

Hymns to Sing Praise
Part 2 of a curriculum series
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Earth & All Stars

Author: Herbert F. Brokering
Illustrator: Preston McDaniels
Publisher: Morehouse Publishing
ISBN: 9780819218674

Psalm 96:1, 98:1-2, & Psalm 150

Main Idea:

Earth and All Stars invites us to join with the Psalmist in praising our Creator God with a new song that celebrates God's continuing work in our lives in new ways that transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Objectives:

Through this lesson the students will have the opportunity to...

- Create a box community that represents the everyday facets of our lives
- Offer praise to God through worship and song
- Learn the background of the hymn
- Discuss ways that God is present and active in the ordinary routines of our lives.
- Create ways to affirm others and offer prayers of thanksgiving for the people in our community.

Something to Remember:

"O sing to the Lord a new song, for God has done marvelous things!"
Psalm 98:1

Lesson Quick View

We GATHER as the people of God

- Create box collages of the seven themes of community life in the book
- Worship with Psalm 96:1 & 98:1

We HEAR God's Word

- Read *Earth & All Stars* by Herbert F. Brokering
- Learn the history and background of the hymn
- Read together Psalm 150

- Build a miniature community using the boxes created in the Gather time

We RESPOND creatively

- Create Praise Stars to celebrate being a Child of God

We DEPART to serve

- Pray together using Praise Stars
- Sing together "This Little Star of Mine"

Additional enrichment activities are provided on the last page of this lesson plan.

You Will Need

Gather

- Seven empty boxes (cereal size or larger)
- Pictures gathered to represent the seven community themes represented in the hymn
- Scissors, tape, glue, markers, extra paper
- Worship Center item – brightly colored cloth, candle, matches, snuffer, Bible

Hear

- Bibles
- Book - *Earth & All Stars* by Herbert F. Brokering
- Audio recording of the hymn
- Completed Box Collages from Gather

Respond

- Pre-cut stars from paper, foam, etc and materials for decorating them

Depart

- Completed Praise Stars
- Words to "This Little Light of Mine" translated into "This Little STAR of Mine"

Special Note to Leaders

You may find it helpful to read the book review of this book as part of your planning for this session.

Storypath: Connecting Children's Literature With Our Faith Story is part of the Union Presbyterian Seminary Library website offering resources for parents, educators, and pastors.

This book review can be found at

<http://storypath.upsem.edu/reviews/book-reviews-a-z>

Suggested Audience

- Preschool - Grade 5
- Multiage - preschool-elementary
- Intergenerational

Suggested Settings

- Mid-week gathering
- Summer Sunday School
- Family retreat/workshop
- VBS



We GATHER as the people of God

You Will Need

- Nametags
- Audio recording of hymn

Greet everyone by name as they arrive and welcome them to the session. If appropriate in your setting, give each person a name tag to encourage everyone to learn each other's names. Introduce newcomers to the rest of the group and invite everyone to make them feel welcome.

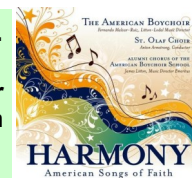
Have a recording of the hymn "Earth & All Stars" playing in the background as everyone is gathering to help set the tone for today's session.

NOTE: There are many audio versions of this hymn available on the internet.

Two to consider include:

<http://www.hymnary.org/hymn/GG2013/26> for a free downloadable piano version or

<http://www.amazon.com/Earth-And-All-Stars/dp/B001BGW3Q6> for a choral version performed by the St. Olaf Boys Choir.



You Will Need

- Seven clean, empty boxes (cereal or other large food boxes)
- Newsprint to cover each box (optional)
- Pictures illustrating the seven themes of the hymn
- Table signs for each theme
- Scissors
- Tape /glue
- Thin markers

Box Collages

The hymn author wanted to focus on ordinary things he found in his community as a way of praising God through everyday life.

Before the session begins, set up 7 "community" stations based on the themes of the hymn. Supply each station with an empty box (cereal boxes work well), pictures related to one of the themes, construction paper, scissors, markers, and tape or glue. Be sure to mark each station with a name sign so the children will know which theme they are working on.

Divide the children between the stations and invite them to cover each box with pictures that will represent one aspect of everyday community life. Encourage them to add their own drawings to the box as well as words to help illustrate the theme of their station.

