

Director's Guide

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About This Material

In May 2020, churches, choir directors, and children's ministry leaders approached a summer of cancelled in-person events - music camps, Vacation Bible School, and summer musicals. Choristers Guild aspired to develop an at-home experience that would nurture the musical and spiritual growth of children and families at home.

With the quick thinking and incredible creativity of Mark Burrows, this resource was curated to meet that need.

Inside this resource, you'll discover fully reproducible material designed to help children (and their families) grow in faith through musical and artistic expression. The content was inspired by Mark's musical for children's choirs, *In the Image* – which explores the story of Creation and helps children wonder what it means to be created *in the image* of God. The musical's imagery, language, and music are used here in new ways to spark creativity, innovation, and conversation.

Five main themes from the musical became the building blocks for five content modules. These modules can be used over the course of a week (one module per day) – or over the course of a month (one module per week). Each module contains the following enrichment activities:

**Bible Beat
Songs
Treasure of Nature
Art Experience
Game
Family Worship**

Through these activities (described later in this Guide), children and families will discover what it means to be created *in the image* of God: embracing their inherent creative abilities, seeing the good in things, taking responsibility to care for creation, creating community, and valuing rest. The music and art expressions in this resource are woven together for a meaningful faith-formation experience.

Using This Resource

The flexibility of this resource gives leaders many options for use.

- Use this as a week-long *at-home* Music & Arts Camp.
- Use this as a week-long *at-home* VBS.
- Use this as a month-long family faith-formation initiative, spanning five weeks in the spring, summer, or fall.
- Incorporate the activity and devotional material into your children’s choir rehearsals (in-person or online).
- Use the modules as a 5-week Sunday School thematic block about Creation.
- Use this material with your choir before producing *In the Image* (the musical) – introducing the theme & music to your children before rehearsals begin.
- Use this material concurrently with *In the Image* rehearsals – providing artistic expression and faith formation as you learn your lines & blocking.
- Use this as a follow-up enrichment experience after performing *In the Image* with your children’s choir.

The five modules are a starting point – a springboard. Though they are fully complete, you might wish to add more activities. We’ve included a **Creativity Bank** for this very purpose. Peruse the art projects, games, and activities in the Creativity Bank and select those you wish to use during your event. Or – simply provide families with their own copy of the Creativity Bank to support continued learning at home.

Planning an At-Home Event

An event hosted at a distance might involve fewer pieces to plan (no venue reservations or lunch volunteers needed), but your planning work is no less important. Here are a few tips for putting together a successful at-home event.

- Schedule your event as you would for an in-person event – avoid holiday weeks and calendar dates when families may be traveling. Check church and community calendars to avoid conflicts with other events involving your primary participant audience.
- Determine the registration procedure. Will you ask families to register online via your church website or an online form?
- Determine any program fees and how they’ll be collected.
- Some good news: families may not need much advance notice for an at-home event. Don’t worry if summer has already begun – just start planning, get the word out, and ask families to share the news with their friends.
- Share news of your event to your local community and neighborhood groups on social media. This type of event may appeal to non-members of your church because they can engage in the material from the comfort of their home. Consider this a great outreach opportunity to your neighbors!

- Decide how you will package and distribute the supplies. Follow local health guidelines for in-person pick-ups.
- Allow plenty of time to package the supplies with care. Pray for the participants and their families as you pack each set of supplies.
- Determine how you will engage your participants during the week and how creations might be shared among your group – as well as with your broader church family. (See the section *Building Community – Connecting and Sharing* for more tips.)

What do I provide participants for an at-home event?

