

Let's Explore
MOANA

A resource for kids and families
from Global Ministries



**Pacific Basin
Initiative**

Let's Explore Moana: A kid-friendly resource for families and congregations

Hello friends!

Today, we are going to imagine we are hanging out with Moana and her village. Along the way we will learn something about a place called Polynesia and how Polynesian people care for the ocean—their “Moana”! We are going to have fun thinking and playing and creating and praying together. Let's go!

(Note to parents and facilitators: This curriculum is designed to help spark conversations, creativity, and faith exploration. You can do these activities in one day or over several days. If you'd like to do activities in one evening, you may decide to pick and choose a few that works well for your group. You're also welcome to do one activity a night over the course of a week or whatever else feels fun and life-giving. Do whatever is best for you!)

(Extra Note: We recommend watching the Disney film Moana before starting on these activities. However, if you're unable to do that, please start by asking the kids what they remember about Moana to refresh everyone's memory. You could even start off with an art activity where the kids draw some of the things they remember about Moana.)

Materials needed:

For learning about Polynesia:

- [This map](#), printed out or on a screen for everyone to view

For cooking Haupia:

- 1 can full-fat coconut milk, about 14 oz
- 5 Tablespoons cornstarch
- 5 Tablespoons granulated sugar
- 3/4 cup water

For the caring for creation/upcycled building activity:

- Cardboard boxes, cardboard tubes from paper towels and toilet paper, and maybe even some cardboard egg cartons. Anything that might be useful or fun to add to a cardboard house/structure
- Xacto knife or box cutter (always use with adult supervision!)
- Duct tape or packing tape
- Coloring/decorative materials – crayons, markers, glitter glue, finger paints, colorful paper, and more are welcome. Whatever you have on hand should work well!

For learning the Polynesian Dance:

- Access to YouTube
- Enough floor space to learn some cool dance moves

Polynesia

The Disney character Moana is from Motunui, which is a pretend place, but based on islands in a part of the Pacific Ocean called Polynesia. Polynesia includes many islands filled with wonderful people and natural beauty. Can you find Polynesia on a map? [Here is a map that highlights Polynesia.](#) Do you recognize any of the islands in Polynesia? Do you recognize any of the countries near Polynesia?

Our church's denomination has a pretty cool organization called Global Ministries. Global Ministries has friends all over the world, including in Polynesia! Here are some partnerships (friendships) that Global Ministries has in Polynesia. (Feel free to click the links to learn more about these partners!)

[Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa](#)

[Maohi Protestant Church \(French Polynesia\)](#)

[Center for Oceanian Women's Theology](#)

[Congregational Christian Churches in Samoa](#)

[Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu](#)

[Pacific Conference of Churches](#)

Cultural Learning: Let's Cook!

Do you remember seeing coconuts in Moana? Yes! Coconuts are a common fruit throughout Polynesia and an important part of Polynesian cuisine. [Try to make this easy and fun Haupia \(Haa-pee-uh\) recipe from Hawaii together as a family!](#)

When you try it, share what you think with your family. If you have never had it before, how does it feel to try something new? Did you like it? Would you eat it again? If you have tried it before, is it your favorite coconut dessert or do you like something else better?

(Note: This recipe is gluten-free, nut-free, and dairy-free. Hopefully it works well for most families! It does take two hours to chill in the fridge, so you may want to start on this earlier rather than later in your family fun night.)

Water

(Note for adults: If your young ones are too young to talk about how water is sometimes scary, it may be best to skip this section. For kids ready for this conversation, though, it may be helpful to understand how water impacts us.)

As you saw on the map, Polynesia is a group of islands, which means they're all surrounded by water! Water is a big deal in Moana. In fact, Moana's name means ocean or sea in Hawaiian and other

Polynesian languages! In the movie, water is sometimes scary, and sometimes it is a friend. Can you think of the moments in the movie when water was a little scary? When was water a friend?

(Pause for some discussion of memories around water in the movie)

For friends living in Polynesia, water is also sometimes friendly and sometimes scary. When you think of the world, when might water be scary? *(Pause for discussion – examples: hurricanes, floods, thunderstorms, rising sea levels, rip tides, even being a home for sharks!)*

Water is also a friend, though! When is water helpful or good? *(Pause for discussion – examples: our bodies need water to live. It's fun to swim. Baths are great. Baptism is a part of our faith. Our plants and animals need water to live. The water is home to a lot of cool sea creatures and plants.)*

The Bible also has a lot to say about water. In the Bible, Genesis 6-9 tells the story of Noah's Ark where there was a great flood across the land. Mark 4 tells a story where Jesus is on a boat with some Disciples when a terrible storm arrives and makes everyone afraid that the boat will sink from the waves. But there's also Ezekiel 47, which paints a vision of life-giving water – water that brings fish and helps fruits and vegetables to grow. And John 13 tells the story of Jesus washing the Disciples feet – an act of great love made possible through water.

