Youth Activity: We’re all in this together

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Start by playing the “welded ankles” game. Everyone stands side by side in a line with their own feet about shoulder-width apart but touching the foot of the person on either side. The task is for the group to walk to a finish line 15-20 feet away without separating their feet from their partner’s. If the facilitator sees any pair of feet separate, the group has to stop, walk back (separately) to the start line, and start over again. If the group is so large that keeping an eye on all the feet will be too difficult, separate them into several smaller groups. This is truly a group effort and may take a few tries.

If time allows, the group may also enjoy playing the “balloon up” game. The youth form a circle and hold the hand of the person on either side of them. The facilitator throws a balloon into the circle, which the group tries to keep from touching the ground for as long as possible without letting go of each others’ hands. Enjoy a good laugh if the balloon pops outside the circle; just toss it back in and start again. If the youth become good at keeping the balloon off the ground, increase the challenge by throwing in a second balloon.

Talk about how these activities worked or didn’t work by raising themes of teamwork, patience, all-for-one, and cooperation. Read together John 17:22-26. How do these games relate to becoming completely one? What types of activities did the disciples share with Jesus in which they may have experienced this oneness? (for instance: foot washing and the Last Supper, healings, traveling together long distances, feeding 1000s, facing those who opposed Jesus)

Ask the youth, “With what other groups of people do you feel united, as one?” (family, sports teams, clubs, camp friends)

Invite the youth, “Tell about a time when you became really excited or happy about something that happened for a friend—not for you, but for them.” And then ask the opposite question: “Is there a time when you felt really sad about something that happened to someone else even though it really had no direct impact on you?”

Why does this happen? Why do we feel for other people? What connects you with your friends, your family, and other folks in your school or around the world?

The discussion may lead the youth to realize that we feel connected with people as we share experiences and recognize similarities. As we hear more about a person’s situation, we may feel more compassion for them. It becomes more difficult to separate ourselves from their pain and suffering. Help the youth see how Jesus’ prayer in John 17 is that we might recognize our connectedness. As one of God’s children anywhere collapses in hunger, pain, or suffering, there is a chain reaction so that it hurts all of us.

Close by listing ways that we may intentionally try to connect with more of God’s children, nearby and globally. (Download the One Great Hour of Sharing app from http://onegreathourofsharing.org/ to your iPhone, read the newspaper, listen closely to friends in pain, include an intercessory prayer in each youth meeting, tutor children in a Title I school or from a resettled refugee family, start a church bulletin board about global mission efforts, participate in a mission trip.) Ask the youth how they might support the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. (Hold a fundraiser for One Great Hour of Sharing, pledge part of their allowance/wages to the offering, research and tell stories to the congregation/in congregational communications about ministries funded by One Great Hour of Sharing, perform the One Great Hour of Sharing dramatic interpretation [see elsewhere in this leader’s guide] during the worship service, etc.)
Ask the youth if someone will close with prayer. If not, offer a prayer: Dear God of all of us, thank you for all those who have recognized our needs and helped us. We want to be available to others when they need our help. We lift up to you the One Great Hour of Sharing offering our church will gather. We want to be one as Jesus wanted us to be one. Guide us to hear, see, and know when your children need us. Give us the courage to unite with those who are hurting. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.
Youth Activity: Together > Alone

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Materials needed:
- Bible
- pens/pencils
- paper
- dry erase board/flip chart
- 10 paper cups filled ¾ full with water
- cafeteria-style tray
- pitcher with water for refilling the cups as necessary
- mop or rags to sop up spills

Think:
Explain that the Scripture selection is from Jesus’ prayer at the end of the Last Supper, right before he left for the Garden of Gethsemane where he was arrested. Have someone read John 17:20-24 aloud. Explain to the youth that Christians are grouped into many different denominations and that your denomination is just one of the many that make up the global Christian community. Ask the youth to individually write down as many denominations as they can think of. Give them two or three minutes to come up with a list. At the end of the time, ask them to count the number of denominations on their list and write the number at the top of the page.

