

Weekly Faith Formation Update

November 9-13, 2020

Helping Children Express Gratitude

Because children are growing up in a consumer-driven world, it's easy to fall into the habit of being me-centered. How can we intentionally nurture gratitude in their hearts so that they turn their eyes toward others too? How can we engage the faith practice of gratitude within our ministry with children? Here are just a few ideas that can be easily incorporated into your ministry plans or classroom routines to help children learn to express gratitude.

Create a "Wall of Gratitude"

A Wall of Gratitude is a designated bulletin board or poster that is visible to all the kids and parents who come into your children's ministry area. Each week, kids can stop on their way into their rooms and write on a Post-It note what they are grateful for, or classes can walk to the Wall of Gratitude together to share what they're grateful for and thank God for all he has done for us. If there is space, each classroom could have its own Wall of Gratitude. If you want to incorporate this idea into a worship service, create a Wall of Gratitude at the entry of the sanctuary. Or during a children's sermon, ask children to gather around a poster-board where you write what they are grateful for. Then make sure to include these thanksgivings in the prayers of the people!

Name Our Thanks

If you're looking for a fun way for a class to share all the things they are grateful for, ask them to use the letters of the alphabet. For example, for the letter "A," I am thankful for crisp apples in the fall. For the letter "B," I am grateful for books to read. This fun way of naming our thanks helps children think creatively about what they have been given by God. If you want to include this in community worship, pick a letter each week and have the children name all the different things we are grateful for that start with that letter.

Thank You Note Project

Encouraging children to think about others is another way to cultivate gratefulness. Cultivating gratitude in children takes intentionality. When we engage children in concrete experiences of gratitude, we nurture their faith. It is in these experiences where children see and practice spiritual habits in everyday life.

In a small group gathering of children, ask them who they are grateful for and why. Encourage them to think about people at church or in their families or in the community. For younger children, after they have named people they are grateful for, provide fill-in-the-blank thank you cards that the children can sign. For older kids, encourage them to write thank you notes, expressing gratitude in concrete ways. You can either post these thank you cards in the mail or hand-deliver them.

[How to Make Painted Paper Leaves for Kids](#)

Materials: Waterproof tablecloth, place mat, or newspaper, Droppers or paintbrushes, [Paper leaves](#) (see note below), Liquid watercolors in fall colors

Instructions

1. **Cover work surface:** Protect your work surface with a waterproof tablecloth, place mat, or newspaper (the paint soaks through the paper leaves and is not completely washable).
2. **Paint with watercolors:** Use droppers or brushes to transfer the watercolor paint to the paper leaves. Try more than one color per leaf and watch as the paint colors spread and merge.
3. **Dry painted paper leaves:** Let the leaves dry. Hang them on a paper tree, in a window, or create a garland with them.



Note: Precut leaves can be purchased or cut your own from coffee filters or paper using leaf templates.

Variations

- Draw veins (or any pictures, designs, and so on) on the paper leaves first with crayons or oil pastels, then paint over the picture for a watercolor-resist effect. (The wax and oil of crayons and oil pastels prevent the water-based paint from adhering. This technique is especially effective with a white or light-colored crayon and a darker paint.)
- Do a leaf rubbing on the paper leaf first with the side of a crayon (place a real leaf under the paper leaf), then paint. Use a dropper to paint a leaf with a generous amount of watercolor paint, then sprinkle it

