

**Important Dates****May 26:**
Trinity Sunday**June 14:**
Flag Day**June 18:**
Father's Day**July 4:**
Independence Day

Celebrate Flag Day

It all started on the morning of September 26, 1897. It was Rally Day for the Sunday school at Brighton Chapel in Coney Island, New York. A favored guest speaker was expected that day, but had not arrived. Superintendent Charles C. Overton spoke an impromptu emergency speech. An American flag lay across the pulpit. Next came the thought: *Why not also a Christian flag?* He then went on to outline the following.

Probably drawing on the design of the flag he was looking at, Overton verbally designed a flag with a white background. The white represents purity, peace, and forgiveness. The blue canton (the upper left-hand corner) represents faith and truth. Centered on the blue canton is a red cross. Red is the color of sacrifice. In this case, the red cross calls to mind the blood shed by Christ on Calvary.

The Christian flag is the only free flag in the world. It is different from every other flag, religious or secular, ancient or modern. It is

uncontrolled, independent, and universal. Unlike all national flags and denominational flags of various churches, the Christian flag has no earthly bonds or allegiances. Christ and Christ alone is its master. Without limitation, it exists for all the world's people regardless of sex, race, national boundary, economic condition, affluence or poverty, politics, slavery, or freedom. It cannot be restricted by any nation or denomination. This unique, universal quality makes it like the air we breathe, belonging to all and yet owned by none. For those who want it, wherever and whenever, it is freely theirs.

The pledge to the Christian flag was written by Methodist pastor Lynn Harold Hough in 1908. There is also a hymn "The Christian Flag," with words by Fanny Crosby and music by R. Huntington Woodman, written in 1903.



**I pledge allegiance to the Christian Flag
and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands.
One brotherhood, uniting all mankind,
in service and love.
—The pledge to the Christian flag**



Worship

Through the Eyes of Little Children

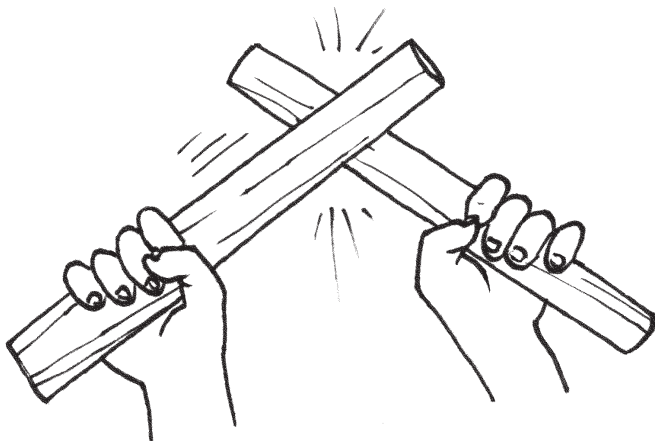
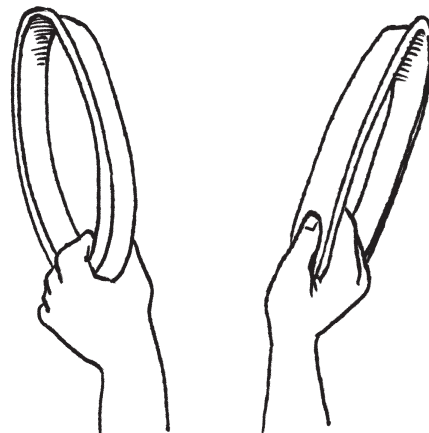
Adapt these activities for your toddlers, preschoolers, and early elementary students. Consider sending them home for families to use together.

I've Got Rhythm—I Will Worship

Let children worship in class with music during the entire quarter! Create a box of rhythm instruments your class can use with the music. In class, let the children use the instruments by playing along with a praise audio track or a worship time. For older students, read a Psalm, such as Psalm 150 from a children's Bible. Let the children accompany the reading with their instruments. You will want to adapt the instruments for the ages of your children. Maybe an older class can help with making the instruments. Here are a few simple instruments to make:

Cymbals:

Recycle old tin pie pans into cymbals. Children can hold the pans by the rims and bang the bottoms together. Check out garage sales, flea markets, or second-hand stores for the tins.



