



INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION FOR TEACHERS

Greetings, incredible humans!

You are part of an international group of people who care about spiritually nourishing children in today's world. Thank you for your time, your effort and your service! We applaud you.

Introduction and Instructions for Teachers

About Year Three

All Life is Sacred.

This is the third and final year of A Joyful Path Children's Curriculum. Year 3 is designed for ages eight through twelve. The Year 3 theme is All Life is Sacred. The 38 sessions explore how to deepen our spiritual connection with Earth, one another and our more-than-human relatives. Year 3 looks directly to Earth for the lessons She readily provides, namely the importance of relatedness, across and throughout the web of life. As Jesus reminded us through parables and metaphor, the continuing cycle of creation reminds us it is our nature to be loving, generous and united. When we recognize the spark of God in every life, there are no enemies: only new teachers.

In Year 3, we use original stories, exploration activities, discussion questions, guided visualizations, nature-crafting, rituals and celebrations, art, song, and movement to invite everyone (teachers and students) into encounters with the Divine in many forms. Just as in Years 1 and 2, the lessons in A Joyful Path Year 3 are heart-centered and experiential. Giving children experiences that are real, kinesthetic and tangible helps them to more fully understand concepts and make meaning that supports them in their own spiritual formation. With time and encouragement, young people come to embody and articulate their spiritual understanding in ways that hold great impact, individually and collectively. Whether or not they are able to apply the Year 3 lessons right away, experiential learning creates a solid foundation for a child's lifelong spiritual journey.

The lessons are informed by Christian mysticism and Earth-centered spirituality. The lessons include interfaith and interspiritual perspectives. Year 3 is more about spiritual formation and transformation than religious education. It is inspired by the Eight Points of Progressive Christianity, Creation

Spirituality, Interfaith and interspiritual wisdom, and centers Indigenous Earth Based Spirituality. *See "Spiritual Foundations for Year 3" Appendix One.

This curriculum was written between 2019-2021. Around the world, communities are facing major social and systemic change. Signs of societal and environmental collapse are evident. Within this reality, Year 3 attempts to ground, prepare and inspire the next generation by providing spiritual practices, self-awareness exercises and organizing tools so communities may rise up resiliently, modeling a healthy and whole way forward for all. Bishop John Shelby Spong has said, "Christianity must change or die." We have been moved by that charge. A Joyful Path, Year 3 offers a Christianity that is radically inclusive, willing to foster connections and asks questions in pursuit of "the Oneness and Unity of all Life." (Progressive Christianity, Principle One) Our goal is that Year Three meets the real needs of communities committed to life and love-affirming social transformation. The lessons aim to equip children and instructors with tools to become radically compassionate, brave lovers of the world, Earth and all creatures.

Age and Maturity

Year 3 of A Joyful Path is a giant leap from Year 1 and Year 2 so take time to consider the age and maturity of the children you are teaching. We address some deep and intellectually challenging concepts and topics in Year 3; and while it was created to work in flow with Year 1 and Year 2 (ages eight through twelve), it is most ideal for children who are primarily ages ten through twelve. If you are concerned that the majority of the children with whom you are working are younger or less mature emotionally or intellectually, you may want to repeat some of the lessons in Year 1 or Year 2 until the group gets older.

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With the children's evolving maturity in mind, the Year 3 lessons offer flexibility. Teachers have the option to choose one of two proposed activities and to tailor it for your classroom. We encourage you to adjust language where needed and improvise with the activities so these lessons nurture and support the children you are guiding.

Classroom Setting Adaptations

We recognize this curriculum is used in a wide variety of settings: Church Sunday School, Intentional Community, In Home and as Supplemental Learning. To embrace its wide use and to avoid too many assumptions, we have tried to suggest adaptations in many of the lessons. While we cannot address each situation directly, teachers are encouraged to adjust the instructions and activities to match your classroom setting. Our decision to provide choices and options is not intended to overwhelm or imply all activities are to be accommodated. Rather, we share adaptation suggestions to encourage fluidity, creativity and ease in how you share the material with the children, in the time allotted, and within your respective classroom settings.

