

OPENING PRAYER: Prayer for Community

Write this short prayer on a poster board (or PowerPoint slide) and invite participants to pray it together.

God of all people,
You have given us each other.
Together, we seek you.
We know that when two or more of us
gather in your name, you are there.
Together, we find you.
We praise you for the gift of each other.
We thank you for the gift of community.
Guide our journey as we draw ever nearer to you.
Amen

GAME: Cooperative Balloon Bop

In this energetic game, participants are challenged to cooperate with each other to keep a balloon in the air while holding hands.

Materials:

1–2 large balloons or beach balls

Instructions:

- Invite participants to stand in a circle, holding hands. (If the group is large, make two circles.)
- Explain that the goal is for participants to see how many times they can tap the balloon, keeping it in the air, using only their hands, heads, shoulders, chests or knees—but not their feet.
- Explain the rules: They must continue holding hands throughout the activity. If the balloon falls to the ground, someone lets go of a hand, or someone taps the balloon with their feet, the count begins again from zero.
- After explaining the rules, drop the balloon into the center of the circle. (If you want to make this more challenging, you can add more balloons to the circle.)

Comments: In order for this to work effectively, participants have to work cooperatively, making sure they are not letting go of their neighbor's hands. They will soon figure out that they must all move together, as a circle, to tap the balloon.

OPENING ACTIVITY: Getting Bananas to Market

With this energetic simulation activity, participants demonstrate how cooperating and working as a community enables them to “grow and harvest” their bananas and get them to market.

Materials:

Several long yellow balloons, a strip of masking tape or painter’s tape to mark start and finish lines
Optional: one banana for each person

Instructions:

- Divide the group in half. (This is for ease of play rather than for competition. You can use any number of groups.)
- Use the tape to mark a line at one end of the room as the start and one as the finish line. Line up the two groups behind the start line. Explain that they are banana farmers and that area in front of the start line is where their farms are. The area behind the finish line is the market. The object of the game is to get your banana to market.
- Take one balloon and demonstrate: Growing bananas—blowing up the balloon (do not tie off); Harvesting bananas—letting the balloon go.
- Explain that the first person in line will grow and harvest the banana. (Blow it up and let it go.) Once it lands, the next person in line will run to where it landed, blow the balloon up again and then let it go. Then the third person in line will run to the banana, stand where it is and do the same. Continue in this manner until each group has managed to get their banana to market.

Comment: It took the combined energy and effort of the “community” to make it possible for the bananas to grow, be harvested and get to market. If you would like to award a prize, you can give each participant a banana.

CLOSING PRAYER: A Prayer for Peace

Lord of all nations,
we are your family.

We are one family.
We are brothers, sisters.
And yet, we forget.

And yet, we fight and steal and hurt.
We do not love our neighbors as ourselves.

But we should. We want to.
We want to follow your ways.

We want to love as you do.

Grant us that peace
that the world cannot give.

And may we learn to walk as one family,
your family.

Amen