

Age-level Characteristics and Foundational Goals*

Preschool Ages 3, 4, 5

Characteristics:

- Nonreaders
- Imaginative and creative
- Attention span of 10–15 minutes
- Active learners; playing is learning
- Learning to share with peers and take turns
- Growing fine motor skills for cutting and coloring
- Self-absorbed; cannot imagine others' points of views

General Learning Goals:

- To know that God loves the child
- To know that all people are loved by God
- To experience the church as a safe, loving place
- To recognize key Bible persons by name
- To say key words of the worship service

Younger Elementary—Kindergarten, First, Second Grades

Characteristics:

Early readers

Like group work

Want to please and belong

Learning to write and understand story sequencing

Love to move and be in story

Intuitive thinking based on observation and experience

General Learning Goals:

To know the names, colors, and some symbols of the church year

To begin to explore the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

To gain confidence in praying both in a group setting and personally

To understand that God creates the world and expects us to take care of it

To begin to connect stories of Jesus and acts of worship and service

To experience (indirectly) concepts of Reformed theology and practice

Older Elementary—Third, Fourth, Fifth Grades

Characteristics:

Ready for Bible skills

Friends are vital

Readers; performance and self-identity tied together

Growing theological vocabulary and questions

See the world in terms of moral judgment and fairness

Able to accept responsibility for own actions
Longer attention span but still willing and wanting to move

General Learning Goals:

To begin to master Bible study skills
To begin to explore concepts of Reformed theology and practice
To explore promises Christians make to God and to one another
To memorize key words for the liturgy
To assume a more visible, active role in the worship and service life of the church

Multiage—Kindergarten through Fifth Grades

Characteristics:

See younger and older elementary characteristics previously listed

General Learning Goals:

To know that God has gifted each of us with unique abilities
To encounter and explore key Bible stories and begin to make connections with life in Christ
To become active participants in the worship and service life of the church
To practice love of God and love of neighbor in our actions and our words

Tweens and Younger Youth—Eleven to Thirteen

Characteristics:

Full of energy
Bring some knowledge of Bible, but that knowledge varies widely
Can begin to work with historical information, thus can now consider a survey course
Come with some, but varying, experiences of church and worship
Enjoy learning by doing, but their interests will vary

General Learning Goals: (Depend on survey courses offered.)

To become familiar with basic foundational stories of the Old and New Testaments
To learn the major themes of the Bible through an overview course
To become familiar with Christian, Reformed, Presbyterian Church history
To explore the meaning and responsibilities of church membership
To have the opportunity to reaffirm their baptism and make a public profession of faith through confirmation

Older Youth—Fourteen to Seventeen

Characteristics: (Most, but not all teens in 2013)

See life in optimistic, confident, and positive terms
Follow rules willingly
Work well in teams
Accept authority

Respond well to challenges and high expectations
Embrace Christianity in conventional, matter-of-fact terms
Are overscheduled and pressured by school, friends, and family concerns
Vary in ability to think abstractly
Want to belong and be a part of things
Fear looking stupid or too different

General Learning Goals:

To introduce biblical metaphors and imagery
To engage in a wide range of theological questions
To create a classroom that is safe and shows openness to listen to their opinions
To provide for sacred moments
To help them identify and learn to value the gifts God has given them
To channel their gifts for service to the church community and world

*From denominational curricula
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