Note to Leader: you may want to pre-cover each box with newsprint and allow the children to draw their own pictures on the box in addition to (or in place of) the pictures you have gathered.

Hymn Themes

- 1.Space
- 2.Weather
- 3.Music
- 4.Construction
- 5.School
- 6.Sports
- 7.Church

Opening Worship

When most or all of the children have arrived and everyone has had an opportunity to work on a box collage, gather everyone together around the worship center you have created asking each group of students to bring their completed (or "in process") box collage to this time of worship. Set the box collages around the Christ candle. Don't worry if the boxes are not completed as this can make the point of how communities are continuing to evolve and grow.

Invite everyone to join you in worship as you **light the Christ candle** saying, "Jesus says, 'I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)

Read Psalm 150

Pray together using the following prayer or one of your own.

Dear God of wonder and might, we praise you for all the wonderful things you have created. We thank you for including us in your creation and for gifting us with music. Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

Close your opening worship time by extinguishing the Christ candle as you say, "The Light that was in one place, is now in every place."

You Will Need

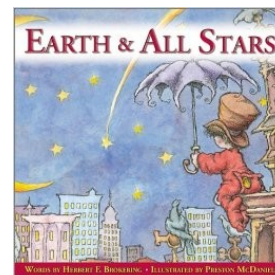
- Worship Center:
- Brightly colored cloth
 - Christ candle
 - Matches & Snuffer
 - Bible

Before the Session

Set up the worship center in a location where everyone can make a circle around it. A small table or piano bench works great.



We HEAR God's Word



You Will Need

- A copy of the book *Earth & All Stars* by Herbert F. Brokering

Earth & All Stars

Read the book, *Earth & All Stars* to the group, pausing at each page to allow the group to take in the many images illustrated so cleverly by Preston McDaniels.

After reading the book, ask the group what impressed them the most. Talk together about the myriad of things portrayed in the book that can be found in everyday life.

Using the link www.hymnary.org, tell the children the history behind the text of the hymn. Herbert Brokering (b. Beatrice, NE, 1926) wrote this text for the ninetieth anniversary of St.

Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, in 1964. It was published in David Johnson's *Twelve Folksongs and Spirituals* in 1968 and in the Lutheran hymnal *Contemporary Worship I* in 1969. About his writing of the text Brokering says, "I tried to gather into a hymn of praise the many facets of life which emerge in the life of community. So there are the references to building, nature, learning, family, war, festivity. Seasons, emotions, death and resurrection, bread, wine, water, wind, sun, spirit. . . have made great impressions on my imagination." Today this hymn can be found in over 32 hymnals.

Ask the children to identify the things from the book that are present in their own community. Talk about the similarities and differences in Brokering's community vs. your present community. Through his hymn text, Brokering was able to recognize God at work in the everyday and offer praise to God in ALL things.

You Will Need

- Audio recording of hymn

Sing Together

Invite the children to sing along with a recording of the hymn. Use the book as a way to display the words to the hymn so all can sing along.

You Will Need

- Bible

Earth and All Stars!

Verse 1. Earth and all stars! Loud rushing planets! Sing to the Lord a new song!
Hail, wind, and rain! Loud blowing snowstorm! Sing to the Lord a new song!

Refrain—God has done marvelous things. I too sing praises with a new song!

Verse 2. Trumpets and pipes! Loud clashing cymbals! Sing to the Lord a new song!
Harp, lute, and lyre! Loud humming cellos! Sing to the Lord a new song!

Refrain—God has done marvelous things. I too sing praises with a new song!

Verse 3. Engines and steel! Loud pounding hammers! Sing to the Lord a new song!
Limestone and beams! Loud building workers! Sing to the Lord a new song!

Refrain—God has done marvelous things. I too sing praises with a new song!

Verse 4. Classrooms and labs! Loud boiling test tubes! Sing to the Lord a new song!
Athlete and band! Loud cheering people! Sing to the Lord a new song!

Refrain—God has done marvelous things. I too sing praises with a new song!

Verse 5. Knowledge and truth! Loud sounding wisdom! Sing to the Lord a new song!
Daughter and son! Loud praying members! Sing to the Lord a new song!

Refrain—God has done marvelous things. I too sing praises with a new song!

