

Prayer

Prayer Services – children plan and carry out prayer services, choosing music, readings and prayers.

Spiritual Journals – the children each have a spiritual journal that they can add to each week. It contains various “prompts” but this is the work of the child and anything can be written in the Journal.

Prayer – various forms of prayer are explored – contemplative prayer, labyrinth, breath prayer, the Episcopal rosary and the many types and kinds of prayers found in the liturgy.

Seder – the children plan and participate in a Seder meal, learning the symbols and words of the celebration. This event takes one week to plan and a second week to celebrate.

Liturgy of Light – the children plan, participate in and lead the Liturgy of Light celebration for all the other classes. This celebration is patterned after the beginning of the Easter Vigil and the lighting of the Paschal candle.

Song and Art – at each level of the Catechesis, art and music are used to supplement the materials. At this age, the children have an Autoharp to play as well as the “music maker” (a lap harp). Art materials include a light box with tracings of stained glass windows as well as liturgically based materials. Additional art materials include watercolors, booklet-making, sewing, clay, building materials or other items that enhance the lessons.

Outreach – in response to the children’s concerns for the needs of the larger world and their community, the children become actively involved in outreach.

Sacred History

Plan of God – this is a time line from the beginning of humankind’s earliest appearance on earth, through the present and on to the time of Parousia (when God will be all in all). The purpose of this lesson is to show that God has a plan for us and that we have a part in that plan. We are called to participate in this plan through our work and the gifts of creation. Important events highlighted on the time line include the various inventions through the ages (inventions which continue on long after the inventor has died). We also look at the rise and fall of various civilizations mentioned in the Bible. We look at the history of the Jewish people and the birth of Jesus. The sacraments are included as part of this study. This work serves as the backbone for much of the other work in the atrium over the next three years. The lesson itself is taught over two to three weeks.

Individual Plan of God – this is an individual lesson where the child works through the main points of the Plan of God lesson and puts himself into the lesson, this lesson also expands on the “covenant” relationship.

The People and the Peoples of God – this lesson examines the roles of cultures throughout history. Its primary focus is on the Peoples of God – Jewish, Moslem and Christian.

My Century – in this lesson, the children focus on the 20th (or 21st) century and its role in the Plan of God. The children identify important events and discuss whether they are “for or against” the Plan of God.

The Kingdom of Heaven and My Place in It – this lesson reminds the child that each individual has a role/place in the Plan of God and that we all need to work to further the Plan of God.

Parousia – (I Corinthians 15:20-22; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 5:13; Joel 2:28-29; Isaiah 60:19-20; Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 2:4-5; Isaiah 35:5-6; John 11:25-26; Matthew 24:30-31; Isaiah 11:6-7; Revelation 21:4-5) Parousia is a term first introduced to the children at age six. It is continually developed and is very familiar to the children. In this lesson we focus on twelve Biblical texts which further expand the child’s understanding of Parousia, therefore, providing a scriptural basis for what the child already knows.

History of Israel – a timeline of the history of the Jewish people is used to tell their story. Israel’s history as a chosen nation in covenant relationship with God testifies to God’s faithful presence through times of light and darkness. Christians and Jews share a common history and a common hope for the time when the Light of God will fill the world. This presentation is taught over two weeks.

History of Worship in Israel – The Temple and the Synagogue – this lesson introduces the places and forms of worship in Jewish history.

Bible

Bible Study – Bible studies are used to examine the events of Jesus birth, his life, his miracles, and his death and resurrection appearances. These are first begun in Level II and continue into Level III.

Typology:

All typology studies are taught over a series of lessons; each contains the primary Bible study of the topic listed below and

supplemental studies linking the lesson to the time of Redemption and to the time of Parousia. Below, are listed the primary focus of each of the following studies.

Creation – (this entire study covers 5-6 weeks) – Genesis, 1-2 - this lesson explores the two Genesis accounts of creation for a Biblical understanding of creation, Creator and the place of humankind in creation. In this lesson the role of myth in Biblical literature is also discussed. As this lesson is developed we focus on the images of Adam and the Garden of Eden and connect them to similar images from the time of Redemption. Finally, we look at Isaiah 65:17 and Isaiah 60:19-22 and how the message of these passages ties to the creation texts.

