

I'm A Helper, Just Ask Me!

Engaging Young Children in Opportunities for Leadership and Service

Scan through the following list of age-appropriate ways to nurture a child's emerging gifts for leadership and service.

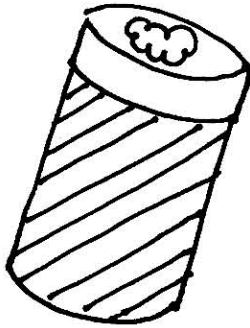
1. "I love to plan and organize things!"

(Spiritual Gift: Administration)

It's in the Bible: 1 Corinthians 14:40

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Invite toddlers to serve on Mr. Clean's Nursery Team. Encourage them to help you make a list of things to do to keep the nursery clean and provide a very brief in-service on "how-to" do these things before stepping aside to cheer them on. You might also display the pictures of team members on the nursery wall and even provide hats or badges for them to wear while they are on duty." Older children may also be asked to be a part of the team.
- Rotate the role of Supply Coordinator in your classrooms. Make up an inventory list of supplies and outline a schedule for children to take turns assessing and requesting needed supplies.
- Invite children with emerging gifts in this area to help plan various aspects of a special program or presentation, e.g., a hunger or mission emphasis and annual Christmas program.
- Create a church council or board for children to address issues related to children's ministry along with concerns of the congregation that may be relevant to them.



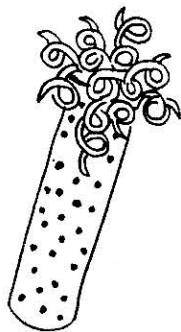
2. "I love to or draw or paint or do Crafts"

(Spiritual Gift: Creative Faith Expression - Artistry)

It's in the Bible: Exodus 31:2-4

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Include children in opportunities to paint walls, backdrops and make decorations for special events or long term enhancements.
- Designate a wall to be a gallery for displaying drawings, paintings and special writings.
- Draw pictures for promotional posters and bulletin or special program cover.
- Invite children to help with craft preparations. You might also ask them to assist younger children in making them.



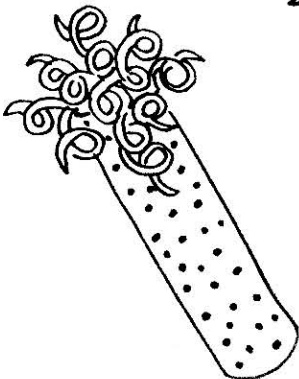
2b. "I love to act out stories"

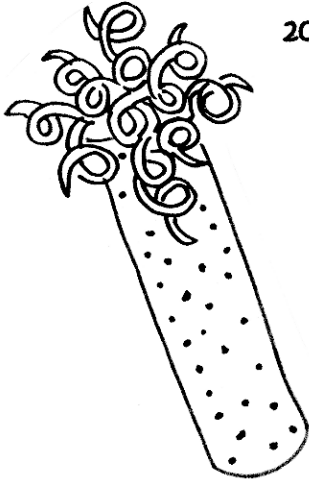
(Spiritual Gift: Creative Faith Expression - Drama)

It's in the Bible: Psalm 78:1

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Provide opportunities for multi-sensory learning. Give children the opportunity to act out Bible stories with age-old and contemporary versions of the story line.
- Give children the option of joining youth and adults in presenting dramas and skits during worship or on special occasions, e.g. Lenten Services.
- Plan a annual dinner theatre or talent show and encourage children to prepare skits to share.
- With all the dramatic action and activity in Bible, point out that almost any story could be a script for a drama or skit. Encourage them to share God's story in ways that they enjoy hearing or seeing it.





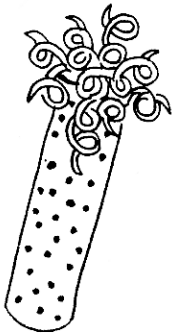
2c. "I love to dance, sing or play an instrument"

(Spiritual Gift: Creative Expression -Music)

It's in the Bible: Psalm 149:3

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Sponsor and promote weekly or seasonal programs for nurturing creative arts. Provide space for teachers to provide instruction in dance, drama voice and musical instruments.
- Make arrangements for children to share their musical gifts during congregational worship and other intergenerational or age specific gatherings. They might provide the prelude, postlude or other special music.
- Give children an opportunity to assist in leading or accompanying songs. Encourage a time of practice and apprenticeships in this area.
- Provide age-appropriate orientations to Lutheran worship, musical traditions and rituals and hymns to inspire their hearts and minds on any given day.



