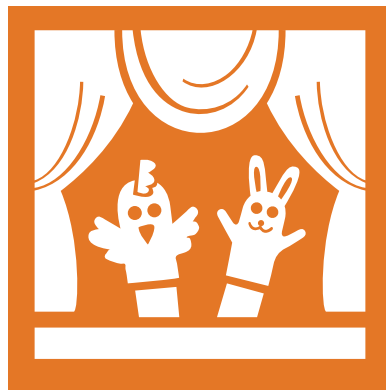




FEEDING 5,000

PUPPETRY
WORKSHOP



OVERVIEW



SCRIPTURE

John 1:1,14, Luke 2:1-7



CONNECTION

When Jesus was born, even the animals gathered at the Nativity, awestruck by God's presence. As we think about animals at the manger, imagine how those animals were offering their gifts. Heifer offers living gifts to people in need around the world, the gift of livestock but also the gift of human compassion.



MAIN IDEAS

- Jesus came to live among us
- Heifer provides animals as living gifts to farmers in need



HIGHLIGHTS

- Hear the story of Jesus' birth
- Create animal puppets representing animals Heifer provides
- Consider sharing the puppet show in worship to inform the congregation about the gifts Heifer provides



SUPPLIES

- Items for a Nativity; decide between a small, printed set using figurines or printouts, or encouraging students to dress in costumes
- Puppets and props
 - » Create a space to use as the puppet stage area
 - » Gather animal puppets if you have them
 - » Gather costumes for Mary and Joseph, a doll to represent Jesus and something to represent a manger (e.g. box or hay)
 - » Collect stuffed animals from other members of the congregation to use in the lesson



ADVANCE PREPARATION

- Click [here](#) to print out and pre-cut finger puppets
- Click [here](#) to print out larger animal graphics for stick puppets
- Click [here](#) to print out a copy of a Nativity; if you use full-size animals, include people to represent Jesus' family

LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Set up a Nativity in the classroom. Gather around it to begin the class.

- How many of you have a Nativity scene in your home?
- What figures are usually in the scene?
- Do you know how the tradition started?

ST. FRANCIS AND THE NATIVITY SCENE

About 800 years ago, a man known as Francesco, or Francis, lived in Assisi, Italy. He was born to a rich family, but would often leave home just to give money to the poor. Once, when he had no money, he gave away his own coat to a beggar.

One night as he was walking to the next town, he saw shepherds in a field and was reminded of the Christmas story in the Bible. He decided to re-create the story for the people of that town. He secretly gathered a feed trough from the stable and some animals and put costumes on some of his friends. He announced that everyone in the town should come to a certain spot that night to witness something spectacular.

When the townspeople arrived, they saw a live Nativity. The story they had heard all of their lives had come to life. There sat Mary and Joseph and even baby Jesus. There were shepherds and kings and animals. That man, who became St. Francis of Assisi, read the story from the Bible and asked everyone to treat each other as they would treat Jesus.

There are many Christmas carols about the holy night that Jesus was born. Some carols tell the story of how people recognized Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus was not just an ordinary baby. God chose to come to Earth and live among us. (Use this opportunity to talk to students about carols that tell the story of the night Jesus was born.)

CONNECTION TO HEIFER

At Christmas time, many of us consider giving gifts to one another in honor of Jesus. Heifer provides a wonderful alternative for us. Just as the first Nativity scene was a living gift from St. Francis to the people of Assisi, Heifer provides living gifts of animals to people around the world. The wonderful thing about Heifer is that it gives these living gifts all year long. For families in need, it is like Christmas when a Heifer animal arrives.

The gift giving doesn't stop there. Each person who receives a living gift of an animal from Heifer agrees to Pass on the Gift. This means they share their training and one of the animal's offspring with another family in the community. When we give animals to families in need, we show them Jesus' love.

FINGER PUPPETS

- Have children color the printed pages before you tape the ends together to make the actual puppet.
- Have each child select 10 puppets for their fingers or use the same animal on each finger of the children's hands.
- Place the Nativity picture in the center of the puppet stage area.
- Gather the children in a circle and sing Heifer's Animal Song on Page 5, having them either move the appropriate finger or hand.
- After they have practiced as a group, have them go behind the puppet stage.
- As each animal's verse is sung during the song, have the children either raise the finger with the animal or put the hand up with the animals.
- All the fingers will be wiggling or all hands will be up during the last verse of the song.

STICK PUPPETS

- Have children color the printed pages, cut them out and glue them to popsicle sticks to create stick puppets.
- Place the Nativity picture in the center of the puppet stage area. This can be fixed in position or on sticks to be like a puppet.
- Gather the children in a circle and sing Heifer's Animal Song on Page 5, having them move the animal their puppet represents at the appropriate time.
- After they have practiced as a group, have them go behind the puppet stage.
- As each animal's verse is sung, have the children raise their respective animal puppet and gather around the Nativity.
- All the puppets should be up for the last verse of the song.

DISCUSSION

Sit in a circle again. Consider which of the animals you would like to give through Heifer.

- Why do you want to give that animal?
- What ways can you encourage others to give to Heifer?

If you are going to do the puppet show in worship as an informational presentation about Heifer or as part of the dedication of your congregation's gifts to Heifer, you will need to plan time to rehearse. Invite members of the congregation to sing along during worship as you dedicate the gifts to Heifer.

FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITY

Celebrate the spirit of Christmas giving by inviting the congregation to take up a love offering during a service.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for the miracle of your son Jesus. We ask that you open our hearts to finding a way to pass our gifts and talents onto others in need. Just as Jesus taught us, we become part of the miracle when we choose to act on our faith. Amen.

HEIFER'S ANIMAL SONG

(Can be sung to the tune of "The Friendly Beasts")

"We," said the chickens, geese and the ducks,
"We fill the yard with our honks and our clucks,
Our eggs can be eaten or sold for big bucks."
"We," said the chickens, geese and the ducks.

"I," said the water buffalo,
"I am big and strong but very slow.
I plow the fields so the grain will grow."
"I," said the water buffalo.

"I," said the pig with the curly tail,
"The children put leftovers in my pail.
I'll soon be much bigger and then be for sale."
"I," said the pig with the curly tail.

"I," said the llama from the mountain high,
"My fleece is soft and warm and dry.
It's spun into yarn that mothers will buy."
"I," said the llama from the mountain high.

"I," said the goat with a curious look,
"My rich and warm milk to market they took.
They sold it in town to buy a new book."
"I," said the goat with a curious look

"I," said the rabbit with the floppy ears,
"My fur is so soft, it brings lots of cheers,
My baby bunnies hop and have long ears."
"I," said the rabbit with the floppy ears.

"I," buzzed the bee in the flower bright,
"Mothers use my wax for candle light.
My honey makes children smile with delight."
"I," buzzed the bee in the flower bright.

"I," mooed the cow in the curved corral,
"My milk and manure makes me one great gal.
Plowing farmers' fields also makes me a pal!"
"I," mooed the cow in the curved corral.

"We" said the Heifer animals, proud and strong,
"With farmers and their families is where we belong.
Our milk, fleece and honey help feed them all year long.
"We" said the Heifer animals, proud and strong.