



IN THE SPIRIT OF THE CIRCLE



OF THE CIRCLE



W O R K B O O K





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Forward Movement
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FORWARD MOVEMENT
Cincinnati, Ohio

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*This lesson is primarily intended for Native American/Indigenous people.
The content may provide helpful insight of other audiences as well.



IN THE SPIRIT OF THE CIRCLE

In the Spirit of the Circle is a Christian formation resource created by Native American and Indigenous members of The Episcopal Church intended for people of all cultures seeking a wider vision of the Christian faith. *In the Spirit of the Circle* speaks with uniquely Native American and Indigenous voices, yet it addresses the hopes, concerns, and commitments of all Christians.

This resource represents a Native response to a church-wide need—to provide in-depth, quality Christian formation that is culturally aware and authentic. This resource speaks in the theological tradition of the people, is accessible to Native communities, and inspires a deep, more profound sense of pride among Native American and Indigenous Christians everywhere. At the same time, this resource is available to the entire Church, regardless of tribal or ethnic identity.

In the Spirit of the Circle can be used in a variety of ways:

- As the formation program on Sunday morning
- As part of the Liturgy of the Word in the celebration of Holy Eucharist
- As a focus for discussion in youth groups and confirmation classes
- As program material for retreats and convocations, or any time the community gathers to worship and learn

Different congregations and communities have different needs, so the workbook is designed to be flexible. Posters featuring original art, photos, and illustrations also are available and make a lovely visual companion for the course. The lesson can be used as a single class, as a smaller course on a particular topic, perhaps arranged by liturgical season (suggestions on p. 80), or as a year-long program. The posters, with their beautiful art, may also be suitable for framing or hanging in a classroom or gathering space.

Our deep hope and earnest prayer is that this resource will inspire all people and congregations to learn more about Native American and Indigenous sacred stories and to continue to create and develop community and connection. Christian formation is a lifelong journey to Christ, with Christ, and in Christ. These resources will help develop deeper relationships with each other and with Jesus.

This is a gift to all of God's children, in Jesus' name.

Sarah Eagle Heart
Office of Native and Indigenous Ministries

Ruth Ann Collins
Office of Lifelong Formation

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

In the early 1980s, a Choctaw priest—the Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, now a bishop—was serving The Episcopal Church in North and South Dakota. In this ministry, Bishop Charleston first articulated a vision for a Native American Christian education resource. As director of the Dakota Leadership Program, he called together a broad coalition of concerned Christians to become the nucleus of local planners and advocates for this ministry. In 1981, they became the Dakota Alliance for Curriculum Development. These were Native Americans from all areas of The Episcopal Church—lay and clergy, men and women, elders and young people. Together with non-Native allies, they began the hard work of researching and developing this incredible resource.

Eleven major Christian education curricula were analyzed and reviewed by the Native American committee members. Community meetings were held throughout the Dakotas to hear the Native American community speak about its needs and ideas about Christian education and formation. Cultural values quickly assumed high rank on the meeting agendas. By 1984, what had been a local ministry evolved into an international effort. The Native American community of the Dakotas extended an invitation to all Native peoples of North America, thus including Native Americans and Indigenous people from throughout The Episcopal Church's nine provinces and First Nations' members from the Anglican Church of Canada.

In 1986, editors and writers gathered together to begin the arduous task of sorting and collating the stories, as well as writing discussion questions for each story and crafting activities to further communicate the theme of each lesson. Biblical references and artwork had to be linked to the text, and so this added a list of talented artists to the process. The missionaries of The Episcopal Church, including the officer for Native American Ministry (now called the Office of Indigenous Ministries) and the coordinator of Children's Ministries (now called the Office of Lifelong Formation) were also deeply involved.

The Dakota congregations desired a Christian education resource that would express Native American and Indigenous cultural traditions, preserve and encourage storytelling, and be visually dynamic. In

addition, each lesson is self-contained on a poster (artwork on one side, the story, scripture, and activities on another). This allows congregations and groups to use the resource in a variety of ways.

In this second edition, we updated the stories and expanded the number to include more tribes. The resources are available as posters, printed workbook, and an ebook version.



FACILITATOR GUIDE

Preparing yourself for each learning opportunity is critical to provide the learner with an exceptional and transformative experience. This guide provides tools that will support you in your role as facilitator. Your role is not to be the content expert: it is to be a shepherd of new ideas and opportunities. When you open yourself up to this perspective, you will be amazed at how much you will learn and grow.

