

Reading across the miles



Theme

Books to read
together

Reading the Bible
together

Looking at the Book
of Common Prayer
together

What we need to do
this work together

Talking or writing
together

Making something
together

Praying and Singing
together

Reading Across the Miles was developed to serve as a faith component to the “Growing Learning Understanding” materials produced by the Military Child Education Coalition. The MCEC is a nonprofit organization focused on the academic and school-related needs of the military connected child. The literature selections are chosen to convey on a child’s level the various issues facing military families. The whole set of materials from Military Child Education Coalition can be purchased through their website at www.MilitaryChild.org.

The Episcopal Church wished to add a faith component to these excellent materials in response to comments from military families about the need for spiritual resources. To this end, we have used the books chosen by the MCEC and written a spiritual piece. Of course there are many other children’s books available that will deal with these themes and activities. This material can be used with them as well.

The materials are best suited for children ages 1 through children in 4th grade and their families. Topics covered in each lesson are listed on the left side of this page.

Reading across the miles

Books used in this material



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Lots of Opposites (Sesame Street)
My Friend Isabelle (Woloson)
We're Different, We're the Same and We're All Wonderful!
(Sesame Street)
It's Okay to be Different (Todd Parr)
Teeth, Tails & Tentacles (Christopher Wormell)
A Child's Book of Art (selected by Lucy Micklethwait)
In My Heart (Molly Bany)
While You are Away (Eileen Spinelli)
How Many Stars in the Sky? (Reading Rainbow)
Mommy, You are My Hero (Michelle Ferguson-Cohen)
Daddy, You are My Hero (Michelle Ferguson-Cohen)
Wild about Books (Judy Sierra)
Once upon a Time (Niki Daly)
A Family of Poems (Caroline Kennedy)
Baby Faces (Sesame Beginnings)
The Kissing Hand (Audrey Penn)
Night Catch (Brenda Ehrmantraut)
On Earth (G. Brian Karas)
Me on the Map (Joan Sweeney)
Inter-linked Space (Ben Denne and Eileen O'Brien)
Family Traditions for All Seasons (Dr. Mary Keller)
The Book of Common Prayer (Episcopal Church)
The New Revised Standard Version Bible
A Prayer Book for the Armed Services 2008 (Episcopal Church)
The Anglican Family Prayer Book (Anne E. Kitch)

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It's okay to be different. This collection of books will address nurturing self-esteem, will teach tolerance and social skills.

Lots of Opposites (Sesame Street)

My Friend Isabelle (Woloson)

We're Different, We're the Same and We're All Wonderful! (Sesame Street)

It's Okay to be Different (Todd Parr)

Psalm 139:14

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

Luke 6: 31

"Do to others as you would have them do to you."

"Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" (Baptismal Covenant Promise p. 305)

2 sheets of construction paper for each person's book
construction paper or socks or felt to make a puppet for each family member

glue

markers or crayons

magazines

family photos

How can your family be more loving this week?

How can you be more loving to your family this week? To your friends?

Reading across the miles

Making something together

Make a booklet using 2 pieces of construction paper folded in half. You may wish to staple it on the fold. Either draw pictures to illustrate the Psalm or the Golden Rule or cut out pictures from newspapers to illustrate the message.

You may also wish to make puppets for each person in your family using construction paper or socks. Using the puppets act out ways you can be loving to one another.

Singing and Praying Together

Make a center for family prayer time. Take a piece of construction paper, put a small votive candle on it and perhaps one of your family booklets. Light the candle each time you gather for prayers.

You may wish to read the two scriptures and pray the following prayer:

Response: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Leader: That we can be like Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

Response: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Leader: That we respect the dignity of every human being.

Response: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Leader: That we will remember to thank God for all our gifts.

Response: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Leader: For those who are special to us.

Response: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

All Amen.



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Talking or writing
together

Counting
Art Appreciation
Sophistication

Teeth, Tails & Tentacles (Christopher Wormell)
A Child's Book of Art (selected by Lucy Micklethwait)

Genesis 1 (story of creation)
Various other readings from *The Twelve Days of
Christmas*

The Apostles' Creed (p. 96)

Art books or websites of classical art

Find paintings of the verses in *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. Find stories or books in the Bible mentioned in the carol.

