

# 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.

## **I am a Child of God!**

### God's Family

#### **Bible Text:**

*"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people,"-- [1 Peter 2:9a](#)*

**Message:** A family that prays together, stays together

#### **Introduction – Background for the minister**

**Who** - Paul encountered Jesus through a revelation that changed the direction of his life ([Galatians 1:13–17](#)). His zeal for preserving Jewish traditions was transformed; he went from persecutor of the church to Jesus' apostle to the Gentiles. His letters show the development of early Christianity.

**What** - Paul says the Jewish law is good ([Romans 7:12](#)), but it does not redeem from sin. Paul introduces a metaphor—legal adoption—to show God's unprecedented offer through Jesus. Because of Jesus' redemptive actions, no one has to remain enslaved to sin any longer.

**Where** - Galatians is sent to multiple congregations in the region of Galatia (modern-day Turkey). Paul had first brought the message of Jesus to these Gentiles. Romans touches on some similar themes and is addressed to various house churches in the city of Rome.

**When** - Galatians could be Paul's earliest letter, normally dated a few years before the book of Romans and perhaps around AD 50. Paul wrote his letter to the Romans before being brought to Rome as a prisoner in the early 50s.

**Connecting to our lives today** - Israel is called God's child many times in the Old Testament, and Paul gives new meaning to this image. Anyone with faith in Jesus who becomes a child of God, through their baptism and Holy Sealing, is thus a part of His family. Paul uses the Aramaic word *Abba*, as Jesus does in prayer ([Mark 14:36](#)).

## **Main part – share with the children**

### **The concept of family**

The concept of family can be a bit abstract. Make the idea of family easier to understand by asking children about the people who are part of their families. Explain that families are often groups of people who gather together and share some things in common. Pose the following questions:

- What is one of your family's traditions?
- What does the word family mean to you?
- Who is someone you aren't related to but who is like family to you?

Summarize by pointing out how we all have things in common as well as things that make us unique. Families don't define who we are, but they do help make us who we are. While we typically think of family as the group of people we live with, family is also a place to belong. We are all children of God, part of God's family, and we belong to Him.

### **Our childhood in God - a history of God's special people**

**Materials:** full length mirror, black dry erase marker, eraser

This telling of the history of God's people is an experiential story. While the minister is sharing this story, an adult volunteer should be in front of the congregation with a full length mirror. What's in bold print should be spoken by the minister, and what's in regular print are directions for the minister and/or the volunteer with the mirror.

Ahead of time, set the mirror, black dry-erase marker, and eraser near the alter where they are not obvious, but are easily accessed. During the storytelling, set the mirror upright in front of the alter so the volunteer can draw on it with the dry-erase marker. Plan the best spot to set the mirror so children can see it.

Begin telling the story.

**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. God created everything that exists, whether distant galaxies all the way across the universe or the tiniest spec that we cannot see with our eyes. God created every living creature.**

Pause to allow kids to consider the complexity of God's creation.

**Most special of all, God created humans in His own image Every person, whether the person knows it or not, was created by God for a purpose.**

The volunteer should bring out the floor-length mirror and hold it horizontally, angling it so the children can see themselves in the mirror. Be careful not to reflect the lights into the eyes of the congregation.

**God created humans to be like a reflection, always pointing back to God. But sin—the wrong things that we do—gets in the way.**

The volunteer should set the mirror down vertically. Use the black dry-erase marker to color thick black lines up and down and across the mirror to look like prison bars.

**Instead of being God's helpers, humans became slaves or prisoners to sin. That means, without God, humans are trapped. Even if we want to do the right things, there is something inside of us that holds us back.**

The volunteer should finish drawing the bars and hold the mirror so children can see themselves in it, drawing attention to the "prison" we're in as a result of our sin.

**We as humans don't stand a chance of doing the right things if we don't have God's help. God's creation remains good, but it needs God to repair it.**

The volunteer should prop the mirror where it won't slip, and so the children can still see the prison bars of sin.

**God put His plan in action. God waited for the perfect time to send His Son to be born as a human baby. Jesus' birth fulfilled a promise to bless the whole world through Abraham's family. Generation after generation, the people of God waited for Him to do something amazing through them, but they never guessed God Himself would come to earth as a baby!**

**Jesus became human. He was tempted by sin like everyone else, yet He didn't give in to sin. Jesus never did anything wrong! And when He was arrested and killed on the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sin and broke sin's power over us. After Jesus died, the Spirit of God raised Him from the dead; this is called the resurrection.**

The volunteer should retrieve the mirror and begin erasing the lines, leaving bits of lines to mar the reflection.

**Jesus' life, death, and resurrection provide something completely new for us. Instead of staying trapped in a pattern of doing wrong again and again, instead of remaining prisoners to sin, our faith in Jesus and through our baptism and Holy Sealing, we are adopted into God's family!**

The volunteer should erase the remaining bits of black lines, and write "I am a child of God" in the middle of the mirror. Prop the mirror up while the story continues.

