

Planning through the liturgical year for Ministry with Children (a step-by-step guide)

Letting the liturgical seasons guide our formation with children and their families not only keeps us in tune with the life of the rest of the church but also opens us all up to be formed by the spiritual stories and themes that infuse these seasons.

The Ministry with Children at St. Andrews has a month-by-month rhythm of formation offerings that is also a helpful guide as the ministry team prepares for the year to come. Every month of Sunday formation looks like this:

- 1st Sunday: Fellowship, hosted by a different family each month (all ages together)
- 2nd Sunday: Spiritual discipline or Service to the community (all ages together)
- 3rd Sunday: Age group cohorts break-out sessions
 - Pre-K to 6yrs – Godly Play lesson (2 adult guides needed)
 - Kids of the Kingdom (3rd-5th grade) – lesson from Episcopal Children’s Curriculum (1 adult guide needed)
 - Adults/parents – conversation around topics generated by the group
- 4th/5th Sunday: Spiritual discipline or Service to the community (all ages together)

Step 1: The liturgical year begins on the first Sunday of Advent and runs through the next calendar year to the last Sunday of the season of Pentecost. Prepare a document that lists down the left side the dates of each Sunday of this liturgical year. It can help to somehow color the dates or highlight them with the color of the liturgical season to help you see how the year shapes out. The colors are as follows:

Advent – purple (4 weeks)

Christmas – red (consult a church calendar)

Epiphany – green (first Sunday after Jan. 6th)

Lent – purple (consult a church calendar to see when this begins and ends)

Palm Sunday and Holy Week - red

Easter – white

Pentecost day – red

Pentecost season/Ordinary time – green

Step 2: Begin to fill in the calendar. Every first Sunday of the month will be “Fellowship.” Easy! Every 3rd Sunday is the age-group break out lessons. Just fill that in and leave a space beside each age group for entering the name of the lesson, where to find the curriculum, and discussion topic for adults. On the St. Andrews website is a resource page with links to Godly Play lessons list and the Episcopal Children’s Curriculum, but St. Andrews already has all these lessons printed and stored in the offices and downstairs in the Godly Play room.

Step 3: The other Sundays. You have so many options! Keep in mind that special holidays like Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Thanksgiving, etc can be topics that drive the activity you plan. Also, one Sunday of each liturgical season it’s very appropriate to plan a crafts/activities formation day (for example, the

first Sunday of Advent is a great time to get materials for Advent wreaths and crafts that are purple to enhance the children's (and family's) home celebration of the season)

There is no rule about whether to do a spiritual discipline or community service activity, just fill in the options in a way that seems to make sense. Repeating certain activities throughout the year is also a good idea, not just because some kids do not come every Sunday, but because recognizing a project or activity as part of formation helps the young people develop of sense of their place and importance in the life of faith.

Here are some of your options we've used in the past:

Spiritual Disciplines

- Anglican Prayer rosaries
- Labyrinth walk, finger labyrinths
- Advent storytelling and caroling
- Bible study tools for families with all ages to practice together
- making "Godly Playlike" activity bags with felt figures for kids to use during Eucharist services
- Writing notes to God (or drawing our prayers for non-writers)
- Acting out a Bible story (we've got a huge bin of costumes)
- Singing songs together

Service to the Community

- Clean & decorate Godly Play room
- Shadow altar guild & learn about preparing for Eucharist
- Bringing food & diapers as donations collection for FaithAction pantry
- Care packages for college students
- Operation Christmas Child
- Caroling around neighborhood
- Cards for people on the church prayer list (Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving, etc)
- Cleaning up Columbarium area
- Pick up trash in neighborhood
- Make snacks for coffee hour (fruit skewers, mini-sandwiches, etc – easy items)
- Crafts/decorations for the nursery
- Make 'blessing bags' for people to share with people at red lights

Liturgical Year Crafts time

- Advent wreaths & purple crafts
- Epiphany crafts
- Lent crafts
- Palm Sunday/Holy Week crafts
- Pentecost party, languages
- All Saints/All Souls activities

Other Special Days Crafts

- Mother's Day
- Father's Day
- Thanksgiving

Special non-Sunday events:

- Christmas Eve
- MLK Day of Service – we've collected food and diapers for FaithAction in the past
- Easter Sunday we've traditionally hosted an Egg Hunt on the lawn and a parish brunch potluck between the services

Step 4: Designate coordinator of the month. This person will be responsible for making sure that the whatever is needed as far as lesson leaders or materials to carry out formation that month. They are *not* the ones who will necessarily lead all the lessons or purchase the materials – they should be the one to coordinate to make sure we have what is needed.

** A sample of what this can look like is found on the St. Andrew website Ministry with Children Resources page: "CST calendar 2014-2015"