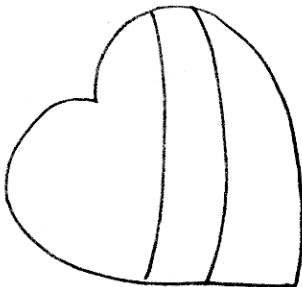
2d. "I love to write poems, prayers and stories"

(Spiritual Gift: Creative Faith Expression - Writing)

It's in the Bible: Luke 1: 2

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Invite children to write prayers to pray in worship
- Recruit children to contribute articles for a Sunday School or church news letter.
- Invite children to write and illustrate their own books, sharing their own faith stories or retelling Bible stories. (Many stores now carry hard cover blank books.)
- Encourage children to use prayer journals or diaries to nurture their ongoing "one-to-one" relationship with God.



3. "I love to encourage people who are having a hard time!"

(Spiritual Gift: Encouragement)

It's in the Bible: Colossians 2:2a

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Provide occasions for children to mentor each other in a specific task or situation. Pair children with perceived emotional, social or physical challenges with those who are known for their kindness and sensitivity to others.
- Offer resources to model ways children can be an advocate or a voice for the needs and concerns of others, e.g. writing or contacting members of their town councils and representatives in congress.
- Invite children to join adults in regularly walking around areas in your community and praying for specific people and needs they observe.
- Teach children to use thoughtful care in performing random acts of kindness for those around them.

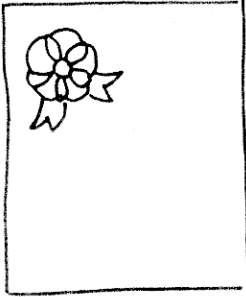
4. **"I love to tell people about Jesus and invite them to know him, too."**

(Spiritual Gift: Evangelism)

It's in the Bible: Psalm 71:17

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Give children opportunities to talk about what they think God is saying to them in Bible lessons.
- Plan a special program or event and encourage children role play ways they might invite their friends to come.
- Invite children to design postcards that can be distributed to friends to encourage them and invite them to come to programs at your church.
- Plan programs for children to learn skills for living, coping and making choices that will project a lifestyle that's Christ's style.



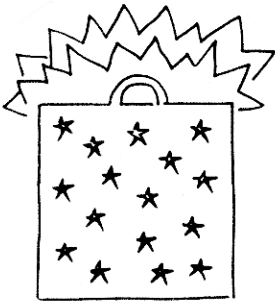
5. **"I love to follow Jesus and look for things that God is doing in my life"**

(Spiritual Gift: Faith)

It's in the Bible: Hebrews 11:1

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Provide opportunities for children to learn about God's presence and activity in the lives of people throughout history.
- Help children learn and interpret the meaning of the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed in relevant and age-appropriate ways.
- Communicate the importance of children in your faith community and the significant perspectives and practices of faith they have to share.
- Request and regard the faith statements of children as you seek direction and insights for our congregational ministries.



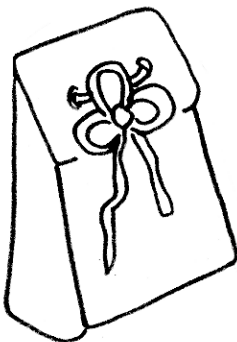
6. **"I love to share what God has given me!"**

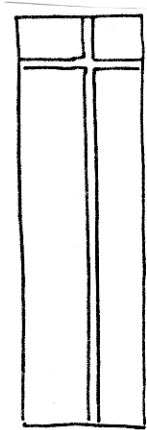
(Spiritual Gift: Giving)

It's in the Bible: II Corinthians 9:8

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Nurture an attitude of gratitude and an understanding that they have been blessed to be a blessing. Teach them the offertory prayer in the settings for worship in the Lutheran Book of Worship.
- Provide opportunities for learning concrete skills and perspectives for the healthy stewardship of time, talent and resources.
- Engage children in all congregational opportunities for giving. Include age-appropriate lessons and activities for nurturing a greater understanding and commitment to share what they have first been given.
- Offer ongoing opportunities to address the needs of others, e.g. Collect gently-used toys, stuffed animals, baby clothes for use in shelters, crisis nurseries, fire and police stations.





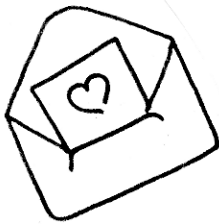
7. "I love to greet people and make them feel welcome!"

(Spiritual Gift: Hospitality)

It's in the Bible: Philippians 2:29a

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Invite children to be worship or classroom greeters.
- Recruit older children to be "playmates" for younger children in the nursery.
- Create a New Buddy program to connect visitors or new members with regular "attenders."
- Create a Pew Buddy program to engage older children in sitting with children whose parents are otherwise engaged in worship or not in attendance.



8. "I love to pray for people and their needs"

(Spiritual Gift: Intercessory Prayer)

It's in the Bible: 1 Timothy 2:1

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Provide and promote occasions for children to pray for each other, their pastor(s), teachers, and other leaders, e.g., before/after worship or Sunday School
- Teach children bedtime and table prayers along with the Lord's Prayer and other prayer of the church.
- Give children opportunities to experience prayer as "talking and listening to God." Teach them to appreciate God's presence and activity in our lives, using Psalm 46:10. Model and promote spontaneous prayer, using everyday words to express thanks, praise, "I'm sorry" confessions or regret and special requests.
- Encourage children to write petitions to share during Sunday School Openings or congregational worship. (Empower them to be the voice for their prayers if they so desire.)

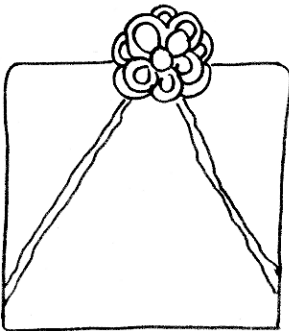
9. "I love to take the lead"

(Spiritual Gift: Leadership)

It's in the Bible: Isaiah 11:6

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:

- Engage children as consultants when developing congregational programs and special projects that might involve them.
- Consider Christmas programs and other public presentations to be opportunities for identifying and nurturing leadership.
- Coordinate apprenticeships between children and adults to nurture skills and relationships.
- Always look intergenerationally to find and nurture leadership for specific areas of ministry, e.g. engaging children to be ushers, readers, musicians and assistants in worship.

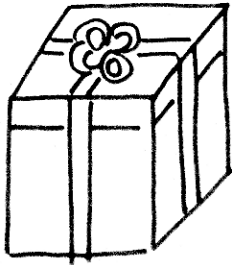


10. **"I really care about people in need and try to find ways to help them."**

(Spiritual Gift: Mercy)

It's in the Bible: Matthew 25:34-36

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:



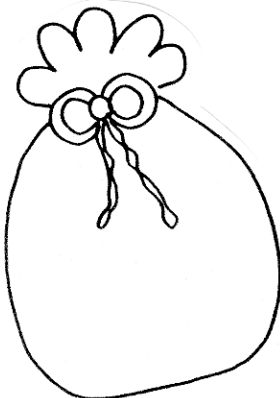
- Work with children to sponsor programs that respond to the specific needs of peers throughout the year, e.g. Stock a "Back-to-School" store for children to come and pick out backpacks and necessary supplies.
- Create a KidCare Club that will meet regularly to provide encouragement and special services for people who are hospitalized or confined or in specific need.
- Give children an age-appropriate awareness and understanding of current crises or events in your community or around the world. Provide opportunities for children to articulate prayers for God's care and provisions for them.
- Coordinate an adoptive grandparent-grandchild program to reach out to the elderly. Children might make cards and crafts to cheer them or visit with them as they play games or help with specific age-appropriate tasks.

11. **"I love to do things for others!"**

(Spiritual Gift: Service)

It's in the Bible: Ephesians 6:8a

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:



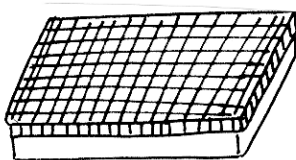
- Engage them in various roles and opportunities for service in your congregation, e.g. the property management team, the kitchen crew, the library staff, the altar guild, child care or nursery helper, and communion bread bakers.
- Sponsor programs and nurture common practices for responding to the needs of people in your congregation, e.g. send cards to those who are hospitalized and care packages to college students and young adults who are away from home in the military or work force, recruit "pew buddies" for young children who sit alone or with a single parent during worship.
- Nurture a sensitivity and responsibility to people and service organizations in your local and global community, e.g. help children realize that God loves them, too, and wants expects them to love and care for around them in crises or ongoing need.
- Provide opportunities for families with growing children to do roadside cleanup and other environmental and other another community project, e.g. serve in food pantries or soup kitchens and participate in projects that reach out to people in need.

12. **"I love to teach!"**

(Spiritual Gift: Teaching)

It's in the Bible: Acts 8:29-31

Activities for discovering and nurturing this gift:



- Encourage teachers to find ways they can engage children in doing a part of a class lesson or craft demonstration.
- Recognize children when they are exemplifying behaviors related to teaching, e.g. helping a younger child
- Pair younger and older children together for specialized learning. You might also have children assist in classes with younger children
- Plan annual talent shows and other opportunities to demonstrate specific skills.