Rhythm Sticks:

Make sets of sticks by cutting 1" dowels into 12" lengths. Lightly sand all the edges and paint. For a different sound, paint four lightly-sanded paint sticks on one side and all four edges. After the paint has dried, glue the unpainted sides together to create two rhythm sticks. Children can make different sounds by tapping the sticks together in different ways.

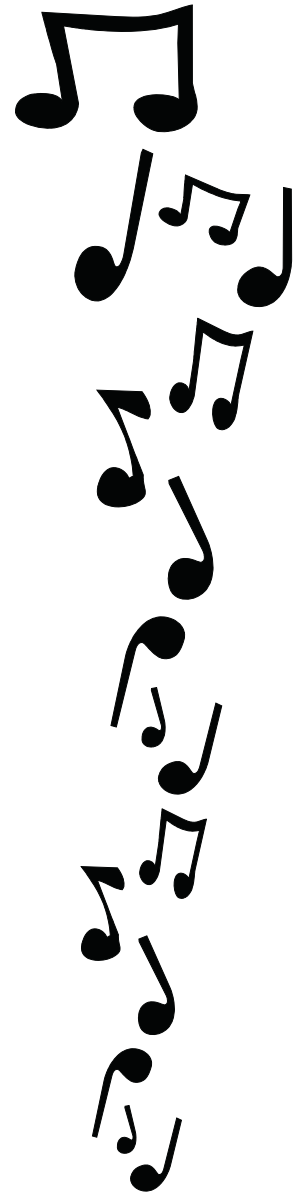


Drums:

Use cylindrical oatmeal boxes, recycled tear-resistant envelopes (found at the post office or office supply stores), and duct tape to make wonderful drums.

Remove the lid from the box. Use a craft knife to cut out the bottom of

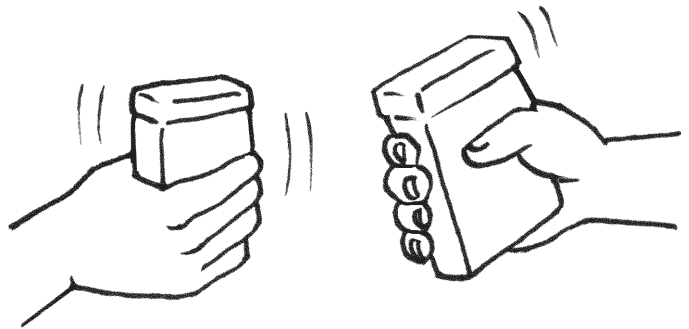
the box. Center the lid on the envelope and trace around it. Carefully cut out the circle you traced, adding two inches all the way around. Center the cutout circle over the top of the box. Attach one side using a two-inch piece of duct tape. Stretch the materials tightly over the box opening and attach with another piece of tape directly across from the first piece. Tape the circle down the same way while working around the circle using a total of eight pieces of tape. Use a long piece of duct tape to secure the edge of the circle around the entire box. Decorate the box with wrapping paper. Use dowels or hands as drumsticks.



Maracas (Shakers):

For older students, pour small stones, beans, or rice into metal or plastic adhesive bandage boxes. Seal the boxes with duct tape. For toddlers, use small containers with tight fitting lids, rice, and epoxy. (Follow all the directions and precautions on the epoxy label carefully.)

