

DIRECTOR



LEADER GUIDE



Be sure to familiarize yourself with the contents of your Resource Download.

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DIRECTOR



**To make your job as VBS Director
easier, make sure you:**

- ☑ read this *Director Guide* completely.
- ☑ check out the Resource Download thoroughly.
- ☑ spread out all the materials that came in your kit.
- ☑ browse the other leader and teacher guides to become familiar with all aspects of this VBS.



Course

Day 1 Sheep Farm in County Donegal

Day 2 Green Pastures in County Galway

Bible Passages

Lost to Found

Psalms 23:1; 1 Samuel 17:34-37

Wrong Path to Right Path

Psalms 23:2-3; 1 Samuel 17

Memory Verses

Psalms 23:1

Psalms 23:2-3

Animal Pals

Mia the Connemara Sheep

Guide the Border Collie

Lesson Focus

Like David, I can be a child of God and have the Lord as *my* shepherd.

Like David, I need the Lord to lead me on the right path through his Word.

Apologetics Content

Is the Lord a distant God? Did he create the universe and then just sit back and watch?

Is the Bible a trustworthy guide to lead us through life?

Names of God

Shepherd

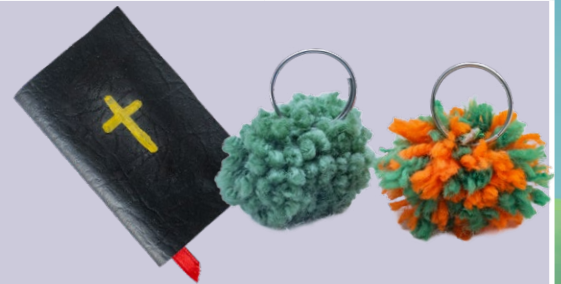
Leader

Celtic Corner Crafts



Baa-loved Sheep

Keepsake Ornament—
Shepherd's Staff



S.O.A.P. Bible

Puffball Zipper Pull

Celtic Corner Science

Sink or Float

Wet Woolly

Sling Fling

Genetically You

Green Meadow Games

Gaelic Football
Lost Sheep Relay

Shamrock, Riverdance, Viking
Strongman Challenges

Still Water Snacks



Cross Trail Mix

Sweet Sheep



Scene 23:2

Border Collie Paw Print

Cool Contests

Guess the Rainbow Skittles

Group Spirit Day

Overview

Day 3 Black Valley in County Kerry

Day 4 Enemy Territory in Dublin

Day 5 Higher Lands in County Antrim

<p>Fearful to Peaceful Psalm 23:4; 1 Samuel 19–23</p>	<p>Grumbling to Grateful Psalm 23:5; 2 Samuel 9:3–7; 1 Samuel 16:1–13</p>	<p>Shaky to Sure Psalm 23:6; 1 Chronicles 22</p>
<p>Psalm 23:4</p>	<p>Psalm 23:5</p>	<p>Psalm 23:6</p>
<p>Shadow the Raven</p>	<p>Pesky the Woolly Aphid</p>	<p>Shirley the Highland Cow</p>
<p>Like David, I can turn to the Lord for comfort when I am anxious or afraid.</p>	<p>Like David, I can have an attitude of gratitude in every situation.</p>	<p>Like David, I need to be on the lookout for God's goodness and mercy, my traveling companions through life.</p>
<p>Why do we even have hard times?</p>	<p>Are good things because of "good luck" or a good God?</p>	<p>What should rainbows remind us of?</p>
<p>Comforter</p>	<p>Provider</p>	<p>Promise Keeper</p>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="131 989 380 1241"> </div> <div data-bbox="399 989 570 1241"> </div> </div> <p>"Don't Worry, Just Pray" Magnet Night-Light in the Darkness</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="623 1020 842 1251"> </div> <div data-bbox="862 957 1062 1251"> </div> </div> <p>Thankube Gratitude Attitude Game</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="1081 989 1260 1276"> </div> <div data-bbox="1263 989 1516 1276"> </div> </div> <p>Psalm Scroll Highland Cow</p>
<p>Shadow Play Fear Not</p>	<p>Sticky Stuff Overflow Your Cup</p>	<p>Firm Foundations Real Rainbows</p>
<p>Run, David, Run Walk Through the Valley</p>	<p>Raiders My Cup Overflows Relays</p>	<p>Psalm 23 Partner Obstacle Course Pot o' Gold</p>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="100 1614 342 1787"> </div> <div data-bbox="355 1614 570 1787"> </div> </div> <p>Stuffed Staff Bird's Nest</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="623 1577 792 1808"> </div> <div data-bbox="829 1614 1013 1787"> </div> </div> <p>Piled-High Popcorn Full Float</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="1036 1598 1292 1787"> </div> <div data-bbox="1273 1614 1533 1787"> </div> </div> <p>Cow Patties Spud Circles</p>
<p>Dress-Up Day</p>	<p>Bible Challenge</p>	<p>Mission Money Mania</p>

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Director Guide

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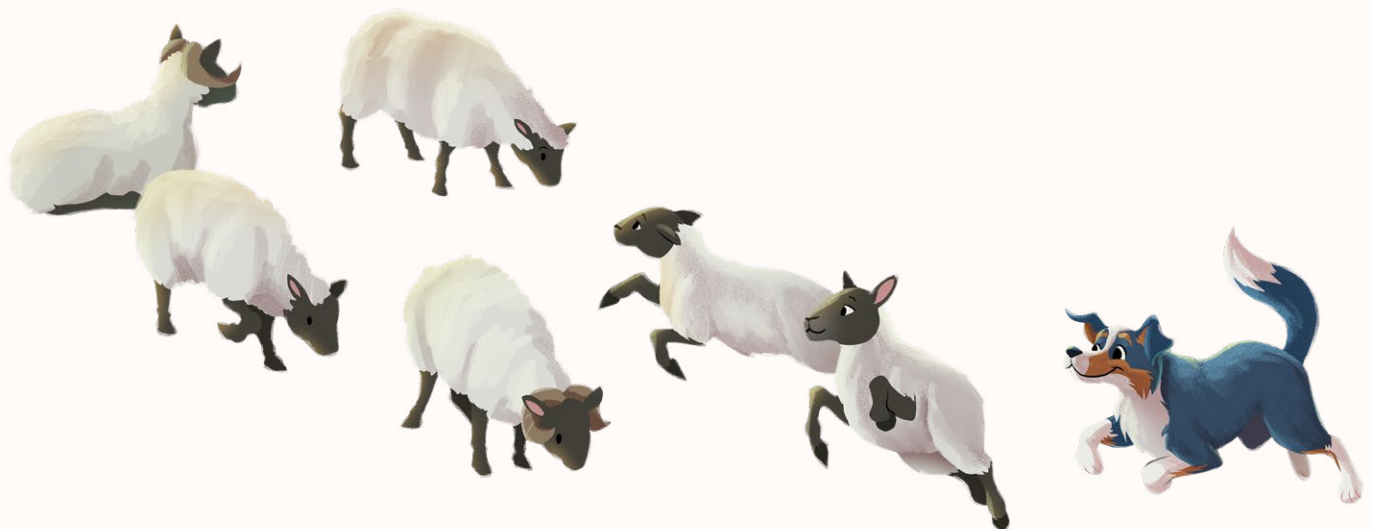
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OVERVIEW

Top o' the Morning!

It's early morning on the Emerald Isle. Gaze ahead as the sun rises on the cool, green pastures dotted with grazing sheep. Listen to the waves crash at the staggering Cliffs of Moher as their towering crags ascend majestically from the sea. Catch the earthy scent of sheep and cattle, fertile meadows, and dense forests. Step into a local restaurant and taste the rich flavors of a land known for its butter and potatoes. Run your hand over the soft wool of a pastured lamb or the rough, stony exterior of an age-old castle. Tune in as lively folk music entertains and delights all who listen.

From the lush meadows of its countryside to the cobblestone streets of its cities, there is something to delight the senses everywhere we turn in Ireland. So journey with us to *Emerald Crossing: An Irish Adventure Through Psalm 23*. Every stop along our path will teach us about the Good Shepherd and how he cares for his sheep. Like David discovered throughout his life, first as a shepherd and later as a king, we'll discover important truths such as:

- I can be a child of God and have the Lord as my shepherd.
- I need the Lord to lead me on the right path through his Word.
- I can turn to the Lord for comfort when I'm feeling anxious or afraid.
- I can have an attitude of gratitude in every situation.
- I need to be on the lookout for God's goodness and mercy, my traveling companions through life.

Beauty and adventure await us each day at Emerald Crossing, where lads and lasses will gather at the **Emerald Isle Assembly**. This high-energy beginning includes wacky intros, lively songs, a Mission Moment, and prayer.

Then they're off to rotate through five fun sites:

Flock Talk Time, where Bible lessons are taught in creative, hands-on ways.

Celtic Corner Science and Crafts, where kids will create their own crafts and explore God's world through science activities.

Still Water Snacks, where kids enjoy scrumptious Irish fare.

Green Meadow Games, the rambunctious rec time where kids join in some lively competition.

Top o' the Morning Missions, Music, and Memory

Verses, where kids sing songs, learn their memory verses, or go in-depth with the Mission Moment featuring Children's Hunger Fund.

Finally, everyone heads back to the **Emerald Isle Assembly** for the closing, where there's more singing, contest results, and the highly anticipated daily drama. Lads and lasses will be introduced to an Irish sheep farmer named Grandpa Fitz, who runs Stillwater Farm. Through some challenges, some fun, and a few big surprises, Grandpa Fitz shows how the Lord has been his comforter and guide his whole life.

So pull on your work boots, grab your walking staff, and get ready for a grand ol' time at *Emerald Crossing!*

Our Goal

We are so thankful for how God has chosen to use the Answers VBS programs over the past years! But why did we decide to embark on such an undertaking in the first place? And why are we still at it by God's grace?

Our primary goal has always been to bring God glory by boldly and unashamedly proclaiming him to a strategic group—young people! From both a biblical and statistical point of view, young people are a big deal. They're not only awesome—we love 'em!—but they're also dearly cherished by our Lord and tend to be softhearted toward spiritual things. Researchers generally agree most people become Christians when they're children, so it's apparent this age group is a huge mission field!

Children are loved by their Creator, and Jesus said to let them come to him (Luke 18:16). We want children to come to Christ and not be hindered in any way from doing so. To that end, we combine a biblically rich VBS with off-the-charts, irresistible fun. In a day and age when content sometimes suffers, we don't want to sacrifice rich teaching. But it's also crucial that the most exciting book in the world not come across as boring or irrelevant. We want to reflect our creative, inspiring, joy-giving God who made laughter and fun.

So why do we do it? We want kids around the world to hear about and personally meet our awesome God and understand how they can receive eternal life through repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. We believe VBS is a great way to introduce them to God, as it is one of the biggest outreaches of the year for most churches.

We pray you will find that every prayer prayed, every minute invested, every dollar spent, and every word spoken will bring God glory as you reach kids for Christ. Just remember—VBS is worth it. May God richly bless your VBS. We're praying for you!

Frequently Asked Questions

The content of *Emerald Crossing* may be new to you. For a list of helpful articles on the topics covered in this VBS program, please visit AnswersVBS.com/emeraldfaq.

Your Role

As the director of VBS, you are someone who possesses vision, organizational and people skills, and a heart for children. The following are your responsibilities:

- Oversee the entire VBS (read through the *Director Guide* and other manuals for further information)
- Work with the church staff on VBS-related issues such as goals, dates, and budget
- Recruit, organize, and oversee the entire VBS staff
- Run training workshops
- Coordinate the closing program to bring everyone back together after VBS is over
- Establish effective follow-up
- Pray over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS

Terms to Know

Throughout the VBS curriculum, various terms will be used. Here is a list of some of the most common terms you should know.

Lads and Lasses: Terms used when referring to children during VBS week.

Travel Groups: Groups of children (individual classes) named after animals that live in Ireland, such as Hedgehogs, Red Deer, Sheepdogs, and Irish Hares.

Group Guides: Group leaders who lead the travel groups from place to place during VBS. No teaching is required for this position.

Flock Talk Time: Bible and apologetics lesson time.

Shepherds: Teachers of the Flock Talk Time.

Celtic Corner Science and Crafts: Rotation site where crafts are made and science experiments are explored.

Still Water Snacks: Indoor or outdoor location where snacks are served.

Green Meadow Games: Indoor or outdoor site (outdoor is preferred) for recreation time.

Top o' the Morning Missions, Music, and Memory

Verses: Rotation sites where kids can spend additional time learning songs, memory verses, and missions.

Good as Gold Memory Verse: Daily Bible verse to learn.

Animal Pals: Our friendly animal mascots that remind us of the main theme of each day.

Toddlers: 2–4-year-olds.

Pre-Primaries: 4–6-year-olds or children ages 4 through those who have completed kindergarten.

Primaries: 6–9-year-olds or children who have completed grades 1–3.

Juniors: 9–12-year-olds or children who have completed grades 4–6.

For multiage K–6 travel groups, we recommend using the material for the Primaries.

Top 20 Tips for the VBS Director

Whether you're a first-time recruit or a seasoned director, here are some tips just for you.

1. Pray and study God's Word. "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). You *will* be busy, so keep in mind that the busier you get, the more you need to pray and study! God will multiply your time if you give him your best.
2. Read through the various guides thoroughly and early. Become familiar with the resources downloaded from AnswersVBS.com/emeraldresources. These contain clip art, logos, printable and customizable versions of the forms mentioned throughout this guide, and more. If you're a first-time director, ask previous directors and VBS veterans what's been done in the past. It helps to receive counsel! At the same time, don't be afraid to try something new.
3. Check out the web address listed on page 8 for great articles on the teaching at *Emerald Crossing*. This is a good resource for you and a good reference for volunteers or parents who have questions.
4. Many hands make light work. Be careful not to overextend yourself. Delegate areas of responsibility to people and allow them the joy of serving, even if it is not quite how you would do it.
5. When working with people, there most likely will be conflicts. Resolve conflict with prayer and gentle answers based on principles from God's Word. "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).
6. Have a backup plan for games in case it rains and you need to be inside all day.
7. Have fun. Directing your VBS should be a joy for you. At the same time, though, remember you are in a spiritual battle with an enemy who will try to throw darts your way. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).
8. Label file folders or electronic file folders with different areas of VBS, and use these to file ideas and suggestions.
9. Help your church catch the significance of this event by sharing that VBS is a huge, God-given opportunity to reach many with the gospel of Christ.
10. Get enough sleep and exercise.
11. Make people feel loved, appreciated, and needed.
12. Communicate well. Make announcements, require attendance at the training workshops, send emails, and keep everyone informed.
13. Be enthusiastic! Your excitement is contagious and makes others want to be in on the fun.
14. When deciding on the ages to include in your VBS, keep in mind that this VBS is written to appeal to not only young children but also older elementary kids—and even teens and adults! It has real answers from God's Word for real issues all kids face.
15. Be the *director*. Don't commit to teaching or any other VBS leadership role during VBS week. Stay as free as possible to greet, encourage, and troubleshoot.
16. Carry a cell phone or walkie-talkie with you during VBS week so you can be reached throughout the building.
17. Prepare two containers for each group leader. See page 34 for more information.
18. Soon after VBS is over, survey the staff so you can make improvements for next year.
19. Keep a list of answered prayers and praises. Share your list with others.
20. After VBS is finished, continue to pray for God to grow the seeds he planted and to bring more fruit over the next months. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

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Terrific Trivia Tidbits

Did you know the island of Ireland is actually home to two separate nations? The majority of the island is known as the Republic of Ireland and is its own sovereign country. A smaller section to the northeast is called Northern Ireland and is part of the United Kingdom.

Use this and the following trivia tidbits (also available on the [Resource Download](#)) to start thinking about our fun theme—Ireland—as well as our spiritual theme—Psalm 23. These fun facts can be shared ahead of time at staff meetings with adults and teens or during the week of VBS with the kids. Use them at arrival and dismissal times or during any downtime between rotations.

Part 1: General Information

- Fashion-forward: Celtic people, who arrived in Ireland centuries before Christ's birth, were known for their love of colorful clothes, which they dyed bright colors. It's also believed they were some of the first people in Europe to wear pants instead of tunics!
- Rhyme time: The phrase *Emerald Isle* was penned in 1795 by Irishman William Drennan in a poem that encouraged unity between opposing religious groups. Since then, the term has become so popular it can be used interchangeably with the word *Ireland*.
- Strum, strum, strum! The harp is the national symbol of Ireland. There is even a bridge shaped like a harp called the Samuel Beckett Bridge.
- Wham! The Irish sport of hurling is considered the oldest and fastest field sport in the world. In this fast-paced game that's a combination of baseball, hockey, and lacrosse, players hit the ball up to 100 mph!
- In Cork, Ireland, a butter museum houses a 22-pound slab of 2,000-year-old butter found in a peat bog in 2016. Experts say it is still edible. Would you try it?
- Afraid of heights? The Cliffs of Moher are one of Ireland's most visited natural attractions. Their sheer vertical drops measure over 700 feet tall at the highest point.
- Road trip: The Wild Atlantic Way is the longest coastal route in the world, stretching over 1,600 miles. In 2017, a 65-year-old man walked the whole road in 103 days.
- Potato, po-tah-to! Before the Irish Potato Famine, a grown Irishman would eat up to 14 pounds of potatoes a day.
- Did you know potatoes have more potassium than bananas and are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber? *Bon appétit!*
- Gingers unite! Roughly 10% of Ireland's population has red hair, the highest per capita percentage of redheads (aka gingers) in the world.
- Ooh-la-la! Did you know having red hair and blue eyes is the rarest hair/eye combination possible?
- Shamrock ceremony: The Irish prime minister visits the United States each year around St. Patrick's Day and presents the president with a crystal bowl filled with shamrocks.
- In the 1800s, Ireland was considered the butter capital of the world, exporting butter to countries all over the globe. Yum!
- Got milk? Ireland produces enough dairy products each year to feed 52 million people.
- Did you know there are over 30,000 castles in Ireland? Interestingly, Dunluce Castle in Northern Ireland is believed to have been the inspiration for Cair Paravel in C. S. Lewis' series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*.
- Claim to fame: The *Titanic* was built in Belfast, Northern Ireland. When it left the dock on April 2, 1912, over 100,000 people gathered to witness the massive ship embark on its voyage.
- An unlikely royal: At Ireland's annual Puck Fair Festival, a feral domestic goat is caught and crowned king as part of the festivities.
- Try saying this Irish location three times really fast (pronounced "muck-an-UH-ee-DARE-da-HAUL-yuh"): Muckanaghederdauhaulia, Muckanaghederdauhaulia, Muckanaghederdauhaulia. In English, it roughly means "pig marsh between two seas."
- Test your abilities further by pronouncing these unusually named Irish locations: Illaungrafranavrankagh, Glassillaunvealnacurra, Ballywinterourkewood, Sru-faunoughterluggatoora Stream, and Corragunnagalliagh-doo Island.
- Roll the cameras! During the filming of the *Star Wars* movie *The Last Jedi*, storm troopers and the *Millennium Falcon* made appearances on Malin Head, a rugged peninsula in County Donegal.
- One of the longest free-hanging stalactites in the world is in Ireland, measuring 23 feet long!
- During Ireland's Great Famine of 1845–1852, it's estimated that nearly a quarter of Ireland's population emigrated to flee disease and starvation. Many immigrants ended up in America. Today, nearly 10% of the American population claims to be of Irish descent!
- If you're traveling to Ireland, make sure to pack for all kinds of weather! Though Ireland has a temperate climate, it's common to have rain, then sunshine, then rain again within the same day or even the same hour.
- Lambay Island, a privately owned island that lies four miles off the coast of Dublin, is believed to be an early destination of Viking raiders. Today, it is home to an entire colony of—wait for it—Bennett's wallabies.
- St. Patrick is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland, but did you know St. Patrick wasn't actually Irish? He came to Ireland under force after being kidnapped at the age of 16.

- Party time! St. Patrick's Day is a public holiday in Ireland, meaning that schools and most businesses are closed in celebration of this special day. Festivities include enjoying parades, feasting with friends and family, and (for some) watching Irish sports.
- Do you like languages? Irish and English are the two official languages of Ireland, though English is much more commonly spoken.
- Did you know Irish is one of the world's oldest languages? Its beginning extends back long before Jesus' birth, but after the event at Babel.
- Want to greet someone in Irish? Try saying this common greeting: *Dia duit* (pronounced "dee-uh-gwit"). It means "God be with you."
- Did you know that Ireland is home to one of the oldest tourist destinations in the world? Newgrange Tomb is a grave that was built thousands of years before Jesus was born!
- The most beautiful book in the world? One of Ireland's greatest cultural treasures is the Book of Kells, a manuscript of the four Gospels that was copied by monks over 1,200 years ago. It has been preserved so well that vivid colors can still be seen in the illustrations drawn on its pages!
- Guess how old the oldest company is in Ireland? Rathbornes, a candle-making company, was started in 1488—over 500 years ago—and is still operating today!

Part 2: Irish Animal Information

- Sssssss! There are no snakes in Ireland. They do have an animal called a slow worm that resembles a snake but is actually a type of legless lizard.
- One of the European badger's favorite meals is worms. In fact, these badgers are capable of eating several hundred worms a day. Yum?
- The Connemara pony is the only horse breed native to Ireland. It's known for its gentle, hardworking ways and for being the largest breed of pony in the world. Giddyup!
- Did you know that hedgehogs, despite their adorable appearance, are actually fierce predators? Their diet includes worms, bugs, small birds, and even snakes.
- Small, but mighty: The Irish stoat, an animal similar to a weasel, is a fierce hunter, often taking down animals up to 10 times its size! It aims for a quick kill by biting its prey's neck.
- Watch out! A grown hedgehog has around 5,000 spines on its back.
- Irish wolfhounds are known as the tallest dogs in the world, measuring up to seven feet tall when standing upright on two legs. Despite their size, they are gentle creatures that typically don't make good guard dogs due to their love of people—whether strangers or long-time owners.
- Giant Bambi? It's believed that the Irish elk was the largest deer to ever exist. Its fossilized remains were discovered in Ireland. At its shoulders, it could be over seven feet tall, and its antlers could grow over 12 feet across!
- One of the smallest mammals in Ireland is the Eurasian pygmy shrew, which grows to be about two inches long and has a one-and-a-half-inch long tail. It lives a fast-paced life with a heart that beats up to 1,200 times a minute and a body that needs to eat 125% of its weight each day to survive. The pygmy shrew is almost constantly hunting to keep up with its hunger!
- Open wide and say ahhh! The basking shark is the second-largest shark in the world. To get food, basking sharks keep their mouths wide open as they swim, allowing thousands of gallons of water to filter into their mouths and through their gills. God gave them special gill structures that look like combs. These help catch plankton, krill, and fish to eat, while letting the rest of the water pass through.
- Sheep have rectangular pupils that give them a wide field of vision, even while their heads are down during grazing. This helps alert them to any predators that may be lurking nearby.
- Smelly signals: Sheep have special scent glands in front of their eyes and between their toes that release scents, allowing them to communicate with each other.
- Border collies are known to gaze intensely at stock, such as sheep, to get them to do various actions during herding. Would you be intimidated?
- Dog or cat? Border collies' bodies are designed to move quickly and easily in a crouched-down position, similar to how a cat stalks its prey. This allows them to herd groups of animals efficiently and effectively.
- A group of ravens is called an "unkindness of ravens." Do you think they live up to their name?
- Ravens have a nictitating membrane which is a translucent inner eyelid that acts like a windshield. It protects the eye from dust and debris as the raven flies, while still allowing the raven to see. God thought of everything!
- Flying fuzz balls: The "wool" on a woolly aphid is actually wax that makes it resemble a little ball of fuzz.
- Short-lived: The typical lifespan for a woolly aphid is 30 days. Unlike most insects which produce eggs, most woolly aphids give birth to live young.
- Watch out! Highland cows occasionally use their horns to defend themselves but mostly use them to forage for food on the ground.
- A cute lawn mower: Highland cows eat about 150 pounds of grass each day!

Dublin over with Laughter

Animal Pal Jokes and Riddles

Day 1 Animal Pal Jokes—Sheep

- What did the sheep want to be when she grew up? [A ewe-tube influencer.](#)
- How did the sheep get injured? [By falling off a shear cliff.](#)
- Why was the sheep embarrassed? [Because he didn't make it to the baaa-throom in time.](#)
- What do you call 3.14 sheep? [Shepherd's pi.](#)

Day 2 Animal Pal Jokes—Border Collie

- What did the gluten-free border collie eat for dinner? [Pizza with a collie-flower crust.](#)
- Why do border collies make good counselors? [Because they make you feel herd.](#)
- Why are border collies good at math? [Because they excel at rounding things up.](#)
- Why was the border collie crying? [Because he was feeling a little melan-collie.](#)

Day 3 Animal Pal Jokes—Raven

- What's a raven's favorite drink? [Caw-fee.](#)
- Why did the raven stop working out? [Because it made him soar.](#)
- What's a raven's favorite food? [Wings.](#)
- Why did the bird family go to the new restaurant? [Because everyone was raven about it.](#)

Day 4 Animal Pal Jokes—Woolly Aphid

- Why did the woolly aphids get in a fight? [Because they kept bugging each other.](#)
- What did the woolly aphid do before testifying in court? [He signed an aphid-davit.](#)
- How did the woolly aphids welcome their new neighbor? [They threw her a house-swarmer party.](#)
- Where did the woolly aphid's train stop? [At the infest-station.](#)
- Why was the woolly aphid a great detective? [Because no one could pull the wool over his eyes!](#)

Day 5 Animal Pal Jokes—Highland Cow

- Why are Highland cows bad at remembering details? [Because everything goes in one ear and out the udder.](#)
- Why did the Highland cow want to be an astronaut? [Because she wanted to explore the Milky Way.](#)

- Why did the Highland cow get all dressed up? [Because she was going to the Meat Ball.](#)
- Why did the Highland cow drop out of the high diving competition? [Because the steaks were too high.](#)

Miscellaneous Jokes and Riddles

- Why did the potato go to the nurse's office? [Because he wasn't peeling well.](#)
- Why did the clover dance? [Someone asked him to do the shamrock shake.](#)
- Why did the Irish chef win the cooking award? [Because her food was stew-pendous.](#)
- What's an Irish castle's favorite video game? [Fort Knight.](#)
- What do you call an Irishman who's good at skipping rocks? [Rick O'Shea.](#)
- How did the Irishwoman get so rich? [Because her money was always Dublin.](#)
- What's an Irish step dancer's favorite hobby? [Doing jig-saw puzzles.](#)
- What do you call an Irishwoman who can't stand up straight? [Eileen.](#)

Knock-Knock Jokes

- Knock knock. [Who's there?](#)
Irish. [Irish who?](#)
Irish you a great day at VBS!
- Knock knock. [Who's there?](#)
Thistle. [Thistle who?](#)
Thistle be the best VBS ever!
- Knock knock. [Who's there?](#)
Wool. [Wool who?](#)
Wool you come with me to Emerald Crossing?
- Knock knock. [Who's there?](#)
Accordion. [Accordion who?](#)
Accordion to the calendar, it's VBS week!

Tongue Twisters

- Shepherds shear their sheep short.
- Dublin dancers dive for donuts daily.
- Granny's green grass grows grandly from the ground.
- Cliffs climb clear to the clouds.
- Flynn flies flights flawlessly.
- Bitter better butter.

Ireland A to Z

A

accordion, Aran sweater

B

badger, bagpipes, barn owl, Belfast, blackbird, black pudding, Blarney Stone, border collie, boxty, British Isles, butter, buttercup (flower)

C

castles, cathedrals, cattle, Caves of Keash, Celtic, Celtic knot, Claddagh ring, Cliffs of Moher, coasts, coat of arms, colcannon, Connemara pony, Cork, cowslip (flower), crest, cricket

D

dairy, Derry, Dublin

E

Emerald Isle, euro, ewe

F

farmland, farms, fiddle, flag, flute, folk music, footballer, forests, fox

G

Gaelic (Irish) language, Galway, Giant's Causeway, glacial valleys, golden eagle, grazing, Great Famine, green

H

hammered dulcimer, handball, Ha'penny Bridge, harmonica, harp, hazel dormouse, heath, heather, hedgehog, Highland cow, highlands, hurling

I

Irish elk, Irish eyebright (flower), Irish hare, Irish setter, Irish soda bread, Irish step dancing, Irish stew, Irish stoat, Irish wolfhound, island

J

Jersey cow, jig

K

Kerry, Kerrygold, Kilkenny, kilt, kingfisher, Knockamany Bens

L

lads, lamb, lamb's ear (flower), lassies, limerick, literature, livestock

M

MacGillycuddy's Reeks (mountain range), magpie, Malin Head, mandolin, moss, mountain hare, Mourne Mountains, mutton, myths

N

Newgrange tomb, Northern Ireland

O

otters

P

passport, peat bog, pine marten, potatoes, Potato Famine, puffin, pygmy shrew

Q

quail

R

rainbows, rainy, ram, raven, redheads, Republic of Ireland, Ring of Kerry, River Shannon, rod, rook, rugby

S

St. Patrick, sausage, shamrock, sheep, sheep's-bit (flower), sheepdog, shepherd, shipbuilding, Silent Valley Reservoir, Slemish Mountain, Slieve League Cliffs, slingshot, soccer, sourdough bread, staff, starling, stone walls, storytelling

T

Taoiseach, taytos, three-leaf clover, thrush, tin whistle, Tollymore Forest Park, Trinity College

U

Uilleann pipes, Ulster, United Kingdom

V

Vikings, viviparous lizard

W

Wild Atlantic Way, Whitepark Bay, woodlands, wool, woolly aphid

XYZ

Xema sabini, yarn, yarrow, zoos

Top 20 Tips When Working with Children

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:13-14

1. Show love. All children, regardless of age or appearance, need to be loved. Greet them warmly each day and always be ready with smiles, giggles, encouraging words, and appropriate hugs. Make sure all staff are aware of your church's appropriate touching policies.
2. Learn names. It makes children feel important and loved to be called by their name. Make sure visible name tags are always on each child.
3. Keep it moving. Children have short attention spans.
4. Use active learning. The more children can actively be involved in the learning process, the more they will retain.
5. Be all there! Try to leave behind whatever is currently going on in your life and focus your attention on the children under your care during VBS. Listen to them and care for them.
6. Eliminate downtime. Find activities to do when you have a few free minutes so all time is being used in a fun and productive way. Practice memory verses, share Terrific Trivia Tidbits and Dublin over with Laughter jokes, play impromptu review games, or ask fun conversation starters (see page 76).
7. Think safety. Read the Child Safety Precautions on page 52. Ensure there are always at least two unrelated adults with the children at all times.
8. Be thematic. Dress to reflect Ireland. Children love costumes, fun cheers, songs, and anything that goes with the theme. Get the kids enthused and excited about participating in the daily contests.
9. Walk worthy. Be an example in both word and deed. Children need to see authentic Christianity, so make sure you are walking the walk and not just talking the talk.
10. Notice the good. Children want attention and will sometimes resort to acting up in an effort to receive attention, even if it is negative attention. Be proactive by noticing and praising the things they do right. Be an encourager.
11. Be aware of age-level characteristics. With younger children, activities need to be hands-on, concrete, short, and simple. Older children love to talk and are processing and questioning information. Be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within you.
12. Challenge them. Children generally rise to the level expected of them, so challenge them to learn their memory verses and song lyrics. At the same time, encourage in them a true love for the Lord and his Word.
13. Pray. Before, during, and after VBS, be a faithful prayer warrior for the children in your care.
14. Be organized. Read through all training information, ask questions, and faithfully prepare any materials for which you are responsible.
15. Be a team player. Children do not need to hear negative words from their leaders. If you are frustrated or upset, take it to the Lord but do not complain or get angry in front of the children.
16. Remember to take bathroom breaks. The younger the children, the more important this is!
17. Maintain order. Children like order! Think through potential trouble spots in your day and decide on a firm, loving discipline strategy. Ask for help from experienced individuals.
18. Build team spirit. Work as a team rather than allowing cliques to develop. Everyone should be an important member of the team.
19. Use guided conversation. Be alert and ready to turn conversations to spiritual matters. Build upon what the children are learning throughout the VBS day.
20. Be prepared to lead a child to Christ. Attend the Gospel Presentation Workshop to be equipped should God give you the awesome opportunity to talk to a child about Christ.

