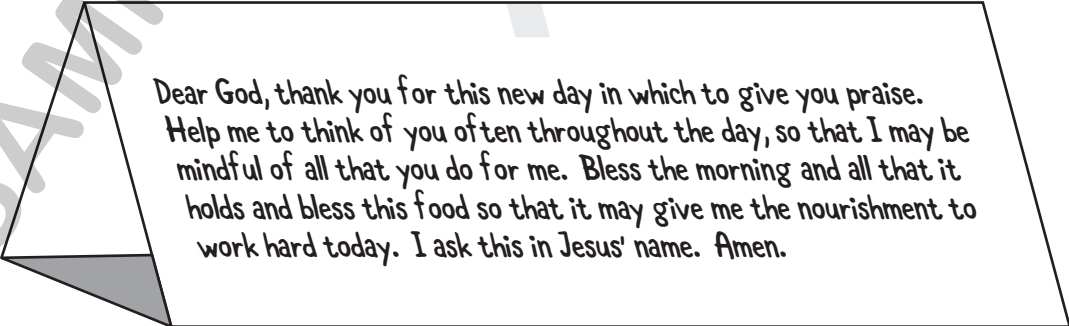
Dinner Prayer

God, Creator of all that is wonderful, thank you for making me a special part of your creation. Thank you for this day of good work, good play, and good learning. You have given me so many gifts and it makes me happy. Thank you for all the blessings of this day and now bless this meal and all those who made it for me; I realize many people’s hands have helped to bring it to this table. Bless it now that it may help prepare me for another day. Amen.

Once the participants have had enough time to write their meal time prayers, encourage the students to read some of them to each other.

Distribute the construction paper, one-half sheet per student. Dispense scissors, pens, and tape. Instruct the learners to fold the paper into three equal sections to form a table tent, also called a kiosk. Tell the students to copy their meal time prayers onto one side of the kiosk, one prayer per section. When the writing is completed, direct the participants to form a triangle and to tape the open-end, or bottom, closed.

Invite the learners to use the prayer kiosk at home. It should be placed in the center of the table for all to see. Pray a prayer before each meal. Encourage the students to think about many people throughout the world who do not have three meals a day and to remember their needs in prayer too.



Dear God, thank you for this new day in which to give you praise. Help me to think of you often throughout the day, so that I may be mindful of all that you do for me. Bless the morning and all that it holds and bless this food so that it may give me the nourishment to work hard today. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

21 Questions Game

1. Letters of the alphabet
2. Days in a week
3. Digits in a basic zip code
4. Hours in a day
5. Sides on a stop sign
6. Cards in a deck
7. Wonders of the world
8. Days in a week-end
9. Items in a baker's dozen
10. Days in February in a leap year
11. Fruit of the Holy Spirit
12. Minutes in an hour
13. Quarts in a gallon
14. Fingers and toes
15. Days and nights of the great flood
16. Persons in the Trinity
17. Days in a traditional work week
18. Seconds in a minute
19. Inches in a yard
20. Players on a baseball team

22 Evening Prayer

Goal

To encourage the use of the Bible for evening prayer and to illustrate that Scripture can guide prayer during all times of life.

Gather

- Bibles
- Copy machine
- Markers
- Paper, 8 ½" x 11"
- Paper, glow-in-the-dark (optional)
- Paper, yellow construction
- Pencils
- Resource sheets:
 - "Star Patterns"
 - "Where to Look in the Bible When..."
- Scissors

Advance Preparation

- Duplicate copies of the "Star Patterns" worksheet for the students to share.
- Make a copy of the "Where to Look in the Bible When..." worksheet for each participant.

Guide

Time is every moment there has ever been or ever will be. Time is also a system for measuring duration. Since a day is divided into 24 one-hour segments, many countries of the world, as well as the military, measure time on a 24-hour clock rather than the 12-hour clock that we normally use. A 24-hour system avoids confusion over morning, afternoon, and evening. With a 12-hour system, if someone says it's 10:00 o'clock, that could mean its two hours before noon or two hours before midnight. Using a 24-hour clock, 10:00 hours is morning and 22:00 hours is night.

