

What We Want Your Children to Experience and Learn Through Our Resources

Our Call to Ministry

To reach, empower, and equip children, and those who care for them, with resources that help them on the journey to

- understand themselves as children of God;
- explore and deepen their relationship with God through Jesus Christ; and
- love and serve God and neighbor.

Our Task

Our task is to create lessons, books, and videos that help children grow spiritually. This is not an easy task, because the needs of children vary based on their situations and experiences. The needs of children are multicultural; they are economic; they are related to time and place and circumstances. The needs of children also differ according to their learning styles, their abilities, and their individual stages of physical, mental, and spiritual development. And most of all, the needs of children are always growing and changing.

Our task to help children grow spiritually also includes caring for the needs of the adults who care for children—parents/guardians, teachers, pastors, and the entire congregation. Without providing tools for these adults, our call to reach, empower, and equip children cannot happen.

Objectives

To live out our call and accomplish our task, we have identified specific objectives that we will meet through our resources.

Children will

- experience the awe and mystery of God's love;
- experience the transforming power of Jesus Christ;
- identify themselves as children of God, the recipients of God's love;
- respond to this love by commitment to God and to the community of faith through Jesus Christ;
- know the Bible and make its stories part of their lives;
- learn skills for reading the Bible so that it can be applied to daily life;
- experience the faith community through worship and service;
- connect with people of faith, both past and present;

- grow in discipleship through the spiritual practices of study, service, prayer, and witness;
- address life issues faithfully; and
- recognize the value of diversity in cultures and abilities within the community of faith.

Parents will

- find help for their own faith and life skills and
- be given the tools to empower them to model and speak about their faith with their children.

Teachers will

- be nurtured in the Christian faith;
- be given the tools that enable them to model and speak about their faith, especially with children; and
- be equipped with the skills and understandings needed to teach effectively.

Faith communities will be encouraged to

- recognize children as an integral part of a vital community of faith;
- value the participation of children in worship, mission and service, and fellowship as well as in the specific settings of children's ministries; and
- be advocates for children in the communities and world in which they live.

General Areas of Content

Children will learn about

- the Bible—its stories, people, passages, and verses; the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; and skills for using and understanding the Bible;
- the church—its beginnings; its practices of worship; its sacraments; its call to service, mission, and outreach; and the relationships found in the community of faith;
- Christian identity—commitment to God; commitment to Jesus Christ; commitment to the church; commitment to the practice of spiritual disciplines; and commitment to one's own ministry; and
- Christian living—self-esteem based on knowing oneself to be a child of God; relationships with others and with the natural world; ethical decision-making; coping with difficulties; and the skills of critical thinking.

Specific Learnings and Experiences for Growing in the Faith

We will be teaching most of the specific knowledge, skills, and values that children need in order to experience God's love, recognize themselves as children of God, and live out their Christian faith through our various resources. *Some of our resources may focus more wholly on some of these topics than on others.*

Knowledge

- Bible stories
- faith heritage, which includes stories of the history and development of the church
- language of the faith, including special words and symbols
- the elements of worship (sacraments, music, and so on)

Skills

- coping skills and tools for handling change and tough situations
- decision-making
- spiritual practices, such as prayer, praise, and play
- Bible-use skills, such as being able to find books, chapters, and verses
- using Bible-study tools, such as atlases, concordances, and dictionaries

Relationships and Experiences

- relationships with loving, caring adults who help them experience trust
- relationships with parents, teachers, and other adults who speak about their faith and model faithful living
- positive relationships with their peers
- baptism and Communion
- caring support of a Christian congregation
- experiences of being nurtured
- participation in acts of service
- opportunities to help others
- a sense of belonging
- being forgiven and forgiving others
- acceptance and participation in the community of faith
- commitment (to God, to Jesus Christ, to the church, to one's own ministry)
- awe and mystery of God's love
- awe in the experience of God's creation
- Christian living in response to Christian learning
- experiences of the reality of living in a multicultural world
- opportunities to be creative
- giving

Attitudes and Values

- awareness that God is with us wherever we are
- identity as a child of God
- wonder and awe for God's world
- a sense of responsibility for creation care
- value for the diversity among people
- respect for the rights of others
- an understanding that God expects us to act toward others in fair, kind, and loving ways
- knowing that we are called to be followers of Jesus
- recognition that the Bible is an important book for Christians

- belief that every person is important to God
- concern for meeting human needs

Age-Level Learnings and Experiences for Growing in the Faith

To help children grow spiritually, we have to understand how children grow and develop. But children don't develop faith in a linear way. The process of faith development is like a spiral, with each new concept building on the learning and experiences that came before.