Age-Level Characteristics

Kids are awesome! Each one is unique and is a special creation from the hand of our amazing Creator. With all their uniqueness, however, they also share some common characteristics. That doesn't mean every child always exhibits the following characteristics at the corresponding age, but these guidelines can be a benchmark to use when looking

at characteristics of children as a whole. Understanding how God has wired different age groups can help us be more effective in teaching and interacting with them.

First, you'll see characteristics of children in general and then characteristics broken down by the four age groups we use with Answers VBS.

Common Characteristics

- Children are born sinners (Romans 3:23).
- God has given each a conscience, and they (generally) want good to win over evil.
- God has shown himself to all children through his creation, making it obvious to all that there is a Creator.
- Children enjoy active learning—moving around, seeing things, touching things, smelling and hearing things, and being involved.
- Children need to be loved, encouraged, and praised.
- Children are rapidly growing and changing.
- Children trust the adults who are responsible for them.
- Children can get discouraged by criticism and failure.
- Children are eager to learn and are curious about the world and God.

Toddlers (2–4 years old)

Physical Characteristics

Toddlers are active! They're on the move—running, climbing, and exploring. They're beginning to perform simple tasks, like using scissors. They can easily get hurt as they are rapidly developing physical skills but don't have wisdom to know when to stop running, climbing, etc.

Takeaways for Us

- Keep toddlers moving. Engage them actively as much as possible. Have them do motions to songs and actions to Bible accounts.
- Supervise them carefully.
- Provide chunky, nontoxic supplies.
- Intersperse periods of sitting with something active.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

Toddlers want to do things by themselves, such as picking out their clothes and dressing themselves. They like imaginative, dramatic play. They're testing their powers and saying "no" a lot. They often want to please adults and try to mimic their behaviors. They're affectionate toward others. Toddlers are fearful of things that are loud and out of the ordinary.

Takeaways for Us

- Let toddlers be helpers. Give them simple one-step jobs to do. Have them help pick up things and straighten the room at the end of the lesson. Let them know they've done a good job.
- Be consistently present all week; establish routines and stick with them.

- Be consistent in discipline. Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no."
- Give them opportunities to dress up and play imaginatively.
- Adults—don't dress in elaborate costumes that may seem unfamiliar and scary.
- Be careful to walk worthy—act and speak in godly ways. Little eyes are watching and will want to imitate you!

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

Toddlers are curious and want to touch, smell, feel, see, and experience their world. They have short attention spans and learn/communicate in short sentences. They understand short and simple directions. They believe what you say. Their attitude toward God and others is in the process of being formed during these years.

Takeaways for Us

- Involve toddlers' senses in learning! The more they can touch, smell, see, taste, and feel, the better!
- Give clear, simple directions.
- Keep activities and lessons short. Toddlers' attention spans are only a few minutes long before they need to switch to something new, so keep it moving!
- Be careful to speak accurately and truthfully.
- Show care and respect for your Bible and help them see your love for it and for the Lord.

Pre-Primaries (4–6 years old)

Physical Characteristics

Pre-Primaries are active and more confident in physical activities like jumping, hopping on one foot, and walking backward. They love to be moving. They're improving in hand-eye coordination. They're rapidly growing and may need rest after active play.

Takeaways for Us

- Pre-Primaries like to play hard, so keep them moving with short, simple games and activities. They may need to sit and rest for a brief time afterward.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

Pre-Primaries are less fearful than Toddlers but may still be afraid of common fears, such as fear of dogs and the dark. They can have emotional extremes and are testing others to see who can be controlled. They want to please adults and want praise. They will often mimic adults' behaviors. They like imaginative play. Pre-Primaries can handle small tasks and levels of responsibility.

Takeaways for Us

- Let them be helpers. Give them simple jobs to do and have them help pick up things and straighten the room at the end of the lesson. Let them know they've done a good job.
- Give them opportunities to dress up and play imaginatively.
- Be consistent in discipline. Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no."
- Be careful to walk worthy—act and speak in godly ways. Little eyes are watching and will want to imitate you!

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

Pre-Primaries talk a lot and ask a lot of questions, including questions about God. They understand that sin is disobeying God. They need a lot of guidance in tasks but can also follow a simple series of directions. They have an attention span of approximately five minutes. They enjoy doing new things and hearing stories and songs. They're not always able to tell the difference between reality and fantasy. They're developing attitudes toward right and wrong and can do basic memory work.

Takeaways for Us

- In downtime, give them time to ask questions. Be ready to patiently answer. But while you are teaching, be careful you don't get so wrapped up in letting them talk that the lesson doesn't happen!
- Vary activities often. The longer an activity goes, the wigglier the children become.
- When engaged in pretend activities, name them as such (e.g., "Let's pretend to be explorers!"). At the same time, point out often that God's Word is not pretend but true!
- Repetition of songs and stories works well, and Pre-Primaries enjoy it.
- Sing the memory verse songs with them. They will be able to learn at least parts of the verses by the end of the week.
- Use visuals.
- Teach them about sin and asking God for forgiveness.
- Show interest in each child, letting them know you care.
- Be careful to speak accurately and truthfully.
- Show care and respect for your Bible and help them see your love for it and for the Lord.

Primaries (6–9 years old)

Physical Characteristics

Primaries love games and competitions, but it can be hard for them to lose. They are continuing to grow and improve in hand-eye coordination and fine and gross motor skills. They need to have opportunities for movement.

Takeaways for Us

- Use games to teach! Primaries love any kind of games, whether active or learning games.
- Help them learn to take turns and to be good winners and good losers. Both winning and losing well are important in God's sight.
- Use boy vs. girl competitions to get them revved up! As long as you keep it light and fun, they will enjoy these times.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

Primaries are becoming more independent and confident in their ability to do things. Girls play most often with girls and boys with boys, but there is some mixing of girl/boy friends. They like to have a best friend and enjoy pretend play. Primaries enjoy jokes and are gaining a sense of humor. They care about being accepted by the group and want adult/teacher approval.

Takeaways for Us

- Give Primaries plenty of opportunities to work in teams or with partners.
- Use humor with Primaries. The sillier, the better!
- Be careful to walk worthy—act and speak in godly ways.

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

Primaries like to talk and ask questions. They understand simple concepts and sentences and are concrete in their

thinking, rather than being able to understand abstract or symbolic thinking. They're learning to read. They need active learning. They're gaining a growing attention span. They understand the consequences of their actions. They can tell the difference between reality and fantasy. They often have a strict sense of right and wrong.

Takeaways for Us

- Be concrete in what you say. Don't use abstract or symbolic language. For example, regarding salvation, don't ask if they have Jesus in their hearts. They will take that literally. "Becoming a child of God," or "being in God's family," are more concrete ways to express the same concept as kids will understand what it means to be in a family.

Juniors (9–12 years old)

Physical Characteristics

Juniors vary widely as they grow in height, weight, and physical maturity. Some may be experiencing a growth spurt launching them into puberty and causing them to tire easily. They're continuing to grow in physical abilities. Some are becoming known for athletic abilities. Juniors enjoy going places and doing interesting things. They enjoy games and competitions.

Takeaways for Us

- Don't comment on physical appearance, such as someone's height. Juniors can feel sensitive and awkward about their bodies.
- Some may show physical, musical, or academic gifts/talents. Help each child realize that they are God's masterpiece, created exactly as they are for a special purpose.
- Some love being active, and some don't. But it's good to keep them involved and moving.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

Juniors can't wait to grow up. They look up to teenagers/young adults. They like challenges and may develop interests and hobbies, although they're self-conscious about their abilities and failures. They're becoming more independent and can handle responsibilities. They enjoy small group discussion with peers and close friends. They're greatly influenced by their friends and want to be accepted. They look to friends for information and advice on issues. They like humor and jokes and may use sarcasm. As they head into puberty, they may experience mood swings.

Takeaways for Us

- Make sure the teens and young adults in their VBS world are good role models.
- Don't tear down Juniors or resort to sarcasm. Be an encourager, be a good listener, and be patient with them.

- Activities can stretch for a longer time, but it's still good to vary them. Keep Primaries involved in being active as much as possible.
- Some children read better than others. Be careful about asking them to read out loud. Try asking for volunteers.
- Small print can be a challenge, so use larger print when possible.
- Encourage memorization.
- Use visuals.
- Show interest in each child, helping them sense you care.
- Be careful to speak accurately and truthfully. Explain Bible words and concepts.
- Remember that you are a role model.
- Show care and respect for your Bible and help them see your love for it and for the Lord.

- Show interest in each child, helping them sense your care for them.
- Incorporate small group discussion into the lesson time with activities that use groups or pairings.
- Be careful to walk worthy—act and speak in godly ways.

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

Juniors are beginning to think abstractly and are asking many questions, for which they want good answers. They have a much longer attention span than younger children. Their reading and memorization skills are improving. They're developing their views on current issues and often want to associate themselves with their parents' belief system. They spot inconsistencies in what people do versus what they say. Juniors enjoy serving and caring for others.

Takeaways for Us

- Ask thought-provoking spiritual questions. Be a safe person to bounce thoughts and ideas off of.
- Listen well and pray with them.
- They can spot inconsistencies. Make sure to walk the walk and not just talk the talk.
- Be careful about asking children to read out loud unless they volunteer or you know they can read well.
- Give them opportunities to be involved in missions or service projects.
- Challenge them to ask God to help them grow in their love for him and his Word. Help them set up Bible reading plans and encourage them to memorize passages of Scripture.
- Be careful to speak accurately and truthfully. Show respect for your Bible and let them see your love for it and for the Lord.

Tips for Managing a Group of Kids

Kids are fun, and kids have energy! This page of strategies is in the teacher/leader guides to help your staff. There are also additional ideas on the next page you can share.

Attention-Getters

Call and Response—The teacher teaches the kids that when she says something, they reply back with something else. Practice the following ideas so they know your expectations for responding to them.

- **Teacher:** Where are my sheep?
Kids: Everybody sleep! (they sit still and close eyes)
- **Teacher:** Potato, pot-ah-to!
Kids: Tomato, tom-ah-to!
- **Teacher:** Shamrock!
Kids: Shamroll!
- **Teacher:** Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo . . .
Kids: Violet!
- **Teacher:** Emerald!
Kids: Isle!
Teacher: Emerald!
Kids: Isle!
Teacher: Shh!

Rainstorm—Use your fingers, hands, legs, and feet to simulate rain that goes from very light to heavy and back to very light. Start with silence then rub hands together for the wind. Snap fingers for light rain then pat your legs for a heavier rain. Clap hands and add stomping feet for heaviest rain. Do in reverse to wind back down to no rain.

Countdown—Hold up five fingers and start to count down from five to one. By the count of one, they need to be completely quiet.

Rhythm Claps—The teacher claps a little rhythm and the kids try to clap the exact rhythm back. Vary the clapping patterns.

Soft Talk—Start talking about something important very softly or in a whisper. Kids will often get quiet to hear what you are saying. Or say, “If you can hear me, clap once.” Continue softly with other commands

Flash the Lights—This is a good signal to listen up.

Lining up and Walking Through the Building

If You—Say different categories for lining up in fun ways, such as the following:

- “If you’re wearing green, line up. Now, if you’re wearing __, line up.”
- “If your birthday is during the summer, line up. Now, if your birthday is during the school year, line up.”
- “If you have a dog, line up. Now, if you have a cat, line up. Now, if you have no pets, line up.”
- “If your first name starts with A–L, line up. Now, if your first name starts with M–Z, line up.”

Proactive Tips

Be Prepared—One of the best ways to ward off discipline problems is to be prepared. Think through and organize your schedule, leaving no downtime. Keep things moving! This takes more time on your part, but it’s worth it.

Active Participation—Keeping kids actively engaged in the lesson is perhaps the best thing you can do to keep the class from getting rowdy. The lessons are written to be creative, fun, and full of active participation. Play the games, act out the Bible accounts, and do the other ideas listed. Occupy kids’ minds and attention with good stuff!

Helpers—Involve the kids. Let them be helpers. Some kids just want to feel needed, so giving them a responsibility is a way to show you trust them. Try putting them in charge of a simple task, like helping others learn memory verses, passing out papers, or holding a poster for the teacher. Sometimes a simple task can keep them busy and make them feel important!

Use Humor—Kids of all ages love to laugh! Have fun together. If you see a situation is getting tense or a child is getting upset for some reason, try thinking of a way to lighten the mood with humor.

Calming Rowdiness

Don’t Yell—Kids may respond at first if someone yells, but they eventually dismiss it. Try some of these other ideas instead.

Separate Kids—Separate kids who misbehave around each other, but also encourage problem-solving when possible. “What are some things we could do to help you and ___ get along?”

Give Choices—Avoid power struggles by giving choices. If a child is resistant to doing something you’ve asked of her, try your command another way. “You can either sit with the rest of the group and listen to the teacher or sit with ___ (group guide’s name) at the back of the room.”

Praise in Public, Correct in Private—If someone does need correction, be careful not to embarrass him in front of his peers. If you need to talk to a child about a misbehavior, pull him aside at a time when the rest of the group is distracted. Kids will be less defensive if they don’t feel they have to “save face” in front of their peers, and if they feel you really care and aren’t just coming down on them.

Know Church Policies—Know your church’s policy for severe behavior issues. Do you take the child to your VBS director? Do you alert the child’s parents? Do you involve other staff members? Be prepared.

Additional Suggestions to Share with Your Leaders

Pray—Some kids may never have had anyone pray for them. Pray not only about behavior situations but also about their eternal souls.

Notice the Good—Sometimes a poor behavior is an attention-seeking device, so be proactive and give attention to that child so she doesn't feel the need to act out negatively. Negative behaviors can be a cry for love and attention.

Distraction—When young kids are dropped off or start to cry, distracting them is a good technique to try. Ask them to tell you about something on their clothes (“Oh, what’s that on your T-shirt?”), get them talking about some of their favorite things, or show them an intriguing toy or puppet.

Keep Them Busy—If there is any downtime (while waiting for the next rotation to begin or if craft time ends a few minutes early, etc.), fill it with something productive! Use the time to practice team cheers, ask questions, or go over memory verses in fun ways, such as making up motions, saying them as a rap, etc. You may also want to play a quick game, like one of the following.

- **Stone Face**—Have a competition to see which child can hold a frown for the longest without cracking a smile.

- **I Spy**—Look for Irish things to spy.
- **Simon Says**—Simon can say Bible-themed things, like read your Bible (hands in front of you making a book), pray (praying hands), tell others (cup hands around mouth), go to church (make a church with a steeple out of your interlocked hands), etc.
- **Quiet Mouse**—Have a competition to see who is the quietest in line.
- **Follow the Leader**—Play the normal version or an Irish version using animals and activities, like the following:
 - » Fly like a magpie (bird).
 - » Hop like an Irish hare.
 - » Moo like a Highland cow.
 - » Hoot like a barn owl.
 - » Hold your shepherd’s staff.
 - » Bend like a rainbow.
 - » Climb the Cliffs of Moher.
 - » Churn the butter.
 - » Do a jig like an Irish step dancer.
 - » Strum a harp.

What's in the Resource Download?

All resources listed on this page are included in the [Resource Download](#) at [AnswersVBS.com/emeraldresources](#). They are also included in the Digital Pro Library, which is available to purchase at [myAnswers.com](#).



You may upload the contents of the [Resource Download](#) to a file-sharing site for your organization only. You may also email the resources to your team as necessary, or each leader can access the above link to download the resources for their rotation.



Assembly Resources

This folder contains **daily scripts**, **Creature Feature slides and videos**, and other **printables** mentioned in the *Assembly Guide*. Additional materials for the Mission Moment and the daily drama are found in their respective folders.



Coloring Pages

You'll find fun extras in this folder with coloring pages featuring the **memory verses**, **animal pals**, and other fun images.



Craft and Science Patterns

Your **science and crafts leaders** will use this folder. A PDF of the **patterns** referenced throughout the *Science & Crafts Guide* is included in this folder. You'll also find **slides for science experiments**.



Decorations

Find **artwork for decorating** your various spaces, including the main set and classrooms.



Director Folders

These folders are for the **VBS director** and feature the forms mentioned throughout the *Director Guide*.

The **Emerald Crossing IrishFest** folder has what you need to host the carnival mentioned on page 67.

The **Helps** folder features editable forms mentioned throughout this guide and scripts for the **short promo skits**. There are a lot of resources here, so be sure to explore this section thoroughly.

Registration forms are also available, but you may want to register children online through the [myAnswers.com](#) portal.

Supply lists for each area are also available here.



Drama

This folder will be used by your **drama director**. It features the **sound effects**, **scripts**, and **prop lists** needed to perform the daily drama.

A **shorter script option** is also included in this folder.

Videos of the daily drama are available with an upgrade to Digital Pro or as a separate purchase.



Games

Your **game leader** can find any **patterns** mentioned in the *Game Guide* here.



Missions

This folder features the **materials for the Mission Moment with Children's Hunger Fund**, including videos, presentation images, printable activities, as well as a submission form for the money collected.

Determine when you would like to offer the Mission Moment—either during the opening assembly or during one of your rotations. Check the *Assembly Guide* and *Top o' the Morning Missions, Music & Memory Verses Guide* for more information.



Presentation

These folders feature **slides** of the animal pals, Bible lesson illustrations, blank backgrounds, memory verses (in KJV and ESV), course overviews, trivia, and daily jokes. We have also included **PDFs** in case you would like to print some of the files.

The **All** folder contains a **PowerPoint file** with all the images. Use this file to manipulate the images for your specific use by moving them around, deleting what you don't need, and adding in any videos. We aren't able to include videos in the file because it becomes too large.



Promotion

We have provided a variety of **logo options** for you to use in promoting your *Emerald Crossing* VBS program. You have permission to use these logos in any way that pertains to your VBS but not on products that you resell or redistribute.

You will also find images to use on various social media platforms in order to advertise your VBS.

Clip art in color and black-and-white formats is available here.

Logos and clip art are provided in three formats. Each format has a specific type of use:

- **PDF** files are vector files, which have transparent backgrounds and are scalable for shirt printing or to make large signs or banners.
- **PNG** files are a general image format that contains transparent backgrounds. They can be used for any print or web use but cannot be scaled up without resolution problems.
- **SVG** files are the simple vector formats required for Cricut machines.

Promo and recruitment videos and **logo animations** are also found here.



Simple Songs for Kids

Use these **audio files** with your **Pre-Primaries** and **Toddlers**. They are songs written into the lessons for the younger kids.

These files can be uploaded onto an MP3 player (on a phone, tablet, or other device) to be played in the classroom. They are also available to purchase on CD (1231410) or streamed through AnswersVBS.com/streaming.



Snacks

Your **snack director** will need to have access to this folder. You may want to print this file and give it to your snack leader for use as necessary.



Support Videos

Fun **countdown videos** and **video games** for use during VBS are available here. You will also find **short animation videos**.



Teaching

These folders are used by your **Bible lesson teachers**.

The **patterns** and **coloring sheets** referenced throughout the teacher guides are found in their respective age-level folders.

A rich text (RTF) document of each **teacher guide** is available for those who want to edit the lesson, along with a **shortened, one-person version** of the lesson for Pre-Primaries, Primaries, and Juniors.

Presentation images of the memory verses, animal pals, and illustrations are also available in their respective folders.

Music Download Contents

All **music resources** (hand motion videos, song lyric videos, lyrics, and presentation images) for both contemporary and traditional songs are found in the Music Leader Download that comes with the purchase of a Super Starter Kit. The original purchaser should check for an email with a code and instructions on accessing the downloads. Or check your kit for a brochure that has instructions for accessing your download through the myAnswers.com portal. These resources are also available with the purchase of Digital Pro at myAnswers.com.

PRIORITIES

First Things First

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. Psalm 1:1-3

To ensure that your VBS doesn't take a detour down the wrong path, work on deepening your relationship with the Lord before, during, and after VBS. As director, your commitment to continual growth in your personal relationship with the Lord is vital. This comes as you depend upon the Lord and eagerly follow after him. Daily prayer and Bible study provide fuel for your growth. The Lord tells us, "whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Encourage your staff to regularly spend time in fellowship with the Lord through prayer and reading his Word.

Take the responsibility of finding a prayer coordinator to head up a VBS prayer ministry seriously. Copy the following page for your prayer coordinator and encourage him to put together a combination of ideas that suits your situation.

Devotions for each VBS day have also been provided. You may want to read through these together or encourage your staff to read them on their own. Copies of the **daily devotions** can also be found in the Resource Download, in the *Helper Handbook* (1230070), and in the teacher guides for each age group.



Praying for Your VBS

Praying that the Lord will use this VBS program for his purposes is vital. Apart from him, we can do nothing. As you launch your prayer ministry, choose from the ideas on the next page.

Top 10 Tips for a VBS Prayer Ministry

“When God plans a great work, he first sets his people to prayer.” — Charles Spurgeon

1. Find prayer warriors. Enlist people who are willing to pray consistently for VBS. Send each of them a list of VBS prayer requests for which they can regularly be praying. See the [Prayer Calendar Sample](#) for ideas.
2. Set up an email prayer loop. Use your church’s email prayer loop—or create your own—to pass along VBS prayer requests.
3. Gather your VBS crew to pray. Pray at meetings and encourage them to pray on their own. Write all VBS crew names on slips of paper and have each draw a name of a fellow crew member to pray for and with.
4. Hold a weekly prayer meeting devoted to VBS. Pray over that week’s praises and prayer requests.
5. Encourage your group guides to pray through the names on their class lists before, during, and after VBS.
6. Hold a dedication service. Encourage the pastoral staff to include a time of prayer during the church service the Sunday before VBS.
7. Print maps and prayer request sheets and encourage your church family to walk the premises and pray over every area of the building and grounds.
8. Pass out “Praying for You” postcards (1230280) to willing and trustworthy church members with instructions to write a quick note to a child, letting him know someone is praying for him. Collect the postcards the week before VBS begins and have church staff address and mail them.
9. People who may not be able to make it to VBS can help by praying during the VBS hours from work, home, or wherever they are.
10. When VBS is over, continue to encourage your church family to pray for the children who came to VBS. Ask God to continue to work in their hearts and minds.



Staff Devotions

Devotion 1: The Lord Is My Shepherd

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. Psalm 23:1

There's no doubt about it—our kids are anxious. Over 22% of children are in therapy, while 40% of high schoolers have experienced persistent hopelessness or sadness. They deal with household substance abuse, parental incarceration, neighborhood violence, and unmet basic needs. Social media, interpersonal relationship drama, and world events all contribute to instability among our youth. They don't know where to turn for comfort.

Moralistic, therapeutic deism is a dominant worldview among their parents. They believe in a god—a supreme being—who has no connection to the world he created, no personal involvement in their lives, and no demands on how they live. This worldview has an appearance of morality—the highest good is to be good to others—but no basis for saying one action is wrong and another is right. They ignore the biblical foundation for morality and instead impose their own idea of right and wrong; morality is based on “my truth” rather than absolute truth. And this worldview is therapeutic—the purpose for living is my own personal happiness; there is no higher purpose.

Without an anchor for their soul and the knowledge of a sovereign Savior who loves them and is working out all things for their good, it's no wonder our kids are lost. They're wandering on the wrong path of their own making, filled with worry and fear, depressed about their lack of happiness, and unsure of what the future holds for them.

This week, we are introducing kids to the gentle Good Shepherd through the life of David and Psalm 23. They will meet the God who created them in his image, with great care, for his glory, and the good of all of us. The God who loved the world so much that he gave his Son as a sacrifice for sin. The God who leads us on the right path, who offers comfort in every trial, who provides for all our needs, and in whom every promise is “yes” and “amen.”

Today, as you prepare to share with the children, first remind yourself of who Jesus is—is he *your* shepherd? Have you crossed from being a lost sheep to a beloved member of his fold? Does he know you (John 10:14)? Do

you run to the chief shepherd and overseer of your soul when you are anxious (1 Peter 2:25)? Is he the shepherd and rock on which you build your life (Genesis 49:24)? Do you know that he will lovingly carry you forever (Psalm 28:9)?

What amazing mercy that we can say, “The Lord is *my* shepherd.” That the Creator of the universe is *my* personal shepherd. Is he yours? May we pray that we live our lives in light of this Good Shepherd as the Puritans did.

Lord of all being,
There is one thing that deserves my greatest care,
that calls forth my ardent desires,
That is, that I may answer the great end for which
I am made—
to glorify thee who hast given me being,
and to do all the good I can for my fellow men;
Verily life is not worth having
if it be not improved for this noble purpose.
Yet, Lord, how little is this the thought of mankind!
Most men seem to live for themselves,
without much or any regard for thy glory,
or for the good of others;
They earnestly desire and eagerly pursue
the riches, honours, pleasures of this life,
as if they supposed that wealth, greatness, merriment,
could make their immortal souls happy;
But, alas, what false delusive dreams are these!
And how miserable ere long will those be that sleep in them,
for all our happiness consists in loving thee,
and being holy as thou art holy.
Help me to know continually
that there can be no true happiness,
no fulfilling of thy purpose for me,
apart from a life lived in and for the Son of thy love.

— Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision*
(Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 13.

Devotion 2: The Lord Is My Leader

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Psalm 23:2–3

The algorithms on TikTok and other social media channels bombard our kids with doubts about the existence of God and the reliability of his Word. They learn in school that the universe came into existence on its own and that they are products of evolutionary processes acting over millions of

years. They are asking, “Does God really exist?” It's a question that has crossed the mind of every person at some point. Before we answer that question, let's ask another question: How can we even know to question the surety of God's existence?

Here's the answer: Apart from the perfect, truthful, unchanging, eternal God of the Bible, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3) and from whom comes knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 9:10), we cannot know anything. Think about it. If there is no god—no ultimate standard of truth and knowledge—and we are simply the product of random processes operating on chemicals over time, then the thoughts in our brains are nothing more than the product of random chemical interactions. How could we *know* anything? The one true God of the Bible has created each person in his image and given us the ability to think rationally, to question thoughtfully, to know truth fully. And he has revealed himself to all people so that everyone is without excuse (Romans 1:18–21). We can know the one true God exists because we have the ability to know in the first place. And we can praise him that he freely gives wisdom to those who ask for it (James 1:5).

Since God exists, we can also know that his Word is true and trustworthy. Over 3,000 times, the authors of the Bible claimed to be speaking or writing the words of God, and they reference the godly authority of other writers (Daniel 9:2; 1 Timothy 1:18; 2 Peter 1:21, 3:15–16). While on earth, Jesus referred to the Old Testament scriptures as truth and from the Holy Spirit (Matthew 19:4; Mark 12:36; Luke 11:49–51; John 5:46, 17:17). And God cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

Since the Bible is the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16), we can trust that God has given us accurate historical accounts and that he will lead us on righteous paths when we obey the guidelines he has set for his creation through the power of the Holy Spirit. We can joyfully cross from the wrong path to the right path when we become his children through repentance and faith in Jesus and willingly submit to the way he wants us to live. We can anchor our morality in the Word of the Good Shepherd who wants only good for us.

Today, as we encourage our children to look to the Lord and to follow his righteous paths, let's think about the behaviors and activities we may participate in that aren't on the right path. Do you gossip in the neighborhood chat? Tell white lies on social media? Envy the lives of those on Instagram? Do you anger quickly? Are you impatient with your children? Christ is calling us to the path of righteousness (Colossians 3:5–10). Are you engaging with his Word and desiring for him to conform you to his image through it? May we pray this with the Puritans:

O God of truth,
I thank thee for the holy Scriptures,
their precepts, promises, directions, light.
In them may I learn more of Christ,
be enabled to retain his truth
and have grace to follow it.
Help me to lift up the gates of my soul that he may come in
and show me himself when I search the Scriptures,
for I have no lines to fathom its depths,
no wings to soar to its heights.
By his aid may I be enabled to explore all its truths,
love them with all my heart,
embrace them with all my power,
engraft them into my life. . . .
From it show me how my words have often been unfaithful
to thee,
injurious to my fellow-men,
empty of grace, full of folly,
dishonouring to my calling.
Then write thy own words upon my heart and inscribe them
on my lips;
So shall all glory be to thee in my reading of thy Word!

— Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision*
(Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 190.

Devotion 3: The Lord Is My Comforter

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:4

After a frustrating day, a friend asked, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Yet we know that no one is good—no, not one—except the Good Shepherd, who defines goodness.

As the infinitely good God, the Creator fashioned a world that manifested his goodness according to his pleasure and for his glory. He established rules for his creation to follow. The standard to which he holds his creation is himself: absolute goodness. With one bite of fruit, Adam fell short of that standard. With every act of disobedience, we too fall short.

Because God is absolutely pure and holy, untouched by sin, he cannot partake in sin nor approve of it in others. He established a penalty for falling short of his standard: death. The goodness and holiness of God demands that he judge sin. As the righteous judge, he had no choice but to carry

out the punishment that he had set for breaking his rules. He placed a curse on his beloved creation. All of creation now groans under the weight of that curse. He imposed a sentence from which we have no means of escaping on our own. We can't get away from our punishment for sin, which is death, eternal separation from our Creator.

When a murderer is given a sentence for his crime, do we blame the judge who sentenced him? The answer to the age-old question "Why?" lies not at the feet of the Creator but in the bite of a fruit by man.

When we walk through the valley brought on by the curse, we can know that the same God who cursed his creation also provided a way of escape from the curse—Jesus Christ. Jesus took on flesh so that he could live the obedient life Adam didn't live while experiencing every temptation we experience. Because he knows what it means to be

human (for Jesus walked through the valley of the shadow of death many times with those around him), he can offer the comfort we need when we go through our own valleys. Knowing that Jesus is sovereign over all and that nothing happens apart from his good decrees for us, we can cross from living in fear to walking in the peace that only he can give.

As you share the Lord as comforter with our children, be careful to emphasize that the mess we find ourselves in is not the fault of our good and loving Creator. This will help children answer the “why” question when they encounter a tragedy or simply have a bad day. In general, these are results of living in a cursed world, which is the deserved punishment for sin. We need to also continually point them toward the great gift that the Creator has for us (salvation through Jesus Christ) and the comfort he provides through his Word.

Devotion 4: The Lord Is My Provider

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Psalm 23:5

“Good luck’ with that!” “I’ve had a bit of ‘bad luck’ lately.” We often say this in an offhand way, but if we aren’t careful with our words, we can inadvertently teach kids a sort of syncretism—I believe in God but I also believe in luck. Yet the two are mutually exclusive. God is sovereign, and nothing happens to us apart from his good plans for us. He is the one who prepares the table for us and overflows our cups. There is no room for inanimate luck to somehow drive our lives.

We may not kiss the Blarney Stone, but how often do we engage in activities that counter our trust in God and his provision for us? Ever read a horoscope? Checked the tarot cards? Hung a rabbit’s foot on the rearview mirror? Knocked on wood to keep bad circumstances away? Used crystals to promote good energy? Thanked “Mother Nature” for a good weather forecast? Asked for good vibes or good thoughts? Sent positivity into the universe? Hidden in a closet on Friday the 13th? Used Phil’s shadow on Groundhog Day to form your opinions on the advent of spring?

In his letter to the people of Colossae, Paul demonstrated the supremacy of Jesus in all things. As you read Colossians 1:15–20, think about what the acknowledgment of luck does to the sufficiency of our Creator and Savior.

David knew from reading about the life of his ancestor Abraham that the Lord provided what he needed (Genesis 22:1–14). On Mount Moriah, God had provided the ram for Abraham to sacrifice in place of Isaac. Later, David’s son Solomon would build the temple on Mount Moriah, providing a stable place for people to meet with God. And still later, near Mount Moriah, the descendant of Abraham and David who had been promised to both, Jesus Christ, was

Read Psalm 89:14 and think about the words of this Puritan prayer:

Thou Maker and Sustainer of all things,
Day and night are thine,
heaven and earth declare thy glory;
But I, a creature of thy power and bounty, have sinned
against thee
by resisting the dictates of conscience,
the demands of thy law,
the calls of thy gospel;
yet I live under the dispensation of a given hope.
Deliver me from worldly dispositions,
for I am born from above and bound for glory.
May I view and long after holiness
as the beauty and dignity of the soul.

— Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision*
(Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 139.

sacrificed on the cross—the ultimate provision by the king of the universe.

When we are tempted to grumble about our circumstances, a form of idol worship (“I know better than God what is good for me!”), or praise luck instead of the provision of our God, let’s remember who God is and how he has provided in the past, provides in the present, and will continue to provide in the future.

May this Puritan prayer tune our hearts to sing our thankfulness to Jehovah Jireh, our provider, alone.

I bless thee for the soul thou hast created,
for adorning it, sanctifying it, though it is fixed in barren soil;
for the body thou hast given me,
for preserving its strength and vigour,
for providing senses to enjoy delights,
for the ease and freedom of my limbs,
for hands, eyes, ears that do thy bidding;
for thy royal bounty providing my daily support,
for a full table and overflowing cup,
for appetite, taste, sweetness,
for social joys of relatives and friends,
for ability to serve others,
for a heart that feels sorrows and necessities,
for a mind to care for my fellow-men,
for opportunities of spreading happiness around,
for loved ones in the joys of heaven,
for my own expectation of seeing thee clearly.
I love thee above the powers of language to express,
for what thou art to thy creatures.
Increase my love, O my God, through time and eternity.

— Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision*
(Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 15.

Devotion 5: The Lord Is My Promise Keeper

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23:6

If you are hosting your VBS in June, you are likely inundated with rainbows—those formed after the spring rains or those featured in storefronts and in parades. The former are a reminder that God is a promise keeper. After the flood that was sent in judgment on the wickedness of mankind, God gave the beautiful rainbow as a sign of his promise to never flood the earth again. The latter come from those who shake their fists at their holy Creator, determined to live their lives on their own terms, building their faith on the shaky ground of man-made morality.

Our kids are caught up in the undercurrents of this new morality—they have friends who are “out,” friends who are furries, friends who are whatever they choose to be. Once they become emotionally involved, it’s more difficult to say with certainty, “Thus says the Lord.” For example, a friend said, “But what about Steve, who is like an uncle to my kids? How can I tell him his lifestyle is wrong when he’s so fun to be around?” This is part of that moralistic, therapeutic deism worldview—if there is a god, he wants people to be happy in whatever they do and can’t lay claim to their lives.

Yet the *real* rainbow shows us there is a personal God—the one who created us in his image—who has defined right from wrong. Anyone who rebels in *any* way is under his wrath (Proverbs 6:16–19) and needs to repent of sin and trust in Jesus for salvation. In the days of Noah, God showed his wrath on sin and his provision of salvation from judgment through the ark. And he showed—through the rainbow—his mercy for those who walk in newness of life. For us, this personal God has given his personal revelation through his Word and provided his personal salvation through the Word, Jesus Christ. These promises, found in the Bible, provide a sure foundation on which we can stand and proclaim with boldness the need for all to repent, receive salvation, and walk the right path with their gentle Good Shepherd.

Today, as you share with the children, evaluate your own foundation. Are you tossed to and fro by every “new” idea? Does your position on right and wrong change based on your involvement with others? Or do you stand firm on the unchanging Word of God, evaluating each teaching in light of what Scripture says, then sharing the true gospel with those around you who need to hear it?

May we pray with the Puritans that the Lord, our promise keeper, would continually remind us that his Word is sure and we can trust it. We look forward to the fulfillment of all his promises in that future time when his children will surely have a place in his courts forever.

Glorious Jehovah, my covenant God,
All thy promises in Christ Jesus are yea and amen,
and all shall be fulfilled.
Thou hast spoken them, and they shall be done,
commanded, and they shall come to pass.
Yet I have often doubted them,
have lived at times as if there were no God.
Lord, forgive me that death in life,
when I have found something apart from thee,
when I have been content with ephemeral things. . . .
Help me to leave my concerns in thy hands,
for thou hast power over evil,
and bringest from it an infinite progression of good,
until thy purposes are fulfilled. . . .
Grant me a distinct advance in the divine life;
May I reach a higher platform,
leave the mists of doubt and fear in the valley,
and climb to hill-tops of eternal security in Christ
by simply believing that he cannot lie,
or turn from his purpose.
Grant me the confidence I ought to have in him
who is worthy to be praised, and who is blessed for
evermore.

— Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision*
(Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 132.

PLANNING

Plan Your Path

Planning your VBS may feel like a big task. But never fear! From budgeting to decorating to a Countdown Calendar, this section provides the information you'll need to make informed decisions and easily navigate your way through *Emerald Crossing*.

Choose a Format

Five-day? Three-day? Morning? Evening? At home? At church? There are a variety of options to consider when planning your VBS. Choose from the options listed below or devise your own. *Emerald Crossing* is designed for a three-hour, five-day experience, but it can be easily adapted to a variety of situations. (Digital Pro is designed for the traditional VBS format and may not be compatible with nontraditional options.)

- **Five-Day Morning VBS:** VBS runs Monday through Friday in the morning. One advantage to this format is its outreach appeal. Many parents are looking for fun summertime options for their children during the day.
- **Five-Day Evening VBS:** VBS runs either Monday through Friday in the evening or Sunday through Thursday in the evening, with the closing program following on Friday evening. One advantage to this format is that church members who work during the day are able to help during the evening.
- **Three-Day VBS:** VBS runs morning and evening for two days with the fifth session on either the morning or evening of the third day. This option may be advantageous if you are renting a facility or if your church is available for limited days.

Alternately, you may want to cover just three of the days. For this option, we suggest covering Day 1 on the first day, a combo of Day 2 and Day 3 on the second day, and a combo of Day 4 and Day 5 on the third day.

- **Backyard Bible Club:** VBS is held in a home. Anyone in the church who has a heart to reach his neighborhood can host VBS from home. An advantage of this format is its small and personal nature.

You'll want to choose from the variety of activities offered that will work best for you. The Bible lesson time is the most important, so be sure to add or subtract activities (e.g., assemblies, crafts, snacks, games) based on your time and staffing constraints. For mixed ages, use the *Primary Teacher Guide* and allow about 35–40 minutes. If you do the assembly openings and closings, determine whether you will have time for songs and/or the Mission Moment. For the drama, you may want to purchase the Drama Download (1230590) rather than perform it live or try the shorter daily skits as an option.

- **Christian School or Homeschool Co-op:** VBS is held in a Christian school or homeschool setting during the school year. This is appropriate if your church does not host a summer VBS program or if you want to expand upon this one. The Bible lesson time is the most important, so be sure to add or subtract activities (e.g., assemblies, crafts, snacks, games) based on your time and staffing constraints.
- **Christian Camp:** VBS runs one or more weeks throughout the summer at a Christian camp. This VBS adapts well to a camp setting.
- **VBS on the Road:** Take VBS on the road. Use it on a youth mission trip, with an urban ministry, or in a neighborhood park. This can multiply your effectiveness, using your VBS program not only for your own church but also for another church or ministry.
- **VBS with Another Church:** Sometimes churches in the same community like to join together and host the VBS. This allows churches to pool resources and manpower.

A Day at Emerald Crossing

A day at *Emerald Crossing* is divided into rotations with 5-minute breaks between each rotation that allow children to get to the next location. Rather than staying in one room for the whole day, children are on the move, rotating from site to site with their groups.

The site rotation plan enables VBS volunteers to specialize in just one area rather than requiring them to be responsible for multiple areas. People may be more willing to help if they know their responsibility is limited to just crafts, teaching, or games. This also allows your volunteers to specialize in an area they are gifted in.

Children enjoy the site rotation plan as well because they are constantly on the move, hearing and experiencing different sights, sounds, and people. The rotation schedule for each group is the same each day.

Emerald Crossing is designed to take between 2½ and 3 hours daily to allow adequate time to complete each rotation. The 3-hour plan is recommended because of the content-rich program. See the Sample Schedules on pages 35–36. Decide which schedule and which rotations work best for you and plan to venture through the day in the following order.

Opening Assembly

To begin the day, everyone meets at the Emerald Isle Assembly. The opening assembly consists of a wacky welcome, singing, a Mission Moment, announcements, and prayer. For the Mission Moment, we're partnering with Children's Hunger Fund to provide meals and the gospel to hungry children. See the *Assembly Guide* for more information.

FOR YOUR ASSEMBLY LEADERS

- ❑ 1 *Assembly Guide* (1230060) for each leader, drama coordinator, and mission leader
- ❑ 1 Music Leader Download (includes contemporary and traditional song lyric videos, hand-motion videos, presentation images of songs, and song lyrics)
- ❑ [Children's Hunger Fund videos](#)



Rotation Sites

Children visit five different rotation sites.

Lesson Time

At Flock Talk Time, children meet their teachers, who present the day's Bible lesson and apologetics content in appealing ways. See the age-appropriate teaching guides for more information.

FOR EACH TEACHER

- ❑ 1 age-appropriate Teacher Resource Kit (Teacher Guide, 1 set of teaching posters, 1 set of Animal Pal Posters, 1 set of Memory Verse Posters)
- ❑ Memory verse songs from the Music Leader Download (daily memory verses set to fun music; includes audio and video files.) If you choose to use the audio files, you may want to have your teachers upload the songs to a music player on a smartphone then use a small amplifier to project the music.



FOR EACH STUDENT

These items can be handed out at the end of the class or given to the group guides to keep until the end of the day.

Emerald Isle Travel Guides can be stamped by the group guides during the welcome time at the beginning of the day or by the teachers at the end of class.

- ❑ 1 set of age-appropriate student guides (available in ESV and KJV)
- ❑ Gospel Bookmark (1230760)
- ❑ The Lord Is My Shepherd Bookmark (1230770)
- ❑ Travel Guide (available in ESV and KJV for Junior/Primary)
- ❑ Emerald Isle Water Book (available in ESV and KJV for Pre-Primary/Toddler)
- ❑ Emerald Crossing Maps/Stickers (1230780)
- ❑ *Exploring God's Word* Bible Study (1230750)



Science and Crafts

At the science and craft site, children create fun crafts and engage in interactive science experiments that are theme-related and reinforce the day's Bible content. You may choose to do either the experiments or the crafts or a combination of both, depending on your budget, time, and the interests of your children. See the *Celtic Corner Science & Crafts Guide* for more information.



FOR EACH SCIENCE AND CRAFTS TEACHER

- 1 *Celtic Corner Science & Crafts Guide* (1230100)

Mission and Music

If you'd like to feature a music, mission, or memory verse review time, see the *Top o' the Morning Missions, Music & Memory Verses Guide*, which includes ideas for these options. Adding these rotations gives kids the opportunity to better learn the motions to the music and learn more about the mission project.

You may want to combine one of these with the snack time or add a separate rotation for music and mission time. To add a rotation, shorten the other rotations to make time for an additional one. Some who have done this have kept all the children together for the Bible lesson after the opening assembly and then let them rotate through the remaining sites in individual groups for the remaining time. This allows for a longer Bible lesson time, while the other sites have shortened sessions.

FOR EACH LEADER

- 1 Music Leader Download (includes both contemporary and traditional song lyric videos, hand-motion videos, presentation images of songs, and song lyrics)
- 1 *Top o' the Morning Missions, Music & Memory Verses Guide* (1230140)
- [Mission Moment videos](#) and [handouts](#)



Games and Snacks

At these sites, children spend half the time playing games and the other half eating snacks. Games and snacks are theme-related and reinforce the day's Bible content. See the *Green Meadow Games Guide* and *Still Water Snacks Guide* for more information.

FOR EACH LEADER

- 1 *Green Meadow Games Guide* (1230080) for each game leader
- 1 *Still Water Snacks Guide* (1230090) for each snack leader



Closing Assembly

The children gather again at the Emerald Isle Assembly for a drama or quick skit, more singing, a [Creature Feature](#), contest announcements, and dismissal. See the *Assembly Guide* for detailed information.



FOR THE DRAMA

- 1 Daily Drama Download (1230590)—This features five videos (approximately 12 minutes each) that introduces lads and lasses to an Irish sheep farmer named Grandpa Fitz who runs Stillwater Farm. Through lots of fun and a few big surprises, Grandpa Fitz shows how the Lord has been his comfort and guide his whole life.

Map Out Your Space

Your church may be small, large, or somewhere in between. You may be landlocked or have outdoor space. Take some time to think through your particular space configuration and plan where each rotation site will work best so you can design your specific schedules.

The following suggestions are based on a VBS with 100 or fewer children. Plan to keep each group to approximately 15 students or fewer. Two groups can rotate together (30 kids approximately) if the rooms are big enough to accommodate them. For example, two groups can go to craft time together, two to snacks/games, and two to lesson time, assuming the age ranges are compatible. If you plan to have more than 100 children, add extra sets of rotation sites as needed.

Opening and Closing: All children are together at this time, so you'll need a large room that can accommodate everybody, such as your sanctuary or fellowship hall.

- This area should ideally feature the following:
 - » Sound system (including microphone and media players)
 - » Screen
 - » Projector
 - » Stage (on which to conduct the daily drama)

Games and Snacks: Children visit both these spots during the same rotation time, so place these rotation sites in close proximity to each other. One group can play games while the other eats snacks, then they can switch halfway through. Or both groups can play games at the same time then go to snacks together.

- It's great to have a place outside to play and eat, but also consider your gym or an open area close to a kitchen. For snacks, children can sit either on the ground or in an area with tables and chairs.
- To modify this for a larger VBS, plan to have three snack areas *and* three game areas (one for Pre-Primaries, one for Primaries, and one for Juniors).

Science and Crafts: Choose a large room with space for tables that kids can stand around. Use lower tables for younger children. Place a few chairs around the edges of

the room for those who might need to sit down. Make sure it's an area that is tarped and can be easily cleaned.

- To modify this for a larger VBS, plan to have three separate craft areas (one for Pre-Primaries, one for Primaries, and one for Juniors).
- Your area may also include the following:
 - » Screen/projector/media player (to project directions and play the VBS music)
 - » Sound system (to verbally share directions and play the VBS music)
 - » Memory Verse Posters (if you add a memory verse time to this rotation)

Lesson Time: Classrooms work well for this rotation. Assign larger classrooms to the groups that have the most children, especially if these are older children. You'll need one teaching classroom for every one to two groups in a rotation. (It's best to have just one group per classroom if possible for more individualized attention.)

- If your groups are multiage, rather than separated by ages or grades, use the Primary teaching material for all groups.
- Pre-Primaries spend half of their time engrossed in learning centers (Exploration Stations) and the other half in teacher-directed time. The stations can be in one part of the room and the teacher-directed time in the other part, or these can be divided into two rooms that are next to each other. If stations aren't possible in your setting, suggestions are given in the teacher guide to easily adapt to all teacher-directed lesson time.
- Toddlers spend most of their time in one area (but join the rest of the kids for the opening and closing assemblies). Plan enough rooms to accommodate the number of Toddlers you have registered.
- If you choose to divide children by age or grade (e.g., all first graders together), place all sites for that group relatively close to each other to cut down on travel time. For example, when planning the Junior locations, locate the game, snack, craft, and teaching areas for Juniors as close as possible to each other.

Assembling Group Supplies

To help keep everyone organized, assemble two containers—one bag and one laundry basket or 4½-gallon storage bin—for each group guide.

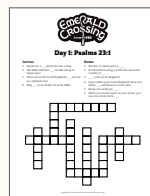
The bag will hold the group’s daily supplies. The other bin can be used as a materials drop-off location for each group. It should remain in the same spot all week long. Use this bin to deposit flyers, daily memos, or new supplies. The group guide can store the children’s take-home items in this bin as well.

Invite some administrative friends to a container-stuffing party a few days before VBS. At this gathering, you will prepare the bag and container for each group. Group guides should pick up these supplies the day before VBS begins. Listed below is a suggested plan for preparing the containers.

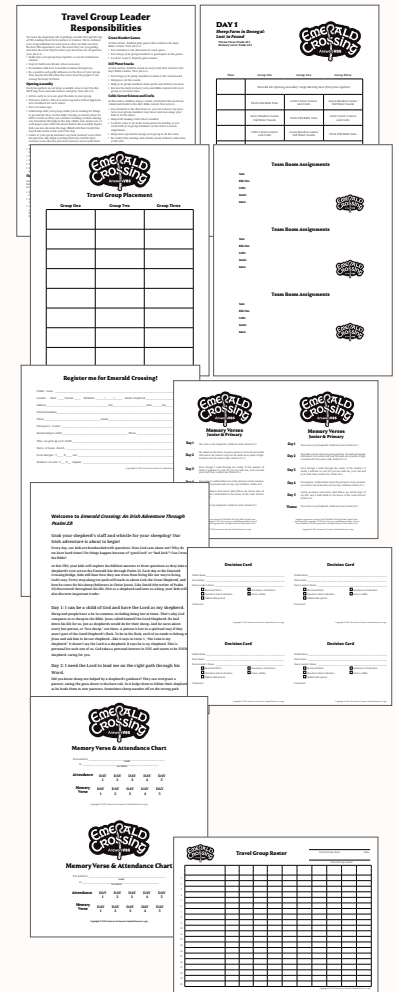
- Make the needed copies ahead of time and prepare supplies so your work crew can focus on counting, sorting, and stuffing.
- Print the travel group names (e.g., “Golden Eagles” or “Irish Wolfhounds”) on card stock, two copies for each group name. Using clear packing tape, attach one copy to the group bag and one to the lid of their storage bin or the side of a laundry basket.

In each bin, include the following:

- Name tags (include extras for walk-ins)
- 1–2 black permanent markers to write names on name tags
- 1–2 pens for general use
- Sharpened pencils or washable markers, 1 per child
- Crayons
- **Coloring and Activity Pages**
- 5 adhesive bandages in a zippered bag
- 10- to 15-foot lengths of rope (or longer if you have a large class) to be used by preschoolers as they walk from area to area



- Lunch bags, which will be used to send home daily papers. Additional bags will need to be distributed each day to the group guides.
- **Team Leader Responsibilities**
- **Daily Schedule**
- **Team Placement**
- **Lesson Time Room Schedule**
- **Registration Forms**
- **Memory Verse Pages, 1 per child**
- **Caretaker Handbook, 1 per child**
- **Decision Cards**
- **Attendance Chart, 1 per child**
- Small stickers (10 per child) or stamp (1230930) for Attendance Chart
- **Team Roster** with preregistered children listed for each team, 1 copy for each day of VBS
- Map of the church with VBS areas clearly marked
- Visitor Appreciation Certificates (1230130)
- Memo from the director with whatever last-minute information you want to convey



Sample Schedules: Morning VBS

3 hours

Time	Group One	Group Two	Group Three
9:00–9:15	Emerald Isle Assembly—Opening: Large Meeting Area (Everyone Together)		
9:20–10:00	Flock Talk Bible Time	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks
10:05–10:45	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks	Flock Talk Bible Time	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts
10:50–11:30	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks	Flock Talk Bible Time
11:35–Noon	Emerald Isle Assembly—Closing: Large Meeting Area (Everyone Together)		

3 Hours with Additional Rotation

Time	Group One	Group Two	Group Three
9:00–9:15	Emerald Isle Assembly—Opening: Large Meeting Area (Everyone Together)		
9:20–9:50	Flock Talk Bible Time	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks
9:55–10:25	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks	Flock Talk Bible Time	Missions, Music, and Memory Verses
10:30–11:00	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts	Missions, Music, and Memory Verses	Flock Talk Bible Time
11:05–11:35	Missions, Music, and Memory Verses	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts
11:40–Noon	Emerald Isle Assembly—Closing: Large Meeting Area (Everyone Together)		

3 Hours with Bible Lesson All Together

Time	Group One	Group Two	Group Three
9:00–9:15	Emerald Isle Assembly—Opening: Large Meeting Area (Everyone Together)		
9:20–10:00	Flock Talk Bible Time		
10:05–10:30	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks	Missions, Music, and Memory Verses	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts
10:35–11:00	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks	Missions, Music, and Memory Verses
11:05–11:30	Missions, Music, and Memory Verses	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks
11:35–Noon	Emerald Isle Assembly—Closing: Large Meeting Area (Everyone Together)		

2 hours and 45 minutes

Time	Group One	Group Two	Group Three
9:15–9:30	Emerald Isle Assembly—Opening: Large Meeting Area (Everyone Together)		
9:35–10:10	Flock Talk Bible Time	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks
10:15–10:50	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks	Flock Talk Bible Time	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts
10:55–11:30	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks	Flock Talk Bible Time
11:35–Noon	Emerald Isle Assembly—Closing: Large Meeting Area (Everyone Together)		

2 hours and 30 minutes

Time	Group One	Group Two	Group Three
9:30–9:40	Emerald Isle Assembly—Opening: Large Meeting Area (Everyone Together)		
9:45–10:20	Flock Talk Bible Time	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks
10:25–11:00	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks	Flock Talk Bible Time	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts
11:05–11:40	Celtic Corner Science and Crafts	Green Meadow Games and Still Water Snacks	Flock Talk Bible Time
11:45–Noon	Emerald Isle Assembly—Closing: Large Meeting Area (Everyone Together)		

Sample Schedules: Evening VBS

Modify the prior schedules as follows:

- For a VBS lasting 2 hours and 30 minutes, start at 6:00 p.m. and end at 8:30 p.m.
- For a VBS lasting 2 hours and 45 minutes, start at 6:00 p.m. and end at 8:45 p.m.
- For a 3-hour VBS, start at 6:00 p.m. and end at 9:00 p.m.

Because many people come from work for an evening VBS, some churches run a concession stand or serve a meal beginning an hour before VBS. This can be a wonderful blessing to working families and helps ensure they can be at VBS. Providing meals is a big undertaking, so this task needs dedicated people to organize it and devote each VBS afternoon to food preparation. Check the Resource Download for a [sample concession stand menu](#) and [treasure hunt ideas](#) to use during this pre-VBS time.

Sample Team Placement

Group One	Group Two	Group Three
Lambs (4 years)	Red Foxes (5 years)	Magpies (6 years)
Irish Hares (7 years)	Hedgehogs (8 years)	Badgers (9 years)
Connemara Ponies (10 years)	Gray Wolves (11 years)	Golden Eagles (12 years)

Sample Bible Lesson Time Room Schedule

Age Group	Rotation One (Group One)	Rotation Two (Group Two)	Rotation Three (Group Three)	Room Number	Teachers
Pre-Primary	Lambs	Red Foxes	Magpies	Room 100/102	Sandy Smith (Lesson Time) Abby Rogers (Exploration Stations Time)
Primary	Irish Hares	Hedgehogs	Badgers	Room 205	Ted McKenzie Susan McKenzie
Junior	Connemara Ponies	Gray Wolves	Golden Eagles	Room 209	John Williams Becky Williams

Money Matters

Time to talk budgets. This VBS is designed to work with those on limited budgets. The crafts are made from ordinary supplies you can buy in bulk, the games work with items that are common and easy to gather, and the snack supplies can be donated by church members. Those who have more money in their budget can make this program as



elaborate as they like, using additional resources from the Resource Catalog.

It is estimated that this VBS will cost \$10–20 per child for the basics. If you would like to offer T-shirts and music CDs, this will add to the cost, which can be offset by reselling these items at cost to the children.

The following budgeting tips are offered for churches of all sizes.



Budgeting Tips

Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:2

- Work with the church staff to determine your VBS budget. Use last year's budget as a starting point, taking into account increased costs and attendance. Once the budget is determined, stick to it and record all expenses. See the Resource Download for a [budget worksheet](#).
- Determine the approximate cost of VBS for one child by dividing the total expenses incurred last year by the number of children who attended. Adjust for increased costs and ask church members to sponsor a child for that amount.
- Get creative with fundraising ideas: car washes, bake sales, yard sales—you name it!
- Compile supply lists for science and crafts experiments (see *Celtic Corner Science & Crafts Guide*), snacks (see *Still Water Snacks Guide*), games (see *Green Meadow Games*)

EMERALD CROSSING VBS Budget Worksheet				
Category	Last Year Budget	Last Year Actual	This Year Budget	This Year Actual
Budgeting Supplies				
Decorations				
Books and Maps				
Snacks				
Games				
Transportation				
Activities				
Materials/Supplies				
Music/Supplies				
Decorations				
Other Supplies				



Guide), and decorations. Ask for supply donations from church members.

- When finished with this year's VBS, find out next year's theme as soon as possible and begin looking for decorations and other supplies at yard sales.
- Cohost VBS with another church and share the costs. Or host separate VBS programs at separate times and share the supplies and costs (complying with the copyright restrictions for this VBS program).
- Ask local businesses for donations. Include their names in the closing program bulletin and send a thank-you letter with a picture of the VBS to each contributor.
- Enlist frugal shoppers to find good deals. Buy in bulk when possible and check with thrift stores and discount warehouses.
- Borrow items. Make sure to list the items, label them, and promptly return them after VBS.
- Fill out paperwork for tax-exempt status at the stores where you will be making VBS purchases. Check with your church treasurer about this.
- Encourage the least expensive form of advertising: word of mouth.
- Save and reuse whatever you can.

