

Holy Cross Episcopal Church

Vacation Bible School 2022



Sharing God's Love, one frog at a time...
Castro Valley, California

Crafts ✨ Games ✨ Snacks ✨ Music ✨ Fun

Monday

Life's a Happy Song

The world can be, at times, crazy and out of control; and at other times, gentle, predictable, and wonderful. Jim Henson's Muppets remind us what is best about humanity: caring for each other, and loving and laughing together. This week we will take a journey with his lovable characters as they teach us about the central lesson in life and the theme of every Vacation Bible School (or VBS for short)—“*I love you, and God loves you, and that's the way it should be!*”

Our first day at VBS revolved around the theme; “Life's a Happy Song.” This is the signature song from the latest Muppet movie. I believe this song is about our life with God. This is not to suggest that tragic and hard things don't happen. Of course, they do. However, when hard and unhappy events happen in our life or the life of our community, God is right there. Hanging on to each of us, as we hang on to each other! We are the arms and heart of Jesus. We are called to share what we believe: that our loving God journeys with us every step of the way. Because of this, we can proclaim, “Life's a happy song!”

The creation hymn found in the first two chapters of Hebrew scripture, the book of Genesis, is a vision of God's creative work. At the end of each day of creation we hear the refrain, ‘it is good.’ At the end of the hymn, God says that the created order is not just good, it is *very* good! Since I am the king of superlatives, I love this. We are created in God's image and we are **VERY** good indeed. Yes, we are capable of less than ‘good’ things ... however, when we remember that we are created in God's image, we will try harder to emulate Go's love and justice in the world.

Our first craft today was the keystone craft of the entire week—all of our campers helped create a real Muppet! This was no simple sock puppet like we have done in the past. These were true Muppets, complete with movable arms (you can add sticks at home later if want to manipulate the hands) and a mouth plate, so the puppet can “speak” like us. Hint: when giving voice to the Muppets, open and close the mouth on each syllable of a word, just like we do, and move just your thumb up and down to create the words.

We needed a Muppet, of course, if we were doing a Muppet VBS; and we wanted a Muppet craft because a puppet is a great way to say our prayers. Oftentimes, a Muppet can give voice to the unspoken prayers of our hearts.

We are also trying something brand new at VBS this summer. We will be working on one large craft over two days--our very own puppet theater. Today we began to decorate the main section of our theater. We are building a theater because we need a place to rehearse with our puppets. We can rehearse what we could say to friends who might be excluding another child from play, or making fun of someone. We can practice and ‘role play’ how that might go.

Our second craft today was to create wooden spoon puppets. Now we have two characters to use to rehearse how we want to share God's love in the world.

With these two new “alter egos” we can share all those happy thoughts we are too shy to share. Our Muppet and puppet friends are **VERY** happy to share them with the world.

Tomorrow we are off to find adventure on the deep blue sea...

Tuesday

Finding Treasure

Ahoy, Matey! Today we were off for an adventure on the high seas with Jim, Long John Silver, and Captain Kermit the Frog! Today's theme was based on the movie *Muppet Treasure Island*. We discovered that the greatest treasure on earth is not the stuff we can lock away and bury in the sand; what is *most* important in this world is our relationships with family and friends!

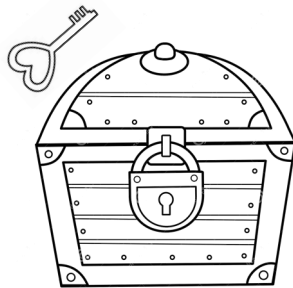
The Church has lived into this truth for over two millennia. The first name of this new religious¹ community with Jesus at the head was *The Way* (Acts 9.12ff). This new group of believers gathered together because they found their lives transformed by God through the ministry of Christ and his disciples. This same principle is active today in the Church!² We bind ourselves together in times of sorrow and times of celebration; *together*, we are the Church!

This was our primary focus for Treasure Island Day, discovering the treasure that surrounds us daily in our family and friends.

To this end, our campers created crafts that spoke to our sense of community. Campers began this morning in our “tent time,” decorating their craft boxes, which will hold all their VBS crafts for the week. Campers will take these boxes home on Friday. If your camper will be leaving us before Friday, please be sure to let a staff member know so we can prepare their boxes for an early departure.

One of the signature songs of *Muppet Treasure Island* has these words: “Hey ho, we’ll go anywhere the wind is blowing” – a wonderful reminder that if we simply listen to the whispering of the Holy Spirit, God will take us “sailing for adventure on the big blue sea!”

Our first craft today was a glove puppet. Our campers created five distinct personalities, one on each finger of the glove. With this, they had available, on one hand, a “cloud of witnesses” (Hew 21.1) to share God’s love! These puppets remind us that we are surrounded at all times and places by the cloud of angels and witnesses who have gone on before us and who are still with us as we make our journey in this world.