Because faith formation builds on previous experiences, children need to hear the same Bible stories many times as they grow. Every time they hear a Bible story, they will bring with them new experiences and maturity that lead to learning new things.

We have created, and made available for download, one-page descriptions of "Some Learnings and Experiences for Growing in the Faith" for each age level. However, these age-level documents are limited. Though they describe the learning and experiences that are important for children at different stages of growth, no list can identify the needs of all children. No list can completely define the process of faith development for any one child. Use the lists as a guide, and be open to hearing how your child experiences God in her or his life.

Bible Stories Every Child Should Hear

Old Testament

- Creation (Genesis 1:1–2:4a; 2:4b-25)
- Noah (Genesis 6:13–7:16; 8:1-21)
- Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12:1-9; 15:1-6; 18:1-15; 21:1-7)
- Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 24:1-67)
- Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:19-34; 27:1-46; 28:10-22)
- Joseph (Genesis 37:1-36; 39:1–40:23; 41:1-57; 42:1–46:34)
- Moses and the Exodus (Exodus 1:8-14; 2:1–3:22; 5:1–13:9; 13:17–15:21)
- Wandering in the Wilderness (Exodus 15:22–17:7)
- The Giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:1–20:21)
- The Tabernacle (Exodus 25:1-9; 35:4–40:38)
- Joshua (Joshua 1:1-9; 2:1-24; 3:1– 4:24; 6:1-27; 24:14-28)
- Deborah (Judges 4:1–5:31)
- Ruth (Ruth 1:1–4:22)
- Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1-28)
- Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-21; 7:15–8:22; 10:17-24; 16:1-13)
- Saul (1 Samuel 10:17-24; 16:14-23; 17:1–51a; 20:1-42)
- David (1 Samuel 16:1-13; 16:14-23; 17:1-51a; 18:1-5; 20:1-42; 25:1-42; 2 Samuel 6:1-19; 9:1-13)

- Solomon (1 Kings 2:1-4; 3:1-15)
- Building the Temple (1 Kings 6:1-38; 8:1-66)
- Elijah (1 Kings 16:29-30; 17:1-7; 18:20-39; 19:1-21)
- Elisha (1 Kings 19:1-21; 2 Kings 4:1-7; 5:1-19a)
- Esther (Esther 1:1-10:3)
- Psalms (Psalm 8:1-9; 23:1-6; 100:1-5; 121:1-8; 139:1-24; 150:1-6)
- Proverbs (Proverbs 3:5; 6:6-8; 10:1; 17:17)
- Isaiah (Isaiah 2:1-5; 6:1-8; 11:6-9)
- Jeremiah (Jeremiah 23:5-8; 33:14-16)
- Daniel (Daniel 1:1-21; 3:1-30; 6:1-28)
- Jonah (Jonah 1:1-4:11)

New Testament

- Elizabeth and Zechariah (Luke 1:5-25)
- The Annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26-38)
- Mary and Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-66)
- Joseph (Matthew 1:18-24)
- The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-7)
- The Shepherds (Luke 2:8-20)
- The Magi (Matthew 2:1-12)
- Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:21-38)
- Jesus' Visit to the Temple at Age Twelve (Luke 2:39-52)
- John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-22)
- Jesus' Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-22)
- Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)
- Jesus' Temptation (Luke 4:1-13)
- Jesus Declares His Ministry in the Synagogue (Luke 4:14-30)
- Calling the Disciples (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32; 8:1-3)
- The Woman at the Well (John 4:1-42)
- Jesus Heals (Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 5:21-43; 10:46-52; Luke 4:38-44; 5:17-26; 6:6-11; 7:1-10; 17:11-19; 18:35-43; John 5:1-17)
- Jesus Performs Miracles (Mark 4:35-41; John 2:1-12; 6:1-15, 6:16-25)
- The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12; 6:5-15; 6:25-34; 7:12; 7:24-27)
- The Sower (Luke 8:4-15)
- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
- The Mustard Seed and the Yeast (Luke 13:18-21)
- The Lost Sheep, Coin, and Son (Luke 15:3-32)
- The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)
- The Ten Talents (Luke 19:11-26)
- Jesus and the Children (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17)
- Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19)
- The Widow's Coins (Luke 21:1-4)

