

## Reunions with Church Family

We are created to be in community

According to dictionary.com, a reunion can be defined as “the act of uniting again” or “a gathering of relatives, friends, or associates at regular intervals or after separation.” As many congregations begin to reunite with one another after a long year or two of separation or even after shorter summer breaks, churches recognize the need for community and belonging. Consider hosting an in-person or online Church Family Reunion for youth and their families to reconnect, play, and be reminded of how good it is to be the church together.

### REUNITING THROUGH PHOTOS

**Photo Booth and Family Tree:** Make a large empty photo frame with the words FAMILY REUNION and the year of the event. Using a polaroid camera, have individuals or a group pose for a picture. When the photo develops, hang it on a nearby tree or pole that is labelled “family tree.” This can serve as a reminder that we are all part of God’s family.



### REUNITING THROUGH FOOD

**Online Cooking Tutorials:** Select a few members of your congregation who are known for their famous church dishes. Ask them to provide a shopping list and recipe along with a cooking tutorial. This will allow youth and families to shop and cook together while learning from their church family.

**Zoom Meal:** If your church is not able to meet in person, encourage the youth to all log in at the same time to enjoy the dishes they have made. Be sure to include questions to keep the conversation going. Consider asking a church member to act as host and teach some basic table manners.

**Meal on the Lawn or in the Church Building:** If your congregation is meeting in person, encourage youth to BYOD (bring your own dinner) and a chair or blanket for a meal on the lawn. Provide conversation cards or discussion starters if youth are sitting at tables. Questions to ask can include, “What did you miss most about being separated from your church family?” or “What is the first thing you want to do now that we are back together?” or “How are you feeling about reuniting with your church family?”

### REUNITING THROUGH RECREATION

**Outdoor Games:** Reunions are a perfect opportunity for people to play together. Young people are craving unstructured times of play especially since these opportunities have been limited during the pandemic. Think about your outdoor space and the people who will be attending. Gather outdoor games where people can work

together. Games like horseshoes, cornhole, ladderball, spikeball, and pickleball allow people to work with a partner or play against someone at a leisurely pace. Whether the game is played quickly or not, participants can reconnect. For those attendees who do not prefer games that are athletic in nature, provide other games like Jenga, Bananagrams, or Spoons. Consider holding a hula-hoop contest or tug-of-war for some old-fashioned fun!

**Get-to-know You BINGO:** Create a BINGO card using one of the following templates:

<https://www.canva.com/create/bingo-cards/> or <https://myfreebingocards.com/templates>.

When creating the card, think about statements that apply to one or more people (examples: sits in the balcony, attends Sunday School, watches worship online, favorite color is blue, plays an instrument, etc.). If meeting in person, give BINGO cards and a pencil to people as they enter the space. Encourage them to walk around and ask others if the statement in the box applies to them. If so, the person being asked should sign their name in the box. If meeting online, mail or email the BINGO card to participants prior to the event. Encourage participants to text friends the questions and write in the appropriate names. Give prizes to winners who get BINGO, fill up their entire board, etc.

**Scattergories:** Have two families sit at a table together and choose one person to act as the scribe. Teams will be allotted two minutes to write down as many “reunions” that they can think of in each category. Categories can include: types of reunions, pop culture reunions, historical reunions, sports reunions, Biblical reunions. After two minutes, the team leader will read their list. If more than one team has the same answer, all teams must cross it off of the list. After each team reads their list, count up the number of items left or the items that were unique to one team. The team with the most points after all rounds, wins.

## REUNITING THROUGH CONVERSATION

**Discussion Questions:** Ask participants questions about reunions.

- What are some emotions people experience around reunions? For example, someone who is going to their high school reunion?
- What might make a person feel excited about seeing high school classmates? What might make a person feel anxious or scared to reunite with former classmates?
- What about family reunions? Are they always joyous? Why or why not?
- What emotion are you feeling about this reunion today? Are you happy to see some of your friends that you haven’t seen in a while? Were you nervous about attending this reunion?

**Biblical Reunions:** If you played scattergories and created a list of Biblical reunions, use a few examples from your list. Invite participants to tell a few details about each of these reunions or read the scriptures for:

- The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)
- Jacob and Esau (Genesis 33)
- The resurrected Christ and his disciples (Matthew 28:16-20).

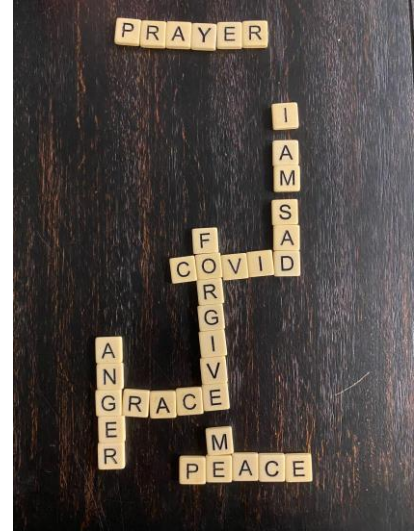
Ask youth to recap what has occurred in the story using the 5 W’s (who, what, when, where, and why), to name the emotions the characters in the story are experiencing, and to discuss what we can learn from these biblical reunions. Which characters exhibited courage, forgiveness, resentment, hesitation, awe, doubt, or belief?

**Instagram Reunions:** Working in small groups, ask the groups to create an Instagram post about one of the biblical reunions either by drawing a picture or taking a picture that depicts the story. Have students include a caption and hashtag that capture the emotions experienced in the scripture. Who should be “tagged” in the story? What location would they use for the post? Be sure to share the images with the entire group.

## REUNITING THROUGH PRAYER

**Prayer Wall:** In times of separation, much can happen in our lives that we have been unable to share with loved ones. Create a space for prayer with a white board and markers, sticky notes, a prayer loom, banagram or scrabble tiles, etc. Allow youth an opportunity to express what has weighed heavily on their hearts and include these in a time of prayer.

**Closing Prayer:** God, You did not intend for us to be alone. You created us to be with one another and declared it good. Creator, we agree that it is so good to see familiar faces and to hear stories of remembrance. We give thanks for your presence surrounding our tears of joy and of sorrow as we celebrate being in the same space and mourn the time we have spent apart. Unite us as we laugh and play and give thanks for this community. Amen.



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