

Trick or Treat: A Halloween Party

Purpose

Halloween is fun because we get to dressed up in fun costumes and get free candy! This evening's party is the same... a chance for the young people of the parish get to laugh and play together, eat some food, and spend a little time in costumes.

Session at a Glance

- 7:00 p.m. Welcome
- 7:05 p.m. Candy Sort / Creation of Teams
- 7:20 p.m. Opening Prayer
- 7:30 p.m. True/False Quiz
- 7:40 p.m. Halloween Relay Race

Extend the Session: Pumpkin Carving (20 minutes)

Give the young people 20-30 minutes to carve a pumpkin. Some young people might not want to participate, so this could be an optional activity. Find a few people in the parish who are good at carving to help give instructions and perhaps some design ideas. Since this is a messy process, make sure you do this near a sink, a big garbage can, and have plenty of rags and towels to clean up with. Consider the following:

- Give the carved pumpkins to members of your parish who are elderly, sick, or otherwise might be unable to carve their own pumpkin. Invite the young people to deliver them or have another way for them to get to the parishioners. Provide a candle for the pumpkins.
- Save the pumpkin seeds and bake them. Clean them thoroughly and let them dry. Spray a baking sheet with butter-flavored non-stick cooking spray and then place the seeds on the sheet in a single layer. Spray the seeds with a light coating of non-stick cooking spray and sprinkle salt, if desired. Bake for 10-20 minutes, turning once, until they are brown and slightly crisp. Serve the pumpkin seeds at the next youth ministry event.

Materials Needed

- Candy for Candy Sort and Opening Prayer. You will need: Good and Plenty, Kisses, Mr. Goodbar, Hershey's Special Dark, Starbursts, Dove Bars, Milky Way, Life Savers, Almond Joys, and Chuckles (see #2 and #3 in Prepare in Advance)
- Roll of paper towels
- Stapler
- Prayer supplies: colored cloth, Bible, pumpkin, candle, and matches or lightstick
- **Resource 2, Candy Prayer**, divided by candy choice. Each team should get two copies for their candy choice – one for the Scripture Reader and one for the Prayer reader.
- 10 large serving spoons
- 10 gourds
- 10 apples (cleaned and ready to be eaten)
- 10 XX-Large shirts (big enough to fit all the participants – easily). If possible, use youth ministry t-shirts or other over-the-head shirts. If you must purchase them, donate them after this event to a shelter.
- A starting line (a rope, tape, or other way of designating it)
- 10 chairs or traffic cones
- Costume pieces, 30 or more (see #6 in Prepare in Advance)
- 10 plastic shopping bags
- Two sheets of newsprint for signs

- Newsprint or dry-erase board for keeping score
- Markers
- Prizes for winning teams, *optional*
- Halloween themed decorations, *optional*
- Halloween-themed food such as candy corn, apple cider, pumpkin-flavored cupcakes, etc.

Prepare in Advance

1. Room Set-Up: You will need a large, open space for these activities. This is best done in a gym or hall, with no tables or chairs (except for the hospitality and check-in area). The activities may be done outside, if there is enough light.

2. Team Size: For the Opening Prayer, there are ten candy choices, which is the number of groups suggested for this session. Groups can be as small as three people or as large as eight. If you have less than 30 people attending, simply eliminate the correct number of candy choices from the Candy Sort / Opening Prayer. If you have more than 80 people attending, create other candy choices, and, if you like, add them to the Opening Prayer using the format of a connected Scripture and a simple prayer. You will need one piece of candy for each participant, divided as evenly as possible. The candy choices are listed under Materials Needed. You will need an additional piece of each candy for the prayer table.

3. Candy Sort: You will need to wrap the candy for this activity. Using a paper towel and a stapler, create an enclosure for the candy so that it will not be visible to the participant, and it won't fall out. It should, however, be touchable (through the paper towel). You need to do this for all the candy so that each participant can receive a hidden piece of candy. Be careful to keep them separate if you are unsure of the number of people who will be attending so that you can ensure that you evenly divide the teams based on the candy choices.

4. True/False Quiz: Make two signs: "False" and "True" on newsprint. Tape the signs on opposite sides of the room from each other. Give the leader a copy of **Resource 1, True/False Quiz**.

5. Relay Race: You will need a starting line and a half-way point for each of the ten teams. If doing this in a gym, use the out-of-bounds line as your starting line, and a chair or traffic cone as your half-way point for each team. You can also use tape or a rope to designate the starting line.

6. Skits: You will need a bag for each team that contains some costume pieces. Each bag should have at least three pieces in it, but can have more. Consider the following, but be creative and use the resources of your parish: masks, ties, fake beads, canes, hats (witches hats, baseball caps, pirate hats, crowns, etc.), wigs, fake eye-glasses (with or without the nose), etc.

7. Invite a young person to read Psalm 34 for the opening prayer. It is located on **Resource 2, Opening Prayer**, to make it easier. (It is only a few, non-connected verses from this Psalm.)

Session Outline

Welcome (5 minutes)

Greet the participants as they arrive and make sure that people have nametags if everyone doesn't know each other. Have Halloween-themed decorations hung, and consider having Halloween music playing ("Monster Mash," for example).

Begin with this simple introduction:

Welcome! Tonight is all about fun—about laughing together and playing games and getting into the spirit of Halloween. To begin, we are going to divide you into teams that will be the teams you will be with for much of the night. To do that, we are going to give you something. Simply hold on to this item and be careful, because you don't want to ruin it.

Candy Sort / Creation of Teams (15 minutes)

Note to Leader: If your group is less than 30 people, simply eliminate some of the candy choices from this activity and from the Opening Prayer. If your group is larger than 60 people, consider adding additional candy choices to this activity, and if possible, to the Opening Prayer.

Hand out the candy (wrapped in a paper towel) and give the following instructions:

In your paper towel is a specific kind of candy. Your job is to find other people who have the same type of candy as you do. Here is what you can't do—say the name of the candy. You can describe it but you can't use its real name—if you know it. You have one minute to find the rest of your group.

Once everyone has found their group, allow them to unwrap their candy from the paper towel but ask that they don't eat it just yet. Move the teams away from each other so each have their own space within the room.

Ask the groups to spend a few minutes coming up with a team name (related to their candy) and a cheer. While they are working on their name and cheer, move from group to group distributing their prayer. Invite one person from each group to read the Scripture passage and one person to read the prayer.

After five minutes, have each group reveal their name and cheer. List the names of the teams on a sheet of newsprint for scoring purposes.

Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Gather all the teams, their prayers, and their candy choices for the Opening Prayer. Your prayer focus (Bible, lit candle, pumpkin, and one of each of the candy choices) should be laid out on a cloth on the floor. Invite the participants to gather around it.

Gather

Prayer Leader:

Let us begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Today we celebrate the simple pleasures of life—laughter, candy, good friends, and having fun. We celebrate the God who loves us and brings these good things into our lives. Amen.

Listen

Invite the reader to proclaim the passages from Psalm 34 (**Resource 2**).

Respond

Invite each team to read their Scripture and prayer. Follow each one with the response: **"O taste and see that the Lord is good."**

Sending Forth

Prayer Leader:

So they ate the good of angels, and God gave them all they wanted. (Psalm 78:25)

Gracious God, you always provide for us in great abundance, giving us what we need, and more to share! May we always recognize the sweetness in our lives! Amen.

Close with a sign of peace. At the end of the prayer, you can invite the participants to eat their candy – or exchange it with someone else.

True/False Quiz (10 minutes)

In a large, open, space, designate one side of the room as the “True” side and the other side of the room as “False.” Have the participants gather with their team. If the teams are larger than five people, divide the teams into smaller groups. Tell the participants that you are going to state a fact and their team’s job is to determine if it is true or false. They should move to that side of the room. After stating the fact, give the teams a chance to move to the side of the room they wish and then tell them the right answer and the accompanying fact, if desired.

If you want, you can give ten points to the teams that got the right answer for each question. This will make it a little longer (figuring out which team is which) but could add some interest and competition to the activity.

Halloween Relay Race (20 minutes)

Gather the teams into an open area, spreading them apart as much as possible. You will need a starting line and another point that marks the half-way point. Set a chair or other marker on the floor to indicate what the participants must walk around before heading back to the starting line. For this relay race, there can be as many as four distinct legs of the race – use as many as you wish. If the teams are small, it might be best to only do 2-3 of the legs, since everyone will be involved in each of the races. It will be easiest to run these races consecutively – without stopping between each race (because it will be harder to get and keep people’s attention). However, you may want to run each race as an individual event so that you can keep the group’s interest (in case one group falls way behind). Make a choice that will work best for your group. If you want to run them consecutively, you will probably want a “judge” with each group to clarify instructions about how to do each event and to make sure that they are doing it fairly.

