



At Home Formation Building a Child's Home Library

The Idea:

The Children's Ministry Committee of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, in Denton Texas began a program in Fall 2004 that focused on building a child's home library. The goal was to help equip children and parents with the stories and vocabulary of the faith so they could learn together. The simple idea of building a child's home library was rooted in conviction that parents and families were central to children's faith formation and the church was a partner with parents in shaping young disciples.

Method:

The approach to implementing the creation of the home library was simple. Before Covid, children from birth through fifth grade were given an age-appropriate book on Rally Day, the first Sunday of the Fall school year. We were intentional about including visitors in the program and if a child showed up for the first time on Rally Day, a book was given to them.

The books were theirs to take home and keep in their rooms. We believed this was a starting point for children to have resources at home to continue their faith formation. The books were chosen for developmental age appropriateness, biblical understanding, Reformed worship instruction, faith identity, justice and inclusion, and joyful faith.

In the Covid years our Rally Day program changed dramatically, becoming simpler and more focused on fellowship rather than structured programming. We provided the books to the children prior to Rally Day and invited parents to send pictures of the children holding their new book. A video was made from the photos and was shown in worship on Rally Day. We have continued this approach to distributing the books to the children and the Rally Day video is one of the highlights of the day each year.

***Each child in every grade level receives the same book,
selected using the criteria outlined below***

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN receive easy to handle board books:

- ~ *Colors I See in Church* by Julie Stiegemeier and Kathy Mitter
- ~ *Sing, Clap, Dance* by Jennifer Hilton and Kristen McCurry

THREE-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN who are entering Sunday school for the first time, receive:

- ~ *Spark Story Bible* by Augsburg Fortress

FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN are encouraged in joyful play with:

- ~ *Designed by God So I Must Be Special* by Bonnie Sose
- ~ *Every Day and Sunday Too* by Gail Ramshaw
- ~ *A Very Big Problem* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

FIVE-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN grow in understanding with:

- ~ *Grateful, A song of Giving Thanks* by John Bucchino and Anna-Liisa Hakkarainen
- ~ *What is God Like?* by Rachel Held Evans and Matthew Paul Turner
- ~ *The Very Best Story Ever Told* by Robin Currie and David Kurtz Williams

KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN who are entering elementary school, receive:

- ~ *Read Aloud Stories* by Ella Lindvall
- ~ *At Psalms School* by Maria Eugenia Cornou and John D. Witvliet

FIRST GRADE CHILDREN who remain in worship throughout service, receive:

- ~ *A Children's Guide to Worship* by Ruth L. Boling and Lauren J. Muzzy

SECOND GRADE CHILDREN for use in exploring questions:

- ~ *When God Made You* by Matthew Paul Turner and David Datrow

THIRD GRADE CHILDREN can use their growing reading skills when they receive:

- ~ *Kids Spark NRSV Bible* by Augsburg Fortress

FOURTH GRADE CHILDREN are given:

- ~ *The World Jesus Knew: A Curious Kid's Guide to Life in the 1st Century* by Marc Olson and Jemima Maybank

FIFTH GRADE CHILDREN in their last year in elementary school receive the hymnal:

- ~ *Glory to God* by Presbyterian Publishing Corporation

Each year the committee evaluates the books given and makes changes as needed. The Director of the Resource Center of Grace Presbytery was a helpful guide in selecting the books.

Further Opportunities for Education:

- Offer a class for children, parents, and teachers to read and discuss each book. The workshop could focus on ways to help children claim the material as their own, as well as guide their parents in becoming more comfortable with the content as they engage with their children.
- Offer a session for all interested parents and adults who want to learn about the books given to the children for their home libraries. The children attending would be the experts teaching the adults what they have learned in mastering their books.
- Reference and use the books in Sunday school so that the conversation continues throughout the year as each age talks about the books in their home library.
- Produce a follow up video with children that describes the meaning of their books and share this with the congregation.
- In your ministry context, explore what additional ways the books, and concepts presented in them, could become formative for the children in your congregation.

Writer: Lisa Patterson, Associate Pastor, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Denton, Texas
Office of Christian Formation: www.pcusa.org/formation

2024