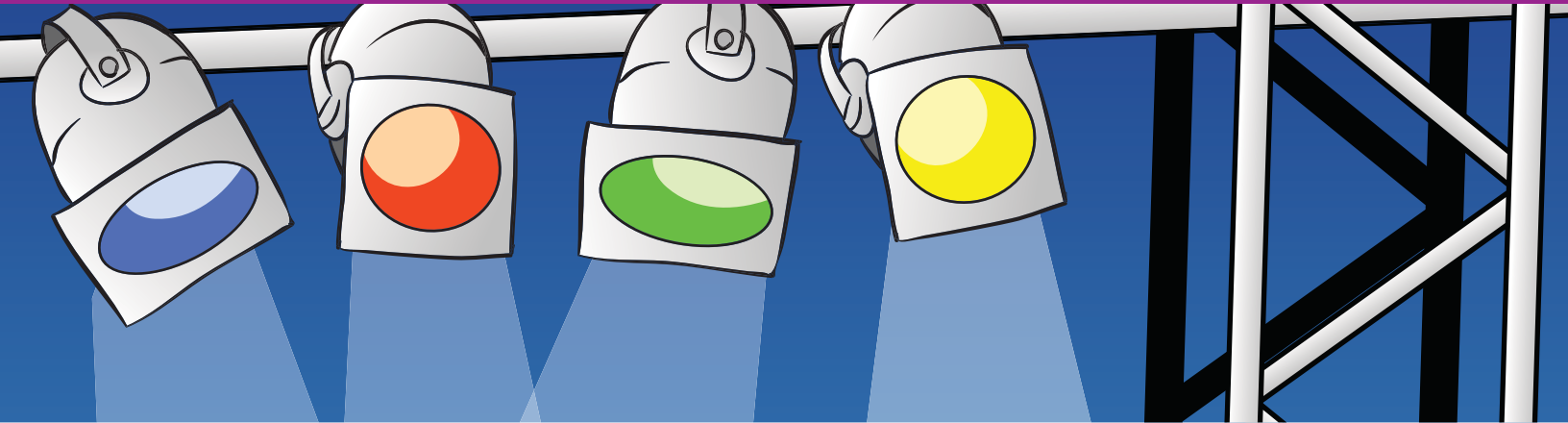
Fill the containers 1/3 full with rice. Then, epoxy the lids to each container and allow to dry. In class, give each child a shaker. Show how to move the shaker to make sounds as the children listen to music or as you sing songs together.





Jump into Worship–Drama Style with Elementary Students

Use summer as a time for children to explore worship with drama. This can be a method children use to tell God's story with a unique style.



Getting Started

- Tell your class that drama is one way that we can worship God and tell God's story.
- Brainstorm ways they could share God's story using drama over the summer, and pick one to try. Some ideas include:
 - Act out a Bible story for another class or the congregation.
 - Share a Bible verse with the congregation.
 - Celebrate a special time such as the Fourth of July.
 - Write and perform a short skit about God or faith.
- Practice either during class or plan special rehearsal times. Be sure to publish a schedule of rehearsals and drama worship times for anything outside of class.

Scripts

- Let children use their imaginations as you or an older student narrate a Bible story. Let them plan how they will walk through the "stage," who plays what part, etc.
- Look online for simple dramas.

Drama Tips

- Keep things low-key with little stress. Simple costumes and sets help the children use their imaginations to fit with the story line. The emphasis is on sharing God's story, not on who is "performing."
- Begin and end each rehearsal and worship time with prayer.



Youth Style: Fourth of July

Take some time on a summer evening—before the Fourth—to celebrate freedom.

■ **Have fun playing games.** Try some new ones, like a version of water volleyball. You need two teams of four on each side of the net. Each team needs a twin-size flat sheet. The team members hold the sheet, parachute-style, at the corners and work together to catch and throw water balloons across the net using only the sheet (no hands!).

Caution: Team members will get wet as the balloons break—but that's the fun of it!



■ **Have an old-fashioned barbecue.** Keep it simple: hot dogs, hamburgers, chips. Purchase red or blue punch for drinks.



■ **Include a devotion time** around a portable fire pit. (Be sure to check and follow all community fire regulations.)

Encourage teens to talk about the blessings and responsibilities of our nation's freedoms. Then talk about our freedom in Christ. How does that freedom in Christ help us deal with the oppression of living in a sinful world? Share the article about the Christian flag with them. Talk about the difference between the national flag and the Christian flag.



■ **Conclude with singing** some favorite patriotic and praise songs.



TEACHER'S DEVOTIONAL

“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs.” (Psalm 100:1-2)

Worship is giving God praise and adoration. There is no specific formula for worship. It takes on different forms for different people. Some people, like David, praise God through music and dancing. Others are closest to Him when they are in nature, gardening, or hiking. Still others use their hands to worship Him by drawing, painting, or woodworking.

How do you worship God? What deepens your relationship with Him? Consider setting aside a few minutes each day for personal worship time. Use this time to engage in the activities that connect you to God and allow you to try new things. Perhaps you could reflect on God while in nature or write words of praise to Him in a journal.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

- » Psalm 100
- » Psalm 95:1-7
- » Psalm 29

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Worshipping Together

The focus of this quarter is worship. Consider engaging in worship as a family through the following activities:

- **Family Picnic:** Have a family picnic in a park or other outdoors location. Discuss the ways God reveals Himself through His creation. End with a prayer, including time for each family member to thank and praise God for their favorite things in nature.
- **Family Talent Show:** Hold a family talent show and encourage your children to sing songs or tell stories that they have learned about in Sunday school.
- **Serve:** Talk to your pastor about service opportunities for your family. This could be a simple job around the church or yard work for an elderly church member. Before serving, make sure your children understand that the purpose is to bring glory to God. After serving, have a family prayer time.



