

Foundation Year Project

Aims

This outline was designed in an attempt to fill the gap between a child being ready for more than nursery rhymes/playgroup-level learning, but not quite ready for the fully fledged projects as set out in the Covenant Christian School project plan. It also provided themes which could be adapted to provide practice in the basic skills of writing, reading and number without losing the coherence gained from an overall plan.

There were other positive reasons for its existence too. It is an attempt to lay a foundation in the children's hearts - the knowledge that everything that is comes from God and relates back to God in some way. Acts 17:24-25 tells us that God made the world and everything in it ... and gives to all men life and breath and everything. So the overall theme or "umbrella" covering all the individual topics studied this year is the greatness and universality of God. With 4 year olds?! Yes, because laying a foundation of faith at the earliest stages helps the children to counteract unbelief and avoid the pitfall of having separate mental categories for "God" and "the rest of life" so common in adult thinking later on.

There are many things which are familiar to children and part of their world. The idea is to take some of these things and look very simply at them, trying to show that each thing is either a provision of God or something that He has made. The first time this project was used, three mums worked together two mornings a week with children aged 4. Each major topic was usually given two sessions therefore, but if one was felt to be sufficient, then something else was planned for the second one, and if we felt it demanded more time, then we carried it over to the next week. Flexibility and trying to sense the children's response was the way we worked. However, the material could be used in a variety of ways, in a classroom, in home-education or by a group of families working together.

Because the adult's own world view will always be communicated either directly or indirectly to the children, it is important that we as teachers grasp the thinking behind the project ourselves, so the following passages, amongst others, might make a helpful study: Ps 119:89-91, I Kings 8:27, Deut 10:14, Ps115:16.

Method

We listed the topics we wanted to cover, divided them roughly into three for the school terms, but left ourselves a "free" slot every so often to allow for flexibility or going out together. In the summer term we left more free time, not being sure quite how the year would work out, and wanting to take advantage of the warmer weather for more outings. We decided we would begin with topics relating most closely to "ME", and work outwards in ever-increasing circles. There is no reason why the topics should not be used selectively or in a different order. They are listed below in the order we studied them, together with a few suggestions of what we did. We found it relatively easy to find library books and resources on most of the topics, and most of our visual aids and activities were home-made and inexpensive. As the year went on, we were able to include work on phonics, word games, maths games, sporty activities and practical maths sessions on weighing, measuring, capacity, etc. interspersed with the topic work.

Our Bodies; the five senses: introduce the 5 senses, together with the part of the body which performs them. Using blindfold, we thought about life without the gift of sight. We had a tape recording of familiar sounds to guess, to highlight hearing. We discussed the combined use of sight and hearing in crossing the road safely. We smelt herbs, perfume and other smelly things, and tasted sweet and salty things. We had a feely box, and made a face and hands in paper collage showing which part linked with each sense. We had a worksheet I can see, I can hear, etc. Thank you, God, for the children to complete. Sang Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes, and I can Clap, and beat out some rhythms with fingers and drumsticks.

Our Bodies; Movement: We described bones and muscles, bending and stiffness. Tried to imagine eating and writing whilst stiff. Looked at pics. of gymnasts and dancers using their bodies. Stuck pictures of people moving and copied appropriate captions. Did marching, dancing to music, moving like animals, acting stiffly, wobbly and loosely. Discussed doing words like jump, kick, stretch. Made a full-sized paper model of each child (by lying them on the floor on lining paper and drawing round their outline) with "joints" made out of brass-headed paper clips. Went swimming together.

Our Bodies; Bones and under the Skin: We introduced the account of Eve being formed from Adam's rib, and added a paper rib-cage to last week's model person! We talked about what's inside me, majoring on three areas - breathing, blood, and the purpose of our skin. Breathing: using 2 balloons as visual aids, we talked about breathing in and out, and our need for air or we would die. We lay on the floor and felt our chests rising and falling. Blood: is pumped round our bodies by our hearts, and carries goodness from our food and from the air all round our body. We listened to one another's heart-beats and played with a pump and a tube in a bowl of water. Skin: is needed to keep our insides clean, dry, warm and safe. Thought about it being like the wrapping or the outer cover on our insides - looked at some "insides" (liver and a bone) from the butcher's to see what we'd be like without skin! Devised appropriate worksheets, and learnt part of a verse from Ps. 139 "You created every part of me".

