

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.

Thanking God for Taking Care of Us

Bible Text:

O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions. Psalm 104: 24

Message

God has created everything we need as humans. We thank Him for this by praising Him and by preserving and protecting His creation.

Introduction / Background for the Minister

The story of creation tells us how God created the world (Genesis 1:1–31). Let us be grateful to God for this. He gives us what we need. He created the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the plants, and the animals. God makes sure that the plants and animals grow and that we have food. We also have Him to thank for our health and the ability to learn.

Share the following details about God's creation and then ask the following questions to encourage the children to reflect on the wonder of God:

- **God's Plan Was Perfect:** When God made the world, He had a special plan for everything! From the stars in the sky to the tiny ants on the ground, God made everything just right. He thought about every little detail because He wanted it all to be good and beautiful. Share the following examples (use linked images, if possible):
 - **Butterflies:** A butterfly starts as a tiny egg, turns into a caterpillar, then into a chrysalis, and finally becomes a beautiful butterfly! God designed this amazing transformation, showing how He cares for even the smallest creatures. ([CLICK HERE FOR IMAGES](#))
 - **The Human Body:** God made our bodies to do incredible things! Our hearts pump blood, our lungs help us breathe, and our brains help us think and learn. All the parts work together perfectly, like a puzzle God put together just for us. ([CLICK HERE FOR IMAGES](#))
 - **Bees and Flowers:** Bees help flowers grow by spreading pollen, and in return, flowers give bees nectar to make honey. ([CLICK HERE FOR IMAGES](#))

God designed plants, insects, animals, and humans to help each other, which shows how smart His creation is and how everything has a purpose! These examples highlight the beauty and thoughtfulness in God's creation, showing children how amazing the world around them is. Ask the following questions: (if children hesitate to answer, seek an answer from an adult)

- What is something in nature that you think is really cool?
- Why do you think God took time to create every little detail in the world?
- **Everything Works Together:** God made everything to work in harmony. The sun comes up in the day and the moon shines at night. Animals and plants all help each other, and the seasons change just right. This shows that God made the world like a well-organized puzzle where every piece fits perfectly! Ask the following questions:
 - Can you think of two things in nature that need each other to survive, like plants and bees? How do you think God planned it that way?
 - Have you ever noticed how the seasons change or how animals live together? What do you think that shows us about God's plan?
- **People Are Super Special:** Out of all the things God made, people are the most special. He made us in His own image, which means we're a bit like Him! He gave us the job to take care of the earth and everything on it, because we are His special helpers. Ask the following questions:
 - What do you think it means to be made in God's image? How does that make you feel?
 - God gave us the job of taking care of the earth. What's one thing you can do to help take care of God's creation?
- **God Took Time to Rest:** After God finished creating the world, He rested on the seventh day. This shows us that resting is important, and that God was happy with what He made. When we look at the world, we can give thanks that God made it good and we can trust His amazing plan.
 - Why do you think God rested after creating the world? What does that teach us about resting and enjoying what God made?
 - How do you feel when you look at the world and think about how God made it all? What part of creation do you especially give thanks for?

We should be thankful for His amazing plan and show our thankfulness everyday!

An example of gratitude from the Bible

Mary and Martha were sisters who had Jesus over for a visit. Martha showed her gratitude by making sure that there was enough to eat for Jesus. Mary showed her gratitude by sitting with Jesus, listening to Him, and spending time with Him (Luke 10: 38–42). What Jesus loved the most was when people spent time with Him and spoke about God. We can take the story of Mary and Martha as an inspiration for ourselves. We can thank God by caring for others and taking time for them. But we also show our gratitude to God when we listen to Him and spend time with Him, for example in divine service, Sunday School, Religious Instruction, youth discussions, small group, or in prayer.

Share these questions with the children to help them figure out if they relate more to Mary or Martha, based on the story of Jesus visiting their home (Luke 10:38-42):

1. When a guest comes over, I like to...
 - a) Sit and listen to them talk.
 - b) Make sure everything is clean and ready for them.
2. If I have a lot to do, I feel...
 - a) Calm, because I can finish it later.
 - b) Worried, because I want to get it all done perfectly.
3. During a lesson at church, I usually...
 - a) Pay close attention because I love learning about God.
 - b) Think about what needs to be done after the lesson.
4. When something exciting happens, I...
 - a) Want to take time to enjoy the moment.
 - b) Start thinking about how to keep everything organized.
5. If Jesus visited my house, I would...
 - a) Sit down and talk with Him as much as possible.
 - b) Make sure He has food and everything He needs.