Threads in the **ROYAL ROBE**

Scripture reveals to us who God is, what He requires of us, and how He shows His love to us in mighty saving acts of grace. We can never begin to understand all there is to know about Him, but our gracious God is able to show us enough of Him in order to have life, health, and peace.

Through the written Word of God, the Holy Spirit teaches us all we need to know of the triune God. We learn what He desires to make known to us.

The Bible does not teach us in neat theological categories. Rather, God makes Himself known through accounts about His work in the lives of real people, through prophecies and prayers, doctrinal teaching, and wise sayings.

When we follow all these threads of truth, we see a pattern emerging—a royal robe woven from the gathered truths of Scripture adorns our King and displays His love.

To see God more clearly, we express what we learn from Scripture in a coherent way, known as the essentials of faith. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed both express the essentials of faith.

The great Reformation confessions of faith further laid out the teaching of Scripture in a

systematic way, weaving together the Golden Threads of Scripture, bringing forth the royal robe that glorifies Jesus our King. By studying them, we grow in our understanding of God. Such knowledge leads us to put on the robe of Christ by faith. This means that we take our place in union with Him, growing in love and obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The essentials of faith are not all Scripture has to say about God, but they represent the Golden Threads around which the whole royal robe is woven. Under the heading of "Teacher Devotionals," every Bible lesson in this curriculum is keyed to the Golden Threads it expresses. The Stray Threads section picks up additional ideas or notes the ways in which the Golden Threads may get distorted.

Believers in the Reformed tradition are people who celebrate that God can be known because He has graciously made Himself known. A crucial part of our faithfulness is learning and studying the essentials that have been revealed. So, we offer these in hopes of enriching every Bible lesson, enabling you as a teacher to trace the threads of Christ's Royal Robe in the teachings of Scripture.

1 ESSENTIAL NUMBER ONE: The One True God Is the Triune God of Grace—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—Whom Alone We Must Worship and Serve.

In the Old Testament, we learn that the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the creator of the entire world and the constant redeemer through the mighty acts of the people in Israel. In the New Testament, we see the LORD, Israel's God, actually is the triune God, who reveals Himself to be the eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He has entered into covenant faithfulness with His people and will not leave us or forsake us.

3 ESSENTIAL NUMBER THREE: Holy Scripture Is the Word of God Written, Through Which, In the Power of the Holy Spirit, We Truly Meet the Triune God.

One of the great achievements of the Reformation was the recovery of Scripture as our sole authoritative source for knowledge of God and its return to the ordinary people of God. The traditions of the Church could be helpful in interpreting the Bible but must always remain beneath the written Word of God. The Reformers affirmed at the same time that what needs to be known about God from Scriptures can be known by ordinary people who engage in a plain reading of the Bible. The Bible is clear enough in its essential teaching for all who read with prayerful reliance on the Holy Spirit to speak through the Word.

4 ESSENTIAL NUMBER FOUR: The Triune God Is Sovereign Over All.

Our religion is not simply a human invention, nor is it subject to human whims for change and supposed corrections. We do not have the freedom to decide who we would like the Lord to be. God is, and He has made Himself known to us in Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. While what we may know of the triune God is true and reliable, we always recognize that we never know all there is to know about Him. The Lord God is high and holy, completely other, beyond our grasp and control, and splendid in His glory. God is moving history toward its appointed end. The triune God of grace is in control. He reigns. He alone is Judge. He alone is worthy of our praise. We never have dominion over Him. God alone reigns.