VBS Budget Worksheet

Category	Last Year's Budget	Last Year's Actual	This Year's Budget	This Year's Actual
Teaching Supplies				
Decorations				
Science and Crafts				
Snacks				
Games				
Drama/Music/ Multimedia				
Publicity/ Photography				
Contests/Prizes				
Nursery Supplies				
Office Supplies/ Postage				
Miscellaneous				
Total Expenses				

Countdown Calendar Worksheet

Month

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

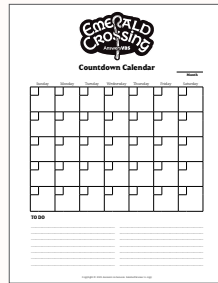
Saturday

TO DO

Director's Countdown Calendar

Five Months Before

- Pray! Prayer is not preparation for your work, it is your work! Be faithful to pray before, during, and after your VBS.
- Print six copies of the **Countdown Calendar**. Fill in the month and days accordingly. Use these calendars to keep your VBS preparation under control.
- Read all guides.
- Determine the projected number of children.
- Meet with your pastor to decide goals, format, dates, times, and budget. Mark the dates on the church's master calendar.
- Begin to assemble your leadership team, starting with a prayer coordinator, a publicity coordinator, and an assistant director. Give them copies of the following:
 - » Prayer Coordinator: pages 23–24
 - » Publicity Coordinator: Section Five—Promotion
 - » Assistant Director: order another *Director Guide* (1230050)
- Plan next month's initial staff meeting with your leadership team and notify them of the date. Items to be covered include praying together, announcing the theme, laying out job specifics, brainstorming, and setting deadlines for all preparations.



Four Months Before

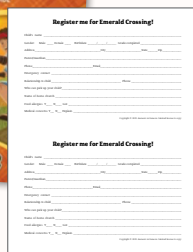
- Continue to pray.
- Meet with the publicity coordinator and decide on a publicity plan with specific tasks and target dates. Order and prepare publicity materials. See the *Resource Catalog*.
- Meet with the prayer coordinator and begin to enlist the prayer support of your church family.
- Recruit the rest of the leadership team. This includes the coordinators listed in Section Four—Recruitment.
- Conduct the initial staff meeting with the leadership team. Distribute copies of the Countdown Calendar and the appropriate manuals to team members.
- Announce the date and time of VBS in your church bulletin or newsletter (1230240). Send “Save the Date” postcards (1230260) to all church children and VBS attendees from last year.



No matter when your VBS is, we recommend that you begin ordering all parts of your VBS in January to take advantage of larger discounts and to ensure item availability.
Check the Resource Catalog for discounts.

Three Months Before

- Continue to pray.
- Determine the number of groups needed.
- Order teacher guides and resources, student guides, an outdoor banner, and other supplementary supplies. See Resource Catalog.
- Make an announcement in church to share the theme and get everyone enthused and ready to pitch in for this year's VBS. Submit the Volunteer Recruitment Flyer (1230250) for placement in the church bulletin or newsletter. See the Resource Download for a **Volunteer Registration Form**.
- Plan next month's Teacher Workshop. See the Training Workshops section. Notify the teaching team of the date with the printable **workshop invitation**.
- Begin to execute the publicity plan.
- Check with all members of the leadership team to assess their progress and encourage them.
- Assemble the rest of your team.
- Make sure the craft, snack, and game coordinators have their supply lists ready to share with the church family within the next month.
- Plan the mission project. See the *Assembly Guide* for possibilities.
- Decide on registration plans and prepare **child registration forms** for next month's registration. Or set up registration through myAnswers.com.
- Post a catchy advertisement on the church's website with pictures from last year's VBS.



Two Months Before

- Continue to pray.
- Conduct the Teacher Workshop.
- Identify staffing holes in the VBS team and recruit the remaining staff.
- Plan the Volunteer Workshop, which will be held next month. Announce the date(s) and time(s) of the workshop in your church bulletin or newsletter. Order one *Helper Handbook* (1230070) for each volunteer or make copies of necessary pages yourself and assemble into packets.
- Set up a VBS Headquarters information counter. See page 46.
- Make an announcement about needed craft, snack, and game supplies along with props, costumes, and decorations. Set up labeled donation boxes to collect supplies.
- Begin registering children.
- Check with all members of the leadership team to assess progress and encourage them.
- Order music CDs or purchase licenses to distribute the MP3s (see Resource Catalog) so children can begin learning the songs.
- Order T-shirts or make your own with iron-on transfers (1231070, 1231090).
- Order name tags (1230150 or 1231060) or make your own. Begin plans for the pre-VBS carnival. See page 67.



Visit myAnswers.com to set up free online registration and upgrade to Digital Pro!



One Week Before

- Continue to pray.
- Conduct the Gospel Workshop.
- Dedicate the VBS crew during the church service prior to beginning VBS.
- Host a “decorating day” (see page 47) to decorate and set up your facility. Check with the church staff to find out if certain areas need to be untouched until after the last church service prior to the beginning of VBS.
- Ensure all positions have been filled.
- Check with all members of the leadership team to find out any last-minute needs.
- Continue to update the class lists with names of new children.
- Get the contests finalized and supplies all together.
- Ensure that the first aid kits are replenished and safety and emergency plans are ready.

One Day Before

- Continue to pray. Have a prayer walk around the inside and outside of the building with members of your church family. Pray over every area.
- Finish decorating the church, including the set for the drama.
- Set up all areas with necessary supplies and label rooms with directional signs (Celtic Corner Science and Crafts—Juniors; Still Water Snacks—Primaries, etc.).
- Ensure all group guides have bags and up-to-date class lists. Group guides should walk through the schedule to prepare for the next day.

Be sure to order the following early in the year to take advantage of larger discounts and ensure item availability:

FOR EVERY PRIMARY AND JUNIOR CHILD:

- 1 Student Guide
- 1 Emerald Isle Travel Guide
- 1 Gospel Bookmark
- 1 The Lord Is My Shepherd Bookmark
- 1 Emerald Crossing Map
- 1 Name Tag or Name Button
- 1 *Exploring God's Word* Bible study
- 1 Certificate of Completion
- 1 T-Shirt or Iron-on Transfer
- 1 Music CD

FOR EVERY PRE-PRIMARY AND TODDLER CHILD:

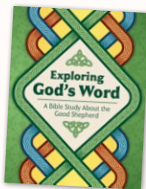
- 1 Student Guide
- 1 Emerald Isle Water Book
- 1 Gospel Bookmark
- 1 The Lord Is My Shepherd Bookmark
- 1 Emerald Crossing Map
- 1 Name Tag or Name Button
- 1 Certificate of Completion
- 1 T-Shirt or Iron-on Transfer
- 1 Music CD

FOR EVERY GROUP GUIDE:

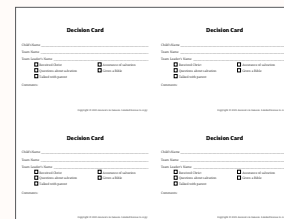
- 1 Name Tag or Name Button
- 1 *Helper Handbook*
- 1 T-shirt or Iron-on Transfer

During VBS

- Continue to pray.
- Faithfully and enthusiastically greet, encourage, and love the VBS crew and children.
- Be available to answer questions, troubleshoot, and help as needed.
- Pray each day with the crew before VBS begins.
- Update the class lists each day, adding new children who have joined.
- Arrange for substitutes as necessary.
- Make sure that contact information is complete for each child and records are faithfully kept.
- On the first day, send home a Caretaker Handbook with each child.
- Make final preparations for the Closing Program. Send home invitation postcards (1230300) midweek.
- Purchase additional supplies as needs arise.
- Meet with children who have further questions about salvation or who make decisions for Christ.
- Distribute certificates of completion, *Exploring God's Word* follow-up Bible studies, and any other take-home goodies to group guides. They can organize them and give them to the children the last day of VBS. (Or give the follow-up Bible studies to the teachers to distribute to Juniors and Primaries during the last day's lesson.)



- Decide how to show your VBS crew members how much they are appreciated.
- Make sure **Decision Cards** are filled out, collected, and recorded for follow-up efforts.
- Encourage all crew members to clean their areas before leaving the last day. Label empty plastic bins (e.g., pens, unused adhesive bandages, unused name tags), and place them on tables so workers can sort remaining supplies. Have a large trash can nearby for discarding trash from their bins.



After VBS

- Continue to pray for the follow-up efforts.
- Hold a leadership debriefing session soon after VBS ends to evaluate how things went. Write recommendations for next year's VBS.
- Execute your plan to show VBS crew members your appreciation. Pass out staff appreciation postcards.
- Report to your church family with thanksgiving on the wonderful ways God worked through this year's VBS.
- Finalize all records and file accordingly.
- Oversee the follow-up plans. See Follow-Up section.
- Complete the **Director's Evaluation Form** and send it to Answers in Genesis.



When you send in your Director's Evaluation Form, we'll send you a coupon for 10% off your next purchase from Answers in Genesis!

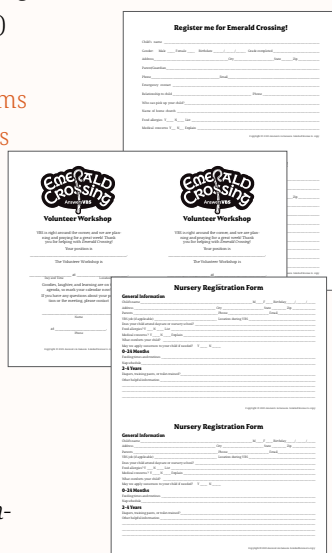
VBS Headquarters Information Counter

How do I register my child? What color card stock do the craft ladies need? How many bananas should I buy?

VBS generates lots of questions! And your VBS staff wants to be prepared with the answers. VBS Headquarters is a great way to keep communication flowing before and during VBS.

- Decide on a prime location and ask permission from the church staff to use it. This area should be highly visible and near the entrance.
- Set up the area 6–8 weeks before VBS. Recruit VBS volunteers to staff it during high-traffic times.
- Decorate the area thematically to capture everyone's imagination. After all, this will be the children's first peek at VBS! See the Decorating Decisions section for ideas and check out [Pinterest.com/answersvbs](https://www.pinterest.com/answersvbs) for photos.
- Stock the following information or supplies at the counter:

- » Music CDs (Resource Catalog)
- » T-shirts (Resource Catalog)
- » [Child registration forms](#)
- » [Volunteer registration forms](#)
- » [Nursery registration forms](#)
- » Craft donation list (*Celtic Corner Science & Crafts Guide*)
- » Science donation list (*Celtic Corner Science & Crafts Guide*)
- » Snack donation list (*Still Water Snacks Guide*)
- » Game donation list (*Green Meadow Games Guide*)
- » Props donation list (*Assembly Guide*)
- » Decoration donation list
- » Promotional materials (Resource Catalog or make your own from the [clip art](#) and [logos](#))



Before VBS

Use the VBS Headquarters to answer questions, register workers and children, pass out promotional materials, collect donated supplies, and sell T-shirts and music CDs.

To capture the children's attention and keep excitement running high, offer weekly contests (e.g., who can sign up the most visitors, design a great promotional poster, or learn a certain VBS song by the following week). Give small prizes to those participating.

The VBS Headquarters can also serve as the registration booth for the pre-VBS carnival. Just move it outside or to the location of the event, and you are set!

During VBS

This area becomes the daily VBS hub. Stock it with extras of the following:

- Copies of all papers going home (the [Caretaker Handbook](#), the [memory verse reference sheet](#), the individual contest sheets, etc.)
- Schedules
- Blank child and worker name tags
- Pens, pencils, markers, and other office supplies
- Adhesive bandages
- T-shirts and music CDs

On the first day of VBS, this area may also serve as the registration area if it is big enough to handle the check-in process. Otherwise, registration can be in a separate spot.

Keep the information counter (VBS Headquarters) up until the week after VBS so people can turn in any leftover supplies.



Decorating Decisions

A colorful and engaging environment helps children learn better, remember more, and leave with happy memories. So be creative and use the tools and ideas in this section to transform the look of your facility and capture the imagination of the kids.

Top 10 Decorating Tips

1. Check [Pinterest.com/answersvbs](https://www.pinterest.com/answersvbs) and [YouTube.com/answersvbs](https://www.youtube.com/answersvbs) for fabulous pictures and step-by-step directions for key decorating elements. This will be a huge help to you!
2. Find a team of people who enjoy decorating and let them loose.
3. Decide which spaces you want to decorate. The spaces where all children meet or travel should receive the most attention. These spaces include entryways, foyers, hallways, a large assembly room, and/or classrooms. See the teacher guides for more information about classroom decorations.
4. Decorations do not need to be expensive or elaborate. Check out thrift stores, garage sales, party supply stores, and internet sites for decorations. Communicate decorating needs through the church newsletter, bulletin insert, email loop, or social media site. Ask church members to loan, donate, or make items.
5. Kids love color! Be sure to keep decorations bright and fun.
6. Plan a day for volunteers to gather and make decorations. Provide the necessary supplies and consider serving some fun, thematic snacks.
7. One or two days before VBS, host a decorating party. Organize rooms as you desire. Remove or add furniture, chairs, toys, etc. Some floors can be tarped, such as the craft/science room. After rooms are physically set, let the decorating begin!
8. Another way to accomplish decorating rooms is to host a room-decorating contest. Build excitement with fun prizes and see what the VBS decorating teams create.
9. Be aware of fire code restrictions for your church.
10. Think about outside spaces. Use *the Emerald Crossing* vinyl banner (1230320) along with a costumed character stationed nearby to greet the kids as they arrive.

Key Decorating Elements

Decorating Posters

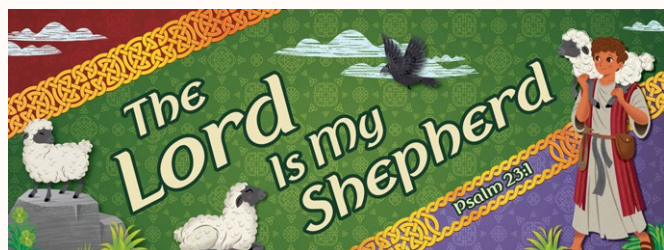
An easy way to decorate is with a variety of colorful posters, so be sure to check out the Decoration Poster Set (1231200) in the Resource Catalog.

Welcome Display

A large welcome sign at your main entrance should greet parents and children when they arrive at VBS—or better yet—how about an Irish-themed welcome display? A large welcome poster is included in the Decoration Poster Set (1231200).

Theme Verse Sign

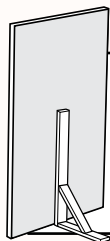
Displaying scripture is always a good idea, especially the theme verse. A Theme Verse Scene Setter is available for purchase (1231210) from the Resource Catalog, or you can make your own large sign and hang it in a central location where everyone will see it.



Rotation Signs

Included in the Super Starter Kit is one sign for each of the following areas: Celtic Corner Crafts (1230190), Celtic Corner Science (1230450), Green Meadow Games (1230180), and Still Water Snacks (1230170). You'll also find a Flock Talk Bible Time sign (1230200) for your classrooms and an Emerald Isle sign (1230210) to display outside your large assembly room. Top o' the Morning Tunes (1230340) and Memory Verse areas (1230350) are also available. Additional signs can be purchased from the Resource Catalog.





Prop up your set and any free-standing decorations with wooden jacks made from 2 x 4-in., 2 x 3-in., or 2 x 2-in. boards. Smaller decorations will need smaller jacks and larger decorations will need larger ones. If necessary, jacks can be weighted down with bags of sand or road salt.

Themed Photo Spot

A great way for kids and families to remember VBS is with photos. Set up a photo-op scene setter available for purchase (1231270) from the Resource Catalog.



Themed Hallways and Areas

STONE WALLS AND STONE RUINS

Rural Ireland is well known for its dry stone walls (stacked stones without mortar), so make them a prominent feature in your decorating. See the *Assembly Guide* for directions on how to paint a stone wall or check the internet for a myriad of methods. You can also purchase inexpensive rock wall print on paper roll or plastic backdrops and tablecloths. Choose designs that resemble rocks more than dressed stone.

Ireland is also known for its stone ruins—old remnants of castles, monasteries, and other structures from the past. So take your decorating a step further with some dilapidated stone remains with patches of colorful flowering ivy.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Ireland's natural beauty includes an abundance of lush green fields and grasslands, so include plenty of green grasses, shrubs, and flowers in your decorating. Sprinkle in a few trees for contrast. Boxes of various shapes and sizes, wrapped with green roll paper, can serve as bases that clusters of flowers can poke out of. Some possible flower choices to buy (fake flowers) or make can be three-leaf clovers (shamrocks), Easter lilies, cowslips, red clover, Irish eyebright, primrose, buttercups, bells of Ireland, and heather. Check internet sources for ways to make a variety of paper flowers.

For ceilings, hang clusters of flowering vines spaced evenly down your hallways. Simply twist lengths of brown roll paper then attach lots of flowers and leaves using a variety of colored card stocks. Make sure they're hung out of reach of little hands.

For the animal decorations, use lots of sheep in various positions, but also include horses, cows, chickens, owls, ravens, border collies, and even butterflies. Other birds, hedgehogs, foxes, and additional animals can be found in the [clip art folder](#). Two-dimensional props and decorations

can be drawn directly onto roll paper or made out of a rigid material like foam board or corrugated cardboard.

TRIBUTE TO IRELAND AREA

Another way to highlight Ireland is to feature some of its symbols and cultural heritage. Decorate with a large map of Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland flags, shamrocks, Celtic crosses, Celtic knots, Irish coats of arms, orange and green streamers or pennant banner bunting hanging from the ceiling (available online), and even a Viking ship. You can also display traditional Irish musical instruments, Irish kilts, step dancing clothes, Aran sweaters, and other wool items. Play Irish music to add to the atmosphere and add some Irish [trivia](#) on the walls.

PSALM 23 CORRIDOR

Designate a hallway as a Psalm 23 Corridor. This will go verse-by-verse, scene-by-scene, through Psalm 23.

Use a set of Psalm 23 Memory Verse Posters for the anchor of each scene, then create a series of life-size dioramas for each poster. Scene 1 (verse 1) can include a blackline image of a shepherd leading a sheep, or a sheep in a field looking up toward heaven. Scene 2 (verses 2 and 3) can feature green pastures (a green grass plastic tablecloth or meadow backdrop) with some still water near it (blue plastic tablecloth or roll paper), along with some sheep lying down. Scene 3 (verse 4) can have a valley. Make the sides of two mountains out of roll paper, with a valley in between.

A blackline image of a shepherd can be standing in the valley holding his rod and staff, with a couple sheep around him. Scene 4 (verse 5) uses a skirted table (to symbolize a king's extravagant table) prepared with various foods and a golden goblet that appears to be overflowing. Draw on the outside of the goblet with a permanent red marker for this effect. Have stained glass windows (made from black construction paper and bright tissue papers) behind the table. And for Scene 5 (verse 6), have a blackline image of a boy and/or girl walking or running, surrounded by words that convey God's goodness and mercy. These can be written on shoe prints or footprints as if they are following the person. The shoe prints/footprints can say anything good God gives to us (e.g., hugs, love, pizza, grandparents, Jesus). Have each child add a shoe print or footprint to fill the wall with examples of God's goodness and mercy that follows us.

Check out the Day 5 Mini Psalm 23 Book craft patterns for verse-by-verse drawings that can be blown up using an overhead projector and used for each scene.

EMERALD ISLE GLOW HALL

Kids love glow-in-the-dark items, so reserve an area that features the Ireland countryside at night. Cover the walls with black fabric or plastic tablecloths and install black lights. Then hang strings of mini LED fairy lights and decorate with sheep and other animals, along with grasses, flowers, and trees.

Also include wood fences, stone walls, old stone ruins, and even a whitewashed Irish stone cottage, if space allows. Paint or highlight your decorations with glow paint. Finish by outlining a road down the center of the floor using neon black light reactive tape.

Things to Avoid

There are so many fun things people associate with Ireland, like leprechauns and fairies, pots of gold at the end of the rainbow, and lucky horseshoes. For the purposes of this VBS, it is wise to keep those out of your decorations.

Clip Art Images

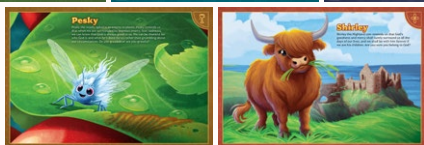
Numerous **clip art** images can serve as an essential part of your decorations. Use a laptop and projector or overhead projector to enlarge and transfer the images onto paper, poster board, corrugated cardboard, or foam insulation.

HOW TO ENLARGE AND TRANSFER CLIP ART

1. Photocopy the clip art onto transparencies.
2. Place roll paper or a rigid material against a wall.
3. Using a laptop and projector or an overhead projector to enlarge the clip art, shine the image onto the paper or rigid material, adjusting it as necessary for the size desired.
4. Trace the image outlines onto the paper or rigid material.
5. Paint the image and cut out.

Other Key Ideas

- Print the **Terrific Trivia Tidbits** onto colorful card stock and display them in various locations around your facility.
- Station a lively team of costumed greeters to welcome the kids as they arrive at VBS.
- Make Animal Pal scene setters (1231240) into freestanding decorations by mounting them on foam insulation and propping them up with wooden jacks.



- Rent a mascot-type costume from a costume store and have someone wear it all week at VBS.
- Line the entrance of your church property with solid color blade/feather flags. It's an inexpensive way to draw attention to your VBS and can be reused every year.
- Colorful mylar or latex (1230920) balloons are a perfect accent—especially for entryways. A balloon arch makes a big impact! Choose colors used in the logo.
- Use a mixture of 2D and 3D elements in your decorating.
- Use a Celtic font for all your signage.
- Large VBS logos can be displayed in various places.
- Find vintage bikes and put flowers in the front basket. Lean them against an entryway.
- For farm areas, use cardboard hay bale boxes (available online). Real hay bales should only be used outside as straw can cause allergy issues.

- Add in a beehive by fashioning a hive out of a floral foam block and adding brown roll paper that has been twisted and glued on. Stick floral wire into the beehive at various angles and attach faux bees (used for crafts) to the ends of the wire.
- Make directional signposts listing names of Irish towns in an assortment of colors.
- Line a wall with colorful row houses as seen in Dublin, Ireland.
- 3D clouds can be made by covering small white pizza boxes or white rice balls with Poly-fil and hanging them from the ceiling with clear fishing line.
- To add dimension to a 2D tree or bush, tape on a butterfly or a leaf here and there that has been folded in half, making them stick out.
- Add a thin (½-inch) black border to your painted props. This helps them stand out better and makes the colors appear more vibrant.
- Because corrugated cardboard tends to curl when only one side is painted, first apply a quick single coat of paint to the back.
- For pre-VBS meetings, check [Pinterest.com/answersvbs](https://www.pinterest.com/answersvbs) and [YouTube.com/answersvbs](https://www.youtube.com/answersvbs) for fun decorating ideas!
- A logo, map of Ireland, and daily phrases (1231250) add color and interest to any space.



Check [Pinterest.com/answersvbs](https://www.pinterest.com/answersvbs) and [YouTube.com/answersvbs](https://www.youtube.com/answersvbs) for more decoration ideas and photos from our test churches!



Large Assembly Room

The decorating of your Emerald Isle Assembly room consists primarily of the *Emerald Crossing* set. The set is your most important decorating piece and serves to communicate the VBS theme and create a setting for the live drama. Check the *Assembly Guide* for complete details. Scene setters for this area are also available (1231220).



Classrooms



Puppet Stages

Puppets are used daily in the Toddler, Pre-Primary, and Primary (but not Junior) rooms. Use one of the rolling hills on the set for this purpose, having the puppet appear from behind the hill. Or make a separate hill specifically for the puppet, and position it just to the left or right of your set. A puppet stage can also be made with a large cardboard box or trifold presentation board. See the teacher guides for more detailed information.

To serve as a focal point for the teaching, the *Emerald Crossing* classroom set features an old stone bridge on a farm in the Irish countryside. Mounted on the walls adjacent to the backdrop are the teaching, memory verse, and animal pal posters. Check the teacher guides for complete details.

Classroom Scene Setter

As a quick and easy alternative to creating your own classroom backdrop, a scene setter is available for purchase (1231260).

Exploration Stations

The Toddler and Pre-Primary classrooms will also enjoy Exploration Stations, which include the Discovery Center, the Dry Sensory Table, the Wet Sensory Table, the Dramatic Play area (which looks like an old Irish farmhouse kitchen), and the Coloring Corner (which looks like a sheep pen). See the teacher guides for more detailed information.



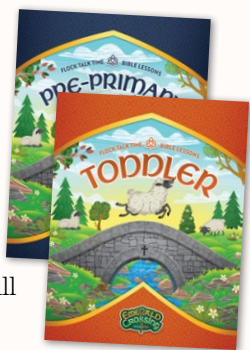
Nursery News

Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise. Matthew 21:16

The youngest VBSers are 0–3 or 4 years old. Because this age group requires a high teacher-to-child ratio, you may want to provide nursery care only for the children of VBS workers rather than opening it up to the community.

This is a precious age group that is absorbing and learning lots about God, so plan to use this time wisely. Check out the before, during, and after VBS tips as you begin to plan for the tiny tots.

This VBS features a *Toddler Teacher Guide* (1230430) for ages 2–4 with lesson, activity, snack, craft, and recreation ideas. There is also a *Pre-Primary Teacher Guide* (1230420) that can be used with 4–6-year-olds.



Before VBS

- Begin to pray for the children who will be under your care.
- Recruit workers. Having a good nursery staff in place helps with recruiting VBS workers who need childcare.
- Decide if you will include 4-year-olds in the nursery group or in the “big kid” VBS program (grouped with the 5–6-year-olds). Also decide if this group will be just church kids or community kids as well.
- Enlist a leader for each room. Those in the 0–24-month rooms are responsible for providing loving childcare. Those in the 2–3-year-old rooms follow the *Toddler Teacher Guide* for a scheduled program. Those in the 4-year-old rooms follow either the *Toddler Teacher Guide* or the *Pre-Primary Teacher Guide*.
- Maintain a 3:1 child-to-adult ratio for the 0–24-month-olds, a 4:1 ratio for the 2–3-year-olds, and a 6:1 ratio for the 4-year-olds. Even if numbers are small, you still need a minimum of two workers in every VBS room.
- Do not pack too many children into a room. It is safer and saner to have reasonable numbers.
- As pre-VBS recruiting progresses throughout the months, keep close tabs on the adults who have signed up to work. Check with each to see if they have 0–4-year-old children who will be in the nursery during VBS week.
- Keep good records of all children signed up for the nursery/preschool area. Check the Resource Download for a [registration form](#).
- List all allergies in a prominent spot so workers are alerted to them.
- Clean and organize the rooms ahead of time. Check with your church’s

nursery supervisor for the normal procedures for readying the nursery rooms.

- Make sure the laundry is done before the week begins.
- Determine safety procedures. See the child safety precautions that follow for ideas.
- Send a **letter** to all nursery parents outlining the needs and expectations of the week.
- If your church does not have an enclosed outdoor play area, prepare one by placing tarped hay bales in a rectangle. Place borrowed (and labeled) outdoor play toys inside the area.
- Read through the *Toddler Teacher Guide* and the *Pre-Primary Teacher Guide* for further information and specifics on teaching the 2–4-year-olds.

During VBS

- Continue to pray for your young ones.
- Nursery rooms should be opened fifteen minutes before the rest of the VBS crew is in place so workers can drop off children and get to their areas on time.
- Encourage nursery workers to arrive on time and be present throughout the week. Young children need the security of familiar faces.
- Follow the schedule, but keep in mind that flexibility is key when working with young children.
- The main physical needs of the 0–24-month-olds include feeding, diaper changing, sleeping, rocking, holding, and playing. Use these times to show Jesus’ love by caring not only for their physical needs but also for their spiritual and emotional needs. Sing, share simple Scripture verses (let them see your Bible and how precious it is to you!), talk about God, pray, and use simple words. Show them love through your voice, smile, and laughter.
- Vary the experiences throughout the day by having both indoor and outdoor times.
- Ask permission to apply sunscreen to 1–4-year-olds. (Babies should not wear sunscreen.) Do not stay outside too long at any one time.
- Clean the rooms, including the toys, each day. Wash laundry as necessary.

After VBS

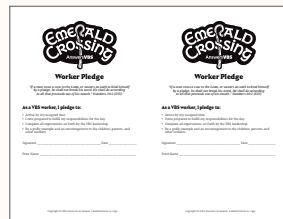
- Return outdoor play items to those who donated them for the week.
- Do a thorough cleaning and reorganizing of the rooms so they are ready for the next church activities.

Child Safety Precautions

Keeping children safe during VBS is an important responsibility of all VBS workers, requiring both prayerful and practical steps. Begin with prayer, praying before and during VBS for God's protection over each child, worker, and visitor. Pray for the smooth running of the facility as well. Prayer is a critically important step in your safety plan which should not be taken for granted!

Next, take practical steps by checking your church's child safety policies and communicating them to your VBS staff. If your church does not have any policies in place, prayerfully consider adopting sensible, wise procedures for the children's sake. Use the following examples to spark your thinking on what precautions to take regarding children's safety.

- Before allowing anyone to work with children, make sure you know them well and trust them. Do not allow new church attendees or others you do not know well to work with children. Check with your church on its policy regarding background checks on children's ministry workers and make sure all VBS workers are screened and interviewed and have had reference checks before assigning them a job.
- In addition to filling out the registration form, volunteers should also be required to sign a **VBS worker pledge**, agreeing to abide by the policies and procedures of your church. See the Resource Download for a sample.
- Thoroughly check all areas daily for cleanliness and safety before VBS begins. Remove hazardous or toxic items, cover outlets, put away heavy or dangerous objects, tape down cords, and make sure everything is in good working order. Check both inside and outside the facility.
- Children should be signed in and out of VBS by their caregivers, following your church's check-in/check-out procedures. Release the children only to authorized individuals.