The Bible is a book that meets our needs at any time of the day. The Bible is also our guide for prayer, the way we communicate with God, through all the times of our lives. Many people turn to the words of the Bible to help them put their thoughts and feelings into prayers. Scripture verses can help us pray when we are happy or sad, calm or afraid, well or sick. Many Bibles and devotional guides contain a list of "Where to Look When..." In this lesson, this type of list will be used as a guide for evening prayer.

Hand out the "Where to Look in the Bible When..." resource sheet to each participant.

Distribute the Bibles and invite the participants to choose two or three themes from the list that are of interest to them and to look up the passages. Provide time for locating and reading the verses.

Encourage the learners to share what was gleaned from the Bible. What did the passage say? Did it offer advice? Did it provide an answer? Invite participants to read selections aloud for further discussion.



Once everyone has had an opportunity to share, explain that these passages are a good guide to use when we want to express our emotions in the form of prayers. Each person will have the opportunity to make 22 stars and to print Scripture references on them that can be used as an aid to evening prayer. The “Where to Look in the Bible When...” stars may be taken home and, with permission, attached to the walls or ceiling of the bedroom.

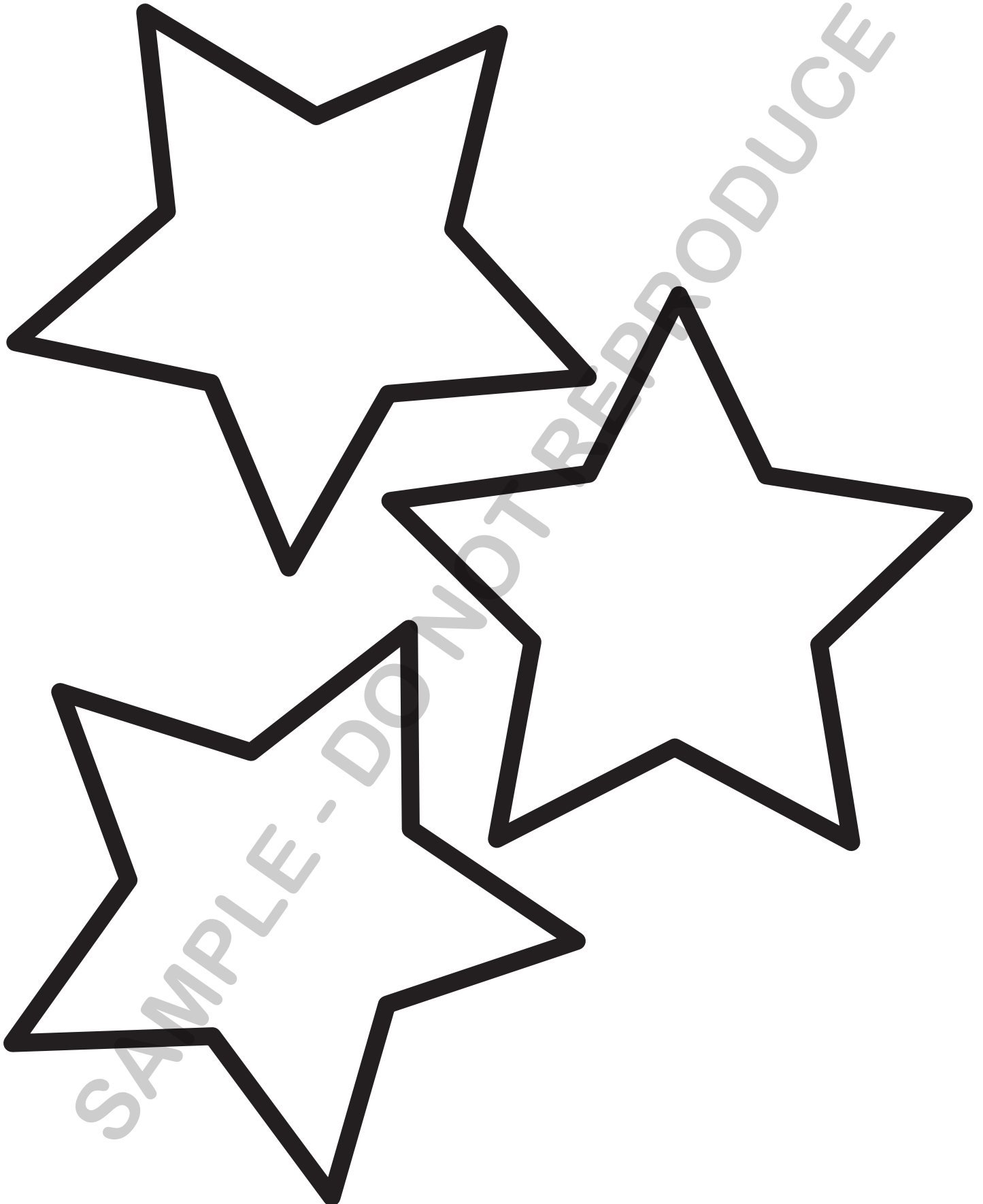
Distribute glow-in-the-dark sheets or yellow construction paper along with star patterns, scissors, pencils, and markers. The glow-in-the-dark paper will add to the night time, evening prayer atmosphere. Instruct the students to trace and cut 22 stars from the paper. Once the stars are prepared, direct the group to letter a different “Where to Look...” word and Scripture reference on each shape. For example:

- Afraid: Psalm 27
- Guilty: Psalm 51
- Hurting: Hebrews 12
- Tempted: James 1

Note that the word and the reference should be written on the same side of the star. Encourage participants to use the markers to decorate or illustrate each star.

Invite the pupils to take the stars home and to ask permission to tape them to a bedroom wall or ceiling. Encourage them to use the stars as a guide for prayer before bed time—at 22:00 hours (10:00 p.m.) or another time. The stars should serve as a reminder that God is present and available to us through prayer—all the time!

Star Patterns



Where to Look in the Bible When...

God seems far away: Psalm 139

People fail you: Psalm 27

You feel defeated: Acts 1-8

You feel guilty: Psalm 51; 1 John 1-2

You feel happy: Psalm 95

You feel lonely: Luke 6

You feel sorrowful: Psalm 46

You have sinned: Psalm 51

You leave home to travel: Psalm 121

You need assurance: Romans 8

You need rest and peace: Matthew 12:25-30

You need to know God's will for your life: Proverbs 3:1-6

You need to make a decision: Proverbs 3

You want courage: Joshua 1:1-9

You wonder about death: 1 Corinthians 15

You're afraid: Psalms 27, 91, 139

You're discouraged: Psalm 34

You're hurting: Hebrews 12

You're sick: Psalm 41

You're tempted: James 1; 1 Corinthians 10

You're tired: Psalm 23

You're trying to figure out right and wrong: Colossians 2

23 Psalm 23

Goal

To use Psalm 23 in a prayer service.

Gather

- Bible
- Candle, white
- Cloth to cover prayer table
- Copy machine
- Equipment to play recorded music
- Matches
- Paper, white construction
- Pencils
- Recording of tranquil music
- Resource sheets:
 - "Sheep Patterns"
 - "Psalm 23 Responsive Reading"
- Scissors
- Table

Advance Preparation

- Make copies of the "Sheep Patterns" resource sheet. Cut sheep out of white construction paper, one per participant.
- Duplicate the "Psalm 23 Responsive Reading" resource sheet.
- Set a table in a prominent place in the gathering space.

Guide

For many people, Psalm 23 is their favorite passage of Scripture. In this familiar chapter, God is seen as a caring shepherd and a dependable guide. We, like sheep, must follow God and obey God's commands. God is our only hope for eternal life and security. In this lesson Psalm 23 is used as the basis of a prayer service. Participants will have the opportunity to read the Psalm and to write phrases of a litany—a prayer in which people speak responsively—to illustrate additional metaphors describing God.