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Making something together

Praying and Singing together



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The Twelve Days of Christmas was written in the 16th century in England. Because it was illegal at that time to practice one's faith, this song served as a reminder for people of the significant teachings of the church. It is a great counting song and a good Bible study as well, and not just for Christmas. Find a good recording of the carol and sing along.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1 st Day | The partridge in the pear tree is Jesus on the cross, who willingly gave up his life so that we might live. The tree also reminds us of Adam and Eve. |
| 2 nd Day | Two turtle doves – Old and New Testaments |
| 3 rd Day | Three French hens – faith, hope and love –
1 Cor 13 |
| 4 th Day | Four calling birds - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the four gospel writers. |
| 5 th Day | Five golden rings - the five books of the Torah/
Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) |
| 6 th Day | Six geese a-layin - the six days of creation |
| 7 th Day | Seven swans a-swimmin - seven gifts of the Holy Spirit – wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. |
| 8 th Day | Eight maids a-milking - the 8 beatitudes |
| 9 th Day | Nine ladies dancing - nine Fruits of the Spirit found in Gal. 5:22-23 – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control |
| 10 th Day | Ten lords a-leaping – Ten Commandments |
| 11 th Day | Eleven pipers piping – the 11 faithful disciples |
| 12 th Day | Twelve drummers drumming – the 12 points of belief expressed in the Apostles' Creed |

Draw 12 boxes on a sheet of white paper. Draw pictures illustrating each verse of the song in the boxes (don't draw in order). Cover the boxes with a stick note and play a guessing game. "On the ninth day of Christmas....". Take turns guessing which box contains that picture.

Reading across the miles



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Books to read
together

Reading the Bible
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Looking at the Book
of Common Prayer
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What we need to do
this work together

Talking or writing
together

Staying connected to family members who are deployed.
Help children adapt to family and daily changes that occur
when a parent is away.

Importance of nurturing resilient family bonds to sustain
children through deployment.

In My Heart (Molly Bany)

While You are Away (Eileen Spinelli)

How Many Stars in the Sky? (Reading Rainbow)

Mommy, You are My Hero (Michelle Ferguson-Cohen)

Daddy, You are My Hero (Michelle Ferguson-Cohen)

Gen. 12 and 17:1-8

(Story of Abraham and Sarah as they leave home and God's
telling Abraham that he would have as many children as there
are stars in the sky.)

Prayers for Family and Personal Life are found beginning on
page 828 of the Book of Common Prayer.

A journal book for each family member

Length of freezer paper

Tape

Markers

World Map

You might like to research the part of the world where your
family member is deployed. Find the place on the map. Look
in the Bible at the story of Abraham. Where did this take
place? Can you find it on the map? What other biblical
events can you find that took place where your family member
is?

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Making something together

Praying and Singing together



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Don't forget to add spiritual and faith formation components to your journal, such as your prayers, something you read in the Bible or another spiritual book, going to church or Vacation Bible School, etc.

On the length of freezer paper, divide the paper into segments. Draw faith events along with existing events that will happen while the family member is deployed, for example birthdays, Christmas pageants, etc.

For young children, you may wish to make a story box. Use sand if your family member is deployed in the desert, water if deployed in the waters, a large rock for a mountain, feathers, kites or a small fan if your family member is a pilot. The story boxes can be used to tell biblical stories - Moses in the desert, Abraham and Sarah, Noah and the flood, Jesus' stories that took place at the Sea of Galilee, the wisemen and the star, etc. Small wooden pegs make great people, little plastic boats and plastic fish help tell the stories. An underbed storage box makes a great story box.

Make a "Flat Stanley" type doll representing your family member who is deployed. Take "Flat _____" wherever you go and take photos to send to your loved one who is away.

Your family devotion center can contain a photo of the deployed member, a photograph of your family and a small calendar.

A Prayer for Those We Love

Almighty God, we entrust all who are dear to us to your never-failing care and love, for this life and the life to come, knowing that you are doing for them better things than we can desire or pray for; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Book of Common Prayer p. 831)

Reading across the miles



Theme

Love of learning
Use of literature to stay connected with family and friends.
Find comfort and understanding in literature.

Books to read together

Wild about Books (Judy Sierra)
Once upon a Time (Niki Daly)
A Family of Poems (Caroline Kennedy)

Reading the Bible together

Gen. 12 (story of Abraham and Sarah leaving their home)
John 10 (Good Shepherd)
Psalm 23

Looking at the Book of Common Prayer together

The Psalms begin on page 585

What we need to do this work together

Journal
World map
Construction paper and markers
Stickers
Fancy paper

Talking or writing together

We have a story in the Bible. These are our “family” stories as well. We can be a part of these stories. Wear a biblical headdress, pretend to ride a camel or a donkey, or walk with a walking stick as you read a favorite story in the Bible. Our hymns also tell stories. In Jesus’ time, the hymnal was the Psalms. Some were sad, some happy. You may like to copy the words of a favorite Psalm or hymn in your journal.

