

# Faith Community Visual Supports

## For Children and Adolescents With Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities

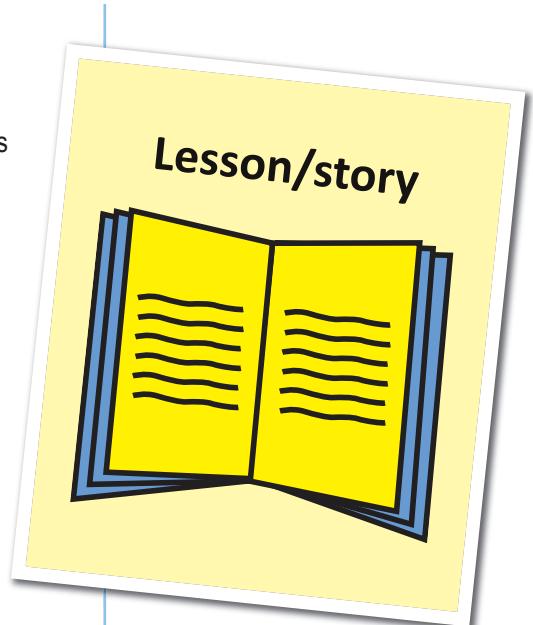
### Introduction

A visual support refers to a picture or other visual item used to communicate. Traffic signs, photographs on menus, and maps are examples of visual supports that are familiar to many people. Research has shown that visual supports also work well as a way to communicate with individuals who have difficulty understanding or using language. Visual supports can be photographs, drawings, objects, written words, or lists. For individuals with difficulty understanding or using language, visual supports communicate what words alone cannot.

