

New Apostolic Church USA

FaithArc

Divine Service Guide for Children's Service

Divine Services for children are suggested at least once a quarter, on a local or regional basis. A children's service should use the special Divine Service Guide that is provided for that quarter by the Faith Arc Team. Children's service Divine Service Guides replace the Sunday morning Divine Service Guide and should not be used in addition to the Sunday Divine Service Guide for that day.

The purpose of a children's service is to:

- give the children a special word that is understandable, memorable, and relevant
- clearly put them in the center of the congregation
- create opportunity to connect multiple generations within the congregation
- strengthen the value of the divine service and increase their knowledge of Christ and the Bible

In order to help build excitement and to ensure that the entire congregation is prepared for these unique services, they should be announced well in advance. It is encouraged to consider setting a consistent frequency of the services (i.e. the last Sunday of the first month of each quarter). Where possible, the children can participate in some of the congregational functions (ushering, greeting, as the choir, etc.). The person giving the children's message should be someone that has the capability to communicate and connect well with the children. For example, a Sunday school teacher, young adult, etc. that is dedicated to prepare for this responsibility.

Liturgy

The divine service is opened in the normal way with the invocation, opening prayer, Bible verse, and response hymn. Thereafter, the minister at the altar can introduce the theme and a few thoughts, which should not exceed 5 minutes.

The person giving the children's message then begins in front of the altar, speaking directly to the children, who should be sitting in the first rows.

The Divine Service Guide for children's service includes a unique portion designed by the Faith Arc team specifically for use with children. This section of the divine service can be anywhere from 15-25 minutes, depending on the number of children and their ages. It may include methods such as interactive discussion, props, skits, demonstrations, and simulation. Questions and dialogue between the children and facilitator are encouraged.

During this time, the priests should sit in the congregation. The children's component can end with a congregational hymn, which allows the priest to return to the altar. The officiant can then summarize the children's component and prepare the congregation for Holy Communion, which should take no longer than 10 minutes. From then on, the service liturgy continues as normal.

It is also suggested that lunch or refreshments with the congregation be available after the service to highlight and celebrate these children services, and to provide additional opportunity for generations to interact with each other.

PRAYER WORKS!

Pray without ceasing

Bible Text:

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."-- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Message: Jesus urges us to pray always.

Introduction – Background for the minister

The historical context of 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 falls within a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Thessalonica. Paul wrote this letter around AD 51-52, likely from Corinth.

The church in Thessalonica faced various challenges, including persecution and confusion about Christ's return (the Second Coming). In this section (1 Thessalonians 5:12-28), Paul is concluding his letter with practical advice and exhortations to the believers.

He encourages them to live in a manner that reflects their faith despite the difficulties they're encountering. The verses encourage a continuous attitude of joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. This guidance is set in the context of anticipating Christ's return and living faithfully until that time.

Paul's message emphasizes the importance of an unwavering commitment to joy, unceasing communication with God through prayer, and maintaining a posture of gratitude in all circumstances. These exhortations aimed to fortify the Thessalonian Christians, fostering resilience and spiritual growth amid challenges.

Main part – share with the children

Unceasing communication with God

"In a place called Thessalonica, the people who believed in Jesus had a hard time. Some didn't like the new Christian beliefs and were mean to the Christians. It made life tough for Christians – they weren't treated nicely, Christians had less money, and even got hurt because they loved Jesus.

They also weren't sure about when Jesus would come back. But the Apostle Paul wrote them letters to help. He said to stay happy and thankful and he encouraged them to never stop praying to God. He also explained about Jesus coming back, and told them to stay strong and keep believing, even when things were hard."

How Prayer Helps - (focus on 2-3 that seem relevant to the children in your congregation)

Sometimes we experience difficulties and confusion. Children in the 5-12 years old age range can experience various situations that make them feel ostracized or fearful. Ask the congregation to close their eyes (for the sake of privacy) and then by a show of hands, ask who has experienced some of the challenges below. Expand on 2-3 that seem to be relevant to the congregation. Allow children or adults to share examples or personal experiences.

