

Years of Wonder

The Years of Wonder program has been created by clergy and teachers in the Children, Youth, and Family Ministry. It is designed to offer progressive Christian formation to children aged three to eleven. We currently offer a class for children aged three to six and another for children aged seven to eleven.

What we teach and how we teach it:

Years of Wonder is designed to support children in their individual faith journeys, while also introducing them to the corporate worship experiences and traditions of the Episcopal Church.

Our lesson plans follow the weekly schedule of Bible readings. Most weeks, we hear the same stories from scripture that parents are receiving in "Big Church". In this way, we anticipate families may continue the conversation about what they have heard and how they have responded together.

Our curriculum is rich in Episcopal practices. We learn about the seasons that shape the church year, and how we recognize them through colors and other signs. We learn about the saints and prophets who shape our faith and show us the way. We also contemplate the justice issues Episcopalians are called to respond to, from creation care to creating a beloved community.

Our work is informed by our joyous belief that each child has a wondrous flame of spirituality burning within them. Our role is to kindle and nurture this flame, providing the tools that will help each child shine their light on the world!

We invite children to wonder about the stories they are hearing and to pose questions. We combine storytelling and wondering with activities that encourage children to respond to what they have heard using their own written and visual language. Through this, children continue to develop their spiritual vocabulary and capacity to communicate their thoughts to others and prayers to God.

Weekly structure and timing:

- 10:45 – 11:15 am: We gather in the Family Seating area. Children may participate in drawing, coloring, or other activities that serve as preparation for the lesson of the day.
- 11:15 am: During the psalm that follows the first Scripture reading, we process to our teaching room.
- 11:45 am: We return for Holy Communion. Children are encouraged to participate in the sung and spoken parts of the service prior to receiving Holy Communion with their families.
- Noon: When children have received communion, we provide the option of going outside for social time and a snack. We offer this as an opportunity for children to experience community, build their own peer relationships and stretch their legs!



FAQs about The Years of Wonder

When does the Years of Wonder program run?

The program runs through the year. We encourage children to worship with families on key dates of the church calendar, including Christmas and Easter Day. We also pause to observe certain holidays, including the Memorial Day weekend.

What curriculum do you use?

We draw from sources including Spark Bible Stories, the Episcopal Church's Lesson Plans that Work, and Godly Play. Our justice lessons are drawn from resources endorsed by the Episcopal Church for creation care and racial reconciliation.

How can my child participate?

Children can participate simply by presenting at church! We ask parents to complete a registration form prior to their child's first session (this can be done on the morning of the first class).

At what age can my child join?

We invite children to join us for class time when they are three years old. Children younger than three are invited to use resources in the Family Seating area in preparation for their joining us, including coloring materials and readers.

When can parents join the classes?

Parents can be present to watch at any point.

How can we build on what our child learns on Sunday?

Our schedule includes a follow-up question that parents can ask their children each week. These can be handy ways to begin or extend a conversation!

Other resources include:

- Growing with Grace: We have created a series of videos for young children, which can be watched on our YouTube channel.
- A children's bible: We use the Spark Story Bible for younger children and the Deep Blue Kids' Bible for older children.
- A calendar of the church year: There are a number of beautiful images of the liturgical calendar available that show the colors of the seasons. You can find a number online through a search for "images episcopal liturgical calendar". Older children may enjoy the Churchman's Ordo.
- Daily prayer resources: There are many excellent collections available, including [Common Prayer for Children and Families](#), co-authored by the Rev. Timothy Seamans of the Cathedral Boys' School.

What is available for children and youth after the Years of Wonder program?

Our youth participate in our flourishing youth group. There are also opportunities for them to serve as acolytes in our worship service, and to support our children's activities as peer leaders.

How do I learn more?

Steph McNally is the Formation Program Manager, and you can reach her at stephm@gracecathedral.org! We'd love to hear from you!