Reading across the miles

Making something together

Singing and praying together



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The Bible is like a library. There are many kinds of books in the Bible - like history, poetry, prophecy, etc.

Make a booklet with construction paper, using 4 pages of paper. Read the 23rd Psalm to your child. Have them illustrate the Psalm. Then encourage them to write the Psalm in their own words or tell you in their own words for you to write for them.

Choose a Bible story to read as you wear your head dress, and “ride your chariot, donkey or camel”. Perhaps one of the night time stories in the Bible could be read with all holding flashlights.

You may wish to make a triptych using a piece of construction paper folded in thirds. In the left section draw a picture of yourself. In the middle section draw a picture of yourself as a part of the Bible story (being a shepherd at the manger at Christmas, for example) In the third section draw a picture of the Bible story (perhaps Noah or the wisemen, etc.) . You are part of the biblical story.

Have a family sing-along with hymns.

For your family devotion center include a hymnal or copy a favorite Psalm on a card. Pray the Psalm together.

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people; Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and tthe Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer p 225)

Reading across the miles



Theme

To provide sensory exposure
Connect with a deployed loved one
Valueing children's treasures

Books to read
together

Baby Faces (Sesame Beginnings)

Reading the Bible
together

Luke 2 (The Christmas Story)
Matthew 2:1-12 (The story of the Wisemen)

Looking at the Book
of Common Prayer
together

Thanksgiving for the Birth or Adoption of a Child, p439ff

What we need to do
this work together

2 8-1/2 x 11 inch pieces of felt
yarn
sandpaper, soft flannel, fake fur, cotton balls, a small rock,
small piece of velvet or gold foil, a small mirror, family
photos, patch cut from an old uniform
sandwich zip lock bags
notebook rings

Talking or writing
together

Talk about being happy, sad, afraid. Per the directions on
the next page, pull the items from the "feeling bag" and
talk about each one.

Reading across the miles

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Sew the felt together to make a bag with open top. You can also punch holes down the sides and bottom of the felt and lace them together with the yarn. In the bag include the items from first page. The sandpaper reminds us of many Bible stories that took place in the desert. The soft flannel reminds us of the swaddling clothes Mary in which wrapped Baby Jesus, the velvet or foil reminds us of the Wisemen, cotton balls remind us of sheep, fake fur reminds us of Mary's donkey, rock reminds us of mountains. Use your imagination to put such sensory objects in the bag. A piece of your family member's uniform or other clothing will serve as a wonderful reminder. The mirror is for the child to see themselves as a Child of God.

For the photo album, place photos inside the sandwich ziplock bag. Punch a hole in the zip end of the bag and thread onto a ring (notebook ring purchased at office supply store). The photos can be changed out as you wish. Make one to send to your family member who is away.

Cut pictures of people from magazines who look happy, sad, afraid, mad, etc. Fold the pictures into different shapes (triangles, squares, stars, etc.) and make a game of guessing how the person in the picture feels and then unfold the picture.

For your family devotion, include your feeling bag and your "photo album" along with candle.

Prayer for Those Absent

O loving God, who has given us family and friends; be with all those whom we love who cannot be with us, guard and bless them wherever they may be, grace them with joy, protect them from all evil, and bring them safely to us once again. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

(Anne E. Kitch, *The Anglican Family Prayer Book*)

Reading across the miles



Theme

Books to read
together

Reading the Bible
together

Looking at the Book
of Common Prayer
together

What we need to do
this work together

Talking or writing
together

Help with transitions
Family love
Family traditions
Honor the power of stories

The Kissing Hand (Audrey Penn)

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall have eternal life.

Baptismal Liturgy, p. 308 Book of Common Prayer
“you are sealed as Christ’s own forever...”

Small heart-shaped box (could be brown cardboard from a craft store, a plastic heart box, etc.)

Items to put in the box

Copy of the liturgy for deployment found in this “Across the Miles” resource.

Little heart stickers

Sacraments are an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. The bread and wine at Eucharist, the water and oil at baptism are such signs. We wear crosses to remind us that we are Christian. We kiss one another to show our love for each other. We have birthday cakes with candles and special gifts, Christmas trees, Easter baskets. Chester’s mother kissed his hand and he knew that he would always have her love.

As family members we can use the family ritual for those leaving.

