

**Children's Time Resources
for use with the Church of the Brethren Vision Statement**

Through Scripture, Jesus calls us
to live as courageous disciples by word and action:
To surrender ourselves to God,
To embrace one another,
To express God's love for all creation.

Overview : These resources are intended to be used during a 5-8 minute Children's Time in the midst of a multi-generational worship service. They would need to be significantly expanded to serve as the basis of a Sunday School class or Children's Church time. This will be most appropriate for ages 4-8 (early elementary age) but the story teller should feel free to adapt it for her or his own context. There are resources for five Sundays here; they do not need to use the same story teller each Sunday.

What is provided here is an outline, or framework, not a script. These resources were created with the other worship resources (Call to Worship, Invocation, Confession, sermon starters, visuals) in mind, but they can stand alone, too. Each Sunday takes one clause of the Vision Statement, and the fifth Sunday is an overview of the whole. Each week includes the following:

*A summary of the material for the storyteller

*A visual, interactive element to use with the children

*A short Bible verse: it may be printed on a piece of paper as a verse for the week. I have used the NRSV translation; some verses have been abridged.

*A prayer to say with the children (and adults)

WEEK ONE February 26 Words and Wings

Prepare in advance: 8 ½ x 11 piece of plain white paper, folded in the middle
Printed Bible verse, if desired; light blue paper will match visuals.

The storyteller begins with a plain white piece of 8 ½ x 11 paper, folded in the middle like a book. Hold it fold down, like a book, and ask the children what it looks like. If this had lots of pages, it would look like a book. What do we read about in books? (*Stories, school assignments, recipes, etc.*) Now hold the paper by the fold and move it up and down so the pages 'flap.' What does it look like now? (*A bird, a butterfly, etc.*) Now, instead of a book, this looks like something that can fly. There is a book that is very special to the Church of the Brethren and to all Christians. It's not just any old book (*demonstrate with paper*), it's a book that can help you fly (*flap pages*). Here's how: the Bible is a book that includes laws that tell us the way to live. But it's also a book that has stories and letters and dreams: dreams of how God wants the world to be. Brethren especially like the stories about Jesus, and how Jesus taught people to love God and love each other. Jesus didn't just tell people what to do, he lived so that they could see what God's dream for the world looks like: he respected the law, he healed people, he made friends with people that nobody else cared about, and he didn't hurt other people, even when they hurt him. Jesus was a very brave person. The Bible invites us to be like Jesus and to be

brave in the ways that Jesus was brave. When we read the words in the Bible, we remember what Jesus wants us to do, but when we live the way Jesus did, we are helping God's dream to happen. That's how we can help other people to fly.

Verse: Those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, are not hearers who forget, but doers who act. James 1:25

Prayer: Dear God, help us to follow Jesus in all that we do,
to trust in You, to love each other,
and to care for your world. Amen.

WEEK TWO: March 4 *Settling and Trusting*

Prepare in advance: Narrow, straight-sided jar with lid (an olive jar works well) filled with 2/3 water and 1/3 glycerin (available at drugstores), approx 1 t. colored glitter. Or a snow globe

Printed Bible verse, if desired; lavender paper will match visuals.

Show the children the jar with the glitter or snow globe; ask if one or more of the children wants to shake it up. The glycerin suspends the glitter so it settles slowly. Hold the jar so all the children can see it. Look at all the glitter swirling around. Do you ever feel all stirred up like this? Like there are a million thoughts or feelings all floating around inside you? If you're worried about something, you can feel like you just can't settle down. Are there things you worry about? (*School, friends, people in your family*) Adults worry, too. Sometimes we worry about things we can change, like whether we did something our parents asked us to, but often we worry about things that we don't know how to change, like if your grandma is sick and you don't know if she'll get better. God understands that we care about people, but God knows there are things that we can't change. The good news is that God knows things that we don't know, and understands things that we can't understand. If we can be still long enough to let our worries settle down, (*the glitter should be toward the bottom of the jar by now*) we might be able to see that God is with us, and we might even be able to see what God is doing. Being still means trusting that God can take care of things we don't understand.

Verse: Be still, and know that I am God! Psalm 46:10

Prayer: Dear God, help us to follow Jesus in all that we do,
to trust in You, to love each other,
and to care for your world. Amen.

