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 4 - An All-Together Strength

One or more blankets in a laundry or wicker basket
Picnic basket
Pool noodles, enough that when you put them end to end, you can make a ring big enough to hold everyone
Bible

Week Four: This promise is for… everyone.

(Peter & An All-Together Strength)

Acts 2:39

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 to go on a Jesus All-Together Picnic, imagining people who love us are at the picnic too? *[allow the children to respond]* Yayy! Let's lay out the blanket/s and get ready to go! Children at home, you can sit on a cushion or a blanket and join the picnic too!

Leader 1: Let me ask you all something. Have you ever made a promise?

Leader 2: Do you mean like when I give someone my word that I will definitely do something or keep a secret?

Leader 1: Yes! Like a pinky swear or a pinky promise. Or, when people get married, they put on a ring, which is a sign they have promised to love each other through life.

Leader 2: Oh! I made a pinky promise the other day. It was a promise to not eat the last of the chocolate ice cream in the freezer! And I kept the promise! Except I did eat all the cookies and cream ice cream in the freezer. Children, have you ever made a pinky promise? *[let the children respond]*

Leader 1: I want to tell you about a promise in the New Testament. The promise was told by Peter who was one of Jesus' disciples. One day, when Peter was preaching, he started talking about the Holy Spirit.

Leader 2: Oh! I've heard about the Holy Spirit! I've heard that the Holy Spirit is a 'helper'.

Leader 1: Yes! The Holy Spirit is a helper. The Holy Spirit is like a friend who loves you and wants you to be well. So what Peter said is that the Holy Spirit is promised to everyone. Everyone! You. Me. Everyone in this sanctuary. Everyone around the world. So, I have these pool noodles here and I'd like you to help me make a ring out of one noodle. And when we do, that ring will represent a promise for anyone who can fit inside the ring, that they will receive the Holy Spirit. Ready to try! *[let the children respond]*

Leader 2: Let's try it! Everyone, stand up! You'll have to use your strength to hold the ends of the pool noodles together *[make a ring with the pool noodle and invite some children to fit inside the ring.]* If that ring is supposed to represent the promise, we need to make it a lot bigger. Can we use these other pool noodles to represent the promise? *[this time make the ring bigger and see how many children can fit in. Repeat this as many times as necessary until the ring grows and all the children can fit in.]*

Leader 1: So this has been a great exercise in seeing how the promise of the Holy Spirit is for everyone. And we had fun doing it!

Leader 2: We sure did! That was really a lot of fun. I can see now how important it was to Peter, as he was preaching to the disciples, to tell them that the promise of the Holy Spirit is for everyone. This reminds me, I made a promise to feed the dog today and I almost forgot!

Leader 1: Well I'm glad you remember now. And I know the dog will be so glad when you keep your promise!

Leader 2: Thank you for helping me remember to keep my promises!

Leader 1: You are welcome. That is what friends are for, and the Holy Spirit is a good friend! Let's pray together. '*Hey God, thank you for the promise of your Holy Spirit. Thank you that this promise is for everyone. 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]