Sin – (this entire study covers 4-5 weeks) – Genesis 3 - this lesson explores the Genesis account of the Fall/Sin for a Biblical understanding of temptation, evil, loss of innocence, consequences of sin and God's constant love for humankind. The main images focused on in this lesson are the Garden of Eden and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. These same images and others identified by the children are considered further as we try to identify images with similar or opposite meaning which are present during the time of Redemption. Finally, we look at additional Bible references found in Isaiah 25:6-8, Revelation 21:1-5, Romans 5:12-21 and I Corinthians 15:20-28 and tie these to the lessons of the Genesis passages. The message the children receive at this point is the transformation of sin and death to salvation and eternal life at the time of Parousia made possible through the obedience of Jesus.

Flood – (this entire study covers 4-5 weeks) – Genesis 6:5 through 9:17 - this lesson explores God's response to evil in the world in the Biblical account of the flood. We introduce the "Priestly" and "Yahwist" accounts and provide simple guidelines to aid the children in identifying passages associated with each account. The primary types identified in this lesson are Noah, water, the ark and the dove. These images and others identified by the children are further explored during the time of Redemption. At the time of the flood, God dealt with evil by destruction; in Redemption, God transforms evil with love. Finally, we note God's promise of eternal fidelity and mercy in Isaiah 54: 9-10.

Abraham – (this study covers 8 weeks) - Genesis 11-25 – this lesson explores Abraham's journey in faith and shows God's developing relationship with God's people. The concept of a covenant relationship is explored. Additional studies associated with this lesson focus on worship during the time of Abraham and nomadic life at that time. The type developed in this lesson is the sacrifice of Isaac. This and others identified by the children are further explored in light of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Finally, we look at offering as a response to God's gifts by examining Revelation 5:11-14, Isaiah 54:1 and Isaiah 60:1.

Exodus – (this study covers 8-9 weeks) – Exodus 1-17 – these lessons look at how God powerfully delivers, protects and provides for the Jewish people with an emphasis on the Promised Land as a sign of hope and fulfillment in the desert. The types explored in this study include the Paschal lamb, the Red Sea, manna and the Promised Land. These types are further explored as we look at God's ongoing liberating work and care for us during the time of Redemption. Finally, we explore the meaning of universal freedom during the time of Parousia in light of the Exodus by looking at Revelation 21:4-5, Isaiah 35:4-6, Isaiah 60:19-21 and I Corinthians 15:20-22.

Moral Parables:

Talents – (Matthew 25:14-30) – in this lesson we study the parable which contains the message that we each have God-given gifts and we are called to use them in the service of God.

Workers in the Vineyard – (Matthew 20:1-15) – in this lesson we study the parable and look at the freedom and generosity of God and the constant call to work in the Kingdom of God. We also look at the concept of fairness.

Debtors – (Matthew 18:21-35) – in this lesson we study the parable which contains the message that God forgives our debts, no matter how great or small; that God has a tremendous capacity to forgive; and that we are also called on to forgive.

Ten Bridesmaids – (Matthew 25:1-13) – this parable is familiar to the children from Level II, in Level III we continue the study focusing on how we "keep our light shining."

Maxims – (Matthew 5:42, 44, 37, 6:6, 7:7, 12, 22; John 13:34; Luke 6:27;

I Corinthians 6:19) we continue our study of maxims in Level III. The ones studied focus on the order and rules of creation, and the rules of humankind. We announce God's order and our place in it.

Prophets:

Call – (Isaiah 6:1-8; Jeremiah 1: 4-10; Amos 7:12-15; Ezekiel 2:8-3:4) in this series of lessons, we compare and contrast the calls of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Ezekiel.

Struggles – (I Kings 18:17-39, 19:1-15; Jeremiah 26:1-19, 36, 37, 38:1-13; Bel and the Dragon) in this series of lessons, we explore the struggles of God's prophets and how God strengthened them during difficult times. The prophets studied include: Elijah, Jeremiah and Daniel.