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The heart shaped box can contain things that remind children that they are loved. Have the child choose such objects. Make a similar box for your deployed family member. Include heart stickers, a small cross and “Jesus Loves Me” written on a small card.

To go with the family liturgy for the deployed person include reminders of your family celebrations during the year - Christmas, Easter, birthdays and other special events that you observe as a family such as first day of school, piano recitals, sporting events to be given as reminders of the family. Perhaps the deployed family member can include some such symbols for the rest of the family as well.

For your family center for your devotions include your heart box. Look at the items in the box and talk about how much you are loved.

Sing “Jesus Loves Me”

Jesus loves me this I know
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong.
They are weak but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me - the Bible tells me so.

Perhaps you can sing together and say bedtime prayers together when you can talk to each other on the telephone or Skype.

Reading across the miles



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Books to read
together

Reading the Bible
together

Looking at the Book
of Common Prayer
together

What we need to do
this work together

Talking or writing
together

Emotions
Social skills

My Many Colored Days (Dr. Seuss)
A is for Angry, an animal and adjective alphabet (Sandra
Boynton)

Genesis. 1 (creation)
Exodus 17 (Israelites complain in the desert)
Daniel 6 (Daniel and the lions)
Luke 18:15-17 (Jesus and children)
Luke 19: 1-10 (Zaccheus)
Luke 6:31 (Golden Rule)

Baptismal Covenant Promise p. 304-05
“Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellow-
ship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?”
“Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving
your neighbor as yourself?”

Paper plates
yarn
markers

Read the Bible selections above. How did the people feel
in each of the stories? (Glad, mad, happy, sad, afraid,
etc.)

What might you do for a family member who was glad,
mad, happy, sad, afraid, etc.?

Make masks for each of the emotions and act out the
Bible stories. Act out something that happened to you re-
cently.

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Make your masks using markers, cutting out holes for eyes, nose and mouth. Secure mask to your head with the yarn.

The Golden Rule can be found in many of the religions of the world.

“Do unto others as you would have them do to you.”

(Christianity)

“Treat others as you would yourself be treated.” (Hindu)

“Live in harmony, for we are all related.” (Islam)

“Hurt not others with that which pains you.” (Buddhism)

“Live in harmony, for we are all related.”

(Native American)

“What you yourself hate, do to no man.” (Judaism)

You may like to write these on cards for your devotion center. How are these rules alike? Different? Which do you like best?

You may like to enlarge your prayer/devotion center to include a rocker or small seating place in a quiet corner of your home. A candle, a Bible, and some children’s Bible storybooks would be good additions. Respect the need of family members to have a quiet place for prayer. Encourage family to go to the prayer center when they are glad, mad, scared, happy. Quiet time with God is a good habit.

Reading across the miles



Theme

Passage of time
Challenges of deployment

Books to read
together

Night Catch (Brenda Ehrmantraut)
On Earth (G. Brian Karas)
Me on the Map (Joan Sweeney)
Inter-linked Space (Ben Denne and Eileen O'Brien)
Family Traditions for All Seasons (Dr. Mary Keller)

Reading the Bible
together

Eccl. 3:1-9 (For everything there is a season)
Rom. 8:34b-39 (Nothing can separate us from the love of
God)

Looking at the Book
of Common Prayer
together

Prayer for those in the armed forces of our country, p 823
Prayer for those we love, p 831

What we need to do
this work together

Stars (paper or cardboard or multi-dimensional)
markers
star charms
lanyard cord
stars on white paper

Talking or writing
together

We read in the Roman's passage that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Discuss as a family how nothing can separate each other from the love of family. What can you as a family do to make this happen?
The reading from Ecclesiastes was made into a song by Pete Seeger.

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Make star necklaces or bracelets for each family member. Put each family member's name on a star and have stars for each person to wear.

You may wish to make a star book with a page for each family member. Include a photo.

Look at a constellation map and find Polaris. Then locate Polaris from where you live (and from where you are deployed.) Looking at the star each evening will help to connect you with your family.

If you have a globe (map will work but not as well) get in a darkened place and shine a flashlight on the place where you live. Then shine the light where your family member is deployed. Sing "This Little Light of Mine" and include a verse "Shine all over _____ (where you live) and Shine all over _____ (where your family member is deployed.)

Put dots on the globe where you have lived.

You may wish to draw pictures of the Ecclesiastes reading on a calendar, or make your own calendar and have a larger space for your artwork.

See above suggestions for singing.

For your devotion center include the globe and the star booklet or some other stars.