

SOME LEARNINGS AND EXPERIENCES FOR GROWING IN THE FAITH

INFANTS AND TODDLERS

For Developing Faith Foundations

Infants and toddlers need

- to have attractive, safe space that encourages personal development and awareness of others
- to have loving, caring adults who help them experience trust
- to know that others love them and that they can love others
- to recognize that they can use their senses to explore and learn about God's world
- to develop self-esteem and to know that they are worthy of love and care

For Knowing the Bible and Our Faith Traditions

Infants and Toddlers need

- to enjoy hearing 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, a place where people love and care about them
- to feel glad that they belong in a family and to a church
- to develop the sense that God is always with them
- 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 during the week as well as on Sunday
- to have opportunities to show love to family and friends
- to become aware of their increasing ability to take part in God's world
- to learn to deal with anger, frustration, and conflict

TWO-YEAR-OLDS

For Developing Faith Foundations

Two-year-olds need

- to have attractive, safe space that encourages personal development and awareness of others
- to have 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 blended with sufficient firmness
- to know that God cares for plants, animals, and birds

For Knowing the Bible and Our Faith Traditions

Two-year-olds need

- to recognize the Bible as a special book with special significance
- to associate the name Jesus with pictures and with the Bible
- to hear Bible stories and to be shown where those stories are in the Bible
- to hear that God loves them

For Relating to God and the Church

Two-year-olds need

- to observe parents and teachers pray, read the Bible, and talk about God and their own faith
- to experience trust in others that will later serve as a foundation for trust in God
- to offer thanks to God by saying brief prayers and by placing offerings in a collection plate
- to experience faith through baptism and 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 and as a child of God
- to experience God's love through teachers
- 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 during the week as well as on Sunday
- 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 and new things they can do

THREE- AND FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

For Developing Faith Foundations

Three- and four-year-olds need

- to be with caring adults who model Christian attitudes and behaviors
- to have their feelings and actions accepted
- to be forgiven when they do not meet adult expectations
- to be guided to play and cooperate with others
- to develop their own abilities and express their own identity as unique children of God and in relationship to others
- to be offered opportunities to make choices and decisions within safe boundaries
- 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, especially from the Psalms and the Gospels
- to be introduced to the Lord's Prayer
- to hear simple, clear stories from the Bible, especially stories that emphasize the goodness of God, thanksgiving to God, the Christmas story, the love of Jesus for children, and Jesus as a friend and helper

For Relating to God and the Church

Three- and four-year-olds need

- to learn simple prayers
- 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 about God, life, death, and crises
- 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 and appreciation for God's world
- to see evidence that God is important in the daily lives of caring adults
- to learn to understand and express their feelings

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 without fighting
- to practice decision making through optional activities
- to develop a sense of stewardship by placing an offering in the offering plate, helping to put materials away in the classroom, and seeing parents give time and money to the church
- to be surrounded by adults (teachers and parents) who have developed satisfying relationships
- to hear words such as *God, Jesus, faith, love, and Holy Spirit*
- to be surrounded by adults who are comfortable talking about their faith and who live out their faith

For Knowing the Bible and Our Faith Traditions

Five- and six-year-olds need

- to recognize the Lord's Prayer, Doxology, and other commonly used aspects of our faith tradition
- to hear stories of Bible people who lived as God wanted them to live, particularly stories that relate 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
- to be introduced to symbols of tradition such as the cross, the United Methodist symbol, a baptismal font, and the Advent wreath
- to be surrounded by teachers who apply the biblical message to present situations

For Relating Faith to Daily Living

Five- and six-year-olds need

- to be surrounded by people who have experienced grace—for example, Sunday school teachers who are warm, loving individuals
- 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 as reminders during the week
- to practice appreciating and caring for God's world
- to have opportunities for learning about and accepting persons of other ethnic backgrounds

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 given responsibility in helping to care for the classroom and class environment
- to be guided in dealing with classroom situations in ways that are Christian
- to hear stories about and have experiences with persons who are different from them
- to investigate and experiment and explore