Give the following instructions about the relay race (for whichever legs of the race you are using):

1. Gourd Race: Give the starting participant a large serving spoon and a gourd. Their job is to walk/run with the gourd on the spoon to the half-way point and back. Once back, they need to hand the spoon and gourd to the next participant so they can do the same. Three of the team members must participate. If the gourd falls off the spoon, that team member must return to the starting line and start again.
2. Spider Race: Three participants must lock left elbows with each other. They must then race to the half-way point and back, remaining locked AT THE ELBOW. If they slip from the elbow, they have to start over. This can be done multiple times if the teams are at least six people.
3. Apple Pass: One participant must place an apple in his or her mouth and race to the half-way point and back. They must then pass the apple to a second participant without touching it with their hands. The second participant, after receiving it, must get back to the finished line as well.
4. Costume Race: This can be done as many times as there are participants. Choose a number of people to participate. The first person begins with the t-shirt on, and must run the race. Once back,

they have to take the shirt off – but they can't start until they have crossed the finish line. The second participants must put on the shirt before they cross the starting line. This continues for as many people are participating.

Encourage the teams to use their team cheers as they are racing and give out points to the winning team(s). Make the numbers large: 100 points for the 1st place, 75 for the 2nd place, and 50 for the 3rd place.

Skits and Snacks (30 minutes)

Serve snacks and drinks immediately following the relay race. Give the participants an opportunity to get their snacks, relax for a few minutes, and then gather them in their teams, somewhat separated from each other.

Give the following instructions to the participants:

Your group is going to receive a bag with some costume pieces in it. You will then have five minutes to make up a short skit using these pieces. You can do anything you want with your skit, as long as you use all the costume pieces in your bag. Not everyone has to participate in the skit—but all should be involved in designing it. Your skit can't be more than one minute long!

Ask if there are any questions and then hand out the bags to each group. Give the groups around five minutes to get organized and design their skit.

Gather the participants on the floor, facing a "stage" area. Have some chairs available in case they are needed. Call each group up, one at a time. Encourage them to speak clearly and face the audience if their performances lack a certain theatrical flair. Award points for the skits, if you wish. Make sure that each skit is acknowledged with applause.

Note to Leader: You may want to do this skit activity by having only those who are interested participate in it. Make a decision that is best for the young people. If not doing it in teams, simply ask for some volunteers who are willing to do some "Whose Line Is It Anyway" type of activities. Instead of giving the groups time to prepare, have two or three volunteers at once go on "stage" and hand them a few of the props. Their job will be to make up a skit on the spot. Keep it short and moving from one group to the next.

End the evening by handing out prizes to the winning teams (if you have been keeping score) and by thanking everyone for participating. You may wish to give each team one more chance to use their team cheer before departing. End with a simple "Thank you, God, for this evening" prayer.

This session was written by Ann Marie Eckert, Coordinator of Youth Ministry Services, Center for Ministry Development, Buffalo, New York.

Resource 1

True/False Quiz

Read the statement (in bold), and have the young people choose a side. The additional information in parentheses can be shared after you give the correct answer.

True **More than 35 million pounds of candy corn will be produced this year.** (That equates to nearly 9 billion pieces – enough to circle the moon nearly four times if laid end-to-end.)

False **Easter is the holiday with the highest candy sales.** (Actually, Halloween has the highest candy sales, followed by Easter, Christmas, and Valentine’s Day.)

True **Jack-o-lanterns are an Irish tradition.** (In Ireland, oversized rutabagas, turnips, and potatoes were hollowed-out, carved into faces, and illuminated with candles to be used as lanterns during Halloween celebrations.)

False **Tootsie Rolls were the first penny candy in America.** (Tootsie Rolls were the first WRAPPED penny candy.)

False **The candy rated #1 by kids when asked which they most want to receive while trick-or-treating is M&Ms.** (It is Snickers.)

False **The pumpkin was brought to the United States from Ireland.** (The pumpkin originated in Mexico about 9,000 years ago. It is one of America’s oldest known vegetables.)

True **Ninety-three percent of children will go trick-or-treating.**

True **Ten percent of children say that gum is their favorite treat while trick-or-treating.** (This is true – chocolate is the favorite for 50% of the kids, and non-chocolate candy for 24%, and gum for 10%.)

False **Kids’ least favorite items to get in their trick-or-treat bags was money.** (Actually, it is fruit, followed by pretzels or other salty snacks.)

True **Ninety percent of parents admit to sneaking goodies from their kids’ Halloween trick-or-treat bags.** (Parents’ favorite treats to sneak from their kids’ trick-or-treat bags are snack-size chocolate bars (70 percent sneak these), candy-coated chocolate pieces (40 percent), caramels (37 percent) and gum (26 percent).)

True **Americans eat 25 pounds of candy, per person, per year.** (But the people of Denmark eat 36 pounds of candy per person, per year!)

Resource 2

Opening Prayer

I will bless the Lord at all times;

his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul makes its boast in the Lord;

let the humble hear and be glad.

O magnify the Lord with me,

and let us exalt his name together.

O taste and see that the Lord is good;

happy are those who take refuge in him.

The Lord redeems the life of his servants;

none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Psalm 34 O Taste and See see “Candy Prayer”