2 ESSENTIAL NUMBER TWO: The Eternal Son of God Came to Us as a Human Being in Jesus Christ.

In the fullness of time, God the Son took up our humanity as He came to us as Jesus, the man from Nazareth. Jesus is both fully God and fully human. He is all that God has to say to us, in word and deed, about who He is and how He loves us. And Jesus is all we have to say to God, as the one man who lived a life of perfect obedience to Him, on our behalf. In Jesus' relationship with His Father, and in His promise of the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, we come to know that the one God is triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

5 ESSENTIAL NUMBER FIVE: Humanity Has Fallen into Sin.

The Scriptures teach us that, although God created us good, through our own willful choices, humanity sinned against Him. The sin of our first parents rocked and wracked the world with terrible consequences. Now, by nature, we are prone to suppress the truth and to choose against our God and our neighbors again and again. There is nothing we human beings do in this world that is not without the taint of our sin. We are helplessly lost in our sin. This means the death of ever hoping to get to the Father on our own. Such a realization is the beginning of crying out in repentance and faith for the rightness and goodness that only can come from the Lord Himself. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who comes to us as a man, has enacted perfect obedience, free from sin, on our behalf.

6 **ESSENTIAL NUMBER SIX:** **We Are Made Right with** **God by Grace Alone Through** **Faith Alone.**

Our salvation from our sins and our sinfulness is all from Christ Jesus. We never can earn our way into God's favor, whether by our good works, zealous worship, or many prayers. The Father forgives our sins by the work of Jesus Christ alone. Christ's death alone takes away the guilt of our sin. Christ's faith and obedience alone, the living sign of His covenant faithfulness, comprise our reconciliation with God. He gives us Christ's righteousness. Our record before God is replaced with Jesus' record! When this happens, we believe in who Christ Jesus is and what He has accomplished. We confess that He is our Lord and Savior. But even this belief and confession is a gift of God, the result of the Holy Spirit's work inside us. Salvation is all of God. We simply rest in what He has done for us.

7 **ESSENTIAL NUMBER** **SEVEN: Election: God** **Chose Us to Be His** **Children and Servants.**

God chose us to believe in Him now that we might spend the rest of our lives serving Him and telling others about Jesus. The essential teaching of election is the awareness that we do not make our way to the Father; He has come all the way down to where we are to claim us. Election, then, is not to a life of ease but to one of service. Those whom He calls, He sends to bring His message to a lost world. If we know Him, it is because He chose us. If He chose us, He sends us to tell others, "Believe the good news and discover your chosenness!"

8 **ESSENTIAL NUMBER EIGHT:** **The Holy Spirit Makes Us More and** **More Like Jesus.**

Sanctification means "to make holy," and it refers to the work of the Holy Spirit to form Christ in us. For we not only receive a new record of righteousness in Christ, but we also receive a new nature. God places His own Spirit within us, and a wonderful series of benefits begins:

- ❖ The Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus Christ so that all that belongs to Him comes to belong to us (John 16:14-15).
- ❖ The Holy Spirit comes to dwell inside us, fashioning us more and more in the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).
- ❖ The Holy Spirit opens our hearts and minds to the Scriptures so that we might be transformed by hearing the Word (John 14:26).
- ❖ The Holy Spirit prays within us, crying out to the Father for us and through us (Gal. 4:6).
- ❖ The Holy Spirit assures us that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16), and His presence is the guarantee of our salvation (Eph. 1:13).
- ❖ The Holy Spirit gives us the power to be faithful witnesses to Christ (Acts 1:8) and enables us to do the ministry and works of Jesus (see Matt. 10:1 and John 14:12).

Of course, the old, sinful nature still remains in us and, thus, the new and the old are in conflict. Christian growth involves a hard struggle. We can never do it on our own. We live in constant need of "the sanctifying work of the Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:2). The person of the Holy Spirit then moves us to live in obedience and empowers us to keep going even after we fail or when the way is difficult. His work will continue until we meet Jesus in Heaven at last.

9 **ESSENTIAL NUMBER NINE:** **We Are Called to a Life of Obedience.**

The people of God, Christ's Church, bring His Word and His love to a broken world. We are in the world, even though we do not belong to this world (John 17:16). We serve the world even though we are aliens and strangers here, passing through on our way to our heavenly homeland. Psalm 84 notes that those who "have set their hearts in pilgrimage" to the city of God cause the dry, desert lands to become a place of springs as they pass through. With the Holy Spirit prompting us and empowering us, with the grace of Jesus cleansing us, with the love of the Father beckoning us, we both gather for worship and move out in service to God. So, even though the church does not belong to the world, it strives to love the world as Christ did.