- Always have at least two unrelated adults (18 and above) with children, including trips to the bathroom. Children must be well supervised at all times and never be left alone with just one adult or teen.
- Always pair responsible teens with adults.
- Count children every time you move to a different station.
- Enlist qualified members of the church with medical experience to be at the facility during VBS hours. Outline a procedure to quickly find and alert them of any situation needing attention. Make sure an accident report is filled out after any incident.
- Be aware of which children have which allergies and make sure precautions are taken to protect them.
- Keep ice packs in the freezer for minor bumps.
- Keep adequate first aid kits in safe and handy spots around the facility and make sure the VBS staffers are aware of their locations. Volunteers can give out adhesive bandages or ice packs, but anything more major should be handled by trained personnel or 911 calls.
- Enlist volunteers to form a security team to monitor the premises during VBS.
- Find out what precautions your church's insurance carrier recommends.
- Consider these additional precautions:
 - » Men should not change diapers.
 - » Do not allow children to sit in leaders' laps.
 - » Do not give piggyback rides.
 - » Do not give front hugs. Offer side hugs, high fives, and fist bumps instead.
 - » Do not take or post photos on social media of others' kids without written parental permission.
 - » Provide a police officer on-site during VBS hours.
- Continue to implement precautions for your situation, asking God to keep you alert and wise regarding these issues.

RECRUITMENT

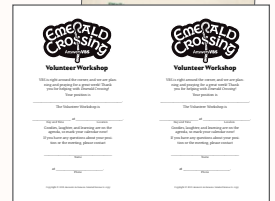
Gather Your Flock

Why should busy people volunteer to help at VBS? There's something in each of us that yearns to be useful for our master (2 Timothy 2:21). Through VBS, God has given us that awesome privilege as we invest in an outreach that is one of the most effective and evangelistic ministries out there. It is estimated that more people have become Christians through VBS than through any other church event. So as you approach people about working at VBS, cast the vision of its importance and eternal impact. Help them feel needed and appreciated.

Listed on the following pages are the leadership areas for VBS with **general job descriptions**. Use these to help identify

where people may best fit into VBS. Keep in mind, however, that God can use any willing heart. It is not necessarily a person's qualifications but one's dedication that counts.

Use the Volunteer Recruitment Flyer (1230250) and the Volunteer **Registration Form** to recruit and sign up your VBS volunteers.



Where Do My Teens Fit In?

Why, into your VBS program, of course! Teenagers provide a great way to round out your staffing needs. They're energetic and fun. Choose teens who have demonstrated a godly lifestyle and the ability to handle responsibility well. Make sure you clearly explain what you expect from them and then encourage them in their roles. The sky's the limit when it comes to incorporating your teens, but the following suggestions provide a starting point.

Drama: The teens in our test churches can't wait for the next VBS so they can act in the live daily drama. One of our

test churches even had to hold auditions for their drama because so many of their teens wanted to be involved!

Song Leaders: Use your youth group choir or band to lead the song motions during the opening and closing assemblies.

Group Guides: Teens enjoy interacting with the younger kids as they lead them from site to site. A side benefit is they are learning right along with the kids.

Assistants: Your craft, game, and snack areas will need helpers. Let your teens participate in the area they're most interested in.

Job Descriptions

Director/Assistant Director

Best fit for this job: Someone who possesses vision, organization, people skills, and a heart for children.

- Oversees the entire VBS (read through the *Director Guide* and other guides for further information)
- Works with the church staff on VBS-related issues, such as goals, dates, and budget
- Recruits, organizes, and oversees the entire VBS staff
- Plans and facilitates the Cool Contests
- Runs training workshops
- Coordinates the Closing Program
- Establishes effective follow-up
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



Administrative Coordinator

Best fit for this job: Someone who is organized and enjoys working with people.

- Oversees administrative tasks of VBS (read through the *Director Guide* and other guides for further information)
- May oversee others who help with administrative tasks
- Recruits and places volunteers
- Organizes and runs the registration of children
- Assists the director with tasks, such as setting VBS dates, designing customized schedules, assigning rooms, and ordering supplies
- May help with administrative tasks, such as typing, copying, and preparing mailings
- Keeps records during the week of VBS
- Organizes and evaluates information after VBS
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



Prayer Coordinator

Best fit for this job: Someone who has a heart for prayer and for organizing others to pray.

- Plans all prayer-related activities involved in VBS (see page 23 for further information)
- Helps execute prayer activities
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS

Craft and/or Science Coordinator

Best fit for this job: Someone who is organized and enjoys planning, preparing, and executing craft and/or science ideas. This may be one person's job, or you may want to split it into two, with a craft coordinator and a science coordinator.

- Plans crafts and/or science experiments for all age levels (see *Celtic Corner Science & Crafts Guide* for further information)
- May oversee others who help with crafts and/or science experiments
- Organizes craft and/or science experiment donation sign-ups for church family
- Buys all extra supplies that have not been donated
- Enlists help and prepares necessary craft supplies and/or science experiments ahead of time so everything is organized into daily packets for the children
- Presents the crafts and/or science experiments during VBS or oversees others who present them
- Decides whether missions, music, or memory verse ideas will be implemented during this time and plans and prepares as necessary
- Oversees the setup and cleanup of the craft and/or science experiment area(s) each day
- Makes sure key lesson themes are reinforced through the science experiments and crafts
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



Publicity Coordinator

Best fit for this job: Someone who is organized and energetic.

- Plans publicity campaign. See the Promotion section for further information.
- Plans ways to build excitement for VBS within the church family
- Plans ways to promote VBS to the community
- Enlists others to help with publicizing VBS
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS

Snack Coordinator

Best fit for this job: Someone who is organized and enjoys working with food.

- Plans snacks for all age levels (see *Still Water Snacks Guide* for further information)
- Organizes snack donation sign-up for the church family
- Buys all extra supplies that have not been donated
- Prepares daily snacks for VBS and/or oversees others who are helping with snacks
- Monitors which children have allergies, plans accordingly (after discussion with parents), and notifies the appropriate group guides and helpers
- Coordinates the serving of snacks each day
- Oversees daily cleanup of the snack area(s)
- Makes sure key lesson themes are reinforced through the snacks
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



Music Coordinator

Best fit for this job: Someone who is enthusiastic and enjoys singing with children.

- Learns all music and motions for the songs (see *Assembly Guide*, *Top o' the Morning Missions, Music & Memory Verses Guide*, and the Music Leader Download for further information)
- Helps plan and run the daily assemblies, including enthusiastically leading music
- Trains others to learn songs and hand motions ahead of time so they can also be up front helping to lead music
- Helps plan and run the Closing Program
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



Game Coordinator

Best fit for this job: Someone who enjoys planning and running recreational games for children.

- Plans games for all age levels (see *Green Meadow Games Guide* for further information)
- Gathers game supplies ahead of time
- Sets up games daily during VBS
- Runs game time and/or oversees others who are running game time
- Oversees daily cleanup of the game area(s)
- Makes sure key lesson themes are reinforced through the games
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



Drama Director

Best fit for this job: Someone who has experience with drama.

- Chooses actors for the drama and prepares folders for each with copies of the drama (see *Assembly Guide* for further information)
- Organizes a rehearsal schedule
- Runs the drama practices and oversees all aspects of the production (lighting, sound, costumes, props, etc.)
- Oversees the actual production of the dramas during the week of VBS
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



Missions Coordinator

Best fit for this job: Someone who has a heart for missions and wants to see children get excited about missions.

- Arranges all details related to presenting the mission project during VBS week (see *Assembly Guide* and *Top o' the Morning Missions, Music & Memory Verses Guide* for further information)
- May act as the presenter of the mission information the week of VBS
- Takes care of delivering mission collection to the appropriate parties after VBS week
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



Decorating Coordinator

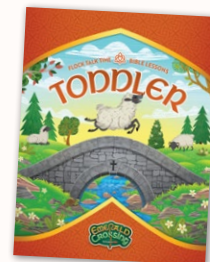
Best fit for this job: Someone who has creative ideas and enjoys decorating.

- Plans the decorations for all areas of the facility to make the space appealing (see the Decorating Decisions section for further information)
- Organizes decorating supplies and oversees a group to set up before VBS
- Organizes and oversees a group to take down the decorations after VBS week
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS

Nursery Coordinator

Best fit for this job: Someone who is organized and enjoys planning, preparing, and executing ideas for children ages 0–3 or 4 years.

- Plans and prepares lessons, schedules, and all other details of the nursery portion of VBS (see *Toddler Teacher Guide* and the Nursery News section for further information)
- Determines the number of nursery-age children who will need care
- Trains volunteers who have agreed to work in this area
- Oversees the nursery area during the week of VBS
- Makes sure key lesson themes are reinforced through all the activities
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



Photographer

Best fit for this job: Someone who is knowledgeable about photography, enjoys taking pictures, and enjoys children.

- Takes pictures of preparations that are occurring before VBS
- Ensures photo releases from parents have been secured and is informed of which children may not be photographed
- Takes numerous pictures during VBS week
- Takes individual pictures or class pictures of children
- Takes a group shot of entire VBS
- Develops and organizes photos after VBS for all to enjoy
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS

Group Guides

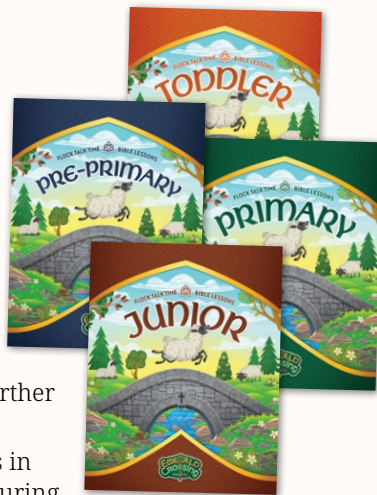
Best fit for this job: Someone who enjoys building relationships with groups of children.

- Checks the children in and out each day
- Leads them from site to site throughout the VBS day, actively participating and helping as needed
- Makes sure all children in the group are accounted and cared for and are enjoying VBS
- Sends home important flyers, crafts, and other items daily
- Writes a follow-up postcard to each child after VBS
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS

Shepherds (Bible Teachers)

Best fit for this job:
Someone who enjoys teaching children.

- Plans and prepares daily Bible lessons (see *Junior Teacher Guide*, *Primary Teacher Guide*, *Pre-Primary Teacher Guide*, or *Toddler Teacher Guide* for further information)
- Enthusiastically engages in delivery of the lessons during the week of VBS
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



A/V Coordinator

Best fit for this job: Someone with a knowledge of sound, lighting, and visual displays.

- Organizes and runs all the A/V components of VBS (see *Assembly Guide* for further information)
- Sets up microphones, video presentations, and stage effects
- Prays over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS



Assistants

An assistant position is not a leadership position but is critically important because the majority of your VBS volunteers will fall into this category. Assistants are the hands and feet of VBS. They work under the designated leader of each area, helping and assisting in whatever way they can.

Depending on the size of your VBS, one or more assistants are needed in each of the following areas:

- Actors
- Administrative Assistants
- Craft/Science Assistants
- Game Assistants
- Snack Assistants
- Group Guide Assistants
- Nursery Assistants
- A/V Assistants
- Decorating Assistants
- Drama Assistants
- Missions Assistants
- Music Assistants
- Photo Assistants
- Prayer Assistants
- Publicity Assistants
- Teaching Assistants

Training Workshops

Think back to your high school days. Do you remember those all-school pep rallies? They were designed to get everyone excited, cheering, and supporting the home-town team.

Think of your VBS training workshops as pep rallies. These are times to rally the crew and get everyone excited and enthused for the upcoming VBS. After all, VBS should be *fun*—fun with a purpose!

The training workshops are also designed to prepare your VBS crew for the task God has given them. Some of your crew will be experienced VBSers. Others will be new. Whatever the case, everyone needs to hear the assignment God has given your church or organization and learn the specifics of how to accomplish that assignment.

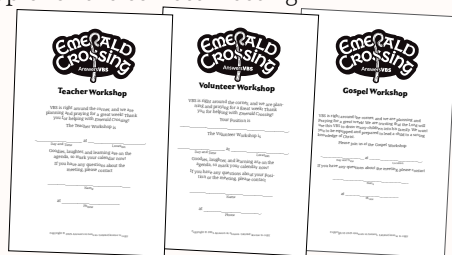
You'll want to host three workshops:

1. **Teacher Workshop:** This will provide your Bible teachers (shepherds) with the opportunity to review their teaching material.
2. **Volunteer Workshop:** This will provide the opportunity to share pertinent information with everyone on your staff (other than teachers). Your volunteers will also be able to check out the various rotation sites they will be helping with (crafts, games, snacks, etc.).
3. **Gospel Workshop:** This will provide the opportunity to teach your entire staff how to present the gospel simply and effectively to children and how to follow up with children who have questions or have indicated they made a decision to follow Christ.

The following outlines how to host successful training workshops. Tailor the ideas for your particular staff and situation.

Workshop Preparation

- Meet with the leadership team to brainstorm and prepare for your training workshops. All members of the leadership team need to attend the Volunteer Workshop since they may be running a small portion of the meeting.
- Set dates for the workshops and place them on the church's master calendar. You may want to repeat the workshops so people have optional dates or consider recording them.
- Notify the correct people for the correct meeting in advance. See the Resource Download for **invitations**.
- Send a reminder a few days before the workshop.
- Enlist volunteers to help with room setup, snacks, decorating, and other preparations for the



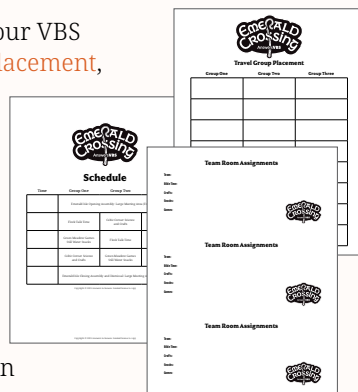
day of the meeting. See the next page for themed snack and decorating ideas.

- Purchase the following:
 - » *Helper Handbook* (1230070) for every member of the VBS crew
 - » Name tags (1230150 or 1231060) for everyone
 - » Pens (1230860), 1 per worker
 - » *How Can I Become a Child of God?* booklets (1002137) for the Gospel Workshop
 - » *Growing Up in God's Family* booklets (1002145) for the Gospel Workshop
 - » The appropriate number of teacher guides and Teacher Resource Kits for the Teacher Workshop
 - » Student guides for each age group (1230710, 1230720, 1230730, 1230740) for the Teacher Workshop
 - » Emerald Isle Travel Guides or Water Books, 1 per child for the Teacher Workshop
 - » *Exploring God's Word* follow-up Bible Study (1230750) for Junior and Primary, 1 per child for the Teacher Workshop
 - » Bookmarks (1230760, 1230770) and Emerald Crossing Map (1230780), 1 per child for the Teacher Workshop
 - » Music for the Teacher Workshop
 - » Something to put each volunteer's paperwork and themed goodies in or on (see [Pinterest.com/answersvbs](https://www.pinterest.com/answersvbs) for ideas)
 - » Themed goodies to give workers at each workshop (e.g., staff T-shirts, journals, themed pens)



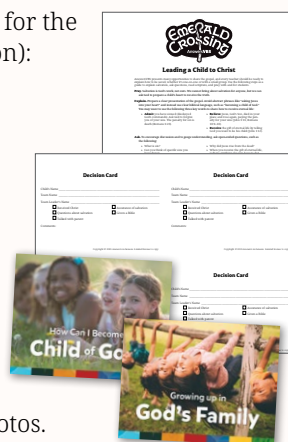
- Copy and assemble the following for Teacher and Volunteer Workshops (1 set per person):

- » Customized copies of your VBS **Daily Schedule**, **Team Placement**, and **Lesson Time Room Schedule**
- » VBS prayer request sheet
- » Map of facility with assigned areas marked
- » List of VBS crew members
- » Cool Contest information (see page 81)
- » Mission Project (see the *Assembly Guide*)
- » Miscellaneous information (e.g., dates and times of key VBS events, price of T-shirts, parking information, first aid kit locations)
- » Items mentioned on the previous page (e.g., *Helper Handbook*, name tags, Teacher Resource Kits, student guides, follow-up Bible study, themed goodies)



- Copy and assemble the following for the Gospel Workshop (1 set per person):

- » **Leading a Child to Christ**
- » **Decision Cards**
- » *How Can I Become a Child of God?* booklet
- » *Growing Up in God's Family* booklet



Tasty Training Treats

- Have some tasty treats on hand to set the mood. Check [Pinterest.com/answersvbs](https://www.pinterest.com/answersvbs) for photos.
- Choose one or more ideas from the list below.
 - » **Still Water Snacks:** Check out the snack guide and sample some themed snacks the kids will be served the week of VBS. It's great for your VBS volunteers to get this preview of coming attractions!
 - » **Brown Cows:** Make root beer floats as an ode to one of our Irish animal pals, Shirley the Highland cow.
 - » **Coffee and Tea Bar:** Ireland is a land of coffee and (especially) tea-lovers. Serve up your favorite roast (hot or cold) alongside assorted syrups, creamers, half-and-half, and even whipped cream if you're feeling fancy. Add in some sugar, honey, lemon, or milk for the tea-lovers and—*voilà!* Your meeting is sure to be a hit.
 - » **Baked Potato Bar:** If your meeting runs over the dinner hour, consider providing a baked potato bar

with assorted toppings, like chicken, bacon, chili, cheese, sour cream, green onion, and more!

- » **Butter Board:** Spread softened butter over a wooden food board. Sprinkle with salt and any other herbs or toppings of your liking. (Think roasted garlic, fresh rosemary, cracked black pepper . . . are you hungry yet?) Provide chunks of artisan bread for dipping. Look online for more butter board inspiration.
- » **Pastries:** Tarts, hand pies, fruit pies, apple cake—the sky's the limit with all the delicious Irish baked goods you could provide for your trainees!
- » **Water:** Wrap water bottles with **Still Water Labels**.

Delightful Decorations

Decorate your area to get the group thinking about the Irish countryside. Do a little or a whole lot—whatever suits your style.

- Cover tables with Irish-themed tablecloths or tablecloths. Or use colors found in the *Emerald Crossing* logo. For decorating helps, check [YouTube.com/answersvbs](https://www.youtube.com/answersvbs) or [Pinterest.com/answersvbs](https://www.pinterest.com/answersvbs).
- Liven up the room with balloons, hay bales, butter churns, antiques, and other farm-themed decorations. Utilize lots of greens, oranges, and yellows as well. Check online for backdrops of sheep or other Irish scenes—these make a big impact on the decor of a room!
- Place info packets on clipboards. Make individual clipboards by cutting a 4 x 8-foot sheet of Coroplast or corrugated cardboard into 9 x 12-inch pieces. Add a binder clip to the top of each. If you want to personalize the clipboards, print/copy color logos, cut them out, and glue them on each one. Place a green pen on each packet. Check [Pinterest.com/answersvbs](https://www.pinterest.com/answersvbs) or [YouTube.com/answersvbs](https://www.youtube.com/answersvbs) for pictures of the tables with the clipboards, packets, and pens.
- Play the VBS music as the crew arrives.

Teacher Workshop and Volunteer Workshop (Part 1)

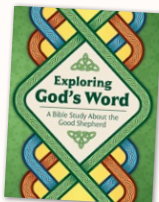
- Pray.
- Be organized and keep the meeting moving. You want people to leave excited and informed, not frustrated!
- Provide a short, uplifting devotional. You may want to involve your pastor in this.
- Encourage the VBS crew about the importance of VBS. (The majority of those who receive Christ do so when they are between the ages of 4 and 14!)
- Get your crew fired up about the theme. Wear something fun, such as your *Emerald Crossing* T-shirt and hat.
- Encourage interaction and sharing with icebreaker questions.
- Host a quiz show with questions from the **trivia** and the Bible and apologetics content the children will be learning. (See teacher guides.) Give themed candy or prizes to those who answer correctly.

- Play the [promo video](#) then share why you chose this particular VBS.
- Play the “Emerald Crossing” theme song and learn it together.
- Discuss the information packet, making sure to highlight the info on the course overview. Ask everyone to commit to read the information thoroughly before VBS.
- Explain how the Cool Contests will work.

Continue with Part 2 for the Teacher or Volunteer Workshop.

Teacher Workshop (Part 2)

- Pass out the appropriate teacher guides and Teacher Resource Kits. Briefly review the material found in them.
- Show samples of the student guides for each age group. These can be given to students at the end of each teaching session as a way to review the lesson content, or group guides can pass them out at the end of the day.
- Pass out the bookmarks and the follow-up Bible study, *Exploring God’s Word*. Suggestions for when teachers or group guides should give these out are found in the teacher guides.
- Preview the materials—particularly the teacher guides.
- To learn more about the content of this program, encourage your teachers and other volunteers to study the articles at AnswersVBS.com/emeraldfaqs.
- Host a Q&A time, then end in prayer.



Volunteer Workshop (Part 2)

- Pass out the *Helper Handbook* and briefly talk through it.
- Introduce the leadership team (nursery, crafts, science, snacks, games, music, and drama coordinators).
- Have the coordinators take their groups to where they will work during VBS and discuss the specifics of their assignments. The director can talk with the group guides and helpers.
- Individual coordinators should schedule additional training sessions as necessary.
- Host a Q&A time for questions, then end in prayer.



Gospel Workshop

- Pray.
- Be organized and keep the meeting moving.
- Provide a short, uplifting devotional. You may want to involve your pastor in this.
- Remind the VBS crew that the majority of those who receive Christ do so when they are between the ages of 4 and 14! VBS matters!
- Show the *What Is the Gospel?* video found at YouTube.com/answersvbs.
- Pass out the Gospel Workshop information packets. Discuss the information.
- Note the info on the back inside cover of each teacher guide, which is a handy reference.
- Role-play a gospel presentation situation. Workers pair up and take turns being the adult and the child.
- Discuss the experience and answer questions, then end in prayer.

PROMOTION

Announce Your Journey

It's time to let everyone know about your VBS! After all, people won't come if they don't know, so pull out all the stops and inform your church and community about *the* place to be this summer!

Promotional Helps

Your Resource Download contains **clip art**, the *Emerald Crossing* logo, and promotional helps. You'll also want to check out the Resource Catalog, which offers a range of promotional materials.



Use exciting and varied methods to share your message, making sure all promotional pieces include the following crucial information:

- VBS name
- Dates and times
- Location
- Ages
- Contact information

Remember to be creative and enthusiastic! Your methods will set the tone for VBS and get people excited and interested.

Add promotional events to the calendar you've already started. Print a separate copy of the calendar for your publicity coordinator.

File Formats

The clip art is provided in three formats in the Resource Download. Each format has a particular type of use. **PDF** files are vector files, which have transparent backgrounds and are scalable for shirt printing or to make large signs or banners. **PNG** files are a general image format that contain transparent backgrounds. They can be used for any print or web use but cannot be scaled up without resolution issues. **SVG** files are the simple vector formats required for Cricut machines.

Emerald Crossing Fonts

Answers VBS recommends the following freeware fonts for promoting *Emerald Crossing*: **Macondo**, **Uncial Antiqua**, and **Metamorphous** from Google Fonts, **CELTIC HAND** and **Berenika** from Dafont.

Also, **Celtics Modern**, **TF Gaelic**, and **Galica** are available for purchase from myfonts.com and **Civane** and **Brother XS** are available from Adobe Fonts.

Templates

Many of the promotional items are set up for use with standard Avery templates (with one exception). In Microsoft Word, select "Labels" and choose "Avery" from label vendors. (Or download these free templates from the "Templates and Software" section of Avery.com.) For the doorknob hangers, choose "OnlineLabel" from the label vendors. Data merges in Word can be set to use the following label templates:

Postcards (1230260, 1230270, 1230280, 1230290, 1230300)	Avery 3263
Bulletin inserts (1230240)	Avery 3265 or 8316
Doorknob hangers (1230330)	OnlineLabel 245
Promo cards (1230310)	Avery 8376
Name tags (1230150)	Avery 74459

When using the templates, you will need to leave room for the preprinted art when populating the labels with your information. Print a test page on a separate sheet of paper to make sure the spacing is correct. We recommend using the Step-by-Step Mail Merge Wizard in Microsoft Word to walk you through setting up your items for print.

The name tags are vertical, so you will need to change the text direction on the template to print them correctly. That option is under the table layout menu in Word.

Promotion Calendar

Five Months Before

- Choose a publicity coordinator and give her a copy of this section of the *Director Guide*. She'll also need access to the Resource Catalog and Resource Download.

Four Months Before

- Meet with the publicity coordinator to organize the promotion plan. Review the various promotional helps and decide which you would like to use. (See the Resource Download and the Resource Catalog.) Purchase these materials or create your own.

Make sure to order your promotion pieces early and order more than you think you'll need. The earlier you order, the less stress you'll have!

(All VBS clip art is owned by Answers in Genesis. You have AiG's permission to use these images with your organization only.)

- Announce the date and time of this year's VBS to your congregation with an insert (1230240) in your church bulletin or newsletter.
- Send Save the Date postcards (1230260) to all church children and VBS attendees from last year.



Three Months Before

- Plan a fun announcement during church about *Emerald Crossing*, such as performing a skit or interviewing kids. Check the Resource Download for **promo scripts** or the **promotional video**. Reveal the theme, reiterate the date and time, and share recruiting needs.
- Pass out volunteer recruitment flyers (1230250) and begin recruiting workers (except for the leadership positions, which should already be in place). **Volunteer Registration Forms** are available as well as a fun **Volunteer Recruitment Script**.
- Post a catchy advertisement on the church's website with pictures from last year's VBS.
- Make preparations to register children at myAnswers.com or with printed **registration forms**.



VBS Digital gives you the ability to register children and volunteers online and comes with the purchase of a kit. Visit myAnswers.com to set up your account and upgrade to Digital Pro, which includes access to leader guides, all music options, exclusive Canva templates, and more.

Two Months Before

- Create an event on Facebook to let everyone on your friend list know you are having VBS. Have your church folks expand the reach by inviting everyone on their friend lists.
- You may also want to set up a Facebook page specifically for your VBS program that you can use to give updates. Or start a group on Facebook for your VBS.
- Look for other ways to use social media channels to promote your VBS.
- Use your church's website and blog to announce your VBS. Be sure to get permission from parents/caregivers before sharing photos or videos of children online.
- Begin registering children at your information counter and/or online.
- Ensure the information counter has the following:

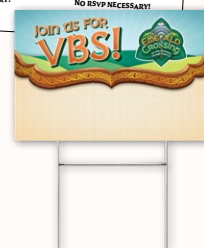
- » Child Registration Forms
- » Volunteer Registration Forms
- » Nursery Registration Forms
- » Craft donation list
- » Science donation list
- » Snack donation list
- » Game donation list
- » Props donation list
- » Decoration donation list
- » Promotional materials, such as flyers or invitation postcards (see Resource Catalog)

- Place collection boxes for donated items at the information counter.
- Obtain permission to put themed posters and flyers (1230220, 1230230) around town.
- Put a catchy announcement on the church's answering service.
- Begin planning the pre-VBS outreach carnival. See page 67.



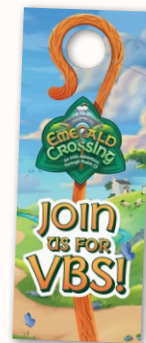
One Month Before

- Hang the banner (1230320) outside your church in a highly visible location. To customize your banner, use a large permanent marker to clearly write your church's information on the banner or purchase large precut or custom vinyl letters from a local craft, sign, or teacher store.
- Send news releases to local newspapers and radio stations, both Christian and secular.
- Mail VBS invitation postcards (1230270) to all church children, past VBS attendees, and other prospective children.
- Post an update on your VBS Facebook page if you set one up. Remind everyone about the upcoming carnival and pass out IrishFest Invitations.
- Enlist willing church members to put up yard signs (1230550) in their front yards.
- Begin selling the VBS music CDs and T-shirts. Wear VBS T-shirts around town and to children's church events.



Two Weeks Before

- Use a puppet or a dramatic person to announce VBS in Sunday school or children's church, encouraging children to register.
- Begin teaching the VBS songs.
- Host the pre-VBS carnival.
- Put another post on your VBS Facebook page.
- Organize a neighborhood publicity blitz.
 - » Make or purchase door hangers (1230330).
 - » Gather your church family for doughnuts, coffee, and juice on a Saturday morning (or whenever suits your schedule).
 - » Divide into groups and assign each a neighborhood to canvass with door hangers.



Sunday Before

- Dedicate the VBS during the church service prior to the beginning of VBS. Ask your pastor to encourage the workers and pray over everyone who will be helping during the upcoming week.

First Day of VBS

- Register children who are not yet registered.

The image shows two identical registration forms for Emerald Crossing VBS. Each form is titled "Register me for Emerald Crossing!" and contains several lines of text for registration details, including fields for Name, Address, Phone, and Email. The forms are presented as a template for registration.

- Be cheerful and welcoming to all.
- Consider having someone who will begin recording moments from VBS to share online. Once again, make sure you have permission from parents/caregivers before posting any pictures or videos of children online.
- Start a hashtag for your particular church to collect posts from VBSers or use a general one (#vbs2026 #emeraldcrossing) to connect with others around the country.

No matter when your VBS is held, begin to order resources in January in order to take advantage of the best discounts and ensure item availability.

**Check the Resource Catalog
for discount options.**

IrishFest Pre-VBS Carnival

You don't want your community to miss out on this awesome VBS, so get the word out by hosting your very own promo event called IrishFest. This is a carnival-type event held two to three weeks before VBS so you can preregister children, build excitement, and spread the word throughout the community.

The IrishFest will include themed games, crafts, activities, and snacks. Admission is free. Invite the community by setting up an event page on Facebook and by mailing or handing out **Carnival Invitations** to church attendees, friends, sports teams, clubs, and family.

For a list and description of suggested **activities** to offer at your carnival, check the following pages.

Many of these suggestions can also be incorporated into VBS week or the closing program if not used prior to VBS.

Setup

- Decide if your event will be indoors or outdoors. If indoors, use a multipurpose room. If outdoors, choose a grassy area or a safe area of the church parking lot.
- Each activity should have its own space, a sign with its name, prize tickets, and a marker or stamp (1230930) to use on each child's master ticket.
- Use folding tables or large cardboard boxes for activities requiring a base. Drape each table with a colorful, thematic tablecloth, fabric, or sheet. Attach boards, PVC pipe, or long cardboard tubes to each side of the table. Stretch a colorful sign made from roll paper between the two boards and add some colorful balloons.