- Mary Anoints Jesus (John 12:1-8)
- The Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-20)
- Foot Washing (John 13:1-17)
- Praying in the Garden (Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46)
- Judas' Betrayal (Matthew 26:17-25)
- Jesus' Arrest and Trial (Matthew 26:47-68)
- Peter's Denial (Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75)
- The Crucifixion (Mark 15:1-47; Luke 23:13-56)
- The Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18)
- The Appearance to the Men on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)
- The Appearance in the Upper Room (John 20:19-31)
- The Ascension (Acts 1:1-11)
- Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41)
- Peter and John (Acts 3:1-4:22)
- Living Together in Community (Acts 4:32-37)
- Choosing of the Seven Helpers (Acts 6:1-7)
- Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40)
- Paul's Conversion (Acts 9:1-25)
- Paul and Barnabas (Acts 9:26-31)
- Peter and Tabitha (Acts 9:36-43)
- Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48)
- First Called "Christians" (Acts 11:19-30)
- Peter in Prison (Acts 12:1-17)
- Timothy (Acts 16:1-5; 1 Timothy 4:7b-16; 2 Timothy 1:5-7)
- Lydia (Acts 16:11-15)
- Paul and Silas (Acts 16:16-40)
- Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-23)
- Paul's Letters (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; 13:1-13; Galatians 5:22-23a; Ephesians 6:10-20; Philippians 4:4-14; Hebrews 11:1-34)
- New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21:1-6)

Language of Faith Children Should Know

Christian Year

- Advent (purple)
- Christmas (white)
- Epiphany (white)
- Lent (purple)
- Palm Sunday (purple)
- Holy Week (purple)
- Good Friday (purple)
- Easter (white)
- Pentecost (red)
- Ordinary Time (green)

Worship

- Sacraments
- Baptism
- Holy Communion
- The Lord's Supper
- Praise
- Prayer
- Intercession
- Thanksgiving
- Offering
- Confession and Pardon
- Scripture
- Sermon or Testimony

Names for Jesus

- Christ
- Lord
- Messiah
- Emmanuel
- Savior
- Shepherd
- Son of God
- Human One

Names for God

- Creator
- Father
- Mother
- Lord

Symbols Children Should Be Familiar With

- Cross
- Dove
- Cup and Loaf
- Water
- Rainbow
- Palm Leaves
- Empty Tomb
- Lily
- Butterfly
- Fish
- Candles

- Sheep/Shepherd
- Trinity
- Altar
- Hands in Prayer
- Church
- Bible

General Theological Concepts and Words

- Creation
- Promise/Covenant
- Blessing
- Sabbath
- Prophet
- Good News/Gospel
- Disciple/Discipleship
- Body of Christ
- Christians
- Church
- Grace
- New Life
- Faith
- Child of God
- Reconciliation
- Repentance
- Forgiveness
- Justice
- Peace
- Incarnation
- Kingdom of God
- Ministry
- Servant/Servanthood
- Love
- Hope
- Joy
- Trust
- Holy
- Truth
- Miracle
- Community

Some Learnings and Experiences for Growing in the Faith: Infants and Toddlers

For developing faith foundations, infants and toddlers need

- an attractive, safe space in the church;
- loving, caring adults who help them experience trust;
- to know that others love them and that they can love others;
- to know that they can use their senses to explore God's world; and
- to know that they are worthy of love and care.

For knowing the Bible and our faith traditions, infants and toddlers need

- to hear words and stories from the Bible.

For relating to God and the church, infants and toddlers need

- to feel that the church is a good place to be;
- to know they belong in a family and to a church;
- to develop the sense that God is always with them; and
- to have opportunities to join with others in praising and thanking God.

For relating faith to daily living, infants and toddlers need

- to hear people talk about God, Jesus, and the Bible;
- to have opportunities to show love to family and friends;
- to become aware of their increasing ability to take part in God's world; and
- to learn to deal with anger, frustration, and conflict.

Some Learnings and Experiences for Growing in the Faith: Two-Year-Olds

For developing faith foundations, two-year-olds need

- an attractive, safe space in the church;
- loving, caring adults who help them experience trust;
- to be guided in respecting others' rights and in being friends;
- to have basic love expressed through gentleness and boundaries; and
- to know that God cares for plants, animals, and birds.