Before the lesson:

- Determine a location, host (or group of hosts), and invitation process. Determine the target audience. The lessons are designed with activities and questions for all ages—but probably not within the same group at the same time. The children's activities are most suitable for elementary-age students. A youth group through high school would be appropriate, or you could combine a mature youth group with an adult study.
- Review the entire lesson at least twice before your group meets. Read the recommended scripture passages and reflect upon the stories and questions.
- Review each of the activities. Decide which to use and how to best facilitate your particular group according to size and composition. Complete any advance work for crafts or displays. Be realistic about the time your group has to use on instruction, conversation, and reflection.
- Think about issues and events that are relevant to your community and find ways those issues can be incorporated into the conversation.

- A note on spelling and terms: this resource uses both “Native American” and “Indigenous” to refer to general groups of people, and where possible, uses tribal, band, and village names for specific groups. Non-Natives include two groups: people of white European heritage and people of Asian, Latino/Hispanic, and African descent. For all people, some of these stories are very difficult to hear, discuss, and inwardly digest.

During the lesson:

- Begin your time together with a prayer.
*God, you were present at the beginning. Be with me (us) as I (we) begin today's (In The Spirit of the Circle Lesson). Comfort me when I am unsure of my new surroundings. Strengthen me when I stumble. And help me remember that your light shines in all places. All this I ask through you, my Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.**
- Guide the conversation but don't control it. Your role is to monitor the comfort level of the room.
- Keep the group focused on the content of the discussion and monitor how the participants are communicating with each other. Be aware of who has spoken, who has not, and whose points may not have been heard or understood.
- To help keep the group on topic, it is helpful to occasionally re-state the key question or insight under discussion.
- Words in bold are glossary terms. A full glossary can be found on page 74.

We are all still learning and growing in all areas of our understanding about life and how we live together. *In the Spirit of the Circle* encourages your community to engage with one another and embrace humility, reconciliation, and forgiveness.



LESSONS

At the beginning of each lesson is a “toolbox” for facilitators. It includes:

- **Category and Story Title**
- **Tribe(s):** the name(s) of the tribe from which the story originated. The Indigenous name is listed first with any European name listed in parenthesis. If a tribe is not listed, the story represents a broader Indigenous perspective.
- **Before the Story:** this section is designed to give the facilitator background on the story and/or ideas to provoke a deeper interest and critical thinking.
- **After the Story:** this section invites people into thoughtful conversations. This gives the facilitator an opportunity to emphasize theological themes or final thoughts.
- **Scripture:** this gives a biblical reference that correlates with the topic. Reading the scriptures prior to the story sets a context for the lesson. The facilitator might read this or ask a volunteer to do so.
- **Glossary:** this content provides an opportunity to discuss church terms and content as well as to learn more about Native American and Indigenous communities and heritage.

Each lesson focuses on the story and provides ways the group can respond.

- **The Story:** this content is written by Native American/Indigenous storytellers and leaders. In many cases, this narrative follows Native storytelling traditions. In other cases, modern stories explore key themes and concepts.
- **Questions & Activities:** age-appropriate discussion questions and activities are designated for elementary-age children or youth/adult participants. Facilitators may modify the activities for younger children to suit

an older audience (or vice versa). The facilitator should feel free to rephrase the questions and modify the activities to meet the contextual and demographic needs of the community. Activities that call for the creation of art/collages or murals can be made with any resources available. Be creative: this is the work of the community and should reflect the personality of the group.

- **In The Spirit of the Circle:** this concluding section provides a way for the group to wrap up the lesson through prayer or song. It is designed to help individuals take the lesson home, offering ways to engage the material and continue to think about the concepts and issues presented.



More information and additional resources are available at www.episcopalchurch.org.

A full set of posters is available at www.forwardmovement.org.

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE CIRCLE OF THE



THE ORIGIN OF STORIES ⚡

TRIBE: Seneca

BEFORE THE STORY

Ask the group how some of their favorite stories begin: “Once upon a time,” or “There once was a person who...” or even “It was a dark and stormy night...” Read Genesis 1:1 aloud. This is the beginning of the story of God’s people, as told in the Bible. Explain that stories are important—stories that tell about how things began, or came to be in the world, are very special. These kinds of stories help us remember all the important things that make us who we are. Ask the group whether they ever wonder about where and how stories began.

AFTER THE STORY

The activities in this session are designed to help people recall the important stories in their family and community and think about the significance of **storytelling** for Indigenous Christians.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 1:1-5

GLOSSARY

Band: a close-knit group of Native people who are familially related and share the same language, traditions, culture, and social morés. Several bands can unite politically to make up one tribe or tribal unit/nation.

Confederacy: a group of tribes sharing the same mother language, traditions, culture, and social morés that come together for solidarity in political union.

Parable: stories told by Jesus to illustrate a spiritual lesson.

Seneca: the most populous tribe of the **Haudenosaunee** (Iroquois) Confederacy. Their traditional homeland was centered in western New York.

Storytelling: a way of passing down moral and spiritual lessons (as well as sharing history and traditions from one generation to another). Storytelling is an important part of many cultures, particularly among Native American and Indigenous people.

Tribe: a large affiliated group of Native people sharing the same language, traditions, culture, and social morés; several different bands can make up a tribe.

THE STORY

Long ago, in a **Seneca** village, lived a baby named Orphan Boy. He was given this name by the woman who raised him after his parents died. When Orphan Boy grew older and strong enough, his foster mother gave him a bow and arrows, saying, “It is time for you to learn to hunt. Tomorrow, go into the woods and kill all the game birds you can.”

Orphan Boy was gone all that next day, and when the evening came, he brought home a good string of birds. Each day, he brought home many birds, enough for his foster mother to share with neighbors. One day he went deeper into the woods. Stopping to tighten a sinew on his arrow, he sat on a round, flat-topped Stone near a small hole in the ground. Orphan Boy heard a Voice ask him, “Shall I tell you a story?” Startled, Orphan Boy looked around, but no one was there. “Shall I tell you stories?” the Voice asked again.

Orphan Boy paused, and once more from the Stone came a Voice asking, “Shall I tell you stories?” Orphan Boy asked, “What does it mean ‘to tell stories?’”

“It means to tell what happened long ago,” said the Voice from the Stone. “Give me your birds, and I will do it.” And the Stone began to tell Orphan Boy story after story, until the evening came. “We will rest now,” said the Stone. “Come again tomorrow, and if anyone wonders why you have so few birds, say that they are scarce and you had to go far to find them.” And he did so.

Orphan Boy came back to the Stone for several days, returning home with fewer and fewer birds each day, since he gave most of the birds to the Stone and then listened to the stories. One day, Orphan Boy’s curious and slightly worried foster mother sent two men to

follow him when he left to go hunting. They watched him kill several birds and bring the birds to the Stone. They saw him put his head down, as though he were listening to the Stone, and every once in a while they heard Orphan Boy say, "Uhm!" in agreement.

"Who's talking to him?" asked the men. They ran to Orphan Boy, asking him, "What are you doing?"

"Sit on this Stone and tell no one," Orphan Boy told them. The Orphan Boy said to the Stone, "Go on with the story. We are listening." The two men and the little boy sat and listened to the stories the Stone told.

As evening fell, the Stone told them, "Tomorrow, all the people in your village must come here, and each must bring bread or meat or whatever they have to eat. Clear this brush away for them so that they can sit near me." Later, Orphan Boy gave the chief the Stone's message. A runner was sent to tell every family in the village about where they should meet and what they should bring. Early the next day, all the villagers followed Orphan Boy to the Stone. They placed the food they had brought on the Stone and sat down in a circle.

When all was quiet, the Stone said, "I will tell you stories of what happened long ago, in a world that came before this one. Try to remember everything you can about the stories I am telling you. Some of you will remember more than others, but you all must do your

very best. Listen, because from now on, you must tell these stories to one another."

The people bent their heads to hear every word of every story the Stone told them. Every so often someone would say, "Uhm!" When the sun was almost down, the Stone said, "Now we will rest and tomorrow, you should all come to see me again." The next morning, after putting fresh food on the Stone, the villagers again sat in a circle, hearing the stories until sundown. Then the Stone said, "Tomorrow, I will finish telling you the rest of the stories."

Very late the next day, the Stone told them, "I have told you all that happened in the world that came before this one. You must tell these stories to your children and grandchildren, generation after generation. Keep telling them as long as this world lasts. Tell these stories whenever you visit one another. Bring whatever food you have as payment when you ask someone for a story. Remember the stories, always." And so it has always been.

QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

For Elementary-Age Children

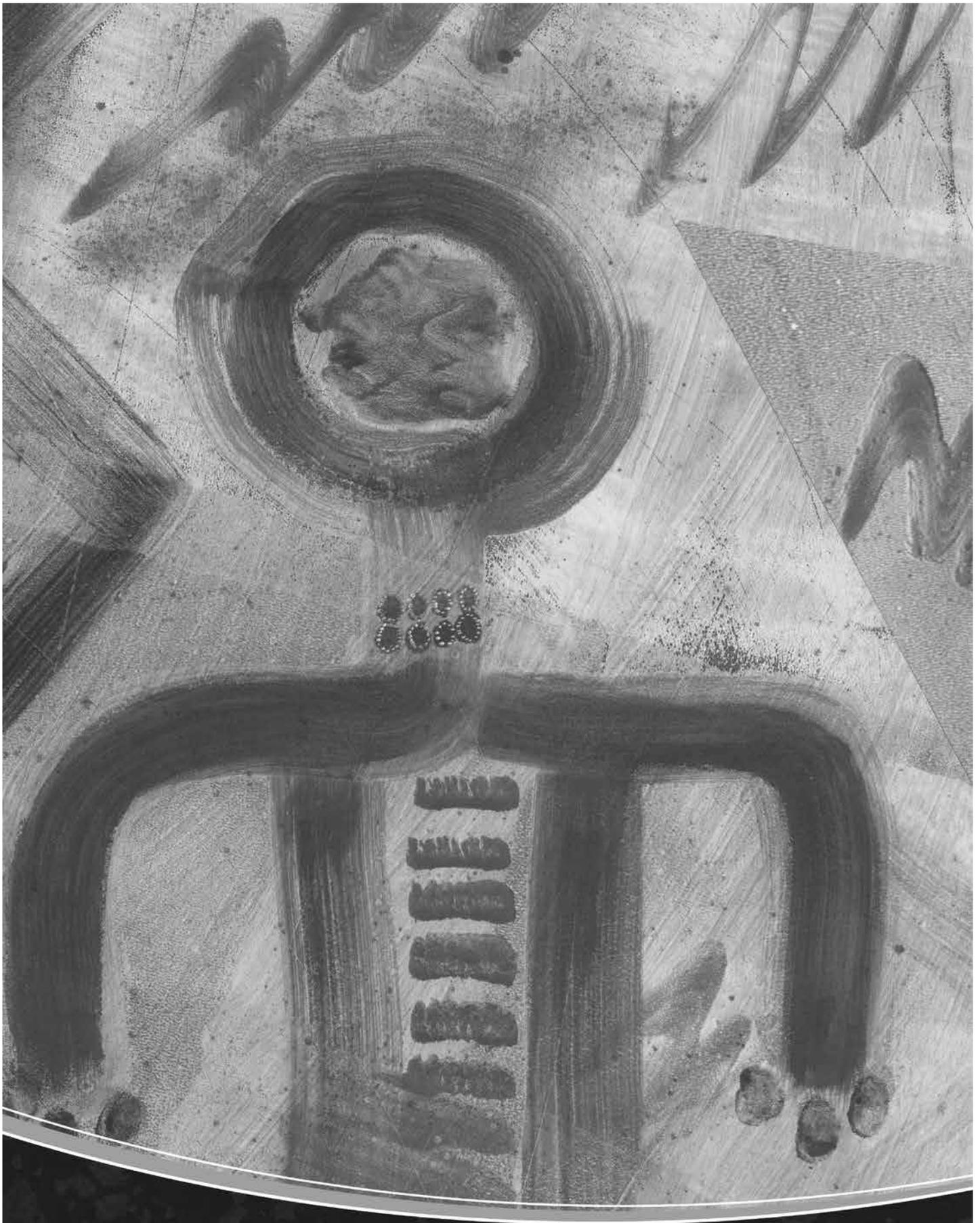
- What are some stories your family tells? Do you know any stories told about your community or tribe? What are the sacred stories in your community or tribe? Invite an **elder** or member of your community to share one of them. You are a storyteller too. Tell a story about something that made you feel good. Draw a picture of one of these stories.
- Draw, write, or tell a favorite Bible story, explaining a little bit about why it is your favorite.

For Youth and Adults

- Storytelling was a very important part of Jesus' ministry. What kind of stories did he tell? What effect did they have on the people who heard them? Act out or retell one of Jesus' parables.
- The story of God's people continues with our own faith stories. Share a story about how God has been present in your life. If you were given the task of telling just one story to pass down to your children and grandchildren, what would it be?

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE CIRCLE ★

Thank God for our sacred stories: Great Spirit, we offer our thanks for the stories you have given us, for the ability to understand them, and for the words you have allowed us to use to send our thanks for sacred things. *Amen.*



— | THE MANY NAMES OF GOD

IN THE SPIRIT
OF THE CIRCLE

THE MANY NAMES OF GOD ⚡

TRIBE: All People

BEFORE THE STORY

Ask your group about their names, who named them, and what their names mean.

AFTER THE STORY

Names speak of God as both the Creator of all and as the God who draws near to them in love, mercy, and grace. The activities in this session are designed to help people come to understand God in their own tradition more fully but also to enrich their sense of how God is near them in a special way.

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 3:1-15

GLOSSARY

Indigenous: this word describes the descendants of the original inhabitants of the Americas prior to the arrival of Europeans.

Naming ceremony: a special ceremony when a new name is given to a Native American or Indigenous person. It is not unusual for Native Americans or Indigenous people to have several names over the course of a lifetime (depending on individual growth or experience); thus an adult's name may not always be the same one they were given at birth or used during childhood. Typically, names are chosen to symbolize traits of a person as they mature and change over time and may also reflect personal or tribal totem animals.

Reverence: to treat something as being holy; to feel deep respect and admiration for something.

THE STORY

One of the special traditions of Indigenous people is the way they use names for things, especially for people. In many tribes, men and women have several names during their lifetimes. They have a name given to them at birth, another name given to them when they become adults, and sometimes a name awarded to them for doing something extraordinary. Sometimes these names are given during a special **naming ceremony**. All of the names are important because they say something unique about the person.

For Indigenous people, a person's name is sacred. Names are a matter of respect, honor, and recognition of the spiritual nature of human life. Native American and Indigenous people are not alone in thinking of names in this very special way.

Thousands of years ago, the people of ancient Israel believed names were sacred too. A name was a very important and holy part of a person's spirit. To know someone's name was to be entrusted with that person's spirit. To know someone's name was to be given a sacred gift that could be used either in a respectful way or to hurt and control the person. For this reason, the people of the Old Testament treated names with great **reverence**.

In the early stories of the Children of Israel, nothing was more holy than the sacred name of God. Moses, the great leader of the Hebrew people, asked God what his Name was. God said, "Tell the people, I Am That I Am sent you." There is a mystery to the answer God gave to Moses.

Many Native American and Indigenous people speak of God as "The Great Mystery" or "The Great Spirit." Like the people of ancient Israel, Native American and Indigenous people know that God is real and holy. God is not to be taken lightly. Yet God is near to the people. That is why many of the names for God used by Native American and Indigenous people can be translated as "Grandfather."

The idea of God as Grandfather is a way for Native American and Indigenous people to name something special about God: God's love for us as God's children. Our names for God are descriptions. They can't really define God, but they can describe God. They can tell us a little about how we can understand and talk with God.

We use these different names to show reverence for God in the person of Jesus, too. Think about all the names we have for Jesus: the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, the Lamb, the Good Shepherd, the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Vine, the Bridegroom. Each name tells us something important about the nature of God and the love God has for us.

People in all cultures and countries and languages have a word they use to describe their understanding of God. Each Native American and Indigenous language also has its own special name for God; all are gifts for us to use. They are ways for us to call out to God in reverence and in prayer. They are ways for us to say, just as the Gospel of John says, "God is love."

QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

For Elementary-Age Children

- Listen to the story of how Adam named the animals (Genesis 2:20). Does your tribe or community tell any stories about how animals received their names? Create your own animals out of clay and give them special names.
- Jesus is known by many names. Explore one or more of the following:
 1. The Bread of Life (John 6:35): Where does food come from? Who gives it? What else do you need to live? What do you think Jesus says about this? Bring and/or bake bread. Share it.
 2. The Light of the World (John 8:12): If possible, begin this lesson in darkness. After the story, light a candle or use a flashlight for light. How does light help people?
 3. The Good Shepherd (John 10:1-15): Why do the sheep follow the shepherd? What does the good shepherd do for the sheep? Make figures of the sheep and the good shepherd. Why do you think Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd?

For Youth and Adults

- Read Exodus 3:1-15. How did God appear to Moses? What did Moses do? Where is your holy ground? Draw or describe it. How did Moses show reverence to God? What do you think God meant when God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"?
- What are traditional names for God among your people? What do the traditional Indigenous names for God tell you about God? How would you describe God? Write, draw, dance, make a collage, or discuss.

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE CIRCLE ★

Address prayers to God, using some of God's many names.



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