Moral – (Isaiah 1:10-19, 29:15-16, 40:3-4, 58:1-9; Amos 5:21-24; Jeremiah 7:1-10) in this series of lessons, we explore the moral preaching of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Amos by looking at times the people turned from God, and how God used the prophets to point them back to God.

Messianic Content – (Isaiah 7:14, 9:2, 9:6, 11:1-4, 11:6-9, 35:4-6, 53:4-7, 60:1-3, 60:4-6, 60:19, 60:21; Numbers 24:17; Micah 5:2; Ezekiel 34:11-16, 34:23-31; Jeremiah 31:31-34) in this lesson, we broaden the messianic prophecies from the life and work of Jesus to their place in Israel's history and to the time of Parousia. We explore them for signs of hope, comfort and encouragement.

Liturgy

Eucharist:

Structure of the Eucharist – in this lesson we examine Rite II of the Holy Eucharist and announce that there is a structure to the Eucharist and that the Eucharist contains a series of prayers, some of which change and some which do not.

Color-Based Material – this lesson continues the study of the structure of the Eucharist including the prayers of the Liturgy of the Word, the preparation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic prayer and Communion. It also identifies the gestures of the Eucharist associated with each prayer.

Propers – we examine the Propers of the Eucharist, what they are and how they change according to the liturgy.

Preface – we examine the preface as part of the Eucharistic prayer. We look at how the preface changes throughout the liturgical year.

The Memorial – we focus on the Eucharist as a living reminder of our redemption and of Christ's continuing presence in the history of salvation. We look at the constant elements of the Eucharist including the words of Jesus, the bread and the wine, the community of believers and the ministry of the celebrant.

Intercessions – these prayers are examined in order that the child becomes aware of the unity that God brings to the world particularly in the celebration of the Eucharist. This unity extends throughout history and into the future.

History of Bread – this lesson celebrates the wonder of the work of heaven and earth in the creation of the Eucharistic Bread.

The Synagogue and the Origin of the Liturgy of the Word – this lesson explores the ancient and modern traditions of worship in the Synagogue and highlights the Liturgy of the Word, used today in our service, as based on the traditions of synagogue worship. This lesson is taught over two weeks.

Baptism:

The Complete Rite – in this two week lesson, we look at the complete rite of Baptism as found in the Book of Common Prayer.

Other Sacraments:

The Bible and Sacraments – in this lesson we introduce the sacraments as the continuing work of Christ. The Bible is lived in liturgy and the sacraments are rooted in the Bible. Sacraments are both personal and communal.

Confirmation – in this lesson we explore the gift of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament and in the sacrament of Confirmation when we make a mature, conscious affirmation of our baptismal covenant.

Reconciliation – in a series of four lessons, the children examine reconciliation as a way of acknowledging when they have “missed the mark” and allowing them to move forward and focus on God rather than on past mistakes.

Prayer Book – the children are encouraged to produce their own prayer book that includes the prayers from the Holy Eucharist and the Rite of Baptism as well as their own prayers.

Conclusion

In the words of Dr. Sofia Cavaletti who developed the program, “If we want to help the child draw nearer to God, we should with patience and courage seek to go closer to the vital nucleus of things. This requires study and prayer. The child ... will be our teacher if we know how to observe....”

Sources:

The Religious Potential of the Child, Sofia Cavalletti

The Religious Potential of the Child 6 – 12 Years Old, Cavalletti

Course Notes, Catechesis Training Levels I, II & III

“Catechesis of the Good Shepherd”, by the Rev. Robert J. Gaestel

Good Sources for Parents:

The Good Shepherd & the Child – A Joyful Journey, Cavalletti, et al. – this is an easy to read overview of the philosophy and theology of the program

Sing with Joy: Music of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Catherine Maresca (and Beverly Sanders), includes a CD by the Cathedral choristers – a music book used in Level I (3-6 year old children)

Songs of Love: Music of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Catherine Maresca (and Beverly Sanders), includes a CD by the Cathedral choristers – a music book used with the 6 – 12 year old children

A is for Altar, B is for Bible, Judith Main – an illustrated child's book

The summary was prepared by Becky Rochford to provide information to the parents of Christ Church Cathedral, Nashville, TN