Psalm 96:1 & Psalm 98:1

The Psalmist gives voice to the work of God that transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary. Read together Psalm 96:1 and Psalm 98:1, the two verses that Brokering used as the verses and refrain for his hymn. How can these verses become the refrain for our everyday life? Talk together about the ways we can acknowledge and praise God in the ordinary routines of our daily life:

1. Where do you see God at work in everyday life?
2. Think of the people you meet in your community. How can they inspire you to sing praise to God for their uniqueness? What can you learn from them?
3. How can you sing praise to God for the ordinary things?

Tabletop Community

Use the Box Collages you created in the Gather time to create your own community as you talk. Take this time to finish the collages and/or add to the community as missing things are identified.



We RESPOND creatively

You Will Need

- Pre-cut stars (foam, paper, cardboard) - one per child
- Decorating materials (glitter, glitter glue, stickers, sequins, ribbon, markers, extra paper, etc)
- Curling ribbon
- Dowels (optional)
- Glue or glue dots)

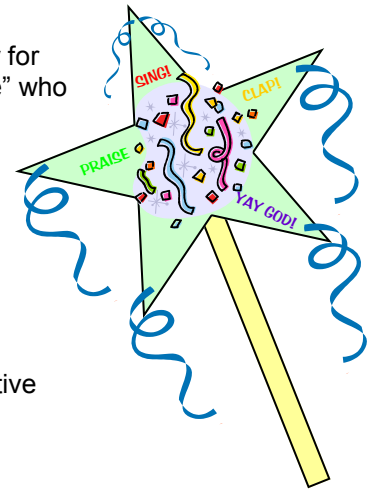
Praise Stars

As children of God, it is always good to affirm and praise God not only for the “things” that are present in our community, but also for the “people” who are part of God’s world and community.

Pass out pre-cut stars and invite the children to decorate a star to represent themselves and honor God as their Creator. As the children are decorating their own star, encourage them to add words of praise AS WELL AS THEIR OWN NAME!

Have fun with this creative response and be sure to allow enough time for the children to work.

Optional: Add dowels and curling ribbon or each star to add to the festive nature.



We DEPART to serve

Star Prayers

Invite the children to bring their completed Praise Stars to a closing circle for a time of prayer and benediction. As the children arrive in the circle, ask them to lay down their Praise Star in front of them with the star end pointing toward the center of the circle. Be sure to include your own star in the circle! When all have arrived and a circle of stars has been created, ask the children to move themselves “two stars to the right” so they are standing in front of someone else’s star.

Begin your time of prayer by thanking God for all the wonderful “stars” that are standing before you then offer the following words (to be echoed by each person in the circle)...

“Dear God, thank you for creating _____ (name on star in front of you), Help him/her shine this week for you.” Repeat this prayer around the circle.

Allow the children take home their own stars OR take home someone else’s star as a way to continue praying and praising God at home this week for the gift of people.

Sing “This Little Star of Mine”

Adapt the of the popular chorus “This Little **Light** of Mine” to sing together “This Little **Star** of Mine, I’m gonna let it shine.....” as your closing benediction

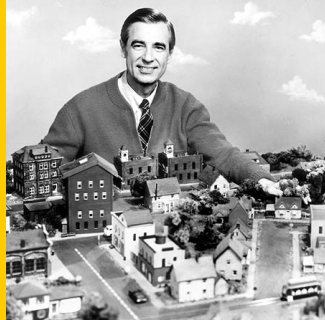
Expanding the Lesson

Looking for ways to turn this one-hour session into a mini retreat or expanded session?

Here are some enrichment activities for you to consider as you plan for your unique time frame and group dynamics.

Gather

- Make a room-size community using small to medium moving boxes covered with newsprint, wrapping paper, and pictures you’ve gathered to represent each of the seven themes in the hymn.
- Show a picture of Fred Rogers in front of his neighborhood as a way to connect your community with his.



Mr. Rogers Neighborhood

Hear

This is a good song to use in hymn reading.

- Ask your church choir director to come with an enlarged copy of the hymn as printed in the hymnbook to show the children how to move from one line to the next in reading the verses.

Respond

- Create a giant Star Mural on one wall of your room using the Praise Stars. Set the box community in front of the wall to create a community surrounded by praise to God our Creator.
- Link this lesson to the theme song used by Fred Rogers at the opening of his TV show “Mr. Rogers Neighborhood.” Find a clip of Mr. Rogers singing the song and sing along with him.