Invite the group to sit around the table that has been positioned in a prominent location in the gathering space. Place the prayer cloth, candle, and Bible on the table. Distribute copies of Psalm 23 and tell the students that it will be read responsively during the prayer service. Organize the participants into two groups. Open the Bible to Psalm 23, light the candle, and begin playing tranquil background music. Encourage silence as worship begins.

Psalm 23 Prayer Service

Opening prayer

Lord, Jesus, Shepherd of us all, you call us together and invite us to be the sheep of your flock. We know that if we stray from your care, you will find us and lead us back. We gather now to give you thanks and praise as our Shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep. Amen.

Psalm 23

Read responsively using the resource sheet.



Prayer Response: A Litany

Explain that in Psalm 23 God is described as a shepherd. Throughout the Bible and in our everyday lives, God is experienced in many ways—for example, as a friend, a guide, or a healer.

Distribute a construction paper sheep and a pencil to each participant. Instruct the worshipers to complete the statement: The Lord is my _____. Tell the group that the symbols will be used in a litany—a responsive prayer—based on Psalm 23. Invite each student to write a word on the paper sheep. Allow time for ideas as well as for reflection.

Once everyone has completed the task, begin the litany by inviting the learners to take turns reading their metaphors. After each phrase is read, the sheep should be placed on the prayer table. Use the following format for the litany:

Reader: The Lord is my _____.

All: We praise your holy name.

Sample Litany

Reader: The Lord is my advocate.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my comfort.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my companion.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my consoler.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my counselor.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my defense.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my friend.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my God.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my guide.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my healer.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my hope.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my light.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my life.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my love.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my mentor.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my Messiah.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my redemption.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my salvation.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my savior.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my spirit.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my teacher.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my truth.

All: We praise your holy name.

Reader: The Lord is my way.

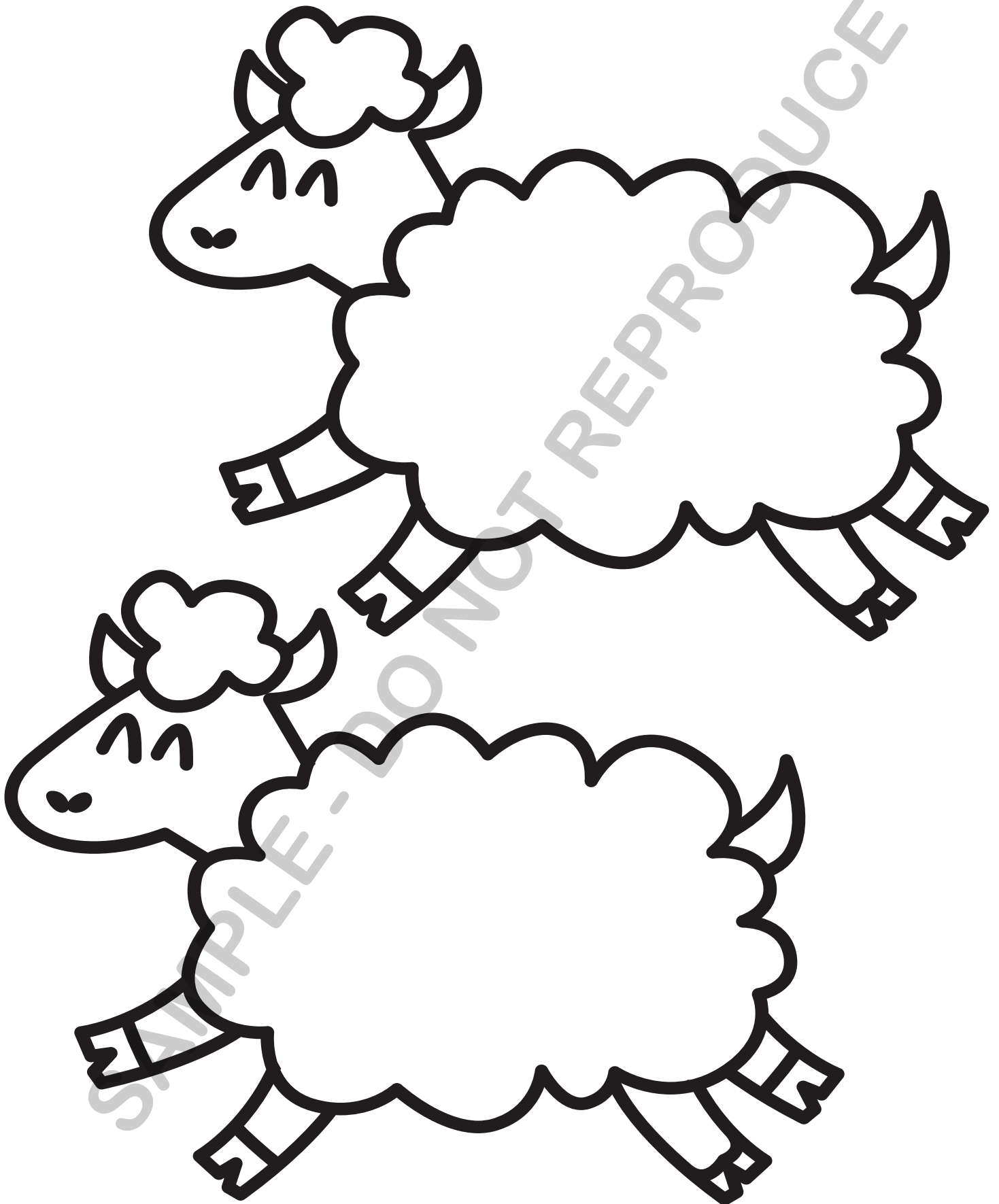
All: We praise your holy name.

