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 2 - An All-Together Soul

One or more blankets in a laundry or wicker basket
Picnic basket to hold plant
Wilted plant with drip plate
Water bottle full of water
Umbrella
Bible

Week Two: My soul thirsts.

(Deer & An All-Together Soul)

Psalm 42:2a

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: Yeah! Are you guys ready for another Jesus All-Together Picnic?! *[allow the children to respond]* Yayy! Let's get the blanket/s out! Children at home, you can sit on a cushion or a blanket and join the picnic too! *[help the children lay out the blanket/s from the basket and find a seat]*

Leader 1: Remember, at this picnic we imagine our loved ones are here with us. Family, friends, teachers, grandparents, …who do you imagine is here? *[allow the children to respond]* Let's imagine them sitting around here now. Ah, what a great feeling it is!

Leader 2: Oh, don't forget! Jesus is here too. Remember, this is a Jesus All-Together Picnic! *[produce a tiny Jesus]*

Leader 1: That's right. Afterall, Jesus loves us very much and we want to feel his love. *[looking at the other leader, who is holding an umbrella and a water bottle full of water)* I notice that you are carrying an umbrella at this picnic. What is that about?

Leader 2: Well, I heard it is supposed to rain today and I wanted to be prepared.

Leader 1: Ohhh, I see. Well, a lot of people might think rain would ruin a picnic, but I know someone who would be so happy for rain.

Leader 2: You do? Who?

Leader 1: Yes, I do. *[reach into the basket and pull out the wilted plant]* This friend.

Leader 2: Oh, wow. Who is that? They don't look too well.

Leader 1: This is Deery. You're right, Deery is looking a little… *dreary.* What do you think is going on with Deery?

Leader 2: It looks like Deery is wilted, like he needs water. Deery looks like how I feel when I'm thirsty. Like after I've been playing outside in the heat for a while and I'm so, so thirsty! Sometimes I feel so thirsty I think I'm going to die! Children, have you ever felt that thirsty before? *[allow the children to respond]* What do you think is the best thing for Deery right now?

Leader 1: [wait for children to respond] Say, do you have any water in that water bottle you are holding? We could give Deery some of that life-giving water right now!

Leader 2: You're right! Why didn't I think of that?! I would love to share this water with Deery. After all, I know what it feels like to be suuuuuper thirsty. And also I know that nothing else will revive Deery like this water. I want to see Deery do well so I will give him water right now. Can everyone make a drinking noise while I give Deery a big drink? *[let the children make sound while the water is poured into the plant]*

Leader 1: Oh, I can already sense the relief Deery is feeling. Can you sense it, children? It feels like a big, 'Ahhhhhhh!' Can you say that with me? *[let everyone say, 'Ahhhh']*

Leader 2: In the bible, in the book of Psalms, there is a song that says we thirst for God like a deer thirsts for water.The song is saying that only God can quench the thirst of our souls.

Leader 1: Wait, what?! Are you saying we should drink God like we drink water?

Leader 2: Well…, yes! When we open the bible and read the words in there, it is like pouring thirst-quenching water into our souls. It is as satisfying as a cold cup of water on a hot summer day.

Leader 1: Wow! I will never look at my water bottle the same way again! Thank you for bringing Deery here today. I can't wait to see how this water revives him throughout the

day. Let's set Deery here so we can see how he is doing by the end of the service. Does that sound good?

Leader 2: It sounds better than good. It sounds very refreshing! Let's pray together. '*Hey God, we know what it's like to be thirsty. We know what it is like to have water when we are thirsty. Thank you for the ways your love refreshes us. 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]