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 a simple explanation of the sacraments
- to know the names of the books of the Bible used most frequently in their class and, as they become more skilled, how to locate them in the Bible
- to hear stories of people who have helped the church come to us
- to use Bibles at home as well as at church
- to have opportunities to retell simple Bible stories they have heard several times
- to hear stories from the Bible
- to repeat the Lord's Prayer with others

For Relating to God and the Church

Seven- and eight-year-olds need

- to participate in corporate worship
- to have the understanding of adults who know children can experience more of God than they can express verbally
- to pray their own prayers in class and at home
- to learn some of the songs and hymns of the church and feel a part of congregational worship
- to be with adults who are open to children's questions about God even if adults say they don't know the answers

For Relating Faith to Daily Living

Seven- and eight-year-olds need

- to be encouraged to consider the rights of other children and family members
- to relate the joys and concerns of daily living to Bible teachings through visual aids, activities, stories, and discussions
- to participate in service projects appropriate to their age levels and abilities
- to learn simple key Bible verses to think about during the week
- to be reminded that God expects us to love everyone, including our enemies

NINE- AND TEN-YEAR-OLDS

For Developing Faith Foundations

Nine- and ten-year-olds need

- to plan and carry out both group and individual activities
- to be guided in dealing with classroom situations in ways that are Christian
- to be given responsibility in helping to care for the classroom and the class environment
- to hear stories about and have experiences with persons 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 the worship and work of the congregation
- to share with faith friends of various age levels
- 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 verses and passages such as the Lord's Prayer
- to hear an explanation of the sacraments
- 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 use the Bible at home as well as at church
- to hear and explore the meanings of Bible stories
- to learn and to use some of the most used hymns of the church
- to learn to use age-level-appropriate study tools such as a concordance, an atlas, and a Bible dictionary
- to learn about how The United Methodist Church started and some of its history

For Relating to God and the Church

Nine- and ten-year-olds need

- to participate in corporate worship
- to pray their own prayers in class and at home
- 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 the understanding of adults who know children experience more of God than they can express verbally
- to have a sense of belonging to both the local church and the larger faith community
- to find guidance for disciplines of prayer and Bible reading
- to learn the importance of obedience and responsibility in the covenant relationship with God
- to hear and talk about the meaning of church membership

For Relating Faith to Daily Living

Nine- and ten-year-olds need

- to be encouraged to consider the rights of other children and family members
- to participate in service projects appropriate to their age levels and abilities
- to relate the joys and concerns of daily living to Bible teachings through visual aids, activities, stories, and discussion
- 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 in various circumstances
- to be guided and assisted in practicing spiritual discipline
- to identify and express attitudes, ideas, and feelings about unfairness, injustice, and social evil
- to be given concrete suggestions and opportunities for ways to be in discipleship

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 share with faith friends of various age levels
- to be able to affirm self as a child of God
- 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 study tools such as a concordance, an atlas, and a dictionary
- 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 use and understand creeds and hymns used most frequently in their church worship
- to know various kinds of writings in the Bible
- to explore Bible stories in historical context
- to learn about the history and teachings of The United Methodist Church
- to increase and use vocabulary related to the Christian faith

For Relating to God and the Church

Eleven- and twelve-year-olds need

- to be guided in making a commitment to God through Jesus Christ
- to have a sense of belonging to both the local church and the larger community of faith
- to be guided in understanding the meaning of church membership
- to verbalize experiences and questions about God and faith, including doubts
- to find guidance for disciplines of prayer and Bible reading
- to see Christian growth as a lifelong process
- to learn the importance of obedience and responsibility in the covenant relationship with God

For Relating Faith to Daily Living

Eleven- and twelve-year-olds need

- to hear and discuss stories of ways others live out their faith in various circumstances
- to grow in their understanding of the relationship between the Bible message and their own relationships with God
- to be guided and assisted in practicing spiritual discipline
- to identify and express attitudes, ideas, and feelings about unfairness, injustice, and social evil
- to clarify and develop their sense of right and wrong in light of Christian faith
- to serve with others in the community and world
- to struggle with moral and ethical issues in light of Christian faith
- to be given concrete suggestions and opportunities for ways to be in discipleship
- to explore the meaning of commitment to God through Jesus Christ
- to grow in their understanding of the meaning of membership in the church