- Share the Parent Guide with each family. This brief guide is designed to provide parents a helpful overview of the activities while cheering them on to find a balanced family rhythm. If parents feel stressed by the task of shepherding kids through this resource, the Parent Guide reassures them they are capable (and creative, too!).
- Be sure each family has access to the five modules. Make hard copies available or distribute the PDFs.
- Share the song MP3 files. Create a private soundcloud playlist for your participants or send the actual audio files via Dropbox, WeTransfer, or another file-sharing method.
- Share the song pages as hard copies or PDFs.
- Consider providing any crafting materials participants will need: the paper supplies, the tangram templates, string, a pack of crayons, balloons, etc. No need for expensive supplies – everything on your supply list can be easily (and inexpensively) found at your local store. A complete list is provided at the end of this Guide.
- Consider providing a printed reference copy of the color wheel and tangram example page – or make these PDFs available to families.
- Provide any Treasure of Nature item that's not available in your local neighborhood (feathers or acorns, for example).

The purchase of this resource includes the license to reproduce the content and/or distribute the digital audio & document files for your event.

Daily Rhythm

One of the temptations when organizing an event filled with at-home activities is to create a sample schedule for parents to follow or recreate.

Avoid this temptation.

This curriculum is designed to accompany a family's daily rhythm. A Bible Beat to begin the day with purpose. A simple art project when children and parents are feeling inspired. A nature devotion to share during outdoor play. A game to engage the pre-meal energy. A family worship experience to end the day. And a musical soundtrack to accompany any type of activity.

Adopt a *less-is-more* approach regarding the schedule. Allow breathing room for creativity to flourish naturally. The freedom to determine a rhythm that works for them is a gift to families.

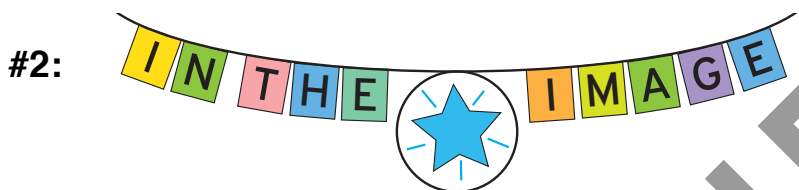
Suggested Sequence

The thematic material in this resource is designed to meet your needs. Present one module per day, one module per week, or customize as your schedule requires. Although we offer a suggested sequence below, you can also customize the module order to best fit your program.



Creative

To be created in the image of a Creator is to be creative. Each of us has the ability to create something beautiful, something meaningful. And real creativity isn't about having the most. It's about doing the most with what you have.



Seeing the Good

After God created the heavens, the earth, and all living things, God saw all that God made, and indeed it was very good. To be created in the image of God is to find the good ...even when it's not easy to see.



Care of Creation

God created people to be earth stewards, to care for God's creation. To be created in the image of God is to respect nature and take responsibility for caring for the earth.



Community

Not just I – but we – are created in God's image. It takes all of us working together to be God's hands, God's heartbeat, God's song in the world.



Rest

After the wonderful work of creating our world, God rested. We are created in the image of God, so we create, we see the good, we care, we connect, and we rest.

Curriculum Overview

This curriculum is a flexible collection of creative and artistic expressions. Here are brief descriptions of the activities included with each module.



Bible Beats

It all begins here – with a meaningful biblical text set to rhythm. The simple Bible Beat rhythm is ideal for a wide variety of ages. Young children are concrete thinkers and this activity not only allows the children to hear the rhythm, but feel it and see it, too. Each of the four Bible Beats works together in a percussion groove, and older children may have fun layering the parts together as the week rolls on.

What do you use to play the Bible Beat? Well, first use voices only – and chant the text in rhythm. Next, add body percussion and ask the children to pat their lap or their chest as they speak in rhythm. For even more fun, add some instruments.

What if we don't have drums at home? A quick lap around the kitchen or garage will result in some handy percussion instruments. Try these out:

- A coffee can
- A 5-gallon bucket
- An empty ice cream pail
- Sandpaper
- A shoe box
- An oatmeal canister
- A cookie sheet
- An empty laundry detergent bottle



Songs

The songs featured in this resource come directly from *In the Image*, Mark's children's musical. This musical features a group of children who wonder what it really means to be created *in the image* of God. Through humorous, earnest exploration, the children discover that being created in the image of God isn't about physical appearance. It's about creativity, faithfulness, responsibility, community, and the ability to find the good in things.

