



Growing in Faith

Christian Education Standards and Curriculum

A guide to home study and age-appropriate educational goals
for members at the Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow.



This booklet contains suggestions for age-appropriate learning to help children and families grow in the basics of Christian faith. The booklet is divided into sections by age or grade.

The church only has your children for a few hours each week. While the church can play a strong supporting role in the area of Christian Education, the primary responsibility of faith development in children lies with the family. Families should provide opportunities within the home for religious development. Numerous passages in scripture, creeds and confessions, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s *Book of Order* encourage parents and families to nurture their children's faith.

The purpose of this booklet is not to create a competitive or pass/fail approach to Christian Education; it is simply a guide. Children learn at different speeds and in different ways. Sunday School teachers may use this booklet to supplement curriculum.

Tips for Using This Booklet:

- Keep a Bible handy.
- Plan regular encounters that build on previous sessions.
- Each section relies on information from the previous sections. Regardless of the age of the student, start at the beginning. Move forward at your own pace.



Two and Three Years Old

Scripture Verse

1 John 4:15 “God is love.”

Bible Use

Children identify the Bible as a special book. The Bible tells us about God and God’s love for creation (including us!).

Worship

Children bring offerings to church.
Children learn to whisper in church.
Children attend nursery or Sunday School.

Presbyterian Beliefs and Traditions

Children identify the cross as a symbol of both the church and God.

Family Worship

Families use simple table graces. (See Appendix A)
Families use simple evening prayers. (See Appendix B)
Children learn and sing “Jesus Loves Me” and other simple church songs.
Families establish meaningful Christian holiday celebrations.
Families read a story Bible with pictures.

Faith Conversations

Parents tell children about going to church when they were little.
Families read books telling biblical stories.
Families listen to Christian music (hymns, simple children’s songs, etc.) in the car.
Families watch videos telling biblical stories.

Family Service Projects

Families discuss sharing. Pick out a toy to share with or give to another child.
Children help with recycling at home.



Four and Five Years Old (in addition to previous material)

Scripture Verse

- Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
Psalm 118:24 “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”
Luke 6:31 “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”
1 John 4:19 “We love because God first loved us.”

Bible Use

Children identify two parts of the Bible: Old Testament and New Testament.

Children retell simple biblical stories like the creation (Genesis 6-8), David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17), Jonah and the whale (John 1-2), Christmas story (Luke 1-2), and Easter story (end of any Gospel). Picture books may help the retelling.

Worship

- Children sit through worship occasionally.
- Children use activity bags in worship.
- Children help hold hymnals with their families.
- Children sing the *Gloria Patri* and *Doxology*.
- Children say the Lord’s Prayer.

Presbyterian Beliefs and Traditions

- Children know the name of our congregation.
- Children know the name of the pastor.
- Children learn that “Christian” means someone who loves Jesus and wants to follow him.

Family Worship

- Families use simple table graces. (See Appendix A)
- Families use simple evening prayers. (See Appendix B)
- Children learn and sing simple church songs.
- Families continue meaningful Christian holiday celebrations.
- Families read the Bible together.

Faith Conversations

- Parents ask children about the Sunday School lesson.
- Families discuss where they see God and God’s love in their lives and the world.

Families go on a nature walk or hike and discuss God's creation.
Parents ask children about their questions about God.

Family Service Projects

Families sort through unused and out-grown clothes and possessions. Donate to a shelter or other community organization.

Children pick out non-perishable groceries for a food bank.

Children help parents with service project at church – weeding gardens, serving coffee hour, greeting on Sunday mornings, etc.



First and Second Grades (in addition to previous material)

Scripture Verse

Psalms 136:1 “O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good, for God's steadfast love endures forever.”

Mark 12:28b-31 “Which commandment is the greatest of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.’”

Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me.”

1 John 4:7-8 “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

Bible Use

Children locate key books in the Bible: Genesis, Psalms, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Children retell more biblical stories like the calling of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12), Moses (Exodus 2, 3, 20 and 32), specific events in Jesus' life (baptism, calling the disciples, etc.).

Worship

Parents assist children following the bulletin.

Children read congregational prayers and parts of worship.

Children learn the Apostles' Creed.

Presbyterian Beliefs and Traditions

Children identify baptism and communion as sacraments (or special acts).

Children identify physical parts of church (pulpit, communion table, pew, parament, etc.).

Children begin to explore “church” as the people, not just a building.

Family Worship

Families use simple table graces. (See Appendix A)

Families use simple evening prayers. (See Appendix B)

Families discuss prayer concerns.

Children lead prayers.

Faith Conversations

Families discuss what God is like.

Parents talk about their favorite bible stories, and the difficult bible stories.

Families discuss things they hear and see that are at odds with or do not represent what they believe.

Family Service Projects

Children make holiday decorations or cards to share with homebound church members.

Families serve in soup kitchen or food ministry together.

Families spend time picking up litter around their neighborhood or in a nearby park.



Third and Fourth Grades (in addition to previous material)

Scripture Verse

Exodus 20 The Ten Commandments

Psalms 23 Shepherding God

Micah 6:8 Requirements for faithful living

Matthew 25:40 Caring for the least of these

Romans 8:38-39 Nothing separates creation from God’s love

Galatians 5:22 Fruits of the Spirit

Bible Use

Children should have their own Bible to read as they choose.

