The Altogether Christian
Children's Time

Foundational Practice from *The Spiritual Child: Educating the Mind and the Heart* by Lisa Miller

In this very uplifting account, Miller makes the point that the experience(s) of unconditional love builds faith and sets an individual up to be more resilient for times of challenge.

Below is a summary of Miller's meditation:
1) First take a series of breaths to calm yourself.
2) See yourself at a table. (*In our case we are using a picnic blanket.)* Around the table (*blanket*) you have invited people who love you just as you are without judgment. See their faces, remember their imprint on you.
3) Choose your word for the Holy One who joins you now at your table (*blanket*). Rest in their collective affirmations and celebrate.
4) Pause and listen for the word(s) they are saying to you.

You will notice a series of scripts cumulatively called **"Jesus All-Together Picnic."** This is the time in worship when you would invite the children in your midst to come forward and join your children's ministry leader(s) or the pastor for a few minutes of discussion and imaginative play. We have developed scripts to help guide your introduction of each weekly character. You will see that the scripts recommend having two leaders, a "dynamic duo" to share the dialogue.

Adapt any of these suggestions to fit the way you would express the ideas in the scripts. You don't have to read it word-for-word; you can also just "get the gist" and express it in your own way. You have our encouragement and permission to do so. Have fun each week!

Some notes before the scripts:

We have created full scripts for your children's time in worship based on the themes in The Altogether Christian worship series from The Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. We leaned more into the "picnic" with various characters in the bible (those who display all-together heart, soul, mind, strength and love). We have suggested using modified lyrics from "Almost Persuaded", #2235 in The Faith We Sing as a song to bring the children up and back to their seats. This option is likely easier for your live musicians to do. Choose what works best for your context. This is one of those "adapt as you need to" examples!

Each week you will need a picnic blanket and a basket of some sort. The blanket could change over the course of the series, or you could ask different members of your congregation to share their favorite picnic blanket for use during the children's time.

The basket can be used to carry weekly props, which vary depending on the biblical character and theme we are exploring. Within the scripts you will see when and what to pull from the basket to enhance the experience. This also builds intrigue as the children 'wait' to see what is in the basket each week.

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

WEEK 3 - An All-Together Mind

One or more blankets in a laundry or wicker basket
Picnic basket
A Giant Question Mark or Question Mark Crown to hide in the picnic basket
Bible

Week Three: I am only a little child.

(Solomon & An All-Together Mind)
1 Kings 3:7b

Check the Suggested Supplies list to make sure you have everything you need.
Invite the children to come forward. You could sing this version of "Almost Persuaded", #2235 in The Faith We Sing:
Jesus invites you here, angels are ling'ring near,
prayers rise from hearts so dear; O children, come!

*Depending on how many children you usually have, have a blanket or blankets so that there is room for everyone to have a seat, **plus empty spaces**. Don't lay the blanket/s out in advance, let the children help do it. Have fun!*

Leader 1: Welcome, friends! If this is your first time visiting our church, we're so happy you're here! For those of you who are joining us online, we're so happy that you're here too!

Leader 2: Are you guys ready for another Jesus All-Together Picnic?! *[allow the children to respond]* Yayy! Let's all get the blanket/s out and get ready! Children at home, you can sit on a cushion or a blanket and join the picnic too! I wonder which bible character we will meet today? *[help the children lay out the blanket/s and find a seat.]*

Leader 1: Well, I really enjoyed learning about David that first week. And last week we learned about how God is the only one who can satisfy our thirsty souls. Before we learn a new character from the bible, do you want to imagine our picnic being filled with people who love us, people like our parents and siblings. Who would you have at our picnic today?

Leader 2: Oh I'd have Miss Guzman here!

Leader 1: Miss Guzman? Who's that?!?

Leader 2: [crouching down low, as if to be stealthy] Miss Guzman is the Question Queen.

Leader 1: The 'Question Queen'? That's a cool title. What does it mean?

Leader 2: It means… Miss Guzman always encourages us to ask questions.

Leader 1: Alright, kids, should we imagine Miss Guzman is here? *[wait for the kids to respond]* Wait! That makes me think of Solomon in the bible. Hold on. *[with excitement!]* His story is right here…. *[reach for a bible and turn to 1 Kings 3:5-10]* Solomon was David's son. God made Solomon the ruler of Israel after David. But Solomon was veeeeerrrry young when that happened

Leader 2: Wait just a minute? Exactly how old was Solomon when this happened?

Leader 1: Well, I don't know *exactly* how old Solomon was. But in this story Solomon says, "I am only a little child." And the Israelites, there were hundreds, thousands, no, hundreds of thousands of them. They couldn't even be counted! So Solomon said to God, "Give me an understanding mind, …an ability to know the difference between good and evil, for who can govern this great people of yours?"

Leader 2: So Solomon, even though he was only a little child, he didn't ask for toys or games or a cotton candy machine? He asked God for a mind to know the difference between good and evil?

Leader 1: Yes! Yes, he did! That was a very *wise* thing to ask for!

Leader 2: *[in wonder and amazement]* Yeah, I probably would have asked for a hamster, or a guinea pig, or some really cute and fluffy animal….

Leader 1: Well, it is possible God would be pleased with that question also. What do you think, children? *[allow them to respond]* In the bible, we read that God was really pleased with Solomon's question. Because Solomon did not ask for a long life or for riches, God was pleased to give Solomon what he asked for.

Leader 2: [in amazement] Wow! So Solomon asked for a wise mind and God was pleased with that question, so God gave Solomon a wise mind.

Leader 1: [encouraging] Yes, God gave Solomon a wise mind. And not only a wise mind, but God also gave Solomon things he did not ask for. God gave Solomon riches and honor too. So in the end, it was a very good thing that Solomon asked.

Leader 2: [shaking head in agreement] You know… this is reminding me of one of my favorite people, Miss Guzman, the Question Queen.

Leader 1: Yeah! So in a way, Solomon was the 'Question King'. For Solomon, asking questions was a way Solomon pleased God. Do you think Miss Guzman also pleases God by encouraging questions?? *[allow the children to respond]*

Leader 2: You know, I never really thought about it that way, but I sure do like asking questions! I have a question for you right now! What do you think I hid in the picnic basket? *[allow the children to respond]*

Leader 1: What is in there?

Leader 2: [reaching into the basket] It's a giant question mark (or question mark crown)! And I'm going to give it to Miss Guzman for encouraging me to ask questions!

Leader 1: That's a wonderful idea! Let's pray together. '*Hey God, thank you for curious minds. Thank you for minds that grow. Thank you for the gift of questions. In Jesus' name. Amen.*' Now will you help put up the blanket/s? *[allow the children to pile the blankets into a basket]*

[While the musician/s play 'Almost Persuaded',
dismiss the children to where they will go next]