Nature's Seasons, Lesson Order and Repeating Year 3 Again

We encourage lessons to flow chronologically in Year 3. Year 3 follows Nature's Seasons in an effort to connect us more intuitively with Earth and Her rhythms. We encourage you to proceed seasonally and in order. If you are inclined to spread lesson plans over two to three sessions, we recommend you first complete the curriculum sessions 1-38 prioritizing one activity and then repeat the curriculum the following year, using the second activity. This will keep the curriculum sessions aligned with the Seasons and Liturgical Calendar of that year.

Please see the Nature Crafting and Seasonal Ceremonies section below to learn more about the seasonal celebrations included in Year 3!

A Note About Hemispheres — A Joyful Path, Year 3 reflects the academic and seasonal cycle as it is experienced in the Northern Hemisphere. We acknowledge adjustments and adaptation will be needed for our friends in the Southern Hemisphere. Where seasonal references are made, we have done our best to include the orientations of both hemispheres. Please align the lessons to match the academic and seasonal cycle where you live. If you have best practices to share, we would love to hear from you. Please send them to: outreach@joyfulpathcurriculum.com or find us at joyfulpathcurriculum.com.

God, Theology and Earth at the Center

Our attempts to live “independently” create the experience of separation that leads to suffering, division and destruction, all of which runs counter to the sacred teachings present in all the world religions, Earth-centered expressions and the teachings of Jesus. Therefore, A Joyful Path, Year 3 has been developed with a focus that explores the interdependence of all things. Each lesson provides spiritual tools and practices to remind us we cannot separate ourselves from Earth, Her creatures, the elements, or one another.

Similar to Years 1 and 2, Year 3 refers to God by many names. Grounded in Progressive Christian theology and embracing ancient Earth-centered teachings and Indigenous expressions, Year 3 suggests God/Life/Mystery/Spirit interchangeably. Please use any of these or other names for the Divine that best fit you and your community. Encourage the children you are teaching to find their own personal name and relationship with the Divine.

Year 3 weaves mysticism, ancient ways of knowing and interfaith wisdom (Please visit Appendix 1 “Spiritual Foundations for Year 3” for more information.). We believe these are present in the teachings of Jesus and they invite us to deepen our own faith and spiritual practice as Christians.

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Remember, you are always welcome to adjust language so it better fits the theology of your faith community or family.

Year 3 centers the voice of Earth. Our planet home is a living system. Many ancient cultures and Indigenous worldviews understand Earth as Mother and Source. Following the lead of our Indigenous teachers, Earth and all species are personified in this curriculum, with the use of pronouns. Earth is often referred to as She. Trees, plants and animals are referred to as siblings, cousins, persons or our more-than-human relatives. We believe this is one powerful way to unlearn harmful patterns, decolonize our minds and decentralize the patriarchy in our theologies.

Race, Representation, Cultural Appropriation

We know and recognize the systemic racism in the U.S. and many other colonized countries. We know systemic racism will take many years to untangle. We are committed to transformation that creates a more equitable world for all. A Joyful Path Curriculum, Years 1-3, teaches toward a future where all bodies are safe and all bodies matter. We call forth full reparations, truth and reconciliation in the journey to Right Relationship with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in our countries and our world. We hope this curriculum is a piece of that movement.

The two lead authors for Year 3 are both cisgendered, able-bodied, white-presenting women who are students of anti-racism and dedicated to continuing to learn and grow. Aware and mindful of their white privilege and to invite perspectives that are as broadly representative as possible, A Joyful Path worked with young people of color, from Camp Anytown ⁽¹⁾, to serve as Cultural Editors. In their review of the lessons and stories, through the lens of young people, the Cultural Editing Team asked questions and suggested revisions to provide greater transparency, insight, and increased awareness so we might more fully

respect and honor cultures and experiences that differ from our own.