Our friends in Polynesia love and struggle with the water, just like Moana did, just like people in the Bible, and just like we do sometimes. Let's pray to talk to God about all of this.

God,

You made the world's water and said it was good. The water scares us sometimes. Sometimes, it is big and dangerous, and we worry about it hurting people, animals, or things we love. But we also love the water. It helps our bodies and helps us grow yummy fruits and vegetables. We love looking at ponds, lakes, oceans, and swimming pools! We know that water is a gift from you. Please protect people from the scariness of the water. Help us love, celebrate, and take care of the water so we can care for each other and your world.

Caring for creation

We know taking care of the earth and God's creation is important, right? This was very important to Moana, too. One way we can better care for the environment is to re-use or "upcycle" trash instead of throwing things away. So, we are going to do that today by upcycling some cardboard into a playhouse or building! This will be so fun AND you'll get to decorate it to make it perfect.

Adults: Feel free to be creative on how you build your structure! If you have big boxes, make a building big enough for the kids to use as a playhouse. If you only have smaller boxes, maybe try making homes for dolls, action figures, and toys. Remember to supervise any scissors or knives being used!

If you want some ideas, you can [find some inspiration here](#) and [even more ideas here](#).

Partnership

What is partnership? Have you ever had a partner for something at school? Maybe you work on a project together, lead a line together, or teach something together. Good partners help each other and trust each other. Partners work together and share their skills and knowledge with each other.

Maui and Moana make good partners in the movie. Share about your favorite moments in the movie when Maui and Moana are good partners and help each other. (Give time for reflection and discussion.)

As you learned earlier, we also have partners all over the world through our church that we can learn about from Global Ministries. We even have friends like Moana in Polynesia. How can we be good partners to our friends in Polynesia? What can we do to help each other and trust each other?

Here are some ideas! We can...

1. Learn more about people in Polynesia and around the world (like we are doing in this activity today!)
2. Give some money to support important work and ministry that partners are doing. [Here is a giving opportunity for Polynesia if you want to do that!](#)
3. Pray for our partners in Polynesia
4. Speak up (“advocate”) for a healthier planet and do things to care for our earth. The Global Ministries advocacy team has some great ideas:
 - a. **Water** - [Learn about the bodies of water near you](#) and how they are impacted by climate change and pollution; carry a reusable water bottle with you and drink tap water instead of from disposable plastic bottles.
 - b. **Food** - Try to eat zero meat for one day every week. [Compost food scraps at home](#) or through a community composting service.
 - c. **Care for creation** - Spend time outdoors in a local, state, or national park; do a public beach/park trash clean-up day ([watch the PCC video of trash clean up](#)).
 - d. **Culture** - Learn about the indigenous people from your area using the [Native Land](#) web-based app; read books about Native Americans like *We are Water Protectors*, *Morning on the Lake*, *The Water Walker*, or *Native Americans Who Inspire Us*.

Cultural Learning: Learn Polynesian Dance Steps!

Dance is a cultural expression that is very important to the people of Polynesia. Do you remember Moana dancing at the beginning of the movie?

We encourage you to try to learn to dance like Moana! [Here is a video where you can learn some dance steps from Hawaii](#). Have fun!

Bonus content: Books about Polynesia

Want to continue your learning about Polynesia and Polynesian people? We recommend these books, many of which you can likely find at your local library!

Ho'onani: Hula Warrior by Heather Gale, illustrated by Mika Song

The Girl Who Heard the Music: How One Pianist and 85,000 Bottles and Cans Brought New Hope to an Island by Marni Fogelson and Mahani Teave, illustrated by Marta Álvarez Miguéns

Tonga by Ruth Toumu'a

Samoa by Jane Va'afusuaga

Colors of Aloha by Kanoa Kau-Arteaga

The Mighty Maui Makes a Friend by Kalikolehua Hurley

The Island-below-the-Star by James Rumford

The Little Kiwi's New Year by Nikki Slade-Robinson