WEEK THREE: March 11 *Expanding and Embracing*

Prepare in advance: Three to five circles, cut out of different colors of paper, 2-3" diameter to 12-15" diameter.

Printed Bible verse, if desired; yellow paper will match visuals.

We're all part of different groups of people. Some of those are small groups—like this little circle, and some are big groups—like this big circle. What are some of the groups you're a part

of *(family, church, teams, etc.)* What are some small groups? What are some big groups? What are *really* big groups? Sometimes you're part of a couple groups at the same time. For instance, my family is a part of this church, and we're all Christians: that's a big circle! *(illustrate with various circles)* But not all our circles fit together. Maybe you have a lot of friends who don't go to this church. Maybe some of them don't go to church at all. Sometimes our circles touch, but they don't fit inside each other. *(illustrate with various circles)* But no matter how we arrange these circles, how many different ones there are, or how they fit together, there is a circle that's big enough to hold them all. It's so big I couldn't even fit it inside this church. It's the circle of God's love. It's a circle that's like your mom or dad or grandma or grandpa giving you a big hug. It doesn't matter what little or big circle we're a part of, God holds us together as brothers and sisters. Because we're all included in God's love, we can love each other even when we're part of different groups.

Verse: Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11

Prayer: Dear God, help us to follow Jesus in all that we do,
to trust in You, to love each other,
and to care for your world. Amen.

WEEK FOUR: March 18 *Caring and Sharing*

Prepare in advance: Grapes or other fruit; enough for each child to have a serving

Printed Bible verse, if desired; green paper will match visuals

I brought a snack with me today; I hope you guys like *(grapes, apples, whatever)* Who do you think these grapes belong to? *(various—could lead to interesting reflection. Hopefully someone will think they belong to the story teller)* Actually, these grapes aren't mine. I didn't plant them or water them or make them grow or pick them. Somebody *(could specify pastor or director of Christian Ed)* bought them at the store so that I could give them to you. But I don't think I'll give them to everybody—maybe just a few people. That way I'll have more for myself. How does that sound? *(Hopefully, someone will protest that this isn't fair.)* Maybe I should keep them all and end this story so I don't have to listen to you complain. *(More protest, hopefully)* I guess there will be if we all take some; but it means nobody can have a whole bunch for themselves. *(Distribute fruit)* While you're eating, I want to remind you of something I said earlier. These aren't my grapes. Someone else gave them to me so I could share them with you. Many people have good things: plenty of food, enough clothes, a place to live. But not everyone. When I keep more than I need, someone else might not have enough. That's not fair, is it? Because the good things we have, those are things that God wants everyone to have so that nobody is hungry, without clothing, or homeless. When we are careful with the good things God has given us, then there can be enough for our neighbors, too.

Verse: Everyone will sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one will make them afraid. Micah 4:4

Prayer: Dear God, help us to follow Jesus in all that we do,
to trust in You, to love each other,
and to care for your world. Amen.

WEEK FIVE: March 25 *Seeing and Being*

Prepare in advance: A “vision” chart, black letters on white poster board. Something like this:



**G O D
J E S U S
H O L Y S P I R I T
S C R I P T U R E S
C O M M U N I T Y**

Printed Bible verse, if desired; any color paper will work

Do any of you wear glasses? If you do, there was probably someone who tested your vision. You might have been asked to look at letters on a chart kind of like this one. It’s a way to test if you’re seeing clearly or not. Most vision charts don’t have words, but this chart does. Can you read any of these? The top line isn’t a word at all, it’s a symbol. What is it (*cross, symbol of Jesus, crucifixion*) Can you read any of the other words? (*adults can help*) These are also things that can help test our vision: to find out if we’re seeing clearly. These are words, but just learning to read these words is not enough. We need seeing and being. We follow Jesus when we try to live the way Jesus taught us; we honor God with worship, praise, and respect for God’s creation; the Holy Spirit guides us and helps us dream God’s dream; the Scriptures are the words which teach us; and community is the group of people who works together and takes care of each other. Whew! That’s a lot for just a few words. It’s OK if you don’t understand this all—the adults are still working on it. The important thing is that we keep working on it together, and keep testing our vision. As long as we can see Jesus, and are trying to follow him, we’ll be going in the right direction.

Verse: Let us look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Hebrews 12:2