

Welcome & Prepare Leader (Gathering in God's Grace)

Purpose: To help the children feel welcome and comfortable, that they belong, and to encourage the children to grow in their life of prayer. To begin the transition into sacred time and holy space for the coming hour gathered together.

Each team member will read the Scripture, the lesson, and spend time in prayer prior to arriving to lead the children on Sunday. The person your team has chosen to serve as Team Initiator communicates with all of the adults so that everyone on the team knows the general plan and Scripture theme for the lesson. This way each component of the lesson – ABCD – is in harmony and each adult has a meaningful role to play so that the children can hear how God may be speaking to them.

Remember that our **Sunday School teaching starts as the first child walks into the room.**

As you begin to talk about prayer, use positive encouragement for each child's contribution, receiving it as a gift. Make each one a special part of your community of prayer. Encourage children to participate in their own ways. For some children, this means observing and listening.

Some ways of introducing prayer practices include:

Prayer Journal: This is a journal where prayer requests are recorded on a weekly basis. Be sure to go back to the previous week or past few week's of prayer requests and touch base with the children who have made those prayer requests. Record these updates. You may wish to have the children join you in making a prayer journal for the whole class.

Ignatian Examen: Sharing of Pows and Wows (or Joys and Concerns) Or Glads and Sads: Ask the children to share joys and concerns from the week. Most children will participate willingly because who doesn't like to talk about themselves! This is a great introductory way of leading the children into deeper and richer prayers. This also helps you and the other children to get to know each other better and encourages the strength of your Sunday School community (this is called intimacy!). You may want to combine this with the receiving of weekly offering, a way of "offering to God our prayers and offerings."

Shared prayer time: Most children, given the opportunity, enjoy praying in a group once they feel comfortable. For older children you may wish to have shared prayer time by placing prayer requests on an index card and distributing the index cards to individuals in the group. One teacher may open the prayer time then allow time for the children to pray for the individual prayer request on their index card, then have another teacher close the prayer. For younger children you may want to use a "talking stick" prayer time. Use an object such as a ball and pass it around. The person who is holding the "talking stick" has the opportunity to share a joy or concern. If you have nothing to say you pass the "stick."

ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication (for others). Children of all ages can begin to learn the method of prayer that Jesus taught us.

The important thing to remember is that this is an opportunity to encourage the children in your group to grow in their prayer life. You may choose a different way of doing this each week, or you may settle on one way for each week. Whatever method you choose it is important that the children in

your class feel a strong sense of value and belonging so that they may continue to grow deeper and richer in their life of prayer.

Prayers do not have to be elaborate; they can be simple sentence prayers.
Use a Prayer starter cube to help vary the kinds of prayers offered each week by randomizing them.

A

Prayers of Adoration: Prayers that show God how much you love and praise Him.
This kind of prayer addresses God's wondrous acts in our lives.

C

Prayers of Confession: Tell God your mistakes and ask God for forgiveness. The Bible teaches us that we need to request forgiveness from those we have injured and from God. God's mercy is abundant when repentance is shown.

T

Prayers of Thanksgiving: Thank God for everything He has done for you and for all the good gifts given to you.
This kind of prayer comes naturally to most children.

S

Prayers of Supplication: Prayers for those in need, including family, friends and your own needs.
It is acceptable to ask for our needs to be heard, as well as the needs of others. Help children understand that sometimes God may answer "no". God's plan for our lives is always good.

Ways to use the Prayer Cube

1. Leader rolls the cube and everyone does that kind of sentence prayer around the circle.
Always offer the option to pass if you do this kind of prayer.
2. Each person rolls and completes the sentence on the top of the dice.
3. Volunteer rolls the cube and group does a group prayer that reflects the prayer rolled.
Group prayers can be a popcorn prayer * or an around the circle** prayer.