These catchy melodies and meaningful rhymes will provide a wonderful soundtrack for your week. Distribute the audio files to your families and encourage them to play the soundtrack as they play games, create art, and prepare meals together. A song or two is also featured in each family worship experience.



Treasures of Nature

One of the unforeseen side effects of our shelter-in-place/safer-at-home time is how people are connecting more with nature. For many families, outdoor activities are bringing great peace and comfort right now - a walk in the park, a family bike ride, a picnic in the yard, the simple joy of being outdoors! In a time when we're forced to spend so much time interacting *virtually*, reconnecting with nature reminds us all that WE ARE REAL.

A global pandemic is not a good thing. It's just not. And it doesn't mean your faith is weak if you don't see this trial as a "blessing." Full stop. But here's the good news: as children of God, we have a sacred ability to hear whispers of blessing and find moments of meaning, even in the hardest times.

Included here are five simple devotions, each based around a treasure of nature. These devotions can be led by a grownup or an older sibling ("junior counselor"). Consider going outside to share these devotion times.

This is slow time ... breathable time. No need to rush.

Before you say anything, encourage the children to simply hold each object, examine it.

What does it look like?

What does it feel like?

Does it feel the way you expected?

Remind the children to handle each object gently and carefully.

Here are the items you'll use throughout the week:

Feather – Acorn – Stone – Leaf

You may need to purchase one or more of these items from an online craft store, especially the feathers, which you will want to be clean. Consider providing a small box or jar, so everyone can keep their treasures in an easy-to-find place.



Art Experiences

Creating art is a wonderful way to express feelings, capture wonder, and appreciate beauty. The art experiences in this resource don't require an art degree or fancy supplies. They are designed to be intuitive – using what families have on hand to craft something beautiful, something with purpose and meaning.



Games

The games featured in this resource are simple, creative, and fun. With very few items required (if any), these small-group games will help families flex their creative & cooperative muscles – all while reinforcing the themes of the week.

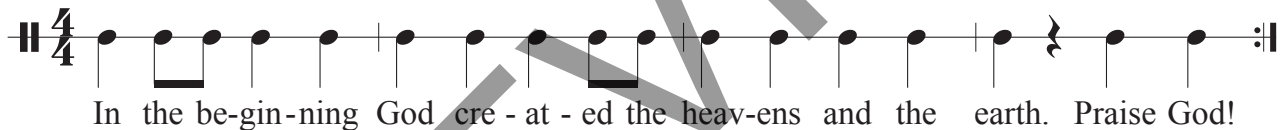


Creative

To be created in the image of a Creator is to be creative.
Each of us has the ability to create something beautiful, something meaningful.
And real creativity isn't about having the most.
It's about doing the most with what you have.



Bible Beat: **Genesis 1:1**



Songs: **"In the Image"** and **"Created to Create"**



Treasure of Nature: **Feather**



Art Experience: **Cartooning**



Game: **One Word at a Time**

Materials You'll Need:

- Feather
- 4x11" Poster board or cardstock strips
- Pencils, crayons, or markers
- Song pages for "In the Image" and "Created to Create"



Treasure of Nature: Feather

Hand each person a feather.

Say:

Hold your feather. Feel how light it is.

Tickle the palm of your hand with it.

Now shape your hands into a little nest and gently hold the feather.

Sometimes we can get scared, worried, or stressed about things in our lives.

Will I be okay in a new class or a new school?

Will anyone come to my party?

Will we always have enough to eat or drink?

How long will we have to stay safe at home?

These worries are natural. But God doesn't want us to spend so much time worrying that we miss out on the wonder of life.

Just as God knows every curve in your thumbprint, God knows every feather of every bird. God cares for every bird, and God cares for *you* very much.

Listen to these words from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, verses 25-27 -

"Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

Now let's sit in silence. Look at the feather in your hands and know that God will take care of you.

After a few moments of silence, pray (the children can echo):

**Loving God,
Help us to not worry so much.
We know your love will take care of us.
Amen.**