

General Church Education



# Thanksgiving: Thanks for Community

Psalm 133:1-3

## Lesson 28

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 2: The Lord Is Our Shepherd

For ages 7-8 years

# Thanksgiving: Thanks for Community

## Psalm 133:1-3

### Ideas for Parents & Teachers

This lesson on thanks provides an opportunity to look at some of the things to be thankful for in life. The focus is on neighbors, near and far. The concept of community folds each of us into larger and larger groups of caring individuals. We should be thankful for the individual neighbors we have, and for the school, the town, the country and the world. Each of these neighbors for which we are thankful will be examined so that children can see that the Lord provides each of them for our happiness, safety and comfort. The Lord Himself is our highest neighbor. It is by means of the different levels of the neighbor that the Lord can shepherd and care for His people.

### Ideas for Children

- The Lord created the world for the sake of people's happiness, security and comfort.
- The Lord has provided for our needs by means of good people in our school, community, town, country and the world.
- We need to give thanks to the Lord for all He gives us.
- Living a life of loving and caring for our neighbors prepares us for a life in heaven.

### From the Writings

Not only is one person a neighbor but also a group of people; for the community is one's neighbor, as is one's country, the church, the Lord's kingdom, and above all others the Lord. All these are the neighbor whom one should be moved by charity to benefit. They are also ascending degrees of the neighbor, for a community is the neighbor in a higher degree than an individual person, one's country in a still higher degree than the community, the church in a still higher degree than this, and the Lord's kingdom in a still higher degree than that. But the Lord is the neighbor in the highest degree. These ascending degrees are like a flight of stairs which have the Lord at the top.

The community is the neighbor more than one person because it consists of a group of people; therefore the same charity ought to be exercised toward it as toward the individual person, that is to say, in keeping with the kind of good that resides there. One's country is the neighbor over the community because it is like a parent, for being the place where the person is born, it nurtures and protects from all harm. One ought, out of love for one's country, to do good to it according to its needs, which have regard to its sustenance, public life, and spiritual life. People who love their country and out of goodwill do good to it will in the next life loves the Lord's kingdom, for there the Lord's kingdom becomes their country. And those who love the Lord's kingdom also love the Lord.

The church is the neighbor over one's country. The Lord's kingdom is the neighbor in a higher degree than the church. The Lord occupies the highest degree. He must be loved above all people and all things. See portions of *Arcana Coelestia* 6819-6824

## Thanksgiving: Thanks for Community

A community is a group of people who depend on each other and care for each other. What kind of community do you live in? Who are the people you depend on to help take care of you?

### Neighbors Living in Community

Perhaps you live in a neighborhood with lots of houses close by or maybe you live on a farm unable to see the nearest neighbor from your house. Some people live in apartment buildings where many neighbors live in one building. We may know some of our neighbors well and not even know the names of other neighbors. But we all depend on neighbors in various ways.

When you are in school your friends and the people in your school are your neighbors. How do you depend on them? Teachers help you learn and the principal makes sure that the school runs smoothly. Other students are your work partners in the classroom and playmates on the playground. It can be enjoyable to learn things or play games by yourself, but it is even more fun to be with a group. Sometimes groups get together and put on a play or a concert. You depend on each other to do a part in the

whole production.

How do you depend on the neighbors in your town or city? What would happen if there was a fire in your house? The firemen would come and help you put it out. What happens when you get sick? The doctors and nurses examine you and give you treatments to help your body heal. Does your city have laws to help it run smoothly? Yes, every town has laws to remind people of safe behavior. There are policemen to make sure people live by the laws and to help people when they need it. There are judges to decide arguments when they come up. Communities often have programs to help people who need basic things like food, clothing and shelter. The community helps provide care, protection and support for our families.



Our country is our neighbor too. It provides even greater protection and care for the people who live in it. Most countries have caretakers such as an army, navy and air force to protect against enemies and to help in times of disaster, like destructive hurricanes or floods. There are lawmakers and leaders who make important decisions. The country also has laws that help all the smaller communities within it live together safely and cooperate with each other.

Are there ways that the whole world is also our neighbor? Yes, countries get together and cooperate on projects that would be too big for one country to do alone. Wealthy countries help poorer countries. Organizations like the Red Cross help countries all over the world when medical help is needed. Worldwide scientific organizations also get together to study and help our planet in many ways.



Our church, the General Church of the New Jerusalem, is an organization with people all over the world who love the Lord God Jesus Christ and want to tell others about the Writings.