The original stories created for Year 3 represent children from a variety of social locations and ethnicities. Our Cultural Editors looked at these stories to invite accuracy and honesty about the past and the present. The stories also suggest the future: the one we can co-create as a family of all colors, ethnicities, and diverse cultures.

In our effort to center ancient ways of knowing and Indigenous teachings, we reference many cultures and sometimes the sacred objects, symbols, and ceremonies belonging to particular Indigenous people and a diversity of cultural expressions. We share these with deep respect. Every attempt has been made to properly acknowledge the individuals who provided original material and other information resources.

A Joyful Path encourages everyone to continue learning about any cultural references in the curriculum. If you choose to purchase additional resources, please purchase them directly from referenced authors, artists and originators. Avoid large corporations like Amazon and other businesses that do not benefit local communities and authors. Choose to buy from BIPOC business owners as well as small independent business owners.

* For more information about Anti-Racism resources and/or trainings, please visit Appendix Two.

Preparation Time

Important — Year 3 requires a bit more preparation time than Years 1 and 2. Spiritual Formation is thoughtful, deep work. A Joyful Path, Year 3 invites an investment of your time as it looks for ways to live out our faith in visible, felt, and active ways.

We recommend reviewing each lesson one week before it will be taught. Doing so will allow you

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to reflect on the content of the lesson, complete any additional research, notify families of field trips or outings, and prepare any materials not already in your Teacher Supply Box (see below). If you are leading a group of volunteers, you will need to review the lesson the week prior and make sure your volunteers have everything they need to teach the lesson.

To prepare (approximately 60 minutes per lesson):

1. Read through the lesson.
2. Engage the Teachers Reflection options for your own spiritual growth and continued education in whatever way your time allows.
3. Decide which Activity Exploration will work best for your class (There are usually two options: choose one OR if time allows you may consider doing both.).
4. Using the Preparation for Teaching checklist, prepare the needed supplies or make arrangements to support your selected activity.
5. Minimally, and if/when there are lessons when preparation time is not possible, we encourage you to use lesson's story and discussion questions to create a time of learning together. Invite the children to draw, create art, or write in their Joyful Path Journals. See Joyful Path Journals/Folders below for more information.

Classroom/Teacher Supply Box

If possible, at the beginning of the year, create a "Teacher Supply Box." This supply box should stay with the teacher, in the classroom, or passed along to volunteer teachers as needed. The supply box should include:

1. Large manilla Envelope OR blank paper journal/sketchbook for each child (see Joyful Path Journals/Folders below)
2. Blank paper

3. Butcher paper
4. Colored pens, pencils, crayons and markers
5. Glue sticks or small bottles of glue
6. Scissors
7. Masking tape and clear tape
8. Safety pins
9. An assortment of standard-sized sticky notes
10. Stapler and staples
11. Magazines and discarded calendars (nature, animal or other)
12. An assortment of colorful scarves, cloth napkins
13. A small bag with a variety of hats/caps, an apron, masks, or other articles for theater and role plays. A variety of colorful square scarves can be used to create capes, neckties, headbands, and etc.
14. Ribbons, yarn and thick string
15. An altar candle and matches or a lighter
16. A portable speaker
17. Cut squares of a tarp or heavy-duty garbage bags to sit on when class happens outdoors.

Joyful Path Journal/Booklet/Folder

The Year 3 Joyful Path Journal/Folder is a spiral-bound sketchbook or 9"x12" envelope that will collect and protect the artwork or written reflections the students create over the year. If sketchbooks are not possible, staple (or hole punch and use a brad or ribbon) fifteen to twenty pieces of unlined paper to create booklets for each child.

In one of the early lessons, children will be encouraged to write their names on their Journal/Booklet/Folder. These will stay with the Teacher Supply Box, creating a Year 3 "portfolio" that will go home with each child after the final lesson at the end of the year.

Classroom Altar

An altar is a table or box used to display sacred objects. It