- A simpler option is to use rope, cones, or sidewalk chalk to mark individual activity spaces.
- Choose a few decorating suggestions found in the Decorating Decisions section. Keep it fun, colorful, and simple.
- Play VBS music.

Staffing

- Enlist at least one worker for each activity area. Church families may want to sign up to decorate, organize, and staff one activity each. This divides the workload into small, manageable pieces.
- Workers should dress in VBS T-shirts or farm-themed clothing.
- Friendly, costumed greeters can welcome the arriving families.

Registration

- Set up the registration area near the entrance to your event.
- Warmly greet each family and check everyone in.
- Copy extra **Carnival Master Tickets** on bright card stock. Cut apart. Give one to each child. This ticket enables children to participate in each activity once and will be marked or stamped at each location as activities are completed.
- Use **registration forms** to sign up any unregistered children for VBS.

Carnival Activities and Games

Some of the games need a start line, finish line, or throwing line. These can be made from painter's tape, masking tape, rope, cones, or chalk.

Rainbow Rocks

SUPPLIES

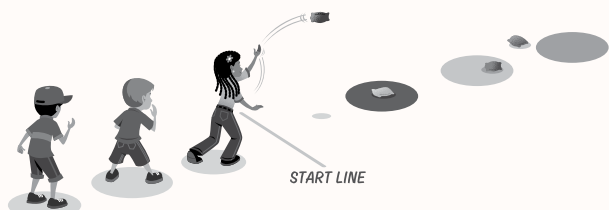
- » Small, flat rocks
- » Non-toxic acrylic paints
- » Paintbrushes
- » Water and paper towels for rinsing brushes
- » Old T-shirts or men's shirts to use as smocks
- » Permanent markers



DIRECTIONS

- » Make some samples ahead of time of various rainbow pictures kids could paint.
- » Kids will paint a rainbow on their rock. Make sure they put their name on the back with a marker.
- » Share that there are lots of rainbows—real ones!—in Ireland because it rains a lot. God is the one who created the rainbow in the sky and it is a wonder!
- » Award 1 ticket to each child who completes this activity.
- » Hold onto the rocks during VBS week and create a colorful outdoor display with them. Allow kids to pick up their rocks at the end of VBS.

Tricolor Toss



SUPPLIES

- » 1 green, 1 white, and 1 orange circle cut from craft foam, poster board, felt, or construction paper
- » 3 beanbags

DIRECTIONS

- » Scatter the circles on the ground.
- » Share that these are the colors of the flag of Ireland.
- » Players get three turns to toss a beanbag onto one or more of the circles.
- » Give 1 ticket for participating and an extra ticket for each throw that lands on a circle.

Flynn's Face Painting

SUPPLIES

- » Face paints
- » Paintbrushes
- » Wet wipes
- » [Face Painting Reference Chart](#)



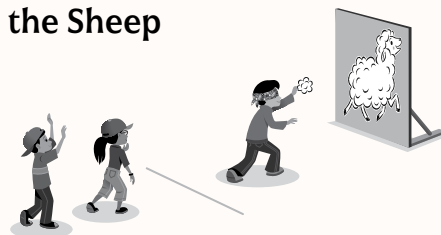
DIRECTIONS

- » Paint the kids' faces, using images on the reference chart.
- » Give 1 prize ticket after completing this activity.

Pin the Tail on the Sheep

SUPPLIES

- » [Sheep Backdrop](#)
- » [Sheep Tail Cutouts](#) (or cotton balls)
- » Tape or mounting putty
- » Blindfold



DIRECTIONS

- » This is played like Pin the Tail on the Donkey.
- » Ahead of time, put up the backdrop and put loops of tape or mounting putty on the sheep tails.
- » Have at least two players play this each round.
- » Share that Ireland is known for having lots of sheep. Who created sheep? God did! What day of creation did he make sheep? Day 6, when he made the land animals. God is a wonderful Creator!
- » One at a time, players are blindfolded, spun around (gently), and directed toward the sheep backdrop with a tail in their hand. See who can attach their tail closest to where the sheep's tail belongs.
- » Give 1 prize ticket after completing this activity. Give 2 bonus tickets for the tail that is closest to the right spot.

Photo Spot

SUPPLIES

- » Photo Spot Backdrop
- » Step stool for small children
- » Camera

DIRECTIONS

- » Purchase the photo ops (1231270) or make one and put it up. [Clip art](#) images are available if you want to make your own.
- » Children stand behind the backdrop and put their face through the hole. Photograph them and print the picture (either at the carnival or later) to give to them. You may want to have an area during VBS where they can pick up their picture.
- » Give 1 prize ticket after completing this activity.



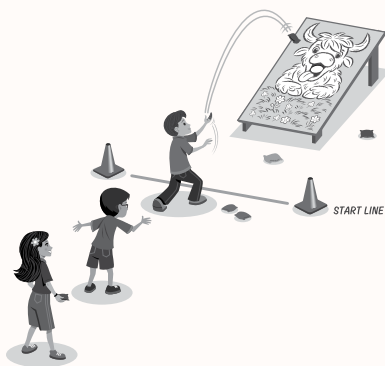
Feed the Cow

SUPPLIES

- » Cornhole board
- » Poster board or colored paper fashioned to look like a cow
- » 3 beanbags

DIRECTIONS

- » Beforehand, decorate the cornhole board to look like a cow with its mouth open. (See picture.)
- » Players have three tries to toss a beanbag into the cow's "mouth."
- » Share that Ireland is known for its dairy products, many of which come from cows. Many foods come from cows, including milk, cheese, and yogurt. God gave us these good foods!
- » Give 1 ticket for participating and an extra ticket for each beanbag that lands in the cow's mouth.



Clover Hunt

SUPPLIES

- » 1 fake three-leaf clover (buy artificial clover online or make your own out of card stock)
- » 4 cones
- » Timer

DIRECTIONS

- » Make a small square with the cones in a grassy area. Drop the pretend clover somewhere inside the square.
- » Players get 30 seconds to find the clover.
- » Give 1 prize ticket for participating and an extra ticket if the clover is found.



Rainbow in a Jar

SUPPLIES

- » Table or elevated surface
- » 25 mason jars with points labeled on them
- » M&Ms candies

DIRECTIONS

- » Set up the jars in a 5 x 5 grid (5 jars in each row and column). Label the middle jar with a sticker or piece of tape with the numeral 3. Label the jars directly around the middle jar with the numeral 2. Label the rest of the jars with 1s.
- » Players get three turns to throw an M&M into one of the jars. Award the amount of tickets to match the label on the jar. For example, if the player gets an M&M in the jar labeled with a 3, give her 3 tickets.
- » Plastic punch cups could be used instead of jars.



Still Waters Search



SUPPLIES

- » Baby pool filled with water
- » Bulk mini rubber ducks (enough to mostly fill a baby pool)
- » Shamrock stickers
- » Timer

DIRECTIONS

- » Place stickers on the bottom of about ¼ of the ducks. Place all the ducks in the filled baby pool.
- » Players have 15 seconds to find as many ducks as possible with shamrock stickers on them. The amount they find is the amount of tickets they receive.
- » Return the ducks to the pool for the next player.

Enemy Ring Toss



SUPPLIES

- » 1 enemy helmet with horns
- » 4 rings

DIRECTIONS

- » Players have four tries to toss the rings onto the horns of the helmet.
- » Give 1 prize ticket for playing and an extra ticket for each successful toss.
- » Note: Add a challenge by using more than one helmet, and placing them at varying lengths from the throw line. A successful toss around the helmets farthest from the line could be worth more tickets.

Do It Yourself Butter

SUPPLIES

- » Small jars with screw top lids
- » Heavy whipping cream (¼ cup per person)
- » Marbles (washed and dried)
- » Optional: Small pieces of bread and knives for tasting butter



DIRECTIONS

- » Pour ¼ c. heavy whipping cream into each jar. Add one marble per jar and screw on the lid.
- » Kids shake their jar until butter starts to form. It generally takes 3–10 minutes to make the butter depending on how vigorously the cream is shaken. Different kids can take turns shaking the jar.
- » Note: Let kids try their homemade butter by spreading some on small chunks of bread.

Coat of Arms Coloring Contest

SUPPLIES

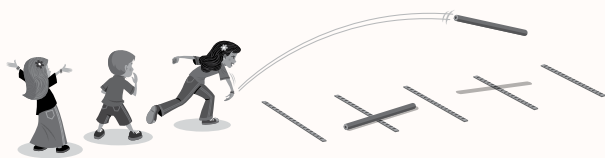
- » [Coat of Arms Coloring Contest Pages](#)
- » Crayons or markers

DIRECTIONS

- » Children color the picture, drawing items on their coat of arms to describe themselves or their family. Make sure they write their name on their page.
- » Explain what a coat of arms is. They are popular in Ireland!
- » If you have a lot of entries, you can have winners of various age categories. Give 1 prize ticket after completing this activity.
- » Collect the pictures and hang them somewhere during VBS week. Announce winners during VBS week. Return pictures to the children on the last day of VBS.



Sling the Staff



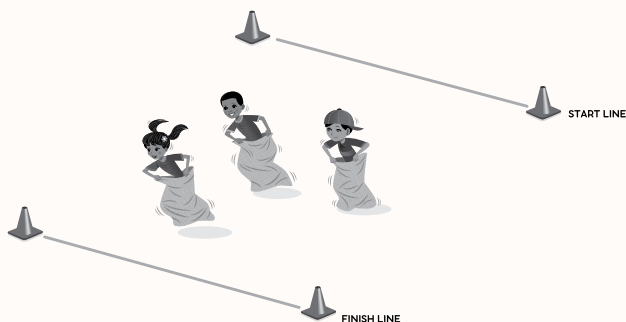
SUPPLIES

- » Pool noodle (use as shepherd's staff)
- » 3 or more cones or ropes to make throwing lines

DIRECTIONS

- » Set up a few lines that indicate different point values, depending on how far the pool noodle is thrown. If thrown past the farthest line, the player gets 3 points, past the second line, 2 points, and past the start line, 1 point.
- » Players try to throw the "staff" as far as they can from the start line and receive a certain amount of tickets depending on how far they throw it.

Potato Sack Race



SUPPLIES

- » Large potato sacks
- » Cones or ropes to make start and finish lines

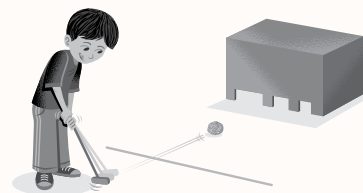
DIRECTIONS

- » Have two or more players for each round.
- » Players step into a potato sack, then race by jumping to the finish line.
- » Give 1 ticket for participating and give an extra ticket to the winner.

Herd the Sheep

SUPPLIES

- » 1 or more wool dryer balls (use as sheep)
- » A child-sized golf club or hockey stick
- » A large cardboard box with three cutouts (see directions)



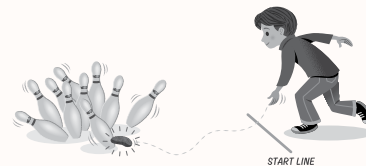
DIRECTIONS

- » Cut three different-sized square openings out of the bottom edge of a large, overturned cardboard box. The holes should be big enough for a wool dryer ball to pass through them. Make sure one opening is fairly large to make it easy for younger players.
- » Using a hockey stick or golf club, players have three tries to get a "sheep" (wool dryer ball) into one of the openings. The smaller the hole is, the more tickets players receive for getting the ball in.
- » Give 4 tickets for getting the sheep in the smallest hole, 3 for the medium hole, 2 for the largest hole, and 1 ticket for participating.

Potato Bowling

SUPPLIES

- » Potatoes (use as bowling balls)
- » 10 bowling pins or water bottles



DIRECTIONS

- » Set up the pins in a pyramid shape like at a bowling alley.
- » Players roll a potato down the "lane" to the pins and see how many they knock over.
- » Allow 2 tries per player.
- » Give 1 ticket for each pin that gets knocked over.

(Knock) Over the Rainbow

SUPPLIES

- » Table or elevated surface
- » 4 assorted, rainbow colored, disposable cups
- » Water gun or 4 beanbags or balls



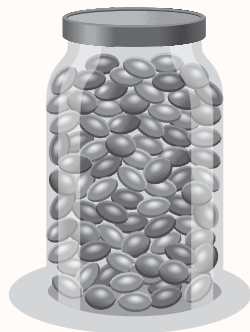
DIRECTIONS

- » Place 4 cups on the elevated surface. Try this ahead of time to make sure your water guns or beanbags are able to knock over the cups. If not, use balls instead.
- » Players have 4 tries to knock the cups over using a water gun or beanbag.
- » Give 1 prize ticket for each cup that is knocked over.

Green Goodie Guesses

SUPPLIES

- » Green candy of any variety (enough to fill a jar—lime Tootsie Fruit Chews are an option)
- » Jar with lid
- » Bowl to hold guess papers
- » Small pieces of paper (1 per player)
- » Markers



DIRECTIONS

- » On their paper, players write their name and how many candies they think are in the jar.
- » Give 1 prize ticket after completing this activity.
- » Announce the winner of this contest at the end of the carnival or on the first day of VBS. The winner gets the jar of candy.

Shepherd's Souvenirs

- » Set up an area called Shepherd's Souvenirs with assorted prizes worth different amounts of tickets. Children turn in their tickets to receive prizes. Check Oriental Trading Company or Rhode Island Novelty for inexpensive prize possibilities. The following are some possible suggestions: lamb bouncy balls, sticky shamrocks, green glow sticks, shamrock rings, green bubble tubes, mini squishy farm animals (especially cows or sheep), border collie squishmallows, shamrock necklaces, mini green footballs, shamrock water bead squeeze balls, sheep key chains, potato squishies or stress balls, mini Highland cow figurines, Highland cow plush backpack clips, assorted Irish stickers, shamrock lollipops, shamrock silicone wristbands, green play dough, rainbow slap bracelets, mini rainbow erasers, rainbow silly straws, mini farm character bendables, barnyard animal stampers, wool felt balls, orange and green mini inflatable balls, cheese squeeze toys, green yo-yos.
- » Another option is to give prizes at each location. If this option is chosen, children will need bags of some kind to keep their prizes in as they move from activity to activity.



IrishFest Food Booth

Set up the IrishFest Food Booth area and choose one or more fun snacks from the suggestions listed. Make signs that announce the name of each snack.

Note: There are also lots of additional great ideas in the *Still Water Snacks Guide* and the Training Workshop section of this guide. You may want to make some of the snacks you will be serving during VBS week.



LOADED FRIES:

- » Fries come from potatoes, a staple food of Ireland. So serve up some fries with a variety of topping options, such as melted cheese, bacon bits, chili, green onions, sour cream, and assorted dipping sauces.

RAINBOW CUPCAKES

- » Serve cupcakes decorated with the seven-color rainbow as an ode to Ireland.

IRISH PARTY MIX

- » Serve bags of party mix that include things like green M&Ms, pretzels, popcorn, green sprinkles, and chocolate chips.

FIONA'S FRUIT

- » Offer assorted green fruits like granny smith apples, kiwis, green grapes, and green melon.

FLAG OF IRELAND SKEWERS

- » Make skewers with foods the color of the Irish flag like an orange cheese cube, a white cheese cube, and a green grape. Make a sweet version with a cube of yellow/orange cake, a mini marshmallow, and a green grape.

CALLAHAN'S COOKOUT

- » Grill hamburgers and hot dogs to offer as a hearty meal for festival-goers.

DRINKS

- » Serve drinks of your choice and call them Donegal's Drinks.
- » Water: Wrap water bottles with [Still Water Labels](#).

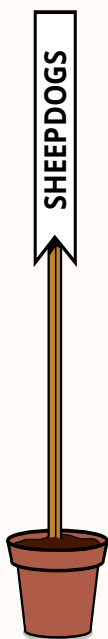
Additional Ideas

- » Animal Piñatas—Buy a fun and colorful Irish animal pinata, such as a cow or fox, and let kids have at it!
- » Irish Balloon Creations—Try making some balloon creations, such as a fox, flower, squirrel, shamrock, or even a rainbow! Look online for ideas.
- » Themed Costumed Greeters—Use your drama team or others to greet and interact with the kids while dressed in fun costumes like a farmer, shepherd, king or queen, Irish step dancer, cow, or sheep.

After Registration

- Teen helpers escort the children to the group's seating area in the opening assembly. Each group's area should be clearly marked with a sign.
- While waiting for the opening assembly to begin, group guides can follow the suggestions given in the **Leader Responsibilities** handout, which includes the following ideas:
 - » Practice and recite memory verses.
 - » Have children update their attendance charts.
 - » Quietly practice cheers together.
 - » Color or work on activity sheets.
 - » Share trivia or jokes found in the *Helper Handbook*.
 - » Get to know each other with conversation starters, such as the following:

Would you like to visit Ireland some day?
 What's one animal you'd want to see if you went to Ireland? What's one you wouldn't want to see?



Would you rather hike deep into a cave or hike to the top of a cliff?

What's your favorite way to eat a potato?

Would you rather live in the city or in the countryside?

- » Play a quick game like the following:

Trip to Ireland: The first person says he's going on a trip to Ireland and he's going to take _____. He fills in the blank with something that starts with the letter A. The next person repeats that sentence and adds something that starts with the letter B. Continue on, adding letters with each new person.

Add to the Story: The first child says four words to start the story, "Once upon a time." The next child adds four more words, the next child after that adds four more words, and so on.

Rock, Paper, Scissors: Play this fun game in pairs. Check online for directions.

I Spy: Play I Spy, picking Irish-themed objects or colors around the room as the item to spy.

Emerald Isle Assembly—Opening

(10–20 minutes)

Start each day with the high-energy opening assembly. The details are in the *Assembly Guide*; the following is a quick overview.

- **Welcome:** The day starts with a quick, fun welcome.
- **Music:** Generate excitement and energy through this kid-friendly music. Plan to sing 2–3 songs in the opening. Memory verse songs (memory verses set to memorable music) are also available.
- **Mission Moment:** Introduce the mission project and hear daily updates on giving totals. This year, we're partnering



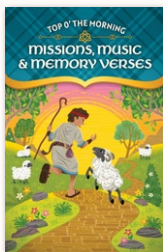
with Children's Hunger Fund to provide meals to hungry children around the world!

- **Prayer:** Pray for the day.
- **Announcements and Dismissal:** Make announcements and send the children off to begin their rotations. Play the VBS music as they leave.

Depending on the time you allotted for your opening and closing, you may want to do the Creature Feature (see *Assembly Guide*) in your opening instead of your closing, or move your Mission Moment to the closing. Either of these can be done at either the opening or closing.

Mission Moment

The mission emphasis to your VBS program provides an amazing opportunity for children to participate in giving to ministries that share the gospel. Check with your director to see when the Mission Moment is featured—either during the assembly time or during one of the rotations.



The *Missions, Music & Memory Verses Guide* contains additional activity ideas.

This year, we've partnered with Children's Hunger Fund to provide food and the hope of the gospel to children facing food insecurity in the US and around the globe. Guided by Grace is a fun and meaningful addition to your VBS program, teaching kids about poverty around the world, and empowering them to make a difference.

Guided by Grace



Your kids will explore five different countries and learn about children living in poverty and ways to make a difference.

As your students explore Ethiopia, Romania, the Philippines, El Salvador, and the US, they'll hear the stories of boys and girls whose lives have been impacted by poverty. These children have no guarantee of meals, shelter, or education. They need help. And they need the hope that only comes from salvation in Jesus Christ.

The good news is you and your kids have the power to make a difference!

The Bible says that giving generously to the poor is really giving generously to God himself (Proverbs 19:17). Teach your VBS class the great joy that comes from sacrificing for the sake of Jesus and his gospel.

During the Mission Moment, your group will meet Quinn, an enthusiastic shepherdess-in-training. Quinn is preparing to join her cousins on their sheep farm in Ireland and has been busy learning everything there is to know about raising sheep. Join her as she attempts to train her dog, Penny, to be a sheepdog. Throughout the week, she'll also be sharing stories about children around the world.

Your mission is to collect coins and help provide meals for children in need, just like the ones Quinn will introduce to you throughout the week.

When your VBS children earn coins for their Coin Paks, they make it possible for Children's Hunger Fund to fill Food Paks. A Children's Hunger Fund Food Pak is a box of

nutritious food that can provide meals for a family in need. In a Food Pak, just 25 cents can provide one meal!

The Food Paks are provided to partner churches in the US and around the world who deliver them to homes of families in need. Along with food delivery, relationships are built and the gospel is shared.

The following items are available with the Resource Download that comes with your starter kit.

- **Daily videos**
- **Daily scripts and activities**
- **Child Profile Slides:** Daily profiles of the children your VBS students will meet
- **Printable Prayer Journals**, featuring informative prayer briefings that will help your kids connect with the real needs of suffering children
- **Printable Map of the World activity sheet**, featuring locations of the children from the daily videos
- **Printable banner artwork**
- **PowerPoint images** to help your kids track their fundraising progress
- Printable **Coin Pak bank** for collecting coins
- **Donation Submission Form** to accompany your donation to CHF at the end of your VBS program

Coin Paks Available to Order

Included in your **Starter Kit** is a sample of the sturdy pop-up **Coin Pak bank** for your kids to use as they collect quarters for meals. Check with your director for this sample. After VBS, these will be fun souvenirs that can be kept as reminders to always care for the needs of others. Coin Paks are available from Children's Hunger Fund. To order, please visit ChildrensHungerFund.org/answersvbs or call 1 (800) 708-7589. Orders must be received 14 days prior to your VBS date. Available while supplies last.

For questions regarding your Mission Moment resources, please email info@childrenshungerfund.org or call 1 (800) 708-7589.

Collecting Donations

Give children their own Coin Pak bank for collecting donations. Encourage your kids in the weeks leading up to VBS to save their money and then begin collecting the first day. Or plan on passing out the Coin Paks on Day 1 and begin

collecting on Day 2. Work with your director to set up a fun area for kids to deposit their money each day as they begin VBS.

Once you've totaled the coins, you can submit your donation online at ChildrensHungerFund.org/answersvbs. If you wish to mail your donation, please write a check to Children's Hunger Fund, indicating "Guided by Grace" in the memo area, then fill out the [Donation Submission Form](#). Send your check with the form to:

Children's Hunger Fund
 Attn: Guided by Grace
 DEPT LA 24373
 Pasadena, CA 91185-4373



Learn more about the gospel-centered mercy ministry of Children's Hunger Fund at ChildrensHungerFund.org.

Tracking Your Progress

To help your kids maintain their excitement, announce how many meals they provided each day. Check with your director to find out when to do this, either during a special mission rotation or during the opening or closing assembly.

Here are some fun ways to help your kids see their progress as they raise funds:

1. Show your progress with Guided by Grace [Daily Count PowerPoint slides](#). Update the slides with the total number of meals that can be provided each day.
2. Make your own goal tracker and update it throughout the week. Create or print a large shepherd's hook and put equally spaced marks on it, going up. Each day, you can color in spaces as you fill in the hook. Color to the mark representing the kids' offering and write the total number of meals that can be provided so far on the corresponding line.
3. Consider having a contest between boys and girls or between teams to see which group can bring in the most money. (Printable [Teams](#) artwork is on the Resource Download.)

NOTE ON COUNTING COINS: It may be helpful to recruit two or three adult volunteers to count and/or roll the coins at the end of each day. Some banks provide a coin counting service, but they may require several days to do so. Check ahead with your local bank or see if anyone has a coin counting machine you can borrow.

Daily Summaries

Day 1: Meet Hani from Ethiopia

WHERE: Ethiopia is a country in East Africa. Nearly 70% of Ethiopia's population experiences multidimensional poverty, considering factors like health, education, and access to basic services.



WHO: Hani and her brother were used to days when they only had one meal per day. In fact, there were some days when they didn't eat at all. It all depended on whether her mother could find work that day. With very little education, she had to rely on day labor, which didn't pay much. If she couldn't find work or had to spend what little she made on medicine or other essential needs, Hani and her brother had to go hungry. When the pastor of a local church brought Hani and her family food and taught them how to grow vegetables and raise goats and chickens, she was overjoyed! Her family finally had a way to ensure they always had food to eat! The pastor also shared with them the good news that Jesus loves them! That was the best thing the pastor shared with Hani, and it gave her hope.

Day 2: Meet Ivanna from Romania

WHERE: Romania is a country in southeastern Europe. It shares part of its northern border with Ukraine. Since the war that broke out in Ukraine, more than 1.6 million refugees have come to Romania seeking safety.



WHO: Ivanna and her sisters had to leave their home very quickly. There was hardly any time to pack, and they had to travel light. Ivanna knew that she would probably never be returning home again. She didn't know where her family would end up, only that they were moving away from the fighting. The important thing was that they were together, and they were safe. Ivanna's parents were able to pack enough food to safely travel to Romania, but they didn't know what would happen once they arrived. They heard about a local church that was helping other displaced people and were able to find a place to stay. Ivanna had to leave so many of her books behind, so when the pastor gave her a Bible, it was a precious gift, and it told her all about Jesus!

Day 3: Meet Luciana from the Philippines

WHERE: The Philippines is a country in Southeast Asia made up of 7,641 islands. Because of its location on the western edge of the Pacific “Ring of Fire,” marked by trenches and active and dormant volcanoes alike, the Philippines is prone to many natural disasters, including floods, cyclones, droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis, and landslides.



WHO: Luciana’s home collapsed in an earthquake. Now, it sits at an angle. Although it seems stable, another earthquake or a strong storm could destroy it completely. Luciana and her family still live in their home because they have nowhere else to live. Her parents can’t afford the repairs on their house while also providing food for eleven people. When a pastor showed up at Luciana’s house with a Food Pak, she hoped things would finally get better. The food meant that her parents could afford to start making repairs to their home, but he also shared with them about Jesus. Now Luciana has a new kind of hope.

Day 4: Meet Hugo from El Salvador

WHERE: El Salvador is a country in Central America, southeast of Mexico. Roughly 24% of the population lives in rural communities. Poverty in these rural areas can be a significant problem due to a lack of education, access to resources, and limited job opportunities.



WHO: Hugo has never known a life where regular meals were guaranteed. Whenever there was food, he was thankful to be able to eat. When he went to bed hungry, he was grateful he had a roof over his head and a soft place to sleep—even if he had to share it with his siblings. Hugo knows there must be something better than the life he’s lived, but he doesn’t know what he can do to change his future. When someone from the church started bringing Food Paks to Hugo’s family, Hugo was excited. Now that they had regular access to food, he wouldn’t go to bed hungry at night! He also didn’t have to help his father in the fields as much, so he could go to school and maybe someday get a good job. Even more importantly, the people from the church shared with Hugo’s family about Jesus! There is so much singing and rejoicing in their home now.

Day 5: Meet Sebastian from the United States

WHERE: Today, we’re going to meet someone who lives in the United States. Poverty in the United States is not always easy to spot because someone can be living in a house or an apartment. Children can attend school but do not have anything to eat when they go home. It can be difficult to tell that they are in need.



WHO: Sebastian knows what it feels like to be in need. Despite living in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, he used to sleep in the back seat of his family’s car. Thankfully, he could blend into the crowd at school since he wore a uniform and could get a free lunch just like everyone else, but he knew he was different, mainly when the other kids talked about the expensive things they had and the places they went. Sebastian was happy when a man from the church offered them a place to stay. Even though it was small and only for a short time, it was better than the car. It gave his parents a chance to look for work so they could find a new place to live. The Food Paks meant Sebastian and his siblings wouldn’t be so hungry at night. Even more importantly, the man told Sebastian all about Jesus and how much he loves him.

Top o' the Morning Tunes

Kids love to sing, and kids love song motions. That's why we do both at *Emerald Crossing*, where the music features fun songs that reinforce the spiritual theme. We have provided a variety of songs to go along with each day's teaching; however, feel free to choose the songs that work best for your children. You can use all of the songs throughout the week or just choose a few to repeat every day. You may also want to begin teaching the songs to your children a few

weeks before VBS begins. Use your Sunday school, children's church, or Wednesday evening programs to familiarize them with the VBS music. Hand out CDs of the music or encourage parents to stream the songs from AnswersVBS.com/streaming.



Music Leader Downloads

Included with each Super Starter Kit (1230020) is a Music Leader Download link, which provides all components of both contemporary and traditional music. The Music Download contains MP4 files of hand-motion videos and song lyric videos, as well as MP3s of the music in stereo, split, and instrumental versions. Presentation images and printable song lyrics are also included.

Contemporary Songs

- Theme Song: "Emerald Crossing" (2:17)
- Day 1 Song: "His Name Is Jesus" (2:59)
- Day 2 Song: "The Lord Himself Will Lead Me" (2:33)
- Day 3 Song: "Christ Is Here" (1:40)
- Day 4 Song: "Provider" (2:08)
- Day 5 Song: "Surely Goodness and Mercy" (3:02)
- Any Day Song: "Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us" (2:26)

Traditional Songs

- Theme Song: "Emerald Crossing" (1:49)
- Day 1 Song: "He Searched High and Low" (1:50)
- Day 2 Song: "Through Every Up and Down" (1:07)
- Day 3 Song: "In the Valley" (2:46)
- Day 4 Song: "I'm Sittin' at a Table" (2:00)
- Day 5 Song: "All the Days" (1:38)
- Any Day Song: "Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us" (2:25)

Sheet Music

The Super Starter Kit includes a sheet music book with both contemporary and traditional songs. This book includes the lyrics and the accompaniment for each theme song. This book can also be purchased separately (1230650).



Student CDs

Audio CDs of the songs are sold in packs of 10. These can be distributed to the children and their parents before or during VBS to help with learning the songs. They make great rewards and souvenirs of VBS as well. The memory verse and the theme songs are together on one student CD. (Contemporary—1230610; Traditional—1230620)

Lyrics

Printable lyrics for each song are available with the Music Leader Download.

Memory Verse Songs

Encourage your kids to learn their memory verses the easy way—by singing them! We offer fun songs for each of the memory verses from *Emerald Crossing*.