At the end of the litany, stand and form a circle around the prayer table. Silently reflect on the responses to the statement “The Lord is my _____.”

Closing Prayer

Lord, God of all. You are many things to many people. Help us to remember your constant love. We know that we make mistakes and often make the wrong choices; but you always love us as your children, no matter what we do. Help us to spend our lives praising your holy name. Amen.

Sheep Patterns



Psalm 23

Responsive Reading

Right

*The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.*

Left

*He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.*

Right

*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.*

Left

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.*

About the Author

Phyllis Vos Wezeman

As a religious educator, Phyllis Wezeman has served as Director of Christian Nurture at a downtown congregation in South Bend, Indiana, Executive Director of the Parish Resource Center of Michiana, and Program Coordinator for ecumenical as well as interfaith organizations in Indiana and Michigan.

In academics, Phyllis has been Adjunct Faculty in the Education Department at Indiana University South Bend and in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. She is an "Honorary Professor" of the Saint Petersburg (Russia) State University of Pedagogical Art where she has taught methods courses for extended periods on several occasions. She has also been guest lecturer at the Shanghai Teachers College in China.

As founder of the not-for-profit Malawi Matters, Inc., she develops and directs HIV & AIDS Education programs with thousands of volunteers in nearly 200 villages in Malawi, Africa including "Creative Methods of HIV & AIDS Education," "Culture & HIV-AIDS," and "Equipping Women/Empowering Girls."

Author or co-author of over 1,950 articles and books, she has written for over 80 publishers.

Phyllis served as President of Active Learning Associates, Inc.; a consultant or board member to numerous local and national organizations such as the American Bible Society, Church World Service, LOGOS, and the Peace Child Foundation; leader of a six-week youth exchange program to Russia and the Ukraine; and Project Director for four Lilley Worship Renewal grants. She is the recipient of three "Distinguished Alumni Awards" and recipient of the Aggiornamento Award from the Catholic Library Association.

Wezeman holds undergraduate degrees in Business, Communications, and General Studies from various institutions and an MS in Education from Indiana University South Bend.

Phyllis and her husband Ken (who met when they were in second and third grade in elementary school) have three children and their spouses, Stephanie (Jeff), David, and Paul (Deha), five grandchildren, Quin, Ayle, Lief, Ashley, and Jacob, and two great-grandsons, Maddox and Troy.