**Maybe you or someone you know has joined a family through a process called adoption. When a child is adopted, the child becomes 100 percent part of the family. It doesn't matter if the child wasn't born into the family or looks different from the family. The law says an adopted child is a part of the family.**

**God wants everyone to join His family! Just like joining a human family comes with good things, joining God's family does too! When you become a child of God, the Holy Spirit—the presence of God—goes into your heart.**

The volunteer should write "Holy Spirit" on the mirror.

**Instead of being trapped doing wrong things, God has set you free to do what is right.**

The volunteer should write "Free!" on the mirror.

**As one of God's children, you get to call God Abba—which means "Father" or "Daddy in Aramaic."**

The volunteer should write "Abba" on the mirror.

**God is close to each of His children, and He promises to be there for you and me. As children of God, we get to be messengers to the world, pointing people to our loving Father.**

The volunteer should write "Messengers" on the mirror.

**Through our words and actions, others can say, "Jesus is really king. God's amazing creation is transformed. Evil has lost!" Each of our lives can tell of God's wonder! God's children can also look forward to eternal life with God.**

The volunteer should write "Live Forever" on the mirror.

**That means, even though our bodies will someday die, God will raise us from the dead just like Jesus rose from the dead. Joining the family of God is the most wonderful thing a person can do. When we accept God's invitation to become His child, to be filled by the Holy Spirit and freed from sin, we live the way God created us to be. You are a child of God and you are a part of God's family.**

The minister should ask the children the following questions:

**How would your mom or dad or caregiver feel if you never spoke to them, never said thank you, never gave them a hug, or never told them you loved them?**

Allow a few children to share their answers.

**How would our heavenly Father feel if we never spoke to Him?**

Allow a few children to share their answers.

**Our message today is about being a child of God, a part of God's family, but also about how Prayer Works! in a family.**

The minister or the assistant should expand upon the Chief Apostle's theme "Prayer Works!" in regards to remaining closely connected to our heavenly Father and His family through prayer.

## Summary

- We are God's children.
- We are part of God's family and we belong to Him.
- Prayer keeps us closely connected to God and our faith family.

## Didactic tips

For smaller groups, consider inviting children to write their names on the mirror around the words and phrases describing God's children. Consider moving the mirror to the exit of the auditorium to allow children the chance to look at themselves in the mirror, surrounded by all the good things that come with being a child of God.

## Supplemental Activity Ideas:

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A fellowship following the divine service is a wonderful opportunity to continue discussing the topic of the service. Below are ideas you can do during fellowship to encourage conversation about the service.

### Table Talk

**Materials:** A question card for each table

Place a card at each table with the following questions for the table to discuss while eating:

- What are some things God created?
- What makes humans more special than anything else He created?
- What did God create people to do?
- What gets in the way of us pointing people back to God?
- Who died and rose again to defeat sin so we can be a part of God's family?
- What does it mean to be a child of God?
- What are some good things that come with being a part of God's family?

### Writing Prayers

**Materials:** Letters from God for each member, plain paper and pencils for each table

Place the following letter in an envelope, seal it, and address each envelope to "My Chosen Child" and place them in a basket. Be sure to have one for each member in the congregation.

As members enter the fellowship space, give each member a letter and ask them to wait until directed to open it.

*My dear child,*

*Do you know who you are? It's easy to forget. Let me remind you. You are...*

- *Created by Me*
- *Loved*
- *Chosen*
- *Strong*
- *Full of My Spirit*
- *Able to make good choices*
- *A reflection of Me*
- *One who makes Me proud*
- *Cherished*
- *Cared for*
- *Brave*
- *Family*

*Love,*

*Your Abba*

During fellowship, invite everyone to open their envelope at the same time. Tell the congregation to read the letter and to think about how they would respond to this letter in the form of a written prayer.

Invite everyone at the tables to write a prayer in response to the letter from God, using the blank paper and pencils, and then to share it with their tablemates. Be sure to ask tablemates if they would like to share and respect anyone's wish to keep their written prayer private.

### **Group and Gather**

**Materials:** a list of directives

In your fellowship space, encourage members to sit with someone they wouldn't normally sit with or with someone they don't know. Provide the following directions:

**Today we're going to play a game called Group and Gather. Families are often groups of people who gather together and share some things in common. Let's see what you all have in common!**

**I'll call out a direction, and you'll have 10 seconds to group yourselves according to the direction. Let's practice. Make a group with people who are the same age as you.**

Be sure to remind everyone to move around the space with care so no one is bumped or caused to fall. Once groups are formed, ask groups which group is what age. Continue to play in this manner using the following directives and don't forget to let groups share out:

- Birth order (oldest child, middle child, youngest child)
- Same hair color
- Same eye color
- Born in the same month
- Same number of siblings (Zero is a number!)
- Same kind of pet
- Same favorite dessert