For knowing the Bible and our faith traditions, two-year-olds need

- to recognize that the Bible is a special book;
- to associate the name *Jesus* with the Bible;
- to hear Bible stories; and
- to hear that God loves them.

For relating to God and the church, two-year-olds need

- to see parents and teachers pray, read the Bible, and talk about God and their own faith;
- to experience trust in others (this will serve as a foundation for trust in God);
- to offer thanks to God through brief prayers and sharing;
- to experience faith through the care of the congregation;
- to know that people gather at church to worship and thank God;
- to develop a sense of belonging at church as a child of God;
- to experience God's love through teachers; and
- to know that church people love and care for them.

For relating faith to daily living, two-year-olds need

- to hear people talk about God, Jesus, and the Bible;
- to see pictures in church classrooms of children's daily experiences;
- to hear teachers and parents pray for food and other daily needs;
- to hear about God's plan for children to grow; and
- to become aware of ways they are growing.

Some Learnings and Experiences for Growing in the Faith: Three- and Four-Year-Olds

For developing faith foundations, three- and four-year-olds need

- to be with caring adults who model following Jesus;
- to have their feelings and actions accepted;
- to forgive and be forgiven;
- to be guided to play and cooperate with others;
- to develop their own abilities and express their own identity;
- to be offered opportunities to make choices within safe boundaries; and
- to have adult interaction as they play.

For knowing the Bible and our faith traditions, three- and four-year-olds need

- to handle the Bible and see others read from it;
- to sing, move to, and say Bible verses; and
- to hear simple, clear stories from the Bible, especially stories that emphasize the goodness of God and the love Jesus has for children.

For relating to God and the church, three- and four-year-olds need

- to learn simple prayers and the Lord's Prayer;
- to be encouraged to give their own offering to God and to the church;
- to develop a sense of belonging at church and as a child of God;
- to experience God's love with family and friends;
- to have accepting adults who are willing to hear their many questions; and
- to experience wonder and awe at God's world.

For relating faith to daily living, three- and four-year-olds need

- to hear stories about loving service to others;
- to see adults and older children participating in acts of service;
- to participate in loving service by sharing food and money and by making things for others;
- to hear teachers and family members pray about people and situations outside the classroom;
- to use Sunday school take-home items during the week;
- to participate in activities that show care for God's world;
- to see evidence that God is important in the daily lives of caring adults; and
- to learn to understand and express their feelings.

Some Learnings and Experiences for Growing in the Faith: Five- and Six-Year-Olds

For developing faith foundations, five- and six-year-olds need

- to develop and express their own identity as individuals and in relationship to others;
- to be guided in playing cooperatively with other children;
- to practice decision-making through optional activities;
- to develop a sense of stewardship by placing an offering in the offering plate, helping put materials away in the classroom, and seeing parents give time and money to the church;
- to be surrounded by adults who have developed satisfying relationships;
- to hear words such as *God, Jesus, faith, love, and Holy Spirit*; and
- to be surrounded by adults who live out their faith and who are comfortable talking about their faith.

For knowing the Bible and our faith traditions, five- and six-year-olds need

- to recognize the Lord's Prayer and Doxology; and
- to hear stories of Bible people who lived as God wanted them to live, especially stories that retell Jesus' teachings.

For relating to God and the church, five- and six-year-olds need

- to hear short stories about the church today and in the past;
- to participate in Holy Communion with parents or other caregivers and to be present in worship when the sacraments are observed; and
- to be introduced to symbols of tradition such as the cross, the baptismal font, and the Advent wreath.

For relating faith to daily living, five- and six-year-olds need

- to be surrounded by people who have experienced God's love;
- to experience prayer: seeing and hearing parents and other adults praying; participating in family and classroom prayer; and perceiving that prayer is good, helpful, and important;
- to use Sunday school take-home items during the week;
- to practice appreciating and caring for God's world; and
- to have opportunities for learning about and accepting all persons without regard to age, gender, ethnicity, or ability.

Some Learnings and Experiences for Growing in the Faith: Seven- and Eight-Year-Olds

For developing faith foundations, seven- and eight-year-olds need

- to plan and carry out both group and individual activities;
- to be guided in dealing with conflict through empathy;
- to investigate, experiment, and explore;
- to be given responsibility in helping care for their surroundings; and
- to hear stories about and have experiences with people who are different from them.