The Lord gives us many neighbors or good people in our lives to help us. We must try to be good neighbors to others in return, giving help when we have the opportunity. The Lord tells us that being a good neighbor is important. Now read from the book of Psalms about people living together in unity. Unity means oneness or agreement. Unity comes to a community when the people are charitable toward one another and are good neighbors.

**Read Psalm 133:1-3.** What does this psalm say it is like to live together in unity? (It is good and pleasant.) This psalm tells us that living together in unity as good neighbors is like precious oil that was used by Aaron, the high priest who worshiped in the tabernacle. Some oils are soothing and healing. Oil is used to take away friction so that the parts of a machine work smoothly. Some oils feel and smell good so you can guess that they stand for something good. Oil represents or corresponds to love. When people come into conflict or friction, the oil of love can overcome this and bring peace.



The other thing this psalm mentions is the dew of Hermon. Dew is the clean, fresh droplets of water that form on the earth in the early morning. Mount Hermon is the tallest mountain in the land of Canaan. Winds from Mount Hermon brought rain to Canaan. Water also stands for what is true.

We need love and truth to make our lives good and strong and to bring us life forevermore. Communities of people can help each other be good. In this psalm the Lord is telling us how important it is to live together in unity, to be good neighbors.

### **The Lord as Our Neighbor**

The Lord is our neighbor most of all because He cares for us in so many ways. He cares for us as a shepherd watches over his sheep. His care is constant, never ending, and He loves each person tenderly. One of the ways He takes care of us is by providing special people in our lives who keep us safe and healthy. He provides people who teach and guide us. He provides people who love us.

Today think about all the neighbors in your life. Think about how each one helps you and takes care of you. Then thank the Lord for these people.



### **Discussion Questions**

- Why do you think we need other people, even when we are feeling like we can do things for ourselves? (Needing others and giving to others in return is what brings happiness. Love is to be shared. We were not meant to be alone.)
- What happens when people dwell together in unity? (Life is good and pleasant for everyone.)
- Did you know that you are a neighbor to yourself? You are, and so you are responsible for taking care of yourself. What kinds of things can you do to help yourself? (Answers will vary.)
- In the Writings the Lord says that different kinds of neighbors are like steps as on a ladder. Can you name some of the different levels of the neighbor? (Self, family, community, country, human race or the world, church, heaven, the Lord.)

# Activity Overview | Thanksgiving: Thanks for Community

## Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Oh come, let us worship and bow down;  
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker,  
For He is our God,  
And we are the people of His pasture,  
And the sheep of His hand. Psalm 95:6,7

## Song

*The First Fruits of Our Land We Bring*

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-the-first-fruits-of-our-land-we-bring/>

## Activities

Choose one or two.

- Activity 1 | Good Neighbor Mobile
- Activity 2 | O Give Thanks unto the Lord
- Picture to color

## Additional Activity Ideas

- Show thanks for what the Lord has given you by sharing food with those in need in your community or through your church.
- Write a “thank you” note to the Lord, or to a person you would like to thank.

## Activity 1 | Good Neighbor Mobile

The New Church teaches that we have various kinds of neighbors. We can be neighbors to our family, our community, our country, the human race, the church, to heaven and to the Lord. Create a mobile illustrating the various kinds of neighbors we have.