Results:

- If you mostly answered A, you're more like Mary! You enjoy learning and spending time with Jesus.
- If you mostly answered B, you're more like Martha! You love serving and making sure everything is in order for others.

Both Mary and Martha are important, and each shows a different way of loving and serving Jesus!

How can we thank God?

Gratitude and songs of praise are a good way of expressing how much we appreciate God's gifts and blessings (Psalm 9: 2; Psalm 100: 4). Our gratitude can be expressed in the following practical ways:

- We can express our joy in God's creation through songs of praise in our congregation or with our family.
 - Ask children to look at hymn #2, 3, 36, and/or 37 and have them share lyrics from the songs that give praise to God for His creation.
- We can ask God in prayer to protect the environment and to help those who are committed to preserving it.
- We can make sure that we treat God's creation with care.
 - Ask the children for examples of how they can do this.

- We can care not only for ourselves and our family, but also for our neighbors.
 - Ask the children for examples of how they can do this.

Helpful tips

Remember the core message is “Thanking God for Taking Care of Us”. Parts of the lesson mention “prayer” and “resting on the seventh day” and it may be tempting to elaborate on these topics but remain focused on the core message so children are clear on what you want them to know and understand by the end of the service.

During the “Mary or Martha” quiz, allow children to stand to show their answers and vary who gets to stand (ex. If your answer is A, please stand OR If your answer is B, please stand) to allow for a movement break. Be sure to remind the children that both Martha and Mary's ways to serve and show thanks to God are important and good.

Encourage the children to think about how they can thank God for the things they love in the creation. You can suggest songs of praise, saying a prayer of thanksgiving, helping others, listening to God in the divine service, or doing something to protect the creation.

Consider having children open the NAC Hymnal and find additional songs that would be songs of thanksgiving for God's creation and songs that thank Him for taking care of His creation, which includes us. Be sure to ask strong readers to help those who are not strong readers, or not reading yet.

Summary

- We marvel at the wonders of God's creation.
- Mary and Martha are an inspiration for us of how gratitude can be expressed for Jesus' nearness.
- Our gratitude is expressed in song, prayer, and in our mindful treatment of our neighbor and God's creation.

Didactic Tips:

- Be sure to allow the children movement every 10-15 minutes to keep them focused on the message.
- Allow ample wait time when asking questions. Children need between 5-10 seconds to process the question, formulate an answer, and then share their answer.
- If possible, pair younger and older children together so the older children can support the younger children when reading is necessary to participate.

Supplemental Notes and Activity Ideas:

Intergenerational Collaborative Collage :

This is an intergenerational activity focused on creating a gratitude collage with the adults and children. Provide materials such as nature magazines, colored pencils, crayons, markers, glue, and a poster board and ask the children and adults to create a collage together that represents the things in nature for which they are grateful to God. Ask the children to present and explain their collages to the congregation. **This activity could be done during a fellowship after the Children's Service:**

Materials Needed:

1. Art supplies (a variety of colored pencils, markers, crayons, glue, scissors, etc.)
2. Magazines with pictures of nature
3. A poster board for every 4-5 participants

Prep:

Place a piece of poster board and art supplies on each table. Assign children and adult members to tables so you have a mix of young and old at each table.

- Begin the activity by asking each table to discuss the following question (place a copy of the question on each table to assist with the discussion):
 - **What is something in nature that you think is really beautiful or special that you are thankful for?**
- Ask table members to find pictures and glue them or to draw pictures onto the poster board of things in the creation that they are thankful for to create a collaborative collage. Each participant can contribute to the larger picture.
- At the end, allow tables to share their collages and thoughts with one another. Encourage them to express gratitude for the creation and for the diversity and uniqueness of each individual in God's eyes.
- Conclude with a prayer thanking God for taking care of His creation.