For knowing the Bible and our faith traditions, seven- and eight-year-olds need

- to recognize the two main parts of the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament;
- to hear stories from the Bible;
- to repeat the Lord's Prayer with others;
- to hear a simple explanation of the sacraments;
- to hear stories of people who have helped the church;
- to use Bibles at home as well as at church; and
- to have opportunities to retell simple Bible stories they have heard.

For relating to God and the church, seven- and eight-year-olds need

- to participate in worship;
- to pray their own prayers;
- to be with adults who are open to children's questions about God, even if adults say they don't know the answers; and
- to learn some of the songs and liturgies of the church and to feel part of worship.

For relating faith to daily living, seven- and eight-year-olds need

- to be encouraged to consider the rights of others;
- to participate in service projects appropriate to their abilities;
- to be reminded that God expects us to love everyone, including our enemies;
- to relate the joys and concerns of daily living to Bible teachings; and
- to learn simple key Bible verses to think about during the week.

Some Learnings and Experiences for Growing in the Faith: Nine- and Ten-Year-Olds

For developing faith foundations, nine- and ten-year-olds need

- to be guided in dealing with conflict through empathy;
- to be given responsibility in helping care for their environments;
- to have experiences with people who are different from them;
- to investigate, experience, and explore their faith;
- to be guided in developing and practicing thinking skills;
- to develop a sense of belonging to the faith community;
- to participate in meaningful ways in worship and the congregation; and
- to be able to affirm self as a child of God.

For knowing the Bible and our faith traditions, nine- and ten-year-olds need

- to memorize and explore the meaning of important Bible stories;
- to learn how to participate in the sacraments;
- to have their own Bibles and to learn how to use the Bible;
- to learn the names of the books of the Bible and to be familiar with the various kinds of books in the Bible;
- to hear and explore the meanings of Bible stories; and
- to learn to use age-level-appropriate Bible study tools.

For relating to God and the church, nine- and ten-year-olds need

- to participate in worship;
- to pray their own prayers;
- to be with adults who are open to children's questions about God, even if adults say they don't know the answers;
- to have a sense of belonging to the faith community; and
- to be guided and assisted in practicing spiritual disciplines.

For relating faith to daily living, nine- and ten-year-olds need

- to be encouraged to consider the rights of others;
- to participate in service projects appropriate to their abilities;
- to relate the joys and concerns of daily living to Bible teachings;
- to be reminded that God expects us to love everyone, including our enemies;
- to learn key Bible verses to think about during the week;
- to hear and discuss stories of ways others live out their faith;
- to identify and express attitudes, ideas, and feelings about unfairness, injustice, and social evil; and
- to be given concrete suggestions and opportunities for ways to be in discipleship.

Some Learnings and Experiences for Growing in the Faith: Eleven- and Twelve-Year-Olds

For developing faith foundations, eleven- and twelve-year-olds need

- to develop a sense of belonging to the faith community;
- to participate in meaningful ways in the worship and work of the congregation;
- to have opportunities for sharing faith stories with friends;
- to be able to affirm self as a child of God; and
- to be guided in developing and practicing thinking skills.

For knowing the Bible and our faith traditions, eleven- and twelve-year-olds need

- to learn the names of all the books of the Bible;
- to use the Bible in study and worship;
- to learn to use age-level-appropriate Bible study tools;
- to learn how the Bible came to be;
- to become acquainted with different translations and versions of the Bible;
- to have their own Bibles;
- to hear the creeds that are used most frequently in worship;
- to know various kinds of writings in the Bible;
- to explore Bible stories within their historical contexts; and
- to increase and use vocabulary related to the Christian faith.

For relating to God and the church, eleven- and twelve-year-olds need

- to have a sense of belonging to both the local church and the larger community of faith;
- to verbalize experiences and questions about God, including doubts;
- to be guided and assisted in practicing spiritual disciplines; and
- to see Christian growth as a lifelong process.

For relating faith to daily living, eleven- and twelve-year-olds need

- to hear and discuss stories of ways others live out their faith;
- to grow in their understanding of the relationship between the Bible message and their own relationships with God;
- to identify and express attitudes, ideas, and feelings about unfairness, injustice, and social evil;
- to clarify and develop their sense of right and wrong;
- to serve with others in the community and world; and
- to grow in their understanding of the meaning of membership in the church.