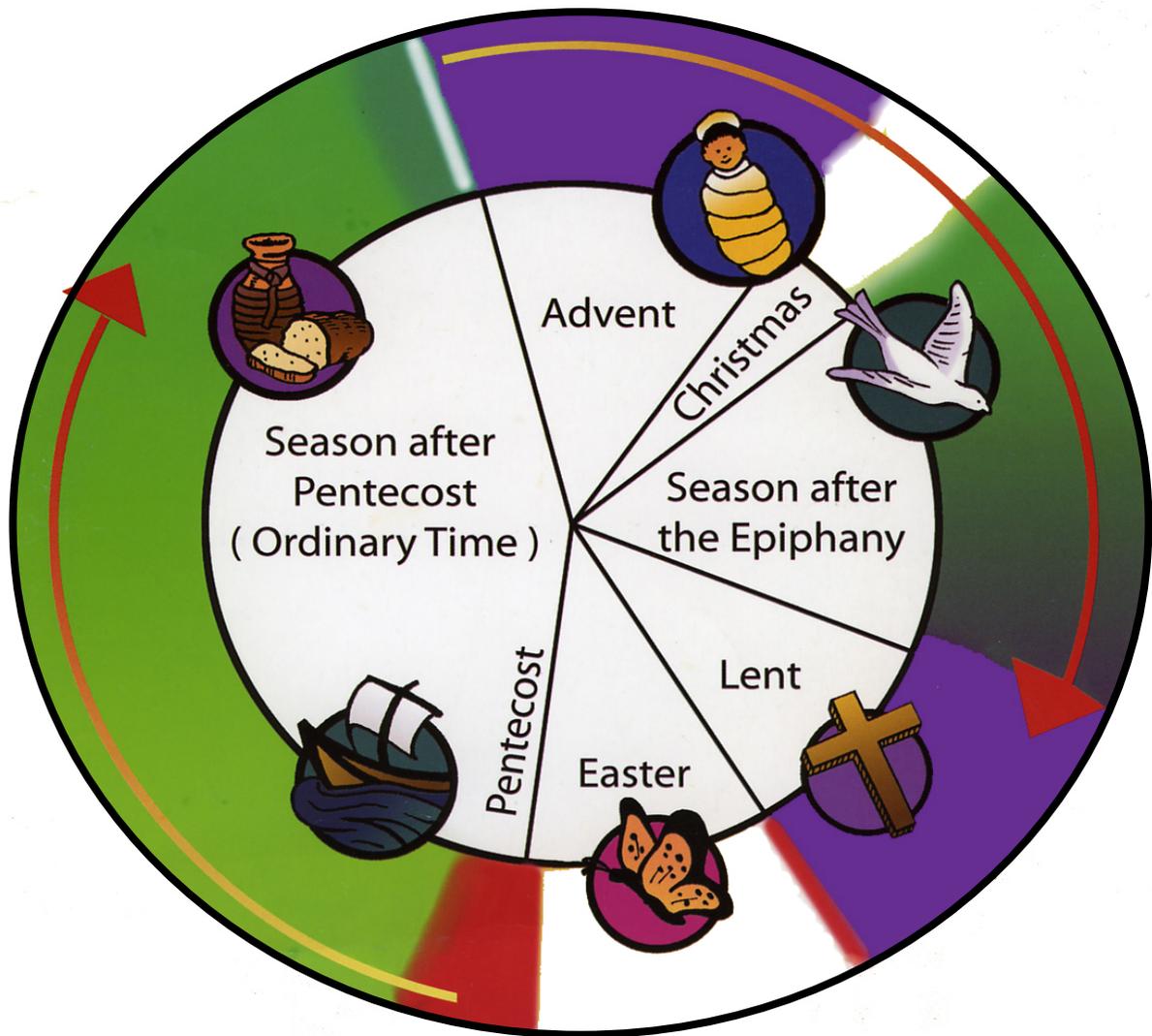
***Popcorn prayer:** silence is offered and as people feel led, they say their prayer (volunteers “pop” up-thus the name)

****Around the circle prayer.** Class members and leaders hold hands in a circle. One person starts the prayer and when they are done, they gently squeeze the hand of the person beside them who says her/his prayer, then squeezes their neighbors hand, etc around the circle. If someone chooses to pass, they simply squeeze the hand of their neighbor to signal they are passing.

Assembly Prayer:

Come together, joining hands and hearts.
Let our hands be links of a chain which hold our lives together –
Not a chain of bondage but a silver cord of strength,
a ribbon of love and faith and community,
Giving us slack to sail the wind,
yet holding us in a mystical embrace,
That we may be alone, but never lonely,
That we may be together, but never lost in the crowd,
That we may be one without forfeiting uniqueness.
Come together, joining hands and hearts,
And let the Spirit of God and the human spirit flow in each one and through us all
As we gather here to share this time and space
And as we walk together on the journey. *John W. Howell*

Seasons of the Church Year Chart



Meaning of the colors

Green-Color of growth

White-color of celebration

Red- color representing the Holy Spirit and passion.

Purple-color of royalty as we invite God to be King of our lives.