### Materials

crayons, colored pencils or markers

*Good Neighbor Mobile Templates* printed on stiff or regular paper

wire coat hanger or rod suitable for hanging the mobile

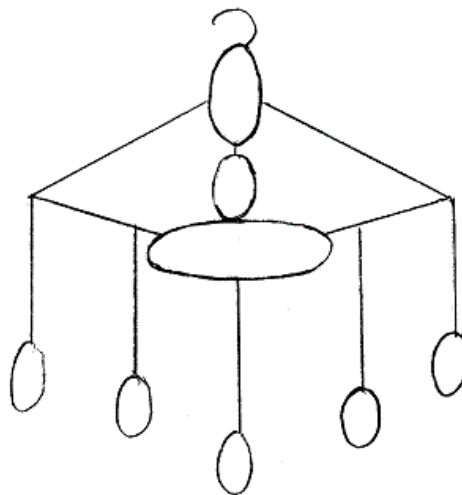
scissors

yarn or string

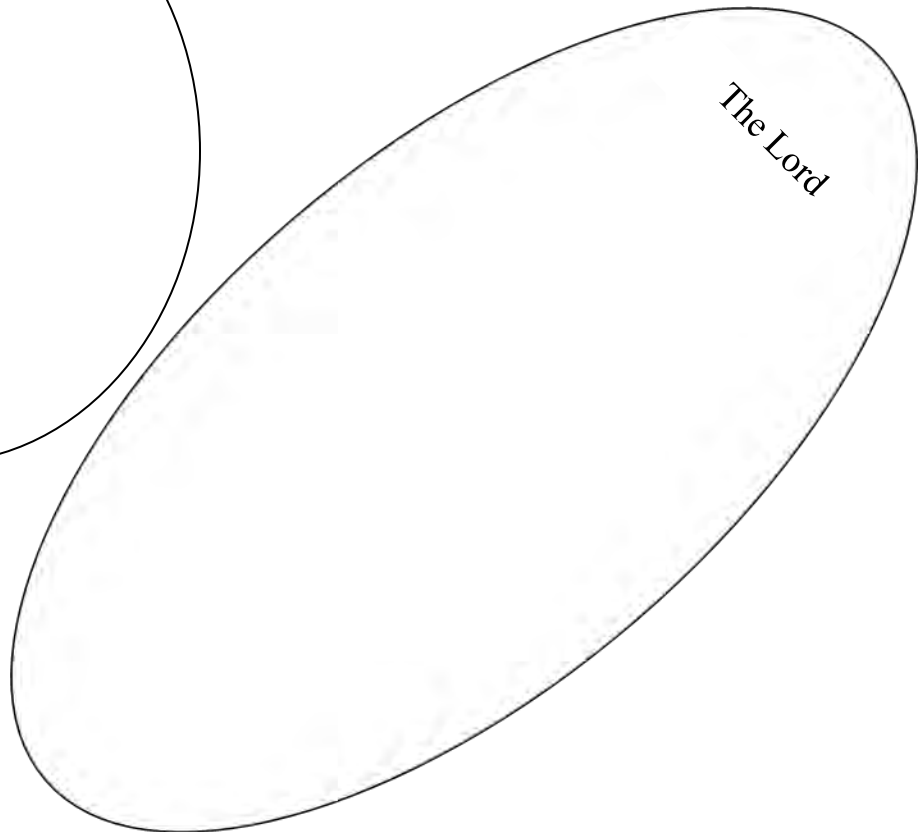
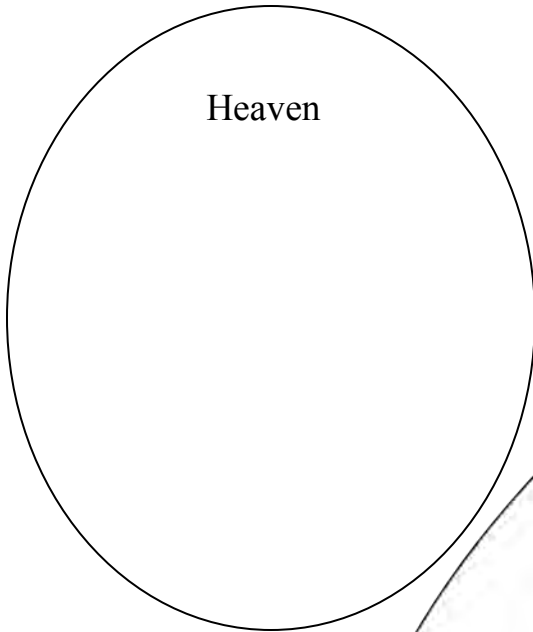
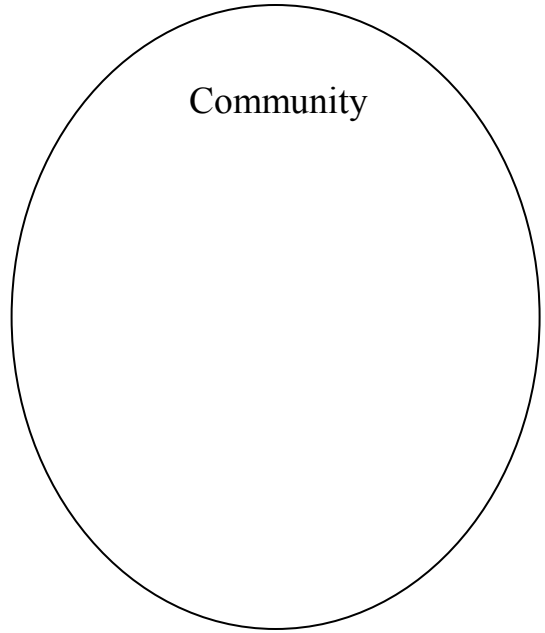
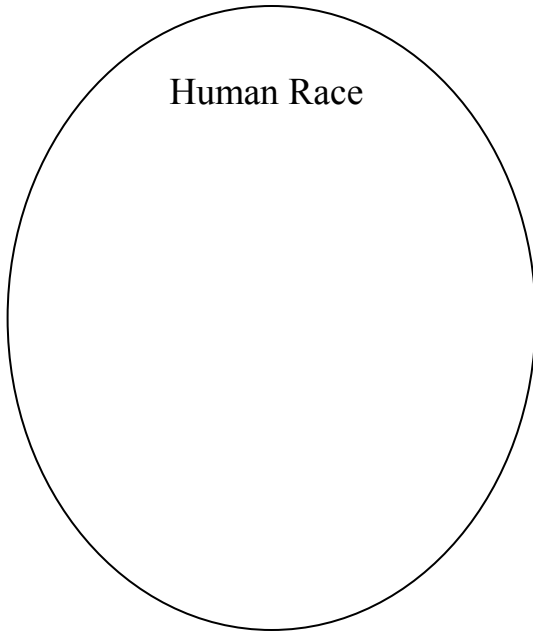
tape

