

Parents Ask Us About...

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

Our entire curriculum is designed to be developmentally appropriate for the children we serve. We know from child development research that young children learn through their senses and need real, hands-on experiences. They understand new information if it directly relates to their previous experiences and understandings. The part of our curriculum that is designed to nurture children's spiritual development incorporates this knowledge of how young children learn along with the five Core Experiences that serve as a basis for all people's relationship with God. We translate these core experiences into concrete experiences that relate directly to children's lives on a level they can understand. These Core Experiences, along with examples of concrete experiences incorporated into the curriculum on a regular basis are outlined below.

COVENANT

This concept, found in both the Old and New Testaments, portrays a fellowship of love and concern. In a covenant relationship, children can develop basic trust and positive self-esteem. Teachers form and model covenant relationships with children by...

- showing an interest in each child.
- taking time to listen to them.
- calling them by name.
- dependably meeting their needs.

CREATION

The Bible tells us that God created and His creation is good. We are stewards of God's creation and also made to be creators. Teachers foster creation by...

- giving children time and materials to be creative and valuing their creations.
- helping children begin to understand stewardship of God's creation by including ecology as a unit topic in their lesson plans.

LAW AND ETHICAL SENSITIVITY

God gave us laws in the form of the Ten Commandments. For children this law is experienced in the context of concern for the welfare of others. Young children need and want limits on their behavior. They need guidance in learning rules and concern for others.

Teachers guide children by...

- teaching conflict resolution skills in a firm but loving way.
- Protecting each child's rights and well-being.
- setting an example by being trustworthy and keeping promises.

REDEMPTIVE LOVE

The central message of the New Testament is forgiveness and being restored to right relationships. Teachers practice, and therefore model, redemptive love every day. This is modeled when they

- show a child love and understanding even when the child has done something wrong.
- accept a child's feelings.
- help a child become aware of the feelings of others.
- encourage but don't force a child to say "I'm sorry."

School for Little Children

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WONDER AND WORSHIP

A sense of wonder is the root of worship. Young children naturally wonder and experience awe because so many things are new to them! Teachers guide children by...

- providing children with experiences which create wonder.
- expressing wonder and awe themselves by making comments and asking questions
- encouraging children to express genuine thanks to God with a class blessing before snack each day.
- using Bible verses and songs of praise and thanksgiving spontaneously in their conversations with children.
- letting children experience the atmosphere of the sanctuary during "in-house field trips" to hear the organ being played or seeing the decorations at Christmas.

Jesus gave us a model for Christian education. He taught in a manner appropriate to His audience, He taught by example, and He taught people in their natural environment. The Weekday Ministries curriculum for spiritual development incorporates this model. There are many aspects of religion that are too abstract for young children to understand. The core experiences we provide for children are designed to lay a foundation for their further spiritual growth.

For more information on this subject, you may want to look at these books in our library:

- **LIVING THE FAITH WITH YOUNG CHILDREN** by Karan Marshall
- **THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN** by Lucie Barbar
- "Guiding the Religious Development of Young Children" in **NURSERY-KINDERGARTEN WEEKDAY EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH** by Josephine Newbury

Written by Rose Ann Denson, September 1998