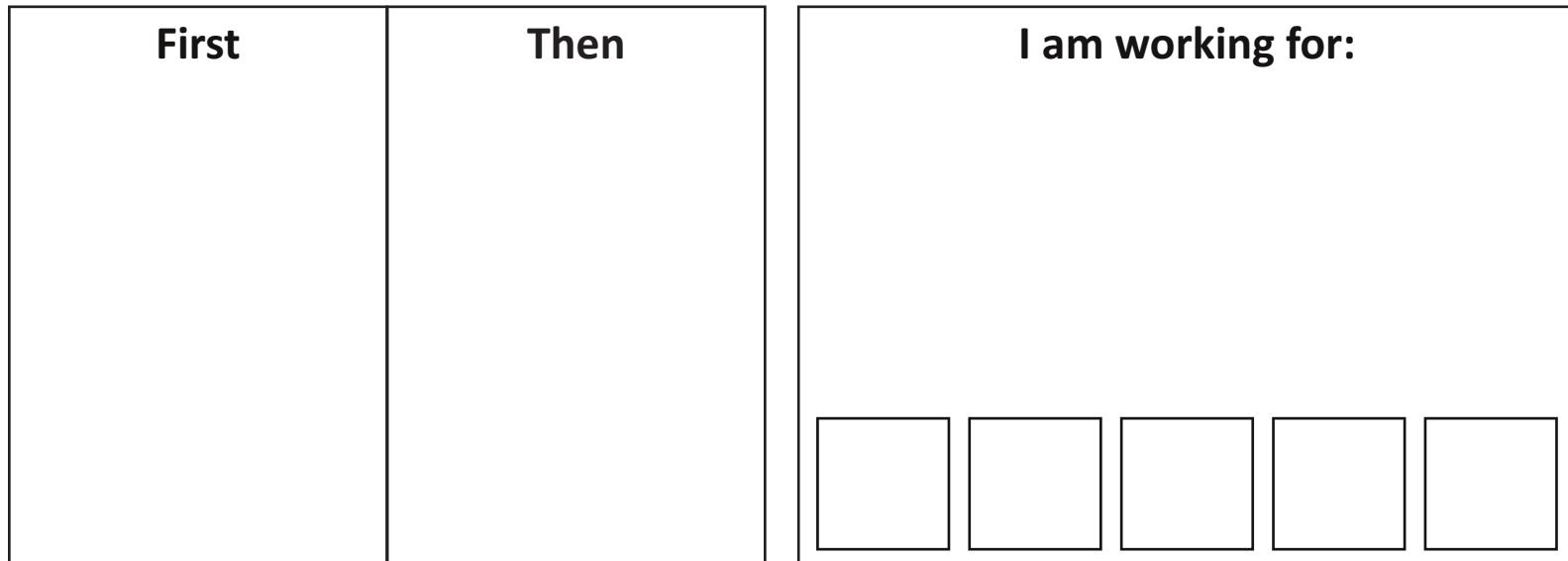
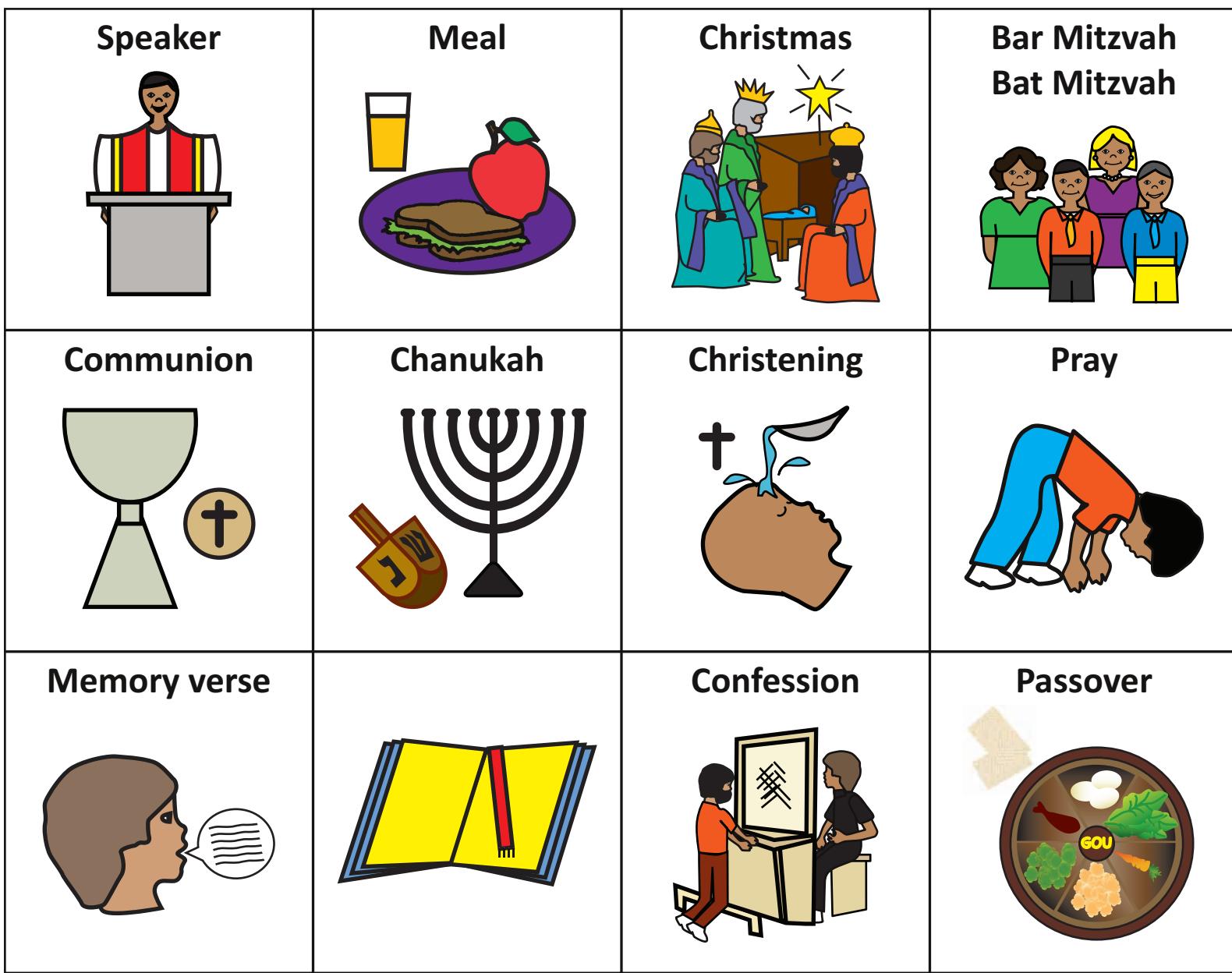
We have included a variety of visual supports in this booklet that families and faith communities might use during rituals, holidays, and common activities.

- A **Mini-Schedule** is a visual tool that communicates the sequence of activities during a particular part of the day. Visual schedules help clarify expectations and help individuals transition between activities and settings.
- A **First-Then Board** is a visual tool that reminds the individual what behavior/task is expected (First) and what preferred activity/item will be provided after completing that task (Then). For example, “**First** clean up toys, **then** play outside.”
- A **Token Economy Board** (such as the “I am Working For” board below) is a visual tool that helps an individual keep track of their progress towards a goal (e.g., access to a preferred item or activity, a break). This helps the individual continue their efforts to achieve the desired goal.

The visual supports included in this booklet were developed in conjunction with a training offered to congregational leaders, religious educators, and parents on how to better include children with autism and other developmental disabilities in religious activities. The event was co-sponsored by the TRIAD Families First Program and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Disabilities, Religion, and Spirituality Program.