Eating and Drinking: We discussed the times of day we eat, and the variety of foods for energy and enjoyment. Coloured, cut out and stuck on food for a main meal, and magazine pics. of people eating. Played a word games, matching picture of food to correct name, and a listening game, e.g. What does apple begging with?, etc. Puffin Book of Verse, "A bird comes to tea".
Dance/Movement - "I went to a party and we ate ... jelly" (children have to be wobbly), etc.

Sleep, Getting tired, Rest: Introduced this topic, necessity of regular rest, and marvel of refreshment next day. Made a cardboard bed with a pipe cleaner person. Looked at photos of the children asleep when they were babies. Played letter and word recognition game with related words, e.g. sleep. bed, cot, etc. Did a dot-to-dot picture of a pram, and a licky sticky picture of a child's bedroom. Listened to some classical music on themes like sleeping, dreaming, awakening.

Washing, Keeping clean: Introduced the topic by open-ended questions on what you do to keep clean. Firstly ourselves, then our clothes, then things in a kitchen. Discussed bathrooms, what are germs and why we should keep clean. We had line drawings of items connected with hygiene which the children coloured and cut out, then stuck onto a sheet with sections for bathroom and kitchen, washing machine, sink and so on. Touched on the importance of water to us in our daily life, and made a worksheet which involved counting items of clothing drying on a washing line. Practical activity - washing some net curtains together!

Being healthy/being ill: Began with a pairs game, matching familiar opposites e.g. young/old, and included healthy/ill in this. Discussed the gift of good health using a zig-zag book as a visual aid. (It had pictures and 5 captions; trust God, eat well, sleep well, keep clean, keep fit). We learnt the verse from Ecclesiastes, "Remember your Creator while you are young", and thanked God for good health. Then we moved on to illness, recapping germs from last week. Talked about accidents at home, falls, burns, and on roads, and discussed the wonderful healing mechanisms of our bodies. Activity - a worksheet denoting a cut knee, a knee onto which the children stuck a plaster, and a knee restored to good health! Thought briefly about being in hospital using the Usborne book on the topic.

Playing and pretending: Introduction - play helps us to learn. God created us first as children to give us time to learn via play/pretend, i.e. copying what adults do. Looked at and discussed various pictures of children playing in different circumstances and cultures. Played a dice game where you have to make up a body by getting eyes for a 1, ears for a 2, etc. Also an introduction to money via playing shop and coin matching on a caterpillar worksheet. Read story "The little old man who could not read". Worksheets on themes of "I play ..." and "I pretend ..." Looked at a Tissot picture, pretend to be there, and try to draw our own version.

Feelings: Introduction - God was pleased/happy when He made the world, but sin and people ignoring Him made Him sad/angry. When we say sorry to God and thank you for what Jesus did, it makes both God and us happy. 3 short stories, lost sheep, coin, son. Finding activity on worksheet. Made double-sided faces, happy on one side, sad on other. Looked at paintings, how do they make you feel? Try to get the children to put their feelings into words, then mimed things like being sad, angry, happy, lonely, together, etc. Made up a story about a long walk which turned out all right in the end, and mimed that. Variety of happy, sad and angry music to listen to.

Talking and Listening: God made us to talk, first to Him and then to each other. Why do we talk? Communication, its value, and examples of it. Contrast different ways of talking, e.g. shout, whisper. Think about being deaf or dumb and how we communicate - sign language. Body language - children guessed various signs, e.g. wave, nod, point, etc. Devised worksheet of children communicating in different ways. Did an "interview" with each child on a tape recorder. Talked about other languages, looked at map. Story of tower of Babel. Got each child to tell their own favourite story to the others. Talked about listening, e.g. telephone, radio, and played with an intercom. Played listening games, I-spy, rhymes, Chinese whispers.

Praying: Talking and listening - in another dimension! Why we pray - God is our Friend who we talk to, our Father, and Boss of everything and everyone. How God talks to us/ how we listen to God - through the Bible, through other people, through what He has made, through circumstances, through our consciences. Holy Spirit helps us to pray. Made a chart on different ways we can pray, stuck on pictures and drawings, e.g. sorry; thanks; praise; pray for others. Prayed together.

Thinking: This involves questions and answers. Talked about the questions mark, and use of question words, how, what, who, when, where, why? Devised simple examples of using these words, and thinking of the answer. God created our minds and brains, we should love Him with all our mind, and think on helpful things, (Phil 4:8). We learn by observing, copying and thinking how something is done. Our minds can work things out, know what is to be expected, or when something is wrong. Played Misfits games, played with dismantle and re-assemble toys, jigsaws, shape-sorters, etc. as we discussed this. Played "Guess my Name" (Ravensburger), and odd one out game, did the memory tray game, and played with a feely bag, trying to recognise an item without seeing it.

