

**Our United
Methodist
History:
Five Lessons for
Preschool Aged
Children**

Written by: The Reverend Dr. Leanne Ciampa Hadley

Introduction

The history of The United Methodist Church is filled with great faith, excitement, evangelism, care for the poor or oppressed and deep desire to do whatever was necessary to share the love and good news of God with those who needed it most. The lessons outlined below are designed to help children learn and celebrate the rich and vibrant history of their denomination.

These five lessons are especially designed for preschool aged children to help them begin to become familiar with key components of United Methodism.

The structure used for these lessons is based on the “Trinitarian Model of Preschool Spirituality,” which I designed and use with the preschoolers in my care at First United Methodist Church, Colorado Springs, where I serve as the Minister to Children and Families. Each session includes three components. The first is a time of wonder where the children simply enjoy looking at and exploring something related to the lesson. The second component is a time to hear a story or lesson for the day followed by an activity to help the children experience some aspect of the story. The third component is a time of simple preschool age-appropriate prayer.

Each lesson in this study uses this model for its format. Feel free to use the ideas as they are or to use the ideas and format them as you desire.

I have tried to create activities that use a minimum of supplies so that costs will not be an issue and so that the preparation will be minimal. However, it will take some preparation and forethought, so be sure to read through this material a few weeks before you plan to use it.

John Wesley

SUPPLIES

Pictures of John Wesley
CD of Wesley Hymns
Suggestions include:
Christ the Lord Has Risen Today
Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
Love Divine, All Love Excelling
Sheet of paper and crayons for each child

TIME OF WONDER

Invite the children to come to the United Methodist Story Circle, and help them gather around.

Show the children pictures of John Wesley. Let them look at them, touch them and notice things such as his eyes, ears, mouth and hair.

STORY TIME

Tell the children the story of John Wesley:

“John Wesley was born on June 17, 1703. His daddy was a preacher. He had 12 brothers and sisters and his mommy taught him all about God and to read and write!

When John was five years old, his house caught on fire. John was way upstairs in the attic, and the fire was moving up toward him! He went to the window and had to jump out. Some men caught him, and he was safe!

John believed that God had saved him from the fire because he was supposed to do good things for others and become a minister, and so he did.

When he grew up, he preached and taught people about God, Jesus, and the Bible. He and his brother, Charles, also wrote songs about God that we still sing in church today!”

ACTIVITY

Have the children draw a picture of John Wesley. Let them share their pictures with the entire group when they have finished. While they are drawing, play a CD of Wesley hymns.

Listen to a hymn of John and Charles Wesley and make up simple movements to it. The words will be too difficult to learn so let the children hear the hymns and appreciate the music! Teach the children the movements and let the song and movements be their *prayer*.

Circuit Riders

SUPPLIES

- A small toy horse for each child
- A sheet of paper and crayons for each child
- Tape or wall tack

TIME OF WONDER

Invite the children to come to the United Methodist Story Circle, and help them gather around.

Show them all of the toy horses, and let the children pet them.

STORY TIME

Tell the children the story about Circuit Riders:

“John Wesley was a preacher who wanted everyone in the whole world to know about God. There were many places where there was not a church for people to go to worship God so John Wesley had an idea. He would not wait for people to go to church, he would ride on his horse and go to their cities and villages and preach to them.

He knew that he could not get to everyone’s house by himself, so he asked his friends, Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, to ride their horses and tell the people about God too. They asked their friends to join and before long there were lots and lots of people riding horses and telling people about God! They were called “Circuit Riders.”

The job of Circuit Riders was difficult. They had to ride their horses through storms, through deep water, and if they got sick, there was no doctor to take care of them. It was a tiring and dangerous job! But the Circuit Riders loved God so much they were willing to do the work and they rode from town to town telling people about God’s love!

ACTIVITY

Have each child draw a house and then tape it to the wall of the room. Give them each a toy horse and let them make it ride from house to house telling the people at each home they are loved by God!

Prayer

Listen to the Wesley hymns CD and encourage the children to move while it plays. Give each child a streamer to dance with.

The Cross and Flame

SUPPLIES

Real candle and matches
A picture of the Cross and Flame symbol of The United Methodist Church
Butcher paper
Marker to draw cross with
Red tissue paper squares
Glue sticks

TIME OF WONDER

Invite the children to come to the United Methodist Story Circle, and help them gather around.

Turn out the lights. Light a real candle, and allow the children to look at the flame. Really, it's ok!

STORY TIME

Tell the children the story about the symbol of The United Methodist Church:

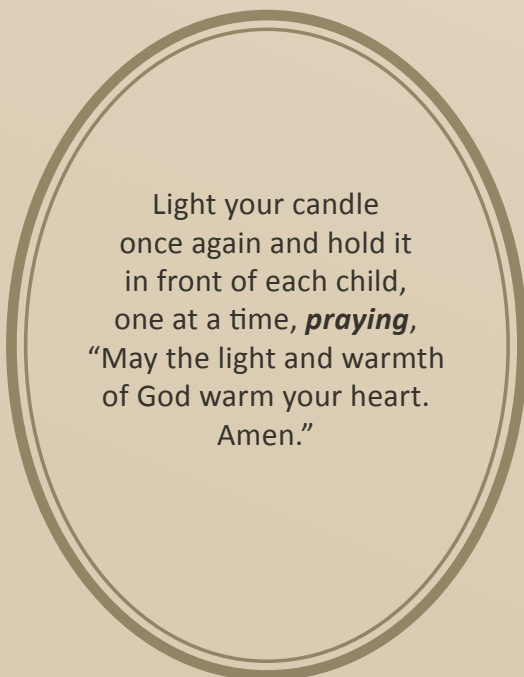
Once when John Wesley was riding on a boat there was a big storm! The people on the boat thought the storm was going to make the boat wreck or tip over. They were very afraid! On the boat were some very holy people. They were not afraid because they were praying and knew that God would take care of them. They were called Moravians.