The contemporary memory verse songs are produced by Seeds Kids Worship and the traditional memory verse songs are produced by Majesty Music. Both are available with the Music Leader Download, which comes with the purchase of a Super Starter Kit.

KJV: Psalm 23

ESV: "The Lord Is My Shepherd" (Psalm 23:1–3 / 2:23)

"You Are with Me" (Psalm 23:4 / 2:09)

"My Cup Overflows" (Psalm 23:5 / 2:11)

"Goodness and Mercy" (Psalm 23:6 / 2:52)

"I Shall Dwell in the House of the Lord" (Psalm 23 / 2:32)

Where Does Music Fit into VBS?

There are several places you can use music in your VBS program. The opening and closing assemblies are prime spots for adding fun songs to your day. The Flock Talk Time teachers will be teaching your kids a daily memory verse, so adding the memory verse songs there will help kids quickly and easily learn their verses. You may also want

to add a song time during the snack time, at an additional music rotation, or play songs as groups move from place to place. Play songs while kids are working on crafts. Suggestions for songs to review are included in the *Top o' the Morning Missions, Music & Memory Verses Guide*.

Cool Contests

The goal for the contests is to help teams have fun, bring friends, learn memory verses (hiding God’s Word in our hearts!) and complete the Go and Do sections on the back of the take-home student guides, which are a valuable component of the VBS program.

Groups that are kindergarten and older will keep track of their completed daily contests on the [Team Roster](#). Younger groups will have fun participating in the contests, as well, but there will not be a scoring element involved in theirs because it’s difficult for them to understand that part of it. (All the kids greatly enjoyed participating in the contests at the test churches.)

Group guides need to turn in their team rosters by the last rotation each day or whatever time works best to give your administrative team enough time to figure out the winner. This is the team with the highest average point total per child. To figure this out, add all the points earned for the team and divide that number by the number of children in the group. For example, if the group earned 50,000 points and there were 10 kids, the average point total per child would be 5,000.

Announce the winning team at the end of each day’s closing assembly. Before announcing the winners, dismiss the younger children (pre-K and younger) if they are picked up from another area. You may want to give each winning group member a small prize, make a donation in honor of that group to a mission of some kind, or just announce it for the fun of it.

- Being here (attendance counts!) 1,000 pts
- Bringing a friend 1,000 pts
- Learning the daily memory verse 2,000 pts
- Learning the bonus memory verses 2,000 pts
- Completing Student Guide Go & Do sections up to 4,000 pts
(1,000 points for each one completed)
- Participating in the daily Cool Contests (below) 1,000 pts

Day 1—Guess the Rainbow Skittles

Prepare a see-through jar with rainbow-colored Skittles. Count how many are in the jar and write the number on a piece of masking tape. Put the tape on the inside of the lid and put the lid on the jar. Place the jar, some slips of paper for kids to write their guesses on, some pens, and a small metal pail or basket somewhere near your assembly area. At any point in the day when they are passing by, each

child can write their guess and name on a slip of paper and put it in the pail or basket. One guess per person. Have an adult figure out who is closest and award the jar to that person during the closing assembly or at the next day’s opening assembly.

Day 2—Group Spirit

Each group comes up with a team cheer, song, motion, or sign. Or they can each wear something depicting their group. For example, if a group’s name is the Golden Eagles, everyone wears something gold, or if they’re the Starlings, each person wears a star.

Day 3—Dress-Up

Dress up in anything that relates to the VBS theme—shepherds, farmers, Vikings, King David, other kings and queens, Irish step dancers, farm animals, or other Irish-themed costumes.

Day 4—Bible Challenge

Complete a scavenger hunt through the Bible to learn more about God as the Good Shepherd and finish off the challenge with a word search.

Day 5—Mission Money Mania

Bring in your final mission money today. Double points for anyone who brings in any amount.

Director’s To-Do List for the Cool Contests

- Ahead of time, communicate to your volunteers how the contests work.
- Figure out any details for the daily Cool Contests. (See above.)
- Print a copy of the [Team Roster](#) for each group guide each day and get it to them.
- Have someone tally up the day’s average point totals per child and determine which group (or groups) won.
- Decide on the prizes or mission donations you want to give to the winning teams and get them organized. If you have a large VBS, you may want to award two or three winning groups split by grades—maybe a K–1 winner, a 2–3 winner, and a 4–6 winner.
- Announce the daily winners and prizes.
- During the closing assembly, explain the next day’s Cool Contest to the kids.

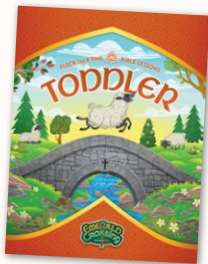
Flock Talk Time (Bible Lesson)

(35–40 minutes)

Children learn better and retain more not only by hearing information but also seeing, feeling, and experiencing it. With that in mind, the lesson time at VBS is fast-paced, fun, interactive, and content-rich.

Toddlers

Toddlers and young preschoolers spend their time (including lesson time, exploration stations, crafts, snacks, and games) in one classroom. For complete information on the toddlers' VBS day, see the *Toddler Teacher Guide* (1230430).



Pre-Primaries

This age group will rotate between two areas at the Flock Talk Time. One area is dedicated to exploration stations, and the other area is for lesson time. Children will spend 15–20 minutes in each area. (Directions are also given for adapting to the lesson only, with no stations, if needed.)

EXPLORATION STATIONS

You may find this is the hottest spot in all of VBS for the Pre-Primaries. They will enjoy the five stations set up in this area. The stations introduce and reinforce various aspects of the daily teaching. Guided teaching tie-ins at each station ensure that active, hands-on learning is taking place. The stations are:

- Discovery Center
- Wet Sensory Table
- Dry Sensory Table
- Dramatic Play
- Coloring Corner

LESSON TIME

This time includes 1–2 costumed teachers sharing the Bible content and memory verse of the day in engaging ways.

For complete information on the exploration stations and lesson time, see the *Pre-Primary Teacher Guide* (1230420).



Primaries and Juniors

These age groups spend time in one area for the Flock Talk Time. The time will be divided into three segments.

- **Introduce It!:** This is the time to begin the lesson in an interesting way by connecting the theme to the main point.
- **Teach It!:** This section deepens the lesson with Bible teaching and apologetics content.
- **Apply It!:** The kids review the lesson and learn the memory verse of the day. Here, you can pass out the optional daily student guides, which are loaded with great practical ideas, or have the group guides pass them out at the end of the day.

For complete information, see the *Primary Teacher Guide* (1230410) and the *Junior Teacher Guide* (1230400).

Special Needs

For ideas on how to modify and adapt the material in these guides to meet the special needs of those in your VBS, please see the *Special Needs Teaching Supplement* (1230530).

Teen/Adult

If you would like to offer a program for teens through adults, please see our *Teen/Adult Teacher Guide* (1230540).



Toddler Supply List

Every Day

- Map of Ireland Poster
- Memory Verse Posters
- Animal Pal Posters
- Optional: Daily Crossing Signs
- Psalm 23 Hand Motions
- Puppet Scripts, 2 copies daily
- Bible
- Modern-day farmer/shepherd costumes for teachers
- Mounting putty or tape for posters
- Blank paper to cover photos on map
- Boy or girl puppet and puppet stage
- Clipboard
- Emerald Crossing Maps, 1 per person

Discovery Center

DAY 1: SHEEP MEMORY GAME

- Different Sheep Poster
- Memory Game Sheep Cards
- White card stock

DAY 2: CAN "EWE" GUESS THE SMELL?

- 8–10 covered containers with various smelling objects or cotton balls with drops of various smells on each

DAY 3: EWE-NIQUE EYESIGHT

- Hidden Sheep Pictures

DAY 4: NEW PASTURES

- Colored cotton balls, purchased or homemade
- Colored paper in same colors as cotton balls

DAY 5: NOW YOU SEE IT

- Large tray with objects representing items from sheep: Ice cream scoop, stick of butter, cheese, wool scarf, wool socks, adhesive tape, carton of milk, yogurt container

Wet Sensory Table

EVERY DAY

- Sensory table with tarp/plastic tablecloth underneath
- Water

DAY 1: SHEEP WASHING

- Waterproof play sheep—at least 6
- Waterproof play person or people (shepherd or shepherds)

- Optional: Memory verse music and device to play it on
- Optional: Player for verse hand motions
- Streaming device or Simple Songs for Kids CD

Day 1

- Gospel Poster
- Blank paper or sticky notes to cover Gospel Poster

Day 2

- David and Goliath Poster
- Goliath Picture
- Measuring tape
- Irish jig music and device to play audio or video

Day 3

- David and Saul Poster

- Rod and Staff Picture
- Pool noodle
- Optional: Action figures and box
- Blank paper to cover David and Saul Poster
- Mini rod and staff and tape
- Shepherd's rod (can use a walking stick)
- Shepherd's staff (can use a cane)
- Stuffed animal wolf or picture of a wolf

Day 4

- Shepherd Provides Poster
- Viking Pictures
- Animal Enemies Pictures
- Mini shepherd's staff (pipe cleaner) and tape
- Large bag/box of mini crackers

- One large cup
- One glass bowl
- One regular-size cup
- Empty popcorn bag
- Table

Day 5

- Goodness and Mercy Posters
- Lord's House Poster
- St. Patrick Picture
- Building block and tape
- Blank paper to cover Lord's House Poster

Student Extras

- Optional: Student Guides and supplies
- Optional: Bookmarks

Exploration Stations

- Small scrub brushes (e.g., nail brushes)
- Soap or "tearless" shampoo

DAY 2: STILL WATER

- Sand buckets or pots that are taller than the water level
- Small stones
- Waterproof play sheep

DAY 3: TAKE AWAY THE SHADOWS

- Cold water
- Ice cubes (in different shapes) made with dark food coloring
- Tongs, scoops, spoons, bowls

DAY 4: FILLED TO OVERFLOWING

- Different kinds of cups
- Scoops, measuring cups, and funnels

DAY 5: RAINBOW COLORS

- Paper towels
- Washable markers in rainbow colors—reds, oranges, yellows, greens, blues, violets

Dry Sensory Table

EVERY DAY

- Sensory table with tarp/plastic tablecloth underneath
- Kinetic sand (preferred) or play sand (not regular sand)
- Baby wipes if using play sand

DAY 1: LOST SHEEP

- Lots of play sheep—either cotton balls to represent sheep,

laminated sheep pictures, or rubber toy sheep (all the same except one a different color)

- Tongs, spoons, sand toys for digging

DAY 2: PLAY PATHS

- Craft sticks and small stones
- Small plastic play sheep
- Small plastic sheepdog

DAY 3: HIGHS AND LOWS

- Sand buckets
- Digging tools—toy hand shovels and trowels, craft sticks, large spoons
- Toy cars

DAY 4: BUGS, BUGS, BUGS

- Plastic or rubber bugs
- Magnifying glasses and/or binoculars
- Spoons or tongs to "catch" the bugs
- Plastic jars to put the bugs in

DAY 5: HIGHER LANDS

- Blocks to build a castle or other castle pieces

Dramatic Play: Fitzpatrick's Farm

EVERY DAY

- Decorating supplies as listed in Decorating Decisions—inside a farmhouse kitchen
- Dress-up supplies in a basket or crate

- Stuffed farm animals—particularly sheep
- Props such as play food, play cooking utensils and pots and pans, play plates and dishes, tin pails, woven baskets, play broom, play dog bed and stuffed animal dog, etc.

DAY 2

- Additional stuffed or plastic animals, such as sheepdogs
- Green plastic tablecloth cut in a "path"
- Painter's tape
- Bible (that can be child-handled)

DAY 3

- Plastic shepherds' staffs
- Stuffed sheep or rubber sheep

DAY 4

- Fake bugs, snakes, mice

DAY 5

- Any items you want to add in

Coloring Corner

- Memory Verse Coloring Sheet for each day
- Decorating supplies as listed in Decorating Decisions—inside a sheep pen
- Markers or crayons in a woven basket or tin pail
- Optional: Glue sticks and additional decorative, textured materials to add to the sheets

Pre-Primary Supply List

Every Day

- Map of Ireland Poster
- Memory Verse Posters
- Animal Pal Posters
- Puppet Scripts, 2 copies daily
- Psalm 23 Hand Motions
- Bible
- Modern-day farmer/shepherd costumes for teachers
- Mounting putty or tape for posters
- Blank paper to cover photos on map
- Player for verse hand motions
- Boy or girl puppet and puppet stage
- Clipboard
- Emerald Crossing Maps, 1 per person
- Device to stream or Simple Songs for Kids CD
- Optional: Memory verse music and device to play it on

Day 1

- Different Sheep Poster
- David as Shepherd Poster

- Gospel Poster
- Lost/Found Crossing Signs
- Blank paper or sticky notes to cover Gospel Poster
- Dry-erase board or white poster board
- Markers or dry-erase markers in various colors

Day 2

- David and Goliath Motions Poster
- David and Goliath Poster
- Bible Basics Poster
- Wrong Path/Right Path Crossing Signs
- Goliath Picture
- Irish jig music and device for audio or video
- Measuring tape

Day 3

- David and Saul Poster
- Fearful/Peaceful Crossing Signs

- Philippians 4:6, 7, and 8 Verse Sheets
- Blank paper to cover poster
- Pool noodle
- Optional: Action figures
- Shepherd's rod (can use a walking stick)
- Shepherd's staff (can use a cane)
- Stuffed animal wolf (or a picture of a wolf)

Day 4

- David as King Poster
- "Good Luck" or Good God? Poster
- Grumbling/Grateful Crossing Signs
- Viking Pictures
- Animal Enemies Pictures
- King's Table Pattern, 1 per person, laminated if possible
- Paper to cover David as King Poster
- 3 balls of play dough per person, 1 brown, 1 yellow, and 1 red (in airtight containers)

- Table to sit around OR 1 clipboard per person
- Small empty cup and tape

Day 5

- Goodness and Mercy Posters
- Lord's House Poster
- Shaky/Sure Crossing Signs
- St. Patrick Picture
- Goodness and Mercy Footprints
- Goodness and Mercy Boards, 1 per person
- Writing utensils, 1 per person
- White card stock
- Optional: Small portion of M&M's per person
- Paper to cover Lord's House Poster
- Building block and tape

Student Extras

- Optional: Student Guides and supplies
- Optional: Bookmarks

Exploration Stations

Discovery Center

DAY 1: SHEEP MEMORY GAME

- Memory Game Sheep Cards
- White card stock

DAY 2: CAN "EWE" GUESS THE SMELL?

- 8–10 covered containers with various smelling objects or cotton balls with drops of a different smell on each

DAY 3: EWE-NIQUE EYESIGHT

- Close-up Pictures

DAY 4: SHAVING CREAM SHEARING

- Sheep Shearing Pattern, 1 per person, laminated
- Shaving cream, dollop per person
- Paper plates, 1 per person
- Craft sticks, 1 per person

DAY 5: FEELY MEELY

- Box with a lid (e.g., shoebox) OR pillowcase
- Optional: Piece of black felt
- Objects for the box: Ice cream scoop, stick of hard butter, cheese, wool scarf, wool socks, adhesive tape, cosmetics, carton of milk, yogurt container

Wet Sensory Table

EVERY DAY

- Sensory table with tarp/plastic tablecloth underneath
- Water

DAY 1: SHEEP WASHING

- Waterproof play sheep—at least 6
- Waterproof play person or people (shepherd or shepherds)
- Small scrub brushes (e.g., nail brushes)
- Soap or "tearless" shampoo

DAY 2: STILL WATER

- Sand buckets that are taller than the water level
- Small rocks
- Waterproof play sheep

DAY 3: TAKE AWAY THE SHADOWS

- Cold water
- Ice cubes (in different shapes) made with dark food coloring
- Tongs, scoops, spoons, bowls

DAY 4: FILLED TO OVERFLOWING

- Different kinds of cups
- Scoops, measuring cups, and funnels

DAY 5: RAINBOWS

- Paper towels
- Washable markers in rainbow colors—reds, oranges, yellows, greens, blues, violets

Dry Sensory Table

EVERY DAY

- Sensory table with tarp/plastic tablecloth underneath
- Kinetic sand (preferred) or play sand (not regular sand)
- Baby wipes if using play sand

DAY 1: LOST SHEEP

- Lots of play sheep—either cotton balls or pom-poms to represent sheep, laminated sheep pictures, or rubber toy sheep (all alike except one)
- Tongs, spoons, sand toys for digging

DAY 2: PLAY PATHS

- Craft sticks and small pebbles
- Small plastic play sheep
- Small plastic sheepdog

DAY 3: HIGHS AND LOWS

- Sand buckets
- Digging tools—toy hand shovels and trowels, craft sticks, large spoons
- Toy cars

DAY 4: BUGS, BUGS, BUGS

- Plastic or rubber bugs
- Magnifying glasses and/or binoculars
- Spoons or tongs to "catch" the bugs
- Plastic jars to put the bugs in

DAY 5: HIGHER LANDS

- Blocks to build a castle or other castle pieces

Dramatic Play: Fitzpatrick's Farm

EVERY DAY

- Decorating supplies as listed in Decorating Decisions—inside a farmhouse kitchen
- Dress-up supplies in a basket or crate

- Stuffed farm animals—particularly sheep (or use white balloons with faces drawn on them for "sheep")
- Props such as play food, play cooking utensils and pots and pans, play plates and dishes, tin pails, woven baskets, play broom, play dog bed and stuffed animal dog, etc.

DAY 2

- Additional stuffed or plastic animals, such as sheepdogs
- Green plastic tablecloth cut in a "path"
- Painter's tape
- Bible (that can be child-handled)

DAY 3

- Shepherds' staffs (canes can work)
- Stuffed sheep or balloon sheep

DAY 4

- Fake bugs, snakes, mice

DAY 5

- Any items you want to add in

Coloring Corner EVERY DAY

- Memory Verse Coloring Sheet for each day
- Decorating supplies as listed in Decorating Decisions—inside a sheep pen
- Markers or crayons in a woven basket or tin pail
- Optional: Glue sticks and additional textured materials to add to sheets

Primary Supply List

Every Day

- Map of Ireland Poster
- Memory Verse Posters
- Animal Pal Posters
- Psalm 23 Hand Motions
- Puppet Scripts, 2 copies daily
- Bible
- Modern-day farmer/shepherd costumes for teachers
- Mounting putty or tape for posters
- Optional: Large easel for map
- Blank paper to cover map
- Player for verse hand motions
- Boy or girl puppet and puppet stage
- Clipboard
- Emerald Crossing Maps, 1 per person
- Option 1 Review Game: No supplies
- Option 2 Review Game: Game pieces, 1 per person, and 1 die
- Optional: Memory verse music and device to play it on

Day 1

- Different Sheep Poster
- David as Shepherd Poster
- Gospel Poster
- Clockmaker Poster
- Lost/Found Crossing Signs
- Optional: This Way, That Way Sheets
- Is the Lord My Shepherd? Pattern, 1 per person
- White card stock, 1 sheet per person
- Hard surface per person—table, clipboard, magazine with a binder clip
- Blank paper or sticky notes to cover Gospel Poster
- Markers, several colors or 1 pack of various colors per person
- Optional: Clock parts

Day 2

- David and Goliath Poster
- Option 2 only: David and Goliath Motions Poster
- Bible Boxes Poster
- Wrong Path/Right Path Crossing Signs
- Irish jig music and device for audio or video
- Options 1 and 2: Measuring tape
- Optional for Option 1 only: Simple armor/toy swords/pool noodles

Day 3

- David and Saul Poster
- Why Do Bad Things Happen? Poster
- Fearful/Peaceful Crossing Signs
- Philippians 4:6, 7, and 8 Verse Sheets
- Flock to the Rock Cards, 1 paper-clipped set per person
- Flock to the Rock Game Boards, 1 per person
- Blank paper to cover David and Saul Poster

- Optional props: Pool noodle, large foam board/cardboard frame, a large box for a mountain, action figures
- Rod (can be a walking stick)
- Staff (can be a cane)
- White card stock
- Dice, 1 per person or every 2 people
- Writing utensils OR baggies of 30 mini marshmallows, 1 baggie per person
- Hard surface for each person

Day 4

- David as King Poster
- Good God Riddles Poster
- "Good Luck" or Good God? Poster
- Grumbling/Grateful Crossing Signs
- Viking Pictures
- Animal Enemies Pictures
- King's Table Pattern, 1 per person, laminated if possible
- Philippians 4:8 Verse Sheet
- Blank paper to cover David as King Poster
- Hard surface per person for both options
- Option 1: 3 balls of play dough per person, 1 brown, 1 yellow, and 1 red (in airtight containers)
- Option 1: Wipes to wipe hands after using play dough
- Option 2: Corrugated cardboard pieces, one 9 x 3-inch piece per person, and one scoring tool for corrugated cardboard
- Option 2: Pipe cleaners (any colors), 6 per person, cut in half and in baggies, 1 baggie per person
- Bag (not see-through)
- Optional for Good God Riddles Poster: Blank paper to cover bottom words
- Optional: Pile of coins, KIND bar, gift box, stuffed animal owl, 12-inch ruler
- Small empty cup and tape

Day 5

- David Gets Supplies Poster
- Rainbows Poster
- Shaky/Sure Crossing Signs
- St. Patrick Picture
- Lamentations 3:22–23 Verse Sheet
- 2 identical sets of building supplies such as a multitude of stacking cups, pool noodles, boxes, play cardboard bricks, and other large, safe building supplies
- Timer (cell phone works)
- Game pieces, 1 per person
- 1 die for the teacher (may want a large one)
- Building block and tape

Student Extras

- Optional: Student Guides and supplies
- Optional: Exploring God's Word booklets
- Optional: Bookmarks

Junior Supply List

Every Day

- Map of Ireland Poster
- Memory Verse Posters
- Animal Pal Posters
- Psalm 23 Hand Motions
- Bible
- Modern-day farmer/shepherd costumes for teachers
- Mounting putty or tape for posters
- Blank paper to cover photos on map
- Optional: Large easel for map
- Emerald Crossing Maps, 1 per person
- Optional: Player for verse hand motions
- Option 1 Review Game: Timer (cell phone works)
- Option 2 Review Game: Game pieces, 1 per person, and 1 die
- Optional: Memory verse music and player

Day 1

- Different Sheep Poster
- David as Shepherd Poster
- Gospel Poster
- Clockmaker Poster
- Lost/Found Crossing Signs
- Optional: This Way, That Way Sheets
- Is the Lord My Shepherd? Pattern, 1 per person
- Blank paper or sticky notes to cover Gospel Poster
- White card stock, 1 sheet per person
- Hard surface per person—table, clipboard, magazine with a binder clip
- Markers, several colors or 1 pack of various colors per person
- Optional: Clock parts

Day 2

- David and Goliath Poster
- Bible Boxes Poster
- Wrong Path/Right Path Crossing Signs
- Box Lid Instructions 1–3
- Box 1 Puzzle Pieces, laminated
- Box 3 Dig Papers, laminated
- Bible Box Leader Scripts
- Irish jig music and device for audio or video
- Measuring tape
- Optional: Simple armor/toy swords/pool noodles
- Three boxes/bins with lids
- Crinkle shred paper
- Kinetic sand
- 1 red quarter
- Optional: Two plastic tablecloths
- Wipes for clean-up
- Blank paper to cover Bible Boxes Poster

Day 3

- David and Saul Poster
- Why Do Bad Things Happen? Poster
- Fearful/Peaceful Crossing Signs
- Philippians 4:6, 7, and 8 Verse Sheets
- Flock to the Rock Cards, 1 paper-clipped set per person
- Flock to the Rock Game Boards, 1 per person
- Blank paper to cover David and Saul Poster
- Optional props: Pool noodle, large foam board/cardboard frame, and safe obstacle such as a large box to act as a mountain
- White card stock
- Dice, 1 per person or every 2 people
- Writing utensils OR baggies of 30 mini marshmallows, 1 baggie per person
- Optional: Rod (can be a walking stick) and staff (can be a cane)

Day 4

- David as King Poster
- “Good Luck” or Good God? Poster
- Good God Riddles Poster
- Grumbling/Grateful Crossing Signs
- Viking Pictures
- Animal Enemies Pictures
- Philippians 4:8 Verse Sheet
- Blank paper to cover David as King Poster
- Corrugated cardboard, one 9 x 3-in. piece per person
- Scoring tool for cardboard
- Pipe cleaners (any colors), 6 per person, cut in half and in baggies, 1 baggie per person
- Hard surface per person
- Bag (not see-through)
- Optional for Good God Riddles Poster: Blank paper to cover bottom words
- Optional: Pile of coins, KIND bar, gift box, stuffed toy owl, 12-inch ruler

Day 5

- David Gets Supplies Poster
- Rainbows Poster
- Shaky/Sure Crossing Signs
- St. Patrick Picture
- Lamentations 3:22–23 Verse Sheet
- 2 identical sets of building supplies such as stacking cups, pool noodles, boxes, play cardboard bricks, other large, safe building supplies
- Timer (cell phone works)
- Game pieces, 1 per person
- 1 die (may want a large one), or 1 per pair

Student Extras

- Optional: Student Guides and supplies
- Optional: *Exploring God's Word* booklets
- Optional: Bookmarks

Celtic Corner Science and Crafts

(35–40 minutes)



Welcome to a favorite spot in the VBS world—the craft and science room! Crafts and hands-on science activities are a fun and meaningful way to introduce and reinforce key concepts. Get the detailed art smarts in the *Celtic Corner Science & Crafts Guide* but check below for a brief overview of some of the main science and craft activities. There are many craft options ranging from a main craft each day to fun extra craft options to premade craft kits that can be purchased online and used any day. The science activities are also fun and thematic. Pick and choose to fit your situation, using any combination of strategic ideas for this rotation.

Day 1

Crafts: Baa-loved Sheep and Keepsake Ornament—Shepherd’s Staff

Design your own Baa-loved Sheep to be a reminder of God’s shepherding care OR create a Keepsake Ornament to hang on your tree that will be a special memory of VBS 2026!



Science Experiments: Shadow Play and Fear Not

In Shadow Play, experiment with shadows and learn how they are made OR understand the science of fear in Fear Not.

Day 4

Crafts: Gratitude Attitude Game and Thankube

Design a fun Gratitude Attitude Game to play with friends and family to learn what they’re grateful for OR use the Thankube as a conversation starter to reflect on ways to give thanks.



Science Experiments: Sink or Float and Wet Woolly

Shepherds provide water for their sheep—learn more about the properties of water in a fun Sink or Float experiment OR marvel at God’s incredible design of sheep’s wool in Wet Woolly.

Day 2

Crafts: S.O.A.P. Bible and Puffball Zipper Pull

Make a miniature Bible from soap and learn about the S.O.A.P. Bible study method OR create a zipper pull for your backpack made of a material that comes from sheep—yarn!



Science Experiments: Sticky Stuff and Overflow Your Cup

Take a closer look at wool and learn how it works in Sticky Stuff OR experiment with water’s incredible surface tension in Overflow Your Cup.

Day 5

Crafts: Psalm Scroll and Highland Cow

Create a Psalm Scroll to hang on your wall as a reminder of Psalm 23 OR make your own version of our animal pal, Shirley the Highland cow, who reminds us that God keeps his promises.



Science Experiments: Sling Fling and Genetically You

Practice using a sling like David did against Goliath in Sling Fling OR have a blast learning about your body’s traits in Genetically You.

Day 3

Crafts: “Don’t Worry, Just Pray” Magnet and Night-Light in the Darkness

When anxiety creeps up on you, look at the “Don’t Worry, Just Pray” magnet you made at VBS OR let your Night-Light in the Darkness remind you of how God is with you always, even through the darkness.



Science Experiments: Firm Foundations and Real Rainbows

Experiment with different types of foundations and learn about God as the true foundation of our lives in Firm Foundations OR try your hand at creating a rainbow in three different ways in Real Rainbows.

Craft Supply List

Day 1 Craft

Baa-loved Sheep

- White air-dry modeling compound, ¼ oz. per child
- Black air-dry modeling compound, ¼ oz. per child
- Cotton swabs, 20 per child
- Wiggle eyes (7 mm), 2 per child
- Black coffee stirring straw (5 inch), 1 per child

Keepsake Ornament

- [Ornament Tag Pattern](#)
- Brown chenille stem, 1 per child
- Brown yarn, 40 inches per child
- Glitter gold chenille stems, 1 for every 2 children
- White card stock, 1 sheet per 18 children

Day 2 Craft

S.O.A.P. Bible

- [Bible Study Method Pattern*](#)
- Mini travel bar soap, 1 per child
- Faux black leather, amount varies*
- Gold foil sheets, amount varies*
- Red ribbon (¾ inch), 2 inches per child
- Small gold cross stickers, 1 per child, or gold metallic marker
- Glue dots, 2 per child
- Colored card stock, 1 sheet per 15 children

*Mini bar soaps come in various sizes. As a result, amounts of faux leather and gold foil will need to be calculated on a case-by-case basis as well as the size of the pattern cutout.