Books and Drawing: We prepared "A Book about Me" with places for the children to fill in descriptions of themselves, and a body outline onto which they stuck labels naming the various parts. We discussed what our bodies can do, and wrote and illustrated short sentences, e.g. I can jump, skip, dance, etc. Talked about different types of art, and experimented with sponge painting, scraperboard, wax and paint, chalk, charcoal, painting, etc.

What is a family? Young and Old: Introduced the family as a gift of God, talked about who looks after us, who is the youngest/oldest? What are grandparents? Babies, (Ps 139:13), growing up, being old, dying, etc. Made each child's family tree, (back to grandparents' generation) with their and their siblings name and age, adding photos and drawings where possible. Made miniature "cars" to show our family going out together, acted a family going out to the seaside, discussed what else we do together as a family, e.g. talk, pray, eat, celebrate, go through difficulties and sickness, etc. Read Puffin poem, "Slowly slowly goes my Grandad", getting faster and faster, marching.

House and Home: Began by giving each child the basic outline of a house, then looked at different types of houses in various countries. Why do we all need a house? (Shelter, warmth, storage, etc.) Why does our house need a roof, door, windows, etc? What would it be like without them? Stuck on coloured shapes for door, windows, etc. and labelled them, e.g. Here is a house, a red door, a blue roof, etc. Now we compared the special-ness of a person's home, and each made another house beginning with an identical outline, but decorating it and calling it "This is my home". Recognised that homes are a provision of God and prayed thanking Him for them. Learnt song "Listen, listen, what can I hear?", then read book on Length, discussed measurement and height. Talked about paces, spans and cubits for measuring length of a room or a table, etc.

Other people/friends: Intro - God made people - why? "For His pleasure we were created", to praise and worship God, to be His friends. Jesus is our best friend. Story of Jesus' friend Lazarus. "My friends" worksheet - colour, then find out something about them; age, height, weight, shoe size. A continuation of measurement theme from last week. Story - "Who will be my friend?" Did God make us all the same? Talked about different kinds of people, with pictures to illustrate, and different things people can do for a job. Game to match work and names - "What does the butcher do? The butcher sells clothes!" No! etc. Each child chose a certain person and made a finger puppet. Finger rhyme - 2 fat gentlemen met in a lane. Puffin Book Of Verse "Sing a Song of People."

Work: (also included day and night, days of the week) We discussed what happens each day, who works when and what do they do. Postman, milkman, shop workers, librarian, etc. then jobs maybe less familiar to the children such as police, air hostess, pilot, medical staff, firemen, etc. Children made their own collage and drawings, with appropriate caption, "I am a ..." Made circular chart denoting 24 hrs, showing different working hours for various jobs, mimed different jobs of work for others to guess, then played shop.

Food and Farming: We all need food, but where does it come from? Animals and plants. Discuss farms, factories, shops, gardens, overseas, and the necessity of work to obtain food. Go back to Genesis, story of Garden of Eden. Touched on bartering, and subsequently money system. Used a farm set to discuss animals we eat, e.g. beef from a cow, etc. and made a worksheet showing other products we get from a cow. Looked at ABC farm book, made farm picture, and made our own butter. Made a plants worksheet showing different parts of plants which provide us with food, and sang Scarecrow song, and Oats and Beans and Barley grow, (stressing that God is the One who knows!)

Plants and Animals: Began by thinking where did they come from? Back to Genesis 1, summary of creation, with children making a zig-zag book drawing the things created on days 1-6, the first page saying "In the beginning, God..." and the last page, "... and it was very good". Looked at pictures of plants, discussed great variety of size, colour and shape. Looked carefully in our gardens, and made a simple graph with licky-sticky fruit shapes, to show how much fruit was in a bowl. Discussed animals in various parts of the world, hot and cold places. Emphasised great variety of size, shape and colour amongst animals as well as plants, looked at magazine pictures. We used some materials from a recent visit to Blackpool Zoo, a Heads and Tails sheet and a picture showing animals of the African savannah. Introduced the idea of a simple pie chart to show numbers of different animals in the picture. Sang animal songs ("Apusskidu", pub. A & C Black has a good selection).

Factories and shops: Took the "God gives us all we need" approach to introduce the children to factories. Where are all the things around us made? Where do the natural materials come from, who provides them? The factory is the place where we convert God's natural materials into what we need. (Could introduce idea of good stewardship here, need to use them wisely, not just for what we want). Used a book on bread to follow process from grain to bread, then looked at a variety of factory-made objects and sorted them by materials, e.g. paper, wood (trees); plastic (oil); glass (sand); pottery (clay); metal, etc. Worksheet along this line. Made our own pot factory, making various pots from plasticene. Discussed what are shops for? Looked at pictures of shops here and in other places. Read a shopping story, played a money game, wrote a shopping list and went shopping together. We subsequently made our own cornflour clay, involving the children in the weighing of the ingredients, and cut out our own "food" shapes. These were later painted and provided hours of "out-of-school" fun.

Weather: God makes the weather. Discussed various types of weather, sun, rain, wind, snow. Why they are of value to us, e.g. rain provides water for us to drink and for plants to grow. Used lots of pictures and photos to aid discussion. Made our own "Weather Book", sticking in pictures, drawing and writing. Made a snowy hill and a sledge with cotton wool and cardboard. Used Shirley Hughes' book "Out and About", thought of lots of words starting with "s" connected with snow. Read Katie Morag story and Percy Green in the snow.

Seasons, Days, Time: Introduced concept of time, who made it. Its regular patterns, learnt Gen 8:22. Thought about movement of sun, moon and earth using 3 different sized balls, and discussed days, weeks, months and years. Recapped names of days of week, and thought about yesterday, today and tomorrow, then morning, afternoon and evening. Tried to relate these to children's own experience. Made a circular chart divided into quarters to illustrate the 4 seasons. Made a birthdays chart to show different months and seasons. Practised o'clocks from Ladybird "Telling the Time" book, and also used "Knowabout Time" by Pluckrose and Fairclough. Did a jigsaw depicting the 4 seasons. Read "The House on the Hill" showing the same place at different times of the year.

Houses (buildings): Recap why we need a home and who provides us with it. Now, who gives us all the materials we need to build a house? (God). Via Q. & A. ascertain what houses are made of. Using "Houses of the World" book, compare houses here with houses in other places. Children drew and wrote about what they would like their house to be like. Looked carefully at the house we were in to see how things are made, and why. Children experimented with brick-laying using Lego. Story of 3 little pigs, children tried to make "house" of straw, wood, bricks.

Other Buildings: We went out on an "I-Spy Buildings" trip - children were given a list of buildings to tick off as we journeyed along in the car. Sometimes we stopped for a better look. Next day we talked about what happens in the buildings we had seen. Each child chose a building, drew a picture and wrote about it in their news books. Made a shared poster of a road with various buildings along it, worked on this together.

Different landscapes: By way of introduction, we thought about the contrast between town and country, hilly and flat, watery and dry, still and flowing water, and so on. We visited Heaton Mersey pond, Fletcher Moss woods and the River Mersey, observing as we went along, and using an "I-Spy Out and About" sheet we devised beforehand. The next day we recapped the visits, completed the I-Spy sheets, read a book on "Town and Country" and did drawing and writing on this theme. In July we were able to recap some of this and some of our work on seasons, as we visited Reddish Vale for a walk and a look at the Visitor Centre.

Animal Homes: Played an animal pairs game, matching words and pictures. Used a suitable story on a fox finding a home. Using pictures and books, discussed the various places that animals make their homes, then made a chart divided into 4, showing creatures that live above the ground, in the sky, under the ground, and in water.

Transport: We started with the invention of the wheel, looking at pictures and making wheels in different shapes to discover that the circle is the best one! Next day we visited the Transport Museum, Boyle St. Cheetham Hill, which was very popular, particularly because there were buses which the children could clamber all over! We followed up the visit by each choosing a picture of an old vehicle, discussing it, colouring it and writing a sentence about it, then making cardboard model buses from the Museum.

Maps: Introduced the topic of maps and plans, other countries in God's world, what is an atlas, a globe represents the world, etc. Drew plans of our own rooms and our houses. Made a plan of the route from one family's house to another, and marked significant features, (park, shops, etc.) including some coloured crosses which the grown-ups had previously marked on the pavement. The children then had fun "map-reading" and finding their way to these crosses. The following week we broadened the topic by thinking of friends and relatives who lived in different parts of the U.K. and making tiny flags to mark where they lived on a large map.

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13 Mauldeth Road West, Withington, Manchester, M20 3EQ.
Tel. 0161-445-8935 Fax. 0161-282-1111
Email hardys@amen.org.uk

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