What is Christian education like for preschoolers at First Presbyterian Church?

We introduce preschoolers that they are valued as children of God and what we believe it means to be Christian. Preschoolers experience being valued as children of God and that the church – particularly our church – is a safe place where children are loved and nurtured.

What are some things that preschoolers learn?

* **God loves us all**– especially the people who aren’t very loved by others.
* **The Bible is a special book that tells us about Jesus.**The Bible has many other stories that help us learn about God’s love. Children see the Bible in their classroom and in the sanctuary. Teachers refer to the Bible as the source of stories heard in Sunday School.
* **They are valued as children of God.** Infants are baptized in a sacrament of belonging. Church members volunteer to support nursery care. Teachers emphasize caring relationships with simple lessons of love.
* Preschoolers experience **simple prayers**. When they pray to god, they can say anything in prayer.
* **We give our time and talents to serve others**. With adult supervision, they accompany on service opportunities such as CROP Walk, or activities in the community. Children meet many congregational helpers (teachers, pastor, custodian, nursery attendant).
* Children learn to care for the building through simple tasks as picking up toys, using the wastebasket, and flushing toilets.

Children are involved in children’s time, offering, prayers, and communion. Children experience the seasons of the church year (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter).

What is Christian education like for youth at First Presbyterian Church?

Children and young adults attending First Presbyterian Church experience God in Sunday School, in worship, and in fellowship. They learn that

* **God is beyond our knowing**– but there are some ways we can know some of God.
* **We are made in God’s image** so we are a (broken) reflection of God.
* **How God acts in the world**. Jesus’ life gives us an idea of what God would be if God were human.
* **There are many images of God**. We read about God in the Bible, see God in nature, hear God in Song, know God in prayer.
* **God values things differently than the world**. God values serving others and caring for the least. We belong to a human community because **we are created by God**.
* **We are broken people in a broken world**. While we mess up in big and small ways, we face consequences, but are never outside God’s grace and forgiveness.
* **We learn to be followers of Jesus**.
* The gathering of Christians is unique and special. **We all have something to offer**.
* The Lord’s Prayer is a way of encountering God’s kingdom. They talk about prayers experienced during worship services and other prayers in the Bible – especially the Psalms as prayer.

We continue to learn about worship. Distinctive activities mark our gathering – Eucharist, Lord’s Prayer, and the Church Year. We deepen our understanding of the church seasons, and learn more about Christianity and Presbyterianism.

We continue to learn that we give time and talents to serve others. **We take care of the church**. We continue to learn about the operation of the church. Children learn about the church budget, jobs that are done by volunteers, and that the building is used for many other things besides worship. Children learn about duties of Deacons and Elders, the pastor, music director and other workers.

We may become aware that inequality and injustice exist, but we have the choice to change the status quo. There’s a difference between being faithful and following rules. For us, being faithful means trying in each moment to do what we think God want us to do.

**WHAT DO CHILDREN LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLE?**

We use familiar Bible stories in Sunday School lessons. Teachers refer to the Bible as the source of stories about Jesus and other important Bible characters. The emphasis of teaching is not on Bible verse memorization, but on contextual learning. Children may hear the same stories a number of times in Sunday School, because our understanding grows and develops. Each story touches us at each time of life with new insight.

Children learn that

* The Bible was written in different times and by different people.
* What we learn of Jesus comes to us from the Bible.
* The Bible is used in Sunday School and in worship

**THIRD GRADE BIBLE CLASS**

We also offer a Bible orientation class for children in (or near) third grade. Students get hands-on with the Bible. They find their way through the text. They find some familiar passages, from Psalms to Paul’s letters. They learn about the basic structure, organization, and language of the Bible. They gain and understanding of the reasons why the congregation chooses to share God’s word with us. They learn that

* Bible stories help us understand the early Christian community.
* Prayer comes from the Bible.
* Having a Bible is a joy, a privilege, and a responsibility.

Do children worship at First Presbyterian Church?

Yes! We welcome children to participate fully in worship – in service, song, prayer, and sacrament. Children contribute to worship through music, drama, acolytes recognize their own contribution to worship and our community.

What do young adults learn at First Presbyterian Church?

We encourage young adults to wrestle with the big questions of Christianity.

* How does God work?
* What does it mean if we pray for something and it doesn’t happen?
* How can God be good if there is evil?
* What is worship?
* What is Christianity?
* Who runs the church?

We help young adults grow in their understanding that Christian community is distinctive in its history, perspective, and practice. We continue to deepen our understanding of prayer. We continue to learn about life in the congregation through full participation. We continue to practice using the Bible as a book with special relevance and meaning. We deepen understanding of the root causes of inequality and injustice and how we, like Christ, can be agents of change.

We are broken people in a broken world. God desires wholeness for everyone and all of creation. We all fall short of God’s intentions, yet we all reflect God’s love and beauty into the world through our actions and words. We suffer and others do because of our brokenness. But God invites us back – over and over – into the project of salvation. God never shuts us out. That is grace. We should seek to extend forgiveness and grace to others.

What are ways First Presbyterian Church encourages young adults to explore their faith?

Young adults explore their faith through study and practice. They study what it means to be a Christian in our world and the history of the church. They explore different types of prayer, reasons to pray, and what we can expect from prayer.

Youth also discuss what it means to be a Christian in the world today. They study the church’s budget, understand the concepts of pledging and tithing. They discuss what it means to be accountable, responsible, trustworthy and good stewards. They may participate and lead service opportunities. They identify ways they can participate in the life of the church.

Does First Presbyterian Church offer confirmation classes?

Yes! In confirmations classes, we guide youth to make a commitment to a thoughtful, faithful life. We encourage youth to think critically about their understanding of God and the sources they use to understand God such as their own experience, the Bible, teachers, and Jesus. We also discuss what makes us distinct as Christians, such as our preferential option for the poor, sacrifice, and seeing people through Christ’s eyes, not the world’s.

We talk about how the Bible can guide our lives, learning methods for Bible study. We consider the authority of the Bible and what authority the Bible has for our lives.

We commit to and celebrate being Christian disciples, deciding whether or not to join the Christian community. We identify and celebrate our own gifts and ministries and recognize and celebrate our place in the human community.

We continue to learn about life in the congregation through full participation, with continuing learning regarding questions related to worship, Christianity, Presbyterianism, and the church. We learn how to be by doing, and we learn to lead by setting an example for others. Youth are encouraged to consider how/what God may be calling them to be/do as a vocational faith response.

Confirmation activities include paired with an adult mentor (friend in faith), opportunities to strengthen the community’s life, visiting another worship setting, writing personal faith statements, and meeting with Session. Organizing and leading a service effort can become a capstone of faith-in-action that complements the confirmation/ profession of faith process.

Does First Presbyterian offer adult education?

From Sunday worship to service opportunities, adult learners participate in and lead the Christian community of First Presbyterian Church. We continue to participate in worship and study opportunities as we test and challenge our faith within the Christian community.

The Bible continues to guide our lives as Christian disciples. We continue, as life-long learners, to plumb the depth and riches of scripture as our guide to life and faith. Adults may hear the same stories they heard as children and youth in Sunday School, because our understanding continues to grow and develop. Each story touches us at each time of life with new insight.

Sunday worship is based on hearing the Bible proclaimed in word and song. Short-term studies offer opportunities to explore foundational teachings of the Bible. Wednesday lectionary studies (via Zoom), and small group Bible studies, we consider the meaning and application of Biblical truth. Short-term studies offer topics for intentional learning. Each summer, church members and friends participate in a summer book read. Through service opportunities, we give our time and talents to serve others.