Puffball Zipper Pull

- Plastic fork, 1 per child
- Green yarn, 48 inches per child
- Orange yarn, 40 inches per child
- Split key rings (¾ inch), 1 per child

Shamrock Crown

- Corrugated gold bulletin board border, approximately 22 inches per child
- Glitter gold chenille stems, 4 per child
- Glitter green chenille stems, 4 per child
- Glitter shamrock foam stickers, 8 large and 8 small per child

Day 3 Craft

Don't Worry, Just Pray Magnet

- [Words and Sky Patterns](#)
- [Psalm 23:4 Pattern](#)
- Corrugated cardboard (3 x 5 inches), 1 piece per child
- Goldenrod card stock, 1 piece per 12 children
- Purple card stock, 1 piece per 12 children
- Tan card stock, 1 piece per 12 children
- Adhesive disk magnet (1 inch), 1 per child

Night-Light in the Darkness

- [Psalm 23:4 Verse Pattern](#)
- Clear plastic jar with black lid (4 oz.) ULINE model #S-9934B-BL, 1 per child
- Yellow, pink, and blue tissue paper, amount varies
- Black construction paper, 1 sheet per 8 children
- Avery 2-inch circle labels 94501 or 22807, 1 sheet per 12 children
- Flameless tea lights, 1 per child

Day 4 Craft

Thankube

- [Gratitude Prompts Pattern](#)
- 2 x 2 boards, cut in 1½-inch pieces, 1 per child
- Colored card stock, 1 piece per 9 children

Gratitude Attitude Game

- [Game Parts Pattern](#)
- [Game Cards Pattern](#)
- White mailer (ULINE model #S-11232 4 x 4 x 1 inches), 1 per child
- White card stock, 1 sheet per 2 children
- Colored card stock, 1 sheet per child
- Rubber bands, 1 per child
- Game dice, 1 die per child

Day 5 Craft

Psalm Scroll

- [Psalm 23 Scroll Pattern](#)
- Straight wood twigs (4 inch), 2 per child
- White copy paper, 1 sheet per 3 children
- Jute twine (15-inch pieces), 1 per child
- Tea bags, 1 per 2–3 children

Highland Cow

- Tan terry washcloths (12 x 12 inches), 1 per child
- Tan long hair faux fur, 2 x 7 inches and 2 x 5 inches, 1 of each per child
- Tan felt (2 x 2 x 2-inch triangles), 2 per child
- Pink felt (1½ x 1½ x 1½-inch triangles), 2 per child
- Tan chenille stems, 2 per child
- Mini wood craft stick (2½ x ¾ inches), 1 per child
- Rubber bands (#32), 4 per child
- Glue dots, 8 per child

My Mini Psalm 23 Sensory Book

- [Cover Label Pattern](#)
- [Sensory Book Pages \(verses 1–6\) Patterns](#)
- [Pond and Tablecloth Tracing Pattern](#)
- White copy paper, 1 sheet per 6 children (for cover label)
- White copy paper, 3 sheets per 2 children (for book pages)
- Green card stock, 1 sheet per 2 children
- Sensory materials (per child): Cotton ball, 2 x 4-inch piece of blue tissue paper, ¾-inch yellow felt circle, 8-inch piece of thin jute twine, 2 x 4-inch piece of lightweight cloth, 6–8 mini star stickers

Tools & Basic Supplies

- Kitchen or postal scale
- Plastic wrap and sealed container
- Ruler
- Scissors and fabric scissors
- Office paper cutter
- Hole punch (¼ inch)
- Colored highlighters
- Glue sticks
- Transparent tape
- Stapler
- Tacky/craft glue
- Optional: Fine sandpaper
- Colored permanent markers
- Black Sharpies
- Quart-size zippered baggies
- Cotton swabs
- Crayons or markers

Experiments Supply List

Day 1

Sink or Float

FOR DEMONSTRATION

- Sheep Family Pictures
- Shearing Pictures

PER TABLE

- Plastic tablecloth
- Clear, large bin, bucket, or bowl at least twice as high as the largest test item
- Water
- Items to test (e.g., pencil, coin, golf ball, ping-pong ball, plastic and metal spoon, cork, crayon, orange, stone, plastic Easter egg, apple, avocado)
- Towels for drying spills

Wet Woolly

FOR DEMONSTRATION

- Sheep Family Pictures
- Shearing Pictures

PER STUDENT

- 3 x 1/2-inch strip of 100% wool fabric
- 3 x 1/2-inch strip of 100% polyester fleece
- 3 x 1/2-inch strip of synthetic craft felt
- 3 one-ounce portion cups
- Water
- 2 paper towels

Day 2

Genetically you

FOR DEMONSTRATION

- Double Helix Illustration or model of DNA double helix
- 2 six-foot pieces of yarn

PER TABLE

- 1 paper plate

PER STUDENT

- 1 PTC paper strip
- 1 tissue, napkin, or paper towel

Sling Fling

FOR DEMONSTRATION

- Two 4 x 1/2-inch suede or leather straps

- One 30-inch piece of paracord, leather cord-ing, or other thick string
- One or more foam golf balls
- Hole punch or drill for leather (diameter simi-lar to cord)

PER STUDENT—MARSHMALLOW SLING OPTION (SEE WRITE-UP FOR LEATHER SLING OPTION PER STUDENT)

- Sling Pattern
- Completed sling for example
- Felt sheets (9 x 12 inch), 1 sheet per 6 students
- Leather or suede string (24-inch lengths), 2 per student
- Scissors
- Bag(s) of large marshmallows

Day 3

Shadow Play

PER TABLE

- Flashlights, 1 per student or pair of students
- 1 big box covered in white OR 8 white shirt boxes
- Small animals, shapes, or other objects for making shadows (e.g., little plastic animals, paper clips, feathers, leaves, toy cars, etc.)

Fear Not

PER TABLE

- 1 opaque sack or bag
- Several items that can be identified by touch
- Nail, screw, toothpick, or other pointy (but not sharp or dangerous) item

Day 4

Sticky Stuff

PER STUDENT

- Velcro (or similar brand) hook/loop fas-tener strips

PER TABLE

- Items to test (e.g., thread, crayons, yarn, crushed leaves, dryer towel lint, small twigs, marbles, cotton balls, thin pieces of fabric, pom-pom balls, feathers, plastic toys)
- Paper plates or bowls

- Optional: Timer for teacher (just one)

Overflow Your Cup

FOR DEMONSTRATION

- Water Molecule Chart
- Marker
- 20–50 large sticky notes or 3 x 5-inch cards and painter's tape
- Pencil
- 1 large piece of paper

PER STUDENT

- 1-ounce plastic portion cup with water
- Plastic pipette

PER TABLE

- Bowl of water
- Paper towels

Day 5

Firm Foundations

PER TABLE

- 2 paper plates
- 2 bowls
- 1 sheet of card stock (8 1/2 x 11 inch) and tape
- 4–6 building blocks
- 2–3 flat rocks (painting rocks, river rocks)
- 1 cup of dry sand in a bowl with a couple spoons

Real Rainbows

FOR DEMONSTRATION

- Rainbow Circle Picture
- Refraction Chart
- Rainbow Colors Illustration
- 1 prism

PER TABLE

- 1 flashlight
- Bottom 4 inches of a milk jug or other similar sized container
- 1 small, flat mirror that can fit into the container
- Water
- Several sheets of white paper
- 1 fine-mist sprayers
- Several unprinted CDs or DVDs

Still Water Snacks

(15–20 minutes)

Crunch! Slurp! Chomp! Gulp! Kids and food are always a hit, so make the most of another favorite VBS destination—snack time. This rotation is designed not only to refresh the kids physically but also to build relationships and reinforce the lesson of the day. Get the detailed scoop in the *Still Water Snacks Guide*, which includes healthy and super simple alternatives as well.



Day 1

Today's Snack: Cross Trail Mix and Sweet Sheep

Today's Drink: Emerald-ade

Munch on some trail mix after making it into the shape of a cross OR enjoy a donut “sheep” while we learn about the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep.



Day 4

Today's Snack: Piled-High Popcorn and Full Float

Today's Drink: Sparkling Orange Drink

Both of today's snacks—popcorn and sherbet/ice cream floats—are filled to the brim, which connects to the Psalm 23 truth that God's goodness in our lives is abundant and overflowing.



Day 2

Today's Snack: Scene 23:2 and Border Collie Paw Print

Today's Drink: Green or Blue Smoothies

Try a taste of an edible Psalm 23 scene OR nibble on a border collie paw print while learning about how God guides us like our animal pal, Guide.



Day 5

Today's Snack: Cow Patties and Spud Circles

Today's Drink: Green Berry Rush

Our animal pal Shirley sponsors today's snack—a Rice Krispies “cow patty,” which reminds us that God's goodness and mercy will *surely* follow us all our lives. Our Spud Circle snack gives us the opportunity to recount what we've learned at VBS and enjoy a classic Irish staple—potatoes.



Day 3

Today's Snack: Stuffed Staff and Bird's Nest

Today's Drink: Golden Lemonade

If you like pizza, you'll love our Stuffed Staff which reminds us of how God protects us like a shepherd OR try our animal pal snack—Shadow's edible bird's nest that teaches how God is with us even in dark, shadowy times.



Snack Supply List

Day 1

CROSS TRAIL MIX (8 HALF-CUP SERVINGS)

- 1 c. oyster crackers
- ½ c. mini pretzels
- ½ c. veggie straws
- 1 c. Cheez-Its
- ½ c. M&M's
- ½ c. mini chocolate chips

SWEET SHEEP (PER CHILD)

- 1 mini powdered donut
- 2 pretzel sticks
- 1 chocolate wafer
- Small dab of white icing

EMERALD-ADE DRINK INGREDIENTS

- Limeade drink mix, 1 quart for every 5 children

Day 2

SCENE 23:2 (PER CHILD)

- 1 graham cracker
- White icing
- Green and blue food coloring
- A few white candy beads

BORDER COLLIE PAW PRINT (PER CHILD)

- 1 small or medium flour tortilla
- 2 tbsp. marinara sauce (adjust for tortilla size)
- ¼ c. shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 large pepperoni slice
- 4 small pepperoni slices

GREEN OR BLUE SMOOTHIE

INGREDIENTS (1 QUART FOR EVERY 5

CHILDREN)

- 1 c. spinach
- ½ c. ice
- 1 banana
- ½ avocado
- ½ c. milk
- Dash of cinnamon
- 2 tsp. honey
- (Optional) blue spirulina powder to make it blue

Day 3

STUFFED STAFF (4 SERVINGS)

- 1 can refrigerated crescent roll dough
- 2 mozzarella cheese sticks
- 8 tbsp. marinara sauce

BIRD'S NEST (4 NESTS)

- 1 c. pretzel sticks
- 1 c. chow mein noodles
- ½ c. butterscotch baking chips
- 2 tsp. butter
- 12 small candy eggs or jelly beans

GOLDEN LEMONADE INGREDIENTS

- Lemonade drink mix, 1 quart for every 5 children

Day 4

PILED-HIGH POPCORN (SERVINGS VARY DEPENDING ON CUP SIZE)

- Premade bags of popcorn OR
- ½ c. popcorn kernels
- 3 tbsp. cooking oil
- ¼ c. melted butter
- Salt to taste

SPARKLING ORANGE DRINK INGREDIENTS

- Orange Crush or orange drink mix, 1 quart for every 5 children

FULL FLOAT (ABOUT 20 SERVINGS)

- ½ gallon rainbow sherbet
- Two 2-liters orange soda

Day 5

COW PATTIES (SEE PACKAGING FOR SERVING SIZE)

- Ding Dongs, 1 per person OR
- Premade chocolate Rice Krispies treats
- 1½ tbsp. marshmallow cream, per person
- 1 tbsp. chocolate icing, per person

SPUD CIRCLES

(4-6 SERVINGS, DEPENDING ON POTATO SIZE)

- 3 potatoes, cleaned
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- Salt
- 1½ c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 6 slices cooked and crumbled bacon
- Sour cream

GREEN BERRY RUSH DRINK INGREDIENTS

- Hawaiian Punch Green Berry Rush, 1 quart for every 5 children

Basic Supplies

- Mixing bowls, stirring spoons, and whisks
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Knives and cutting boards
- Butter knives for spreading
- Drink pitchers or coolers
- Plate or flat working surface for assembly
- Baking sheet
- Small condiment cups and lids
- Muffin tin and muffin tin liners or nonstick spray
- Large saucepan with lid
- Ice cream scoop
- Clear punch cups and fun straws or spoons
- Parchment paper
- Snack-sized baggies
- Themed plates, napkins, spoons, and/or cups for serving

Use this supply list to estimate the snack supplies you need, allowing for extras. This list is based on the suggested snack and drink of the day. Modify the list as necessary based on your chosen snack and drink.

Green Meadow Games

(15–20 minutes)



Get ready to have a blast at Green Meadow Games! This rotation helps reinforce concepts learned, teaches practical lessons in sportsmanship, and is downright fun! Get the particulars in the game guide but check below for a brief overview. Choose the games that best fit your situation.

The game guide also lists super simple game options, games just for the younger kids, and extra game ideas. There are loads of great possibilities!

Day 1

Game 1: Gaelic Football

Build teamwork and challenge yourself physically while playing this adaptation of the wildly popular Irish sport of Gaelic football.

Game 2: Lost Sheep Relay

This fun-filled relay game helps us remember how God cares for his children, just like a shepherd cares for his sheep.

Day 2

Game 1: Shamrock, Riverdance, Viking

Listen and respond quickly in this fast-paced Irish hand-motions game.

Game 2: Strongman Challenges

Have a blast trying challenges like caber toss, farmer's carry, and potato put. While you're at it, knock down Goliath!

Day 3

Game 1: Run, David, Run

Reinforce what we've learned about the life of David in this large-scale Rock, Paper, Scissors game that will put your agility to the test.

Game 2: Walk Through the Valley

Do you trust your teammates? You'll need to rely on them as you complete a blindfolded trust-walk relay to remind us that God is with us in the darkest of times.

Day 4

Game 1: Raiders

Work as a team to protect your property from the Vikings in this exciting game that is sure to be a favorite!

Game 2: My Cup Overflows Relay

Move quickly to set a table and "anoint" your team's leader during this lively relay game.

Day 5

Game 1: Psalm 23 Partner Obstacle Course

Have a go at a series of obstacles that mimic the journey we've taken through Psalm 23 at VBS this week.

Game 2: Pot o' Gold

Who can get the most gold before the game is over? This "game of luck" teaches us that thankfully, knowing God forever isn't based on luck, but on God's loving kindness.

Game Supply List

Day 1

GAELIC FOOTBALL

- Cones, chalk, field tape, or rope to mark boundary lines and goals
- Bandanas, jerseys, or wristbands for 1 team
- 1 large foam or playground ball
- Coin for coin toss

LOST SHEEP RELAY

- Lost Sheep Pictures*, beanbags, or bandanas, 5 of the same color per team
- Cones, 5 per team
- Hula-Hoops, 1 per team

Day 2

SHAMROCK, RIVERDANCE, VIKING

No Supplies or Prep

STRONGMAN CHALLENGES

Supplies will vary depending on which challenges you choose to do.

- Goliath Picture*, 1 per team
- Chalk, field tape, or rope
- Cones
- Cardboard boxes (11 x 17-inch), 9 per team
- Dodgeballs, 5 per team
- Pool noodles, 1 per team
- Yoga balls or hippity hop balls, 1 per team
- Bags of potatoes (1–3 lbs.), 2 per team
- Timer
- Potatoes, 1 per player
- Permanent markers
- Tape measure

Day 3

RUN, DAVID, RUN

- Cones, chalk, field tape, or rope to mark boundary lines

WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY

Amounts will vary depending on how many courses you decide to make.

- Cones, chalk, field tape, or rope
- Obstacles (e.g., cones, plastic cups, balls of paper, playing cards, boxes, Hula-Hoops)
- Plastic gold coins, 1 per player

- Buckets, 2 per team
- Blindfolds, at least 1 per team
- Timer

Day 4

RAIDERS

- Kiddie pool
- Balls of any size (as many as possible)
- Pool noodles (cut in half), enough for half the players
- Optional: Water gun

MY CUP OVERFLOWS RELAYS

- Cones, chalk, field tape, or rope
- Tables, 1 per team
- Buckets (1 per team) with plastic tableware for each team (e.g., tablecloth, plate, utensils, cup, napkin, play food, plastic vase with flowers)
- Plastic cups, 1 per player
- Buckets of water, 1 per team

Day 5

PSALM 23 PARTNER OBSTACLE COURSE

Supplies will vary depending on which obstacles you choose. Double this if making two courses.

- Cones
- Blindfolds
- Pool noodles (1 per pair of players)
- Green tablecloth or tarp
- Blue tablecloth or tarp
- 8 rocks, cones, or weights of some kind
- 3 tables
- Bucket of ping-pong balls
- 5 plastic cups of water, plus 10 more plastic cups
- Hula-Hoops, 2 per pair
- Optional: Small bucket of water and sponges

POT O' GOLD

- Cones
- Large container (bucket, pot, or bowl)
- Plastic gold coins
- Foam dice, 1 per player
- Plastic baggies

Emerald Isle Assembly—Closing

(15–25 minutes)

The closing assembly is designed to rivet kids with a drama and keep them happily singing as they head home. Review all the specifics in the *Assembly Guide* but check out the following for a quick overview.

- **Music:** The day starts with music, and the day ends with music. Conclude your day with several songs interspersed throughout the closing assembly.
- **Creature Feature:** God’s creatures are amazing and so cool to check out! We’ll highlight true info about each day’s animal pal. Note: the Creature Feature can be done in the opening assembly, if you prefer. There are **presentation images** or **videos** to use.
 - » Day 1: Sheep
 - » Day 2: Border Collie
 - » Day 3: Raven
 - » Day 4: Woolly Aphid
 - » Day 5: Highland Cow
- **Drama or Skits:** The highly anticipated daily drama features an Irish sheep farmer named Grandpa Fitz who runs Stillwater Farm. Through some fun, some challenges, and a few big surprises, Grandpa Fitz shows how the Lord has been his comfort and guide his whole life.
- **Contests:** Announce winners of today’s contest (if you are having winners). Announce whatever pertinent information the kids need to know about tomorrow’s contests. (See the Cool Contests section for more details.) For instance, remind them to do their Student Guides, including the Go and Do activities, learn their memory verses, and participate in one of the following each day:

Day 1—Guess the Rainbow Skittles

When passing by the jar of Skittles, kids can write their name on a slip of paper with their guess of the total number of Skittles and put it in the pail or basket.

Day 2—Group Spirit

Each group comes up with a group cheer, song, motion, or sign. Or they can each wear something depicting their group. For example, if a group’s name is the Starlings, everyone wears a star.

Day 3—Dress-Up

Everyone dresses up in any attire related to the VBS theme—shepherds, sheep, farmers, farm animals, Vikings, King David, kings or queens, Irish step dancers, etc.

Day 4—Bible Challenge

Kids can find the missing words in the verse and complete a word search for this interactive Bible challenge.

Day 5—Mission Money Mania

Kids bring in their final mission money today. Double points for anyone who brings in any amount.

- **Announcements:** Communicate pertinent information of the day.
- **Takeaway Time:** Share one last thought before the kids leave for the day.

Dismissal

Dismissal can be the most chaotic time of the VBS day, but there is no need for it to be. Order and safety are top concerns, so have a plan of action for safety during dismissal.

- Require caretakers to park and come in to pick up their children. This eliminates children dashing through the parking lot without adult supervision.
- Decide where children will be picked up and inform caretakers at check-in time. Put this information in your Caretaker Handbook.
- Group guides and assistants must stay with the children until they are safely checked out. Collect name tags and make sure all papers, crafts, and belongings go home.
- Caretakers should initial the check-in/checkout roster.
- Toddler/preschool checkout should take place in self-contained classrooms. Have the parents sign the children out on the check-in/checkout roster.
- Make sure children are dismissed only to authorized individuals.
- If someone different from the drop-off person is picking up the child, make sure the group guide knows this and writes it down at check-in time.
- If your church uses electronic checkout, follow your procedures for that.

Your Ideas

These additional ideas were shared by VBS directors just like you!

- “We have over 150 kids. We use the online registration and have added a field for names of people authorized to pick up the child. Those names are printed on the child’s name tag (using mail merge). At the end of closing assembly, we have parents/caregivers enter at the back of the sanctuary. They gather all their children (with the leaders checking IDs as needed), then exit at the front where staff members are waiting to collect name tags. The one-way traffic flow through the sanctuary really helped us reduce the chaos at dismissal.” — Nancy O.
- “We have about 140 kids, so we don’t have a closing; instead, they are in their rooms. Each parent has a security card and must hand it to the teacher before the child is allowed to go.” — Laurie P.
- “We are a small church that draws in around 100 kids from the community. When kids come on Monday morning, they are given a name tag with a number on it. Every kid from the same household gets the same number. The parent gets a card with that number on it as well as their last name. At the end of every day that week, the parents line up and show their card to someone at the back of the sanctuary who has a microphone. The announcer says the last name and number and usually asks the parent for the kids’ first names to call those, too. (Younger kids especially don’t always hear/recognize their last name and number.) Then one final precaution: The kids are instructed to hand their name tags to one of the adults at the back who will check their number with the number of the parent picking them up. If a parent needs to have someone else pick their household up, they give them that card. If they don’t have that card with the right number, the VBS director will call the parent and verify that the kid(s) can go home with the person who’s there.” — Kristi D.
- “We usually run between 70–100 children each year. The children are given numbers on their name tags. When the parent drops them off, the parent is given a wristband—silicone with our church name and phone number on it—that has a number that matches the one on the child’s name tag. At dismissal, the teams line up at specific doors at the back of our sanctuary and the parents meet them there. The parent gives the wristband to the team leader who then matches it to the number on the child’s name tag. Then they go into our gym to pick up their craft and go out the gym doors. We love the one-way traffic and this helped cut our pickup time down by 10 minutes or so!” — Cathy T.
- “I took the registration forms that name the authorized adults who could pick up each kid. Made a list in alphabetical order of the child’s name, then listed the adults who could come pick them up. At dismissal, I had two lines (A–M and N–Z) out in front of the building and parents had to show ID and be checked off before entering the building to get their child. It really worked great!” — Cason W.
- “Parents are notified during check-in that they are welcome to come at 8:00 p.m. for our closing ceremonies, and for dismissal at 8:30 p.m., kids stay put in their seats (in worship center) while parents come to our crew leaders and sign their initials next to their child’s name and leave with their child. The crew leaders have a list of children’s names, parents’ phone numbers, and the name of approved pickup person.” — Lynel W.
- “We all come together for closing ceremony and parents are lined up outside in a car line much like they would at our local schools. The parents have name tags they hand to the worker, who brings them inside and announce the name on the microphone. All exterior doors are locked so no one can come inside. We’ve had issues with kids running through the parking lot with cars going everywhere. Workers’ kids have to remain seated (I need the workers’ help anyway) until the car line is gone. This also keeps all my workers together so I can make any announcements/reminders about the next day.” — Heather W.

FOLLOW-UP

Follow Up with Your Flock

VBS is over and you're ready to sit back and put your feet up. But wait! You still need to tie up the loose ends and finish strong. Make sure you follow up with the children, the VBS crew, and the church.

Follow Up with the Children

- Continue to pray!
- Host the closing program, warmly welcoming all kids back.
- Talk with each child who indicated a decision for Christ. Make sure his family is aware of the decision.
- Have each group guide write follow-up postcards (1230290) to children in his group and turn them in to office staff to address and mail.
- Send birthday postcards (1230460) to children over the following year to let them know you are thinking of them.
- Send invitations to future children's events.
- Get permission from caregivers to post pictures of their kids and/or to post your VBS compilation video, if you made one for the closing program. You can



use YouTube or Facebook to show the video or use a live broadcast tool like Periscope or Facebook's live feature.

- Use your hashtag to continue to collect posts.
- Plan to host a fun-filled event approximately a month after VBS. Stop by homes of visitors or mail them a picture of their child at VBS (1230840) and invite them to the upcoming event. Event ideas include a church family picnic, kids' concert, or back-to-school bash.
- You may also want to consider taking a trip to the Creation Museum (CreationMuseum.org) located near Cincinnati in Petersburg, KY. This museum features a walk through biblical history based on the 7 C's of History. Special group rates are available.
- Or plan a trip to the Ark Encounter (ArkEncounter.com) in Williamstown, KY. The Ark Encounter features a full-size replica of Noah's ark, complete with a fun petting zoo and zip lines.

Follow Up with the VBS Crew

- Host a staff party. Give out recognition awards and staff appreciation postcards (1230120).
- Ask the VBS crew to chime in with quick praises on the VBS Facebook page or other social media sites your church is using.



- Have leadership crew members write personal thank-you notes to each staff member on their team.
- Complete and mail the **Director's Evaluation Form** to Answers in Genesis. We'll email you a 10% off coupon on your next purchase from AiG.
- Conduct a debriefing with the leadership team to brainstorm thoughts for next year.

Follow Up with the Church

- Clean, organize, and store all items that can be reused.
- Complete all recordkeeping, including updating the church database.
- Send the mission money to the appropriate place. See the Mission Moment section of the Resource Download for a [Donation Submission Form](#) to fill out and send in along with the money to CHF.
- Give a praise report to the church family and post an article on the church website, on the VBS Facebook page, or in the newsletter.

Emerald Crossing Closing Program

A great week needs a great ending with a great closing program. This brings everyone together to celebrate and learn what God has been doing all week. Be prepared to lovingly welcome any who do not normally attend church. This is a wonderful time to share Christ's love and build relationships!

Choose a time to host the closing program (e.g., the last evening of VBS or a church service following VBS week). Include this information in your Caretaker Handbook. Send out invitation postcards (1230300) midweek.



Before the Closing Program

During the 30 minutes before the program begins, families visit the various areas of *Emerald Crossing*. Leaders of these areas should be in their respective spots to meet and greet everyone and share about the week.

During the Closing Program

- **Share Terrific Trivia Tidbits:** As a fun way to start things off, share some Ireland trivia. See page 10.
- **Perform a drama segment:** Choose a favorite drama section, or even an entire day's drama, and perform it again.
- **Sing songs:** Have the children sing favorite VBS songs for their parents.
- **Share cheers:** Give groups with cheers an opportunity to share them.
- **Review the Animal Pals/Creature Features:** Show the animal pals and see if the kids can share a bit about them and review the real-life design features of those creatures.
- **Recite memory verses that were learned:** Have various age groups share their memory verses, have all the children recite the theme verse, or have them recite all of Psalm 23 with hand motions.
- **Announce the final mission total:** Tell about the mission project you've been collecting money for and announce the totals.
- **Announce contest info:** Share any pertinent information regarding the Cool Contests of the week.
- **Show highlights:** Recap the week's events with a short highlight video or photos. Parents love to see their children in pictures.
- **Share stories:** Ask those with compelling stories to share their experiences from the week.
- **Play a review game:** Divide into groups and challenge each with review questions from the week. Groups can be parents versus children or boys versus girls.
- **Share the gospel:** Ask your pastor (or children's pastor) to share the gospel so the kids can hear it again and the parents and visitors can also hear.
- **Thank the VBS staff:** Have your pastor recognize your volunteers by asking them to stand and receive huge applause!
- **Share announcements and pray:** Ask your pastor to make any announcements, invite everyone to future church events, and then close the program in prayer.

After the Closing Program

Serve fun snacks in the snack area. Choose from the ideas given for the training workshops, the carnival, or VBS week.

If you didn't host the carnival, do so now and let everyone end the week with some added fun.

Leading a Child to Christ

AnswersVBS presents many opportunities to share the gospel, and every teacher should be ready to explain how to be saved, whether it's one-on-one or with a small group. Use the following steps as a guide to explain salvation, ask questions, read scripture, and pray with and for students.

Pray. Salvation is God's work, not ours. We cannot bring about salvation for anyone, but we can ask God to prepare a child's heart to receive the truth.

Explain. Prepare a clear presentation of the gospel. Avoid abstract phrases like "asking Jesus into your heart" and instead use clear biblical language, such as "becoming a child of God." You may want to use the following three key words to share how to receive eternal life:

- » **Admit** you have sinned (disobeyed God's commands). Ask God to forgive you of your sins. The penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23).
- » **Believe** Jesus, God's Son, died in your place and rose again, paying the penalty for your sins (John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10).
- » **Receive** the gift of eternal life by telling God you want to be his child (John 1:12).

Ask. To encourage discussion and to gauge understanding, ask open-ended questions, such as the following:

- » What is sin?
- » Can you think of specific sins you have done?
- » Are you bothered by your sin?
- » Who is Jesus?
- » Why did Jesus have to die?
- » Why did Jesus rise from the dead?
- » When you receive the gift of eternal life, is there anything else you have to do? Emphasize that salvation is not based on what we do but is a gift from God through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Respond. When children demonstrate a basic understanding of salvation, encourage them to talk with their parents about what it means to become a child of God (if parents are believers). If they come from a non-Christian home, encourage them to express belief in Jesus through prayer, confessing sin and asking Jesus to save them.

Some children may not be ready to make a decision. For children who have previously made a decision, they may need reassurance or want to confess sin.

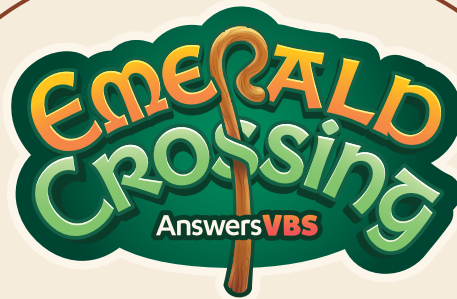
- » Read Romans 10:9-10 and John 10:28-29 with those who need assurance, encouraging them to trust in God's promises.
- » For those wanting to confess sin, read 1 John 1:9 and remind them that God forgives when they repent (turn from sin).

Celebrate. Rejoice together! Read Luke 15:10.

Grow. Explain that children of God receive the Holy Spirit, who helps them understand and obey the Bible. Share practical ways for them to grow in faith and follow Jesus:

- » Read the Bible and obey what it says. (Provide a Bible.)
- » Pray every day. Prayer is talking to God.
- » Attend a church that teaches that the Bible is God's true Word.
- » Tell others about Jesus.

As you faithfully teach and guide children in the gospel, trust God to work in their hearts. Continue to pray for them and encourage them as they grow in their understanding of what it means to follow Christ.



At *Emerald Crossing*, children will journey through Ireland's lush landscapes, exploring the powerful words of Psalm 23. Along the way, they'll meet the shepherd-king David and the ultimate Shepherd-King, Jesus Christ. In a world filled with worry and confusion, kids will learn how to cross from anxiety to peace, from fear to faith, and from uncertainty to a firm foundation in God's Word through a relationship with the Good Shepherd. They'll discover there is a God who cares for them!

The *Director Guide* and accompanying digital resources contain everything you need to effectively oversee and administer your VBS program. From clip art to customizable forms, and decorating ideas to a countdown calendar, you'll be equipped to lead your travelers to the truth of God's Word!



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