### Directions

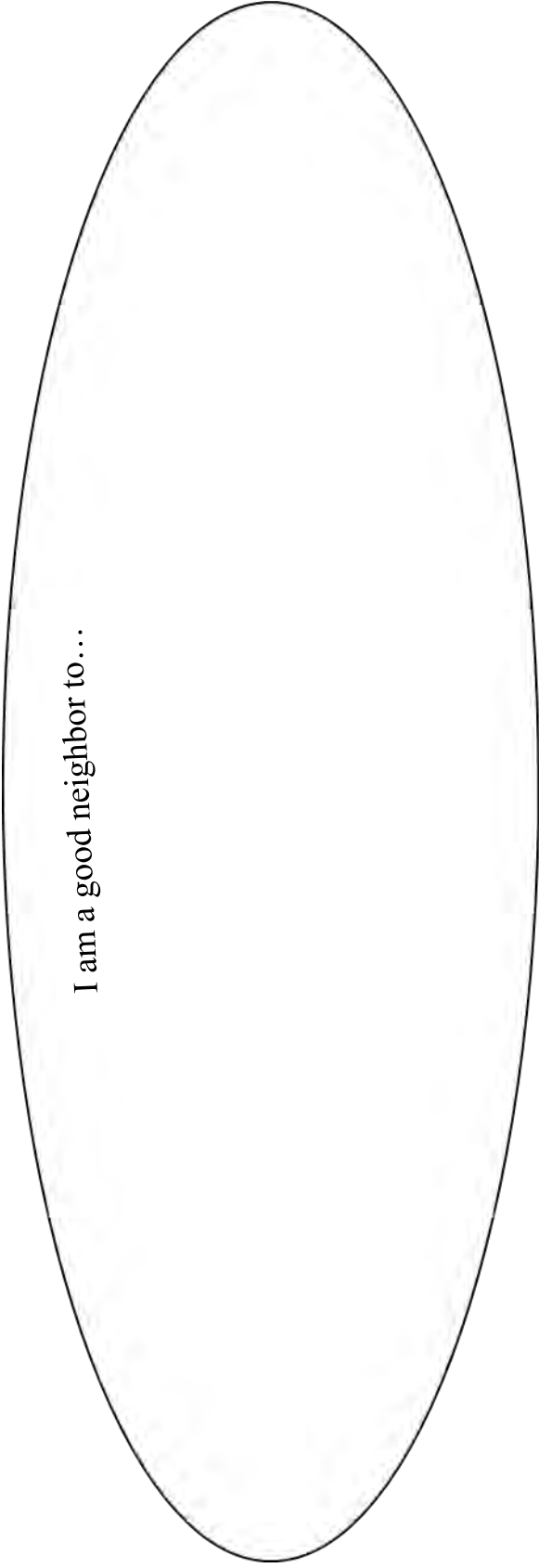
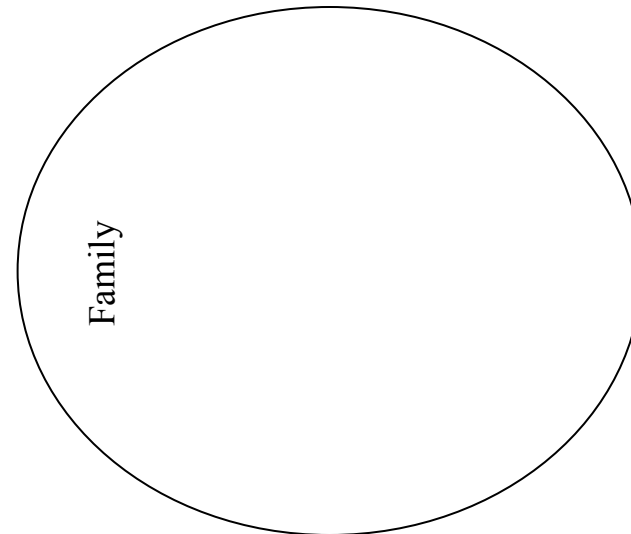
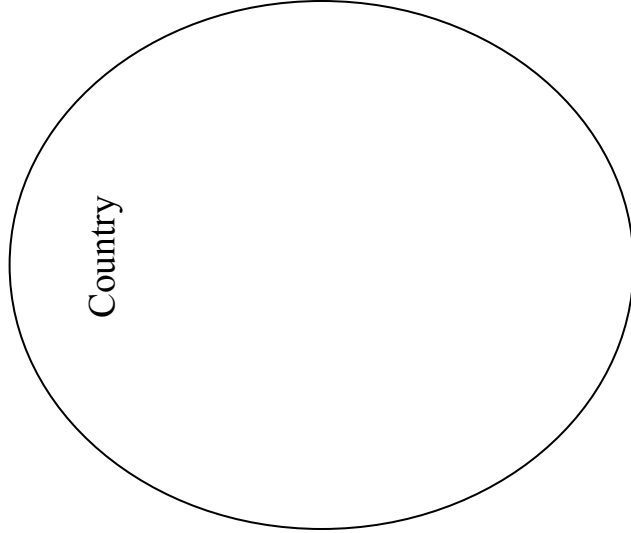
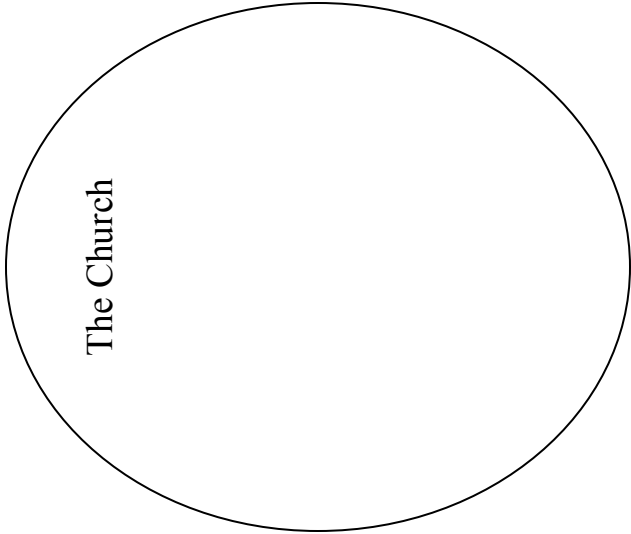
1. Using the *Good Neighbor Mobile Templates*, draw pictures of our neighbors in the ovals using crayons, colored pencils or markers.
2. Cut out all of the finished pictures.
3. Attach the pictures to a wire coat hanger or other hanger as shown below.
4. Use tape to attach the Lord near the top of the mobile. Attach “Heaven” right below it. Attach “I am a good neighbor...” to the bottom of the hanger. Tape yarn or string to the back of the remaining pieces and tie to the hanger. You may need to bend the hanger in order to fit all of the pieces.



## Good Neighbor Mobile Template







## Activity 2 | O Give Thanks unto the Lord

Make a circle of thanks with the Lord in the center to show that all good things come from Him.

**Materials:** crayons, colored pencils or markers; piece of colored paper; glue

**Directions:** Draw a picture of the Lord in the center of the circle below. Then draw or write one thing you are thankful for in each section of the circle. Be sure to think about heavenly blessings, such as the Word, as well as natural blessings, such as the food we eat. You might also want to thank the Lord for your family, friends, pets, or beautiful things in nature. Cut out the circle and the title and mount them on a piece of colored paper.

### O Give Thanks unto the Lord