¹Our word religion comes from Latin and means to hold or bind together. That is what all religions do: bind the people together around a belief system.

²When we use capital ‘C’ Church, we mean all Christian denominations.

Our second craft today was a compass. Jim was given his dad's compass so he could always navigate his way. Our compasses today remind us that the Church has handed down the Bible, the memories of the faithful (called the magisterium of the Church³), to guide us and help us listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit to instruct us in our day. Our compass is a reminder to listen to our family, teachers, and all who care for us so that we can be guided as Jim's compass guided him. When Long John tries to get Jim to abandon his friends and go away with him as he is stealing the chests full of treasure, Silver says, "You are honest and brave and true. You didn't learn that from me." And Jim replies, "I learned it from my friends." This is the heart of our compass craft, to remember where we learn the good lessons of love and justice!

Our last craft today was a pirate vest. There is a little pirate in all of us! God created and confirmed that not only are we good, but we are also very good! (Gen. 1.31) And yet, as human beings, we continue to betray the trust of stewardship of this creation God has put in our care. As Paul bemoans, "*For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.*" (Rom 7.15) To save us from our "pirate" tendencies, God sent Jesus into the world to empower us to follow in the way of God's stewardship for all people—a way founded on abundance, love, and justice!

Tomorrow, we make the journey with Gonzo as he discovers who he is and whose he is!

³In the Anglican Communion of which the Episcopal Church is one part, this magisterium resides in the people of God. Each National Church body is responsible for determining how they believe God is calling them to be a church. This is why the Anglican Communion can be made up of communities that span the theological spectrum from a very biblical literalist to very liberal interpretation of scripture. This is how, we as a Church, have overcome biblical understanding of women's suffrage and denouncing slavery for the evil it begets.

Wednesday

"Who & Whose I am"

Today our theme was about claiming who and whose we are—children of God's love! Our theme is taken from the movie *Muppets from Outer Space*. This is a really great movie, but one that is not very well known.

Gonzo discovers that he is unique on this planet, and the movie is about his quest to find which group he belongs to. The clip we used starts out with Gonzo dreaming about Noah and an Ark where he is NOT welcome to come aboard--not exactly Holy Cross theology! This parish proclaims that all, without exception, are most welcome! Our movie clip today nicely sets up the tension of discovering who and whose we are!

The movie *Muppets from Outer Space* is about Gonzo's journey to discover where he belongs, and who "his people" are. Noah asks, "what species are you?" and Gonzo replies, "I am unique." Meanwhile, he receives a mysterious message that tells him to watch the sky. In the end, he discovers he is an alien from another planet, and at the conclusion of the movie, his relations come to take him home. And yet, at the moment of goodbye to his fellow Muppets, he makes the realization that his family is right here in the midst of his community.

So too, our Christian journey leads us back to the center of our community. It is like walking the Labyrinth. (Holy Cross' Labyrinth can be found next to the church on the south side of the parish campus.) The labyrinth looks like a maze, but in reality, it is a single path that winds back and forth and always ends up directly in the center. So too is our journey with God. We may traverse back and forth, and at times we may feel like we are lost. And yet if we keep our eyes on God's love and follow the way of peace and justice, we will eventually find ourselves back in the heart of the community, right where we are supposed to be.

In the Tent time craft, we created a small rocket car. it is a reminder that the Holy Spirit calls us to zoom into the world to proclaim peace and justice for the entire creation.

The Noahic covenant is where we find the first craft project of the day—Space Arks. Our Noah's Ark comes with a removable wing so we can soar to wherever God will take us next to share the message of love for all people and our responsibility for being stewards of God's creation. Being a steward means taking care of something that does not belong to us. We talked about making sure the recycles and the green waste get in the right can. We need to take care of God's planet so God's people can live here for eons to come.

Our second craft today was to build a space mobile. When our lives seem out of control, our mobiles hanging in our bedroom remind us that the universe is an orderly creation. This is how God created it and a reminder to do our best to help bring order to our world through love and peace.

The last craft of the day is one of my favorites—a jet pack to take us into adventures far and wide. The old 60's TV show *Lost in Space* had jet packs. The jet pack was a favorite mode of transportation for select (read *male*) members of the Robinson family. As a kid, I thought it would be way cool to go to school via jet pack! Today our campers got to live the dream as they built and decorated their very own jet packs to remind us that, with the Holy Spirit, we can be transported into realms of God's love at any moment to share God's peace and justice with all we meet!

Tomorrow, our VBS adventure with the Muppets will celebrate Christmas in July at Holy Cross!