- Being teased, picked on, or physically bullied by peers can make children feel isolated and afraid.
- Feeling left out of social groups or activities can be quite distressing for kids, leading to a sense of isolation and loneliness.
- Struggling with schoolwork or facing difficulties in learning can make children feel inadequate or different from their peers.
- Facing challenges within your family - divorce, financial struggles, or other significant changes at home can affect a child's confidence and sense of security, leading to feelings of isolation.
- Being from a different cultural / background or having different traditions can sometimes lead to feelings of being an outsider, especially if not understood or accepted by peers.
- Fear of failing whether in sports, academics, or hobbies, can make children feel anxious and isolated.
- Experiencing or witnessing traumatic events, whether it's in the news or in their immediate environment, can lead to fear and a sense of insecurity.
- Facing fears or anxiety about specific things, like animals, darkness, or certain situations, can make children feel different or ostracized.
- Experiencing social anxiety can cause children to struggle with social interactions, leading to feelings of isolation and fear of being judged or misunderstood.

The effects of prayer – (display the following words on a white board when discussing this section: Gratitude, Comfort, Connection, Strength, Compassion, Reflection)

Encouraging a continuous connection with our heavenly Father through prayer is a great support in all situations. In addition, encourage open communication with a trusted adult who can provide support and guidance to navigate these challenges, especially an adult who will pray with you. Connect the effects of prayer below to the challenges discussed above. Here's what prayer can do:

- Prayers should involve gratitude. Encouraging children to reflect on what they're thankful for, even during tough times, can shift their focus toward the positive aspects of their lives and the many, many blessings that our heavenly Father has given them.
- Prayer can be a source of comfort and emotional support. It allows children to express their fears, worries, and hopes to our heavenly Father fostering a sense of inner peace and security.

- Engaging in prayer within a family or congregation can help children feel connected to something larger than themselves. This sense of belonging can provide reassurance and support during difficult times.
- Through prayer, children may develop resilience and inner strength. It can instill a sense of faith that God is with them and only has in mind what is good for us.
- Many prayers emphasize compassion and kindness. Engaging in prayer that promotes these values can encourage children to be empathetic and supportive toward others facing similar difficulties.
- Prayer often involves quiet reflection and focus. This can help children develop mindfulness, teaching them to feel the presence of God which can help them to feel calm in the face of adversity.

Jesus is our example

Jesus is our big example in everything. He showed us how to stay connected with our heavenly Father. He constantly quoted scripture, which showed He knew His Father's will and obeyed His Father's will. He always took time to pray. Oftentimes, He would leave those He was with to find a quiet place to pray. He provided a great example of prayer in The Lord's Prayer and He showed His love for us in the High Priestly Prayer.

In the High Priestly Prayer, Jesus speaks to God the Father, expressing His desires and concerns for His disciples and the unity of believers. He starts by praying for Himself, asking for glorification so that He may glorify the Father. Then, He prays for His disciples, asking for their protection, unity, and sanctification. Finally, Jesus extends His prayer to include all future believers (us!), praying for their unity and that they may experience the fullness of God's love.

The prayer reflects Jesus' deep care for His followers and His desire for them to be united and strengthened in their faith. It emphasizes unity, love, and the glorification of God through the lives of believers. This prayer is considered a profound and intimate moment in the Gospel narrative, revealing Jesus' heart and His relationship with the Father.

It is beautiful when the love that Jesus exemplified is also found in our behavior. Let us follow His example, because when He returns for us we want to be with Him forever.

Summary

- Remain constantly connected with God through prayer because prayer works!
- Use the examples of prayer Jesus gives us to glorify Him, to pray for ourselves, and to pray for others.

Didactic tips

The examples of difficulties young children experience in the "How Prayers Helps" section can be an open discussion with the children and adults. Be sure to include in your discussion the effects these difficulties can have upon emotions, schoolwork, behavior, etc.. Be sure to emphasize that prayer over our concerns should always be coupled with sharing our concerns with our parents or other trusted adults who can pray with us.

Supplemental Notes and Activity Ideas:

Going Deeper... (for the minister)

The High Priestly Prayer – John 17: 1-26

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: *"Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."*

This passage is the beginning of Jesus' prayer, where He speaks to God the Father, expressing His imminent glorification and His role in offering eternal life to believers. The prayer continues, encompassing His concerns and desires for His disciples and future followers, emphasizing unity, love, and the manifestation of God's glory among believers.

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them."

In these verses, Jesus acknowledges the disciples' belief in His divine mission and prays specifically for them, highlighting their chosen status and the unity between Himself, the Father, and the believers.

"Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

Jesus prays for the disciples' protection, unity, and joy as they continue in the world but not of it. He acknowledges their challenges and the world's opposition but seeks their sanctification and preservation through the Father's name.

The prayer continues in John 17 with Jesus extending His prayer beyond the disciples to all future believers, emphasizing unity, love, and the desire for believers to experience the fullness of God's glory.

"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes, I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."