Next, ask the youth to get into groups of three or four. If you are a small group already, you can remain as one group. Have the youth compare their lists and record all the denominations on one piece of paper. Have the small groups write the number of denominations they came up with together at the top of that page.

Point out that individually the youth may have been able to think of a few denominations on their own, but together they were able to think of many more. This is just one example of how we can be better by working together.

Next ask the youth to list some of the things people in the developing world struggle with (i.e., malaria, water shortages, hunger). Write them on the dry erase board. Explain that if just one denomination tried to address all of these problems, the situations would remain overwhelming. One Great Hour of Sharing brings together nine denominations.* By working together, we are able to make much more progress towards the world becoming a better place. Explain that although we are many denominations, Jesus prayed for us to be one in him so that we may better serve God’s children.

Experience:
Read the following story about a Church World Service project in rural Nicaragua:

For years, the residents of a small village in Nicaragua struggled with the lack of clean water. The village had a well but it only worked three months out of the year. During the other nine months, women in the village would spend six hours each day walking the round trip to haul water from the nearest water source. They didn’t know that the women were making this journey only to bring back water that was contaminated. They were giving water to their children and families that only made them sicker. It came time to find another solution!

The village soon learned that there was once a natural spring high in the hills near the village. Due to deforestation, the spring had dried up, but by planting trees near the spring, the village
was able to bring it back. Then for several weeks, everyone in the village pitched in to bring the water closer. They worked together to run pipe from the spring to a large concrete storage tank in the village. From the storage tank, villagers laid smaller pipe to each individual household, giving them fresh, clean water right outside of their front door. The women in the village no longer had to walk six hours to get water, and the water they were drinking and giving to their families was not making them sick, but making them healthier.

By working together, the village made this possible. One Great Hour of Sharing makes projects like this one possible by providing the education, training, and materials necessary for villages like this one to have access to clean water.

Explain that the group will now see if they can work together to get our water from one place to another. Place five cups of water each on opposite sides of the room, with the sides being ideally at least 20 feet apart. Place the tray in the center of the room and issue the following challenge:

- Retrieve all 10 cups of water and place them on the tray without spilling any water.
- Only one cup may be retrieved at a time from one side of the room. You must retrieve a cup from the other side and place it on the tray before retrieving a second cup from the first side.
- When all 10 cups of water are on the tray, you must place the tray on the floor in the center of the room.
- Each person may only use one arm and one leg for the duration of the activity.
- If any water spills, you must start over.

Let the group experiment with different ways of accomplishing the task. Most groups will start by trying to hop on one foot with the tray in hand, which will most likely cause the water to spill. The best way to accomplish the task is for the group to stand in a line and pass the cup or the tray down the line. The person at the end of the line, after handing off the cup or tray, then hops to the front, so the chain can continue and reach where it needs to go.

After the activity, explain that only by working together could we get our water where we needed it to be. It might have taken us more than one try and we might have had to try different ways, but eventually we were able to overcome the obstacles to accomplish the task.

**Take action:**

Brainstorm ways the group can work together with another One Great Hour of Sharing denomination in your community to make the One Great Hour of Sharing offering great. Here are some things to try:

- Do this activity with a youth group from another denomination.
- Talk with a youth group from another denomination about what their denomination does with One Great Hour of Sharing funds and share what yours does.
- Coordinate a skit or moment for mission about One Great Hour of Sharing with a youth group from another denomination and perform it in both churches.
- Team up with a youth group from another denomination to host a fundraiser for One Great Hour of Sharing.

* If the youth show interest, explain that the denominations are
  - American Baptist Church
  - African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
  - Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
  - Cumberland Presbyterian Church
  - Church of the Brethren
  - Presbyterian Church (USA)
  - Reformed Church in America
  - United Church of Christ
  - United Methodist Church