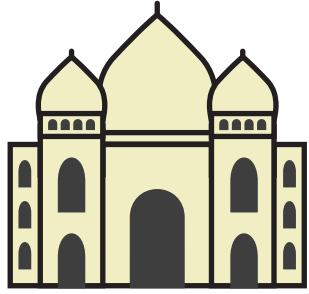
**How to use the visual supports in this booklet:** (1) Cut out the pictures and put Velcro on the back of each one. (2) Attach the opposite piece of Velcro on the schedule strip, First-Then Board, or Token Economy Board. (3) Attach the pictures you need in the order of the schedule or task. (4) Remove pictures as tasks are completed.



Church



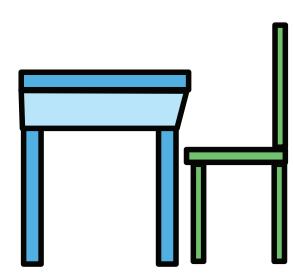
Mosque



Temple



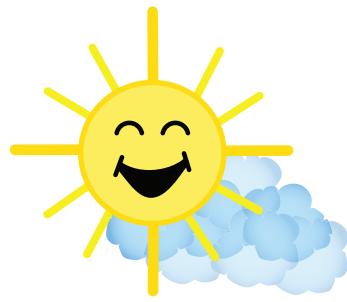
Classroom



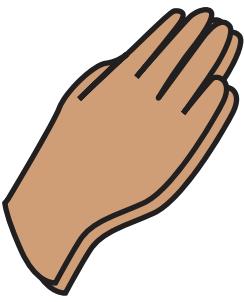
Nursery



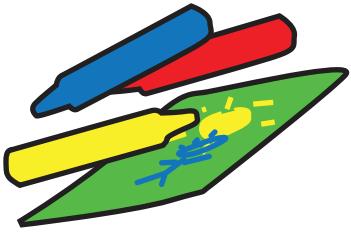
Good morning



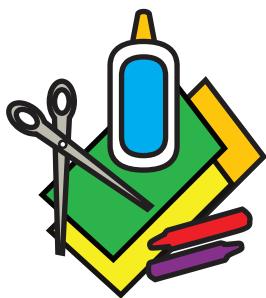
Prayer



Color



Craft



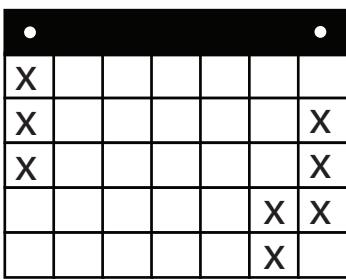
Special activity



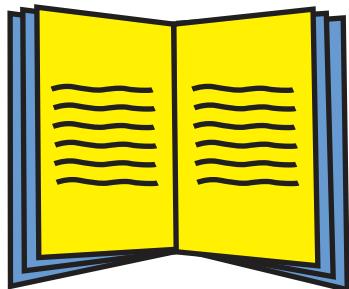
Game



Attendance chart



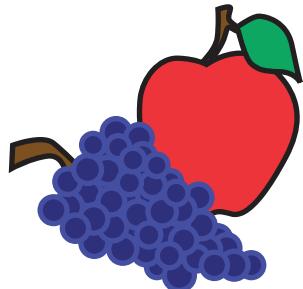
Lesson/story



Sing



Snack



Take a break



Outside



Bathroom



Read



Baptism



# Resources

To learn more about visual supports, see the free publication Visual Supports and Autism Spectrum Disorders, which may be accessed at [vkc.vumc.org](http://vkc.vumc.org) in the “Resources” section under “Autism-related materials.”

## **Vanderbilt Kennedy Disabilities, Religion, and Spirituality Program**

This Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC) Program provides training to current and future religious and spiritual leaders and educators, supports individuals with disabilities and families as they give expression to their religion and/or spirituality, and encourages disability service providers to consider the religious and spiritual interests of the individuals they serve. As a liaison with faith communities, the Program develops ecumenical educational materials, conducts research, and shares best practices. Contact [courtney.taylor@vumc.org](mailto:courtney.taylor@vumc.org), (615) 322-5658.

## **Tennessee Disability Pathfinder**

This free statewide phone, web, and print referral service in English and Spanish connects the Tennessee disability community with service providers and resources. Its website database has 1,600 agencies searchable by Tennessee county and service. See the “Disability Resource Library” and search the “Interfaith Resources” section, as well as exploring other topic pages. Pathfinder is a project of the VKC and the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities. Contact [TNPathfinder.org](http://TNPathfinder.org) (615) 322-8529, toll-free (800) 640-4636.

*The visual supports in this booklet were created by Whitney Loring, Psy.D., Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Vanderbilt School of Medicine; Kim Frank, Educational Consultant, Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders (TRIAD); and Kylie Beck, Art Director, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. This printed edition was made possible with support from the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Training Program through Grant No. T73MC00050 from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the MCHB, HRSA, HHS. Printed June 2012.*



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LEND—LEADERSHIP EDUCATION IN NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES