

GIRWIAM'S RAINBOW

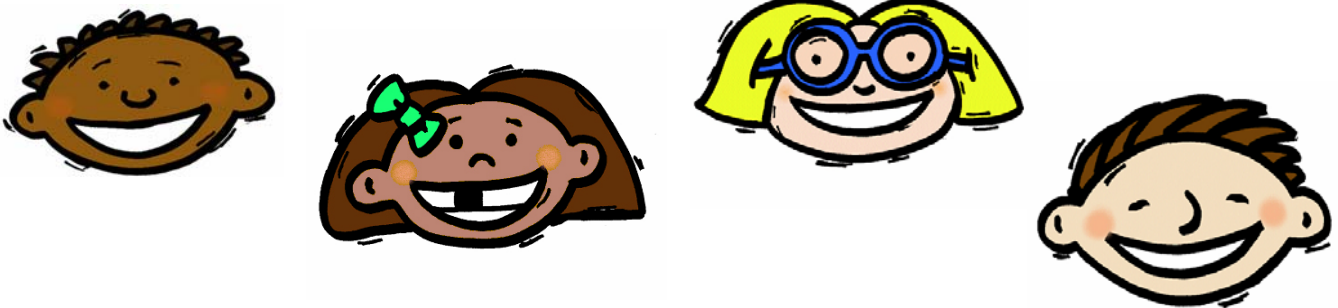
HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM

BEFORE CLASS: Youth church volunteers arrive 15-30 minutes ahead of class to prepare the room and make sure all the materials are in order. The youth church teachers may want to gather for a prayer to bless the class, children, and volunteers. Becoming centered and prepared before the children arrive assures a much smoother session with the children.

AS THE CHILDREN ARRIVE: Children are signed in by their parents and enter the room. Music is playing and activities are available for the youth. Teachers greet the children and make them feel comfortable. Have some activities for early birds, or simply have the craft project for the day ready to begin. Books, puzzles, play dough, crayons and paper are usually enough to entertain young children before class begins. Even older youth feel more comfortable if there is something to do when they come to class.

OPENING: Ritual is important to the spiritual climate of class. Children feel comfortable with a structured class, something they know will be familiar each week. The opening song is always used for one month at a time, so the youth can hear the song enough times to learn it. Having a chart displayed with the words to the songs helps also. When class begins, have everyone stand and form a circle to sing the opening song. This is followed by an opening prayer. The prayers are scripted, to make it easier for those who are not comfortable giving a prayer. But if the leader is a practitioner or is comfortable giving their own prayers, that is OK too. This is followed by the offering. Some groups prefer to call it a gratitude box. Each person tells something they are grateful for as they add their contribution to the offering basket or box.

ATTENDANCE: This is a time when each child is acknowledged. An attendance chart gives the children a chance to keep track of their attendance, by putting a sticker by their name. The younger children have a get acquainted song which helps them get used to speaking in front of their peers. If this song is used consistently, they will learn to love their chance to sing "Here I am." This is also a good time to ask for birthdays and sing to anyone who has had a birthday the past week.



THE LESSON ITSELF: The lessons begin with an introduction of a concept, sometimes with a demonstration or story. If a story is used, it is always better to use the actual book with pictures, for this holds the attention of children much better than just talking. When a book is not available, Girwiam can tell stories, or the children can act out or put on a puppet show about the story. Any activity that is interactive and participatory is more meaningful for the youth. The children can be seated at tables for this, or sit on the floor or chairs in a circle. Once the lesson has been introduced the group can be seated at tables for the activity or craft. If a church holds an opening session for all groups together, then this is the time the children go to their classroom or table. Smaller group interaction gives the teachers a chance to really connect with the children on a personal level and really listen to them. Discussions about stories or concepts are much better in a small group. This also allows the teacher to gear the conversations to the age of the children.

DEMONSTRATIONS: Often there is a demonstration to begin the lesson. This might be a lesson with a prism, mixing colors, etc. These demonstrations can be done either in the large group before breaking into the age groups, or in the small groups.

PUPPETS: Puppets are used often in the lessons. Children use the puppets to tell a story or express their understanding. Children who are sometimes too shy to speak before the group feel more comfortable when they have a puppet. It also adds to the stories that have no pictures or books. A simple puppet stage can be made out of a project board, or a table turned on its side.

CRAFTS: The craft have been chosen to be age-appropriate and simple enough to complete in a short time, so that everyone feels successful. Creativity is encouraged and individual choice is honored. Most often, crafts can be taken home to show parents.

GAMES: Games give the children a chance to use what they learned and to get up and move a bit, which is always a good idea after sitting for 20 minutes or more. This time is a transition period to allow those who take longer on crafts to complete their projects.

REVIEW WITH TAKE HOME PAGE: When everyone is finished and the classroom is cleaned up, then the take home page can be used as a review of what they learned.

MEDITATION: Meditations are included in lessons to help children develop the skill of going within. This should be a consistent part of class and the time varies with age. It is used before or after the craft, depending on the lesson. Meditations are part of the lessons from early in the year and continued through the year at all levels. Begin the meditation by asking the children to get comfortable in their chair, take everything from their hands and lap, and to sit with a straight back and their eyes closed. Gently guide them into the quiet place within where they feel their connection with God. Speak in a slow, calm voice, and leave time for each youth to mentally respond to any prompts. As you end the meditation, ease them back into the here and now and slowly open eyes and turn on lights.

CLOSING: Class always ends with a prayer and affirmation. As the youth learn to give Science of Mind treatments they will participate in the closing prayer. A prayer stick can be used to pass to each youth so they know when it is their turn to add their "Claim to the Universe." Again, consistency is the key. If this practice is always a part of class, the youth will learn this skill and be able to apply it to their daily lives. Each class ends with an affirmation, which is the affirmation of the month. This is said in unison, holding hands in a circle, before the end of class