John was very impressed with these holy people and he began to pray more and seek God's love! One night, he felt his heart burn with the love of God and said, "I felt my heart was strangely warmed by God and God's love."

The symbol of The United Methodist Church is a cross and flame (show them). It is a symbol of Jesus (the cross) and God's warm and special love that is always with us.

ACTIVITY

Using butcher paper or a large paper tablecloth draw a very large outline of the cross. Give the children small squares of tissue paper and help them glue the squares on the cross to make a preschool version of the Cross and Flame. Tape it to the wall after it dries.



Light your candle
once again and hold it
in front of each child,
one at a time, **praying**,
"May the light and warmth
of God warm your heart.
Amen."

Hymns of Wesley

SUPPLIES

Hymnals
A piano or some kind of instrument for them to try and play
2 paper plates per child
A stapler
Beans, a few per child (Be careful since beans could be a choking hazard!)

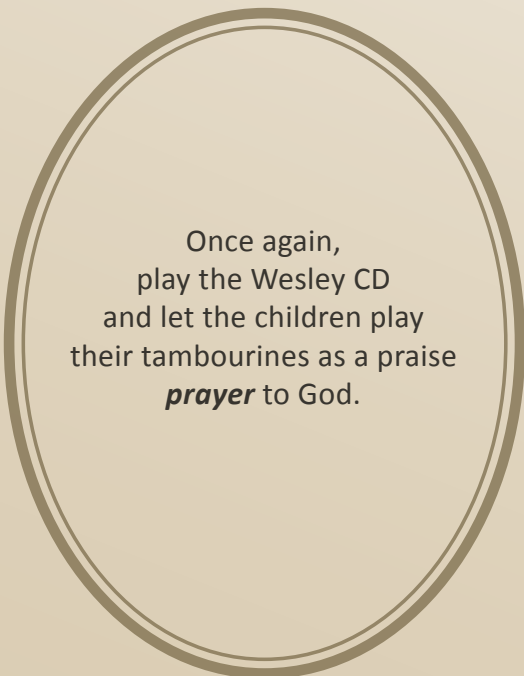
TIME OF WONDER

Invite the children to come to the United Methodist Story Circle, and help them gather around.

Have a hymnal and show them the songs inside. Show them the words and music. If you have a piano, let them take turns playing the keys. If not, try and bring some kind of instruments for them to play.

STORY TIME

John Wesley and his brother, Charles, used to write songs about God and teach them to other people. Some of those songs are in our hymnal and we still sing them in church.



Once again,
play the Wesley CD
and let the children play
their tambourines as a praise
prayer to God.

ACTIVITY

Using paper plates and a few beans, help the children make their own tambourines. Have them draw on the plates first and then staple them together with the beans inside.

Our United Methodist Church

SUPPLIES

Cut outs of the letters U-M-C
Pictures of people in the church
Symbols, including:
Cross
Cross and Flame
Dove
Christ candle
Bread
Chalice
Lamb
Water

TIME OF WONDER

Invite the children to come to the United Methodist Story Circle, and help them gather around.

Have the symbols and letters cut out and placed in a basket. Pull each cutout and picture out of the basket and see if the children recognize it. Help them if they do not know.

STORY TIME

Tell the children what each of the pictures or symbols represents. Then tell the children how they belong to a "United Methodist Church."

ACTIVITY

Take the children on a walk inside and outside of the church (weather permitting). Look for the words, "United Methodist Church," the Cross and Flame symbol, or the people or other symbols you showed them. They might be on the sign outside, on the bulletin, on a nametag, or on a banner. See how many of each you can find. After your walk, invite the children to gather back into a circle for the prayer.

Prayer

God, we thank you for (name
each child
in the circle),
and for John Wesley,
and for The
United Methodist Church.
Amen.

The Reverend Dr. Leanne Ciampa Hadley is an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church. She is the President and Founder of the First Steps Spirituality Center, www.1ststeps.net, which is dedicated to providing spiritual care to hurting children at no cost to the children or their families. It is also the mission of the center to provide training and workshops to adults who are interested in the spirituality of children and teens.

Leanne also serves as an associate pastor at First United Methodist Church, Colorado Springs, where she oversees and directs the children and families ministries.

In addition to working at the church and center, Leanne travels nationally and internationally leading retreats, workshops and training events about the spirituality of children and teens.

Leanne is the author of *Friends and Followers of the Bible I and II*, and *A Walk with God For Women*, Abingdon Press, and has been a contributing author to several other books including *365 Meditations for Mothers with Young Children*, and *365 Meditations for Mothers*, Dimensions Press, and *The Children's Worker's Encyclopedia of the Bible*, by Group Publishing. She has also created two videos, "Praying with Children" and "Creative Children's Sermons," produced by Cokesbury Publishing.

Her most recent book, *When You Pray as a Family*, authored by herself and Rueben P. Job, is available from Abingdon Press and the website www.BecomingAPrayingCongregation.com.