Children differentiate between the Old and New Testaments.
Children learn the notation of Bible references and look up particular passages.
Children discuss the role of the prophets in the Old Testament, foretelling of the Messiah.
Children learn about parables, and distinguish between historical events and parables.

Worship

Children sing from the hymnal.
Children recite from memory regular parts of worship (*Gloria Patri, Doxology, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, etc.*).
Children learn "church words" for parts of worship: prelude, introit, confession, etc.

Presbyterian Beliefs and Traditions

Children identify Christian symbols: fish, dove, flame, crown, butterfly, Alpha, Omega, PC(U.S.A.) seal, etc.
Children discuss the seasons in the church year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost.

Family Worship

Families use simple table graces. (See Appendix A)
Families use simple evening prayers. (See Appendix B)
Children share prayer concerns and pray aloud together.

Faith Conversations

Families discuss how faith affects all aspects of life.
Parents encourage kindness and compassion towards those who are different.
Families discuss temptations and negative behaviors like jealousy, revenge, selfishness.

Family Service Projects

Families visit a homebound congregation member each month.
Families forego a larger Christmas for themselves in order to assist a needy family or organization.



Fifth and Sixth Grades
(in addition to previous material)

Scripture Verse

Ruth	Jesus' family tree
Psalm 100	Make a joyful noise
Isaiah 40:8	God's Word
Matthew 5:3-11	The Beatitudes
John 1:1-5	Christian creation story
Ephesians 4:4-6	Unity in the body of Christ

Bible Use

Children learn the order of books in the Old and New Testaments.
Children read an entire book of the Bible.

Worship

Children participate fully in worship.
Family discusses worship (sermon, prayers, hymns, etc.) at home.

Presbyterian Beliefs and Traditions

Children learn more theological language: Trinity, stewardship, grace.
Children learn the political structure of the church: deacons, elders, Session, presbytery, etc.

Family Worship

Families use simple table graces. (See Appendix A)
Families use simple evening prayers. (See Appendix B)
Families share prayer concerns and pray aloud together.

Faith Conversations

Families discuss how other people's faith may differ from their own, especially for students in school.

Family Service Projects

Families do yard work for homebound church members.
Families educate and advocate around a particular political/social issue with implications on faith.



Middle School
(in addition to previous material)

Students interpret the Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, and other common elements in worship and faith.

Students explain the sacraments of baptism and communion.

Students explain the general narrative structure of the Bible – from creation to Easter.

Students actively participate in worship, fellowship, mission, stewardship, and other areas of church life.

Students reflect on any given passage of scripture. What does it mean? Why is it important? How does this describe God? How does this describe the people of God?

Students learn church history: early church, medieval period, reformation, American.

Students attend a presbytery meeting.

Students participate in an ongoing mission project in our local community (with church or family).

Students demonstrate recognition and exploration of their own faith life apart from family or church.



High School
(in addition to previous material)

Students demonstrate growing faith through meaningful interpretation of scripture and application to their lives and contemporary issues.

Students develop trust, security, and confidence in facing problems with the help of God, through prayer and people.

Students differentiate between denominations and other religions.

Students develop stewardship practices of time, talents, possessions, and other resources.

Students develop a deepening desire for genuine worship experiences and fully participate in personal and communal devotions.



Adult Education
(in addition to previous material)

Adults are biblical grounded – continuing to learn about scripture, reflecting on who God is, and who God is calling them to be.

Adults are historically informed – attentive to our particular tradition in the larger theologically reformed and protestant family.

Adults are socially engaged – understanding that discipleship necessitates a concern for and participation with the struggles of creation.

Adults are communally nurtured – actively participating in the church's worship, educational, missional, fellowship, stewardship, and other areas of ministry.

Appendix A Table Blessings and Graces

Come, dear Jesus, be our guest. Bless this food to our health and thy glory. Amen.

Without Thy sunshine and Thy rain, we would not have the golden grain.
Without Thy love we'd not be fed; we thank Thee for our daily bread. Amen.

God is great. God is good. Let us thank him [or God] for our food. By his [or God's] hands we all are fed.
Give us, Lord, our daily bread. Amen.

Sung to the "Jeopardy" theme song:

God is great, and God is good. Let us thank him [or God] for our food. By his [or God's] hands we all are fed. Give us, Lord, our daily bread. Amen.

Appendix B Evening Prayers

Our Father in heaven, hallow'd be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.
Amen. ¹

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen.

As I close my eyes tonight, keep me, God, within your sight. Bless those whom I know and love. Bring us safe to heav'n above. Amen.

God our shepherd, you have brought us through this day to a time of reflection and rest.
Calm our souls, and refresh us with your peace.
Keep us close to Christ and draw us closer to one another in the bonds of his wondrous love.
We pray through Christ our Lord. **Amen.** ²

To you, O God we give up the burdens of this day, trusting your love and mercy.
To you, O God, we surrender ourselves, trusting our risen Lord to lead us always in the way of peace, today, tomorrow, and forever. **Amen.** ³

¹ The ecumenical version of the Lord's Prayer is more easily used by children.

² from the *Book of Common Worship*, Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.

³ *Ibid.*