Thursday

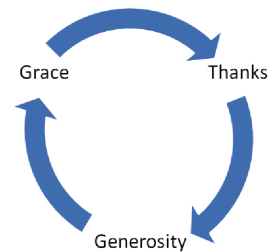
"We are God's gift"

Sharing God's gifts is our theme today. So what would our Muppet movie be today? *A Muppet Christmas Carol*, of course! My wife Susan says this is the best version of the classic tale. I concur. You can't ask for a better Charles Dickens than Gonzo narrating the story along with his faithful best friend, Rizzo the Rat! Priceless.

This is a story of redemption and a story of who God created us to be. We just have to realize that we are God's gift in the world—a living Christmas gift. We can share peace and justice in our neighborhoods and schools, not just during the holiday season once a year but all year long! God gave the gift of Jesus to the world, and our gift in return is to share God's love as God's son taught us! That is the central truth of the Christian journey and the primary focus for our fourth day at VBS.

One of the poignant scenes in today's clip is Scrooge encountering two citizens collecting alms for the poor on Christmas Eve. They are played by none other than Professor Honeydew and Beaker. As usual, Scrooge responds with his typical "Bah Humbug" and barely gives them the time of day. But on Christmas morning, after his night of redemption, Scrooge discovers the gift that he is and what he has to share. He receives a Christmas gift from Beaker – a red scarf – and is awakened to the wonders of giving!

To this end, our campers, in their first craft, decorated two red scarfs: one to keep, reminding them to share their gifts of love with the world, and one to give away, passing on the gift of who we are. We talked about God's circle of blessings. When we give of ourselves, our generosity begets grace, and grace begets thanks, and thanks beget generosity... and off we go into God's circle of blessings!



Our second craft today is what we call a Jingle Bell ring. It is a simple plastic ring laced with ribbon and jingle bells. How does that movie line go? "Every time a bell rings, an angel gets its wings." Our jingle bells are similar. Every time we hear them ring, they remind us that we are called to be God's gift of love in our world. Like Pavlov's dog experiment, we remember to share God's grace when we hear the bell! ☺

Our third craft of the day was to finally put together our theaters. We attached the wings and decorated and attached the curtains. Now we are ready to explore the wonders of relationships with our puppets. We can say prayers through them, share confidence with them, and use them to offer a special message of love by putting on a show for our families or friends. All kinds of opportunities to practice bringing wonder and delight to God's world.

Lastly, the tent time craft was one of the few 'kit' crafts we purchased this year. It is a Christmas tree decoration to remind us of what we learned at VBS about sharing God's love all year long.

Alas, tomorrow is our final day of this SECOND week of VBS, where we will prepare to get Movin' right along...

Friday

"Movin' Right Along"

Today we wrapped up our journey with our Muppet friends. Our focus was on what's next? As we leave the happy home of the Muppets, where we have had fun with God and God's people, the question is: how can we carry those happy, fun feelings and work into the world?

Finding connection in a community is really important. This week we discovered that true treasure on earth is found in our family and community. We can support and hang onto each other during hard times and celebrate and dance with each other during times of joy—we need each other! The gospel says: “Where your treasure is, your heart will be also.” (MT 6.21) The Muppets discovered that being together as a community is most important in this world. It is not the things we acquire or the positions we hold. Treasure is found in the simple act of sharing a smile—something the Muppets have honed to a fine art.

We began our journey this week with a clip from the Muppets' latest film, and today we ended our journey with a clip from the first movie they ever made. Our clip began with Kermit singing the iconic song “The Rainbow Connection” and ended with “Movin' Right Along” sung in Fozzy's Studebaker. These were the focus of our Friday crafts.

At tent time, we assembled our heart rainbows. The rainbow in theology is the sign of the Noahic covenant. It symbolizes the promise that God will be with us and love us for all time. It has a double meaning in our day as it represents the diversity of all of God's people. In the Anglican Communion, of which the Episcopal Church and Holy Cross are a part, we firmly believe that God has created us to be both wonderfully diverse and wonderfully united. We are diverse because each of us is unique, and we are united because God created us all from the same “human soup.” Rainbows are a wonderful reminder to make sure that all God's people are welcome in our community.

We assembled a different rainbow project during our craft time, as you can never have too many reminders that God loves us! We also decorated a wooden Studebaker car to remind us that our journey with the Muppets does not end today with VBS. We are called to go forth from this place —“movin' right along” to share God's love with all we meet!

We invite all VBS campers, their family and friends to join us for

VBS Sunday

July 31 at 10:15 AM

At this very special closing service we will remember our time with the Muppets, sing some of the songs and lead the congregation in our VBS theme song: *I Love You and God Loves You!* The presiders for this service will be none other than our starring Muppets!

Join us for a final celebration of VBS 2022! We encourage you to wear your VBS shirts and join us in church this Sunday. Hope to see you there!