Here, Jesus emphasizes the separation of believers from the ways of the world, praying for their sanctification through truth. He extends His prayer beyond the immediate disciples to include all future believers, emphasizing unity among believers and with God.

"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

In these final verses, Jesus expresses His desire for believers to share in the glory given by God and to be united in love and purpose. He seeks their ultimate presence with Him and emphasizes the knowledge and declaration of God's name and love among believers.

This prayer reflects Jesus' deep concern for the unity, sanctification, and ultimate well-being of His followers, extending to all future believers, and emphasizes the relationship between believers, God, and Christ.

This prayer demonstrates how Christ valued prayer as a constant connection with His heavenly Father, as evidence of the power of prayer, as a necessity in a world full of difficulties, and as a way to demonstrate a love for others.

Visual Aids – (during the divine service)

Act it Out

Have two grown-ups or two youth act out a situation where one is being left out because of their beliefs and practices (ex. they are made fun of because they attend church on Sunday mornings rather than sleeping in late). The scene could include a prayer spoken by the one being made fun of that includes glorifying Christ, a request for self, and intercession for others. See the sample prayer:

Dear heavenly Father,

Thank you for giving us Your Son Jesus as our Savior and as a great example. Help me to always be grateful for His presence in my life. Help me to ignore the teasing and to have strength to not tease back. Help me find friends who also love You and go to church on Sunday. Give me the courage to tell a trusted adult if the teasing doesn't stop. And, please let each of those who tease me get to know You and Your Son so they can feel Your love. Let me continue to show love

to them, even though they tease me, so they might experience Your love through me and stop teasing me and others in the future. Amen

After this activity, you can ask some of the following questions:

- What famous prayer did this prayer mimic? (the High Priestly Prayer)
- What 3 parts of the High Priestly Prayer were present in this prayer and what evidence in the prayer supports the 3 parts? (Glorify Jesus, pray for self, pray for others – refer to specific parts of the sample prayer)
- What would you pray for in this situation?

Prayer Cards – (this could be done during an instrumental piece during the divine service)

Have 2-3 index cards and pencils on the seats in church prior to members arriving. Explain that rather than expressing a prayer in words, encourage the children and adults to write a prayer in the form of a card to God.

Direct the members to fold the index card in half and to write a Prayer Card to God, that is either a prayer of praise or thanks, a prayer for others, or a prayer for one's self. Be sure children who are not reading or writing are paired with an older child or adult who can assist them. Once they finish, encourage them to create a second Prayer Card for someone in the congregation that they know needs a prayer and then allow them to deliver that card to that person.

Congregation project – Prayer Buddy Program

A Prayer Buddy program can bridge the generational gap between adults and children in a congregation and can be a beautiful way to foster intergenerational connections and spiritual growth. Here's a suggested plan:

The program's goals are to show prayer works, to nurture spiritual connection, foster mentorship, and to encourage understanding between generations.

Steps for creating a Prayer Buddy program:

1. Create a flyer that explains the Prayer Buddy program, its goals, and invites adults and children from the congregation to join the program.
2. Match adults with children based on shared interests or connections.
3. Gather everyone for a meeting to explain the program's purpose and how to pray together respectfully. At the meeting discuss:
 - a. The goals: to show prayer works, to nurture spiritual connection, foster mentorship, and to encourage understanding between generations
 - b. Prayer Buddies should meet at a regularly scheduled time determined by each pair (Ex. every Sunday morning before or after service), and each buddy should share a prayer request with their buddy during their meeting.

- c. Prayer Buddies must commit to praying for each other throughout the week. They are also encouraged to take turns praying together during their weekly meeting, but it's not required.
 - d. Each time buddies meet, they should discuss answers to previous prayers they experienced, if they received one, as well as new prayer requests for the next week.
 - e. Writing down prayer requests and answers can enhance the experience.
4. Guide adults to communicate in ways that suit the children's age, being patient and listening actively.
 5. Remind everyone that prayer requests are confidential unless your buddy says otherwise.
 6. Plan fun activities or events for Prayer Buddies to connect and bond within the congregation. For example, invite Prayer Buddies for a "Pray, Play, and Pizza" party where adults and children could engage in their weekly prayer meeting, enjoy a pizza lunch, and then play board games together.
 7. Keep parents in the loop and involve them in their children's participation.
 8. Ensure safe communication and meetings, especially for children, with appropriate supervision.
 9. Ask for thoughts and feedback periodically to make the program better.

This program aims to show the power of prayer as well as foster a sense of belonging, mentorship, and spiritual growth among both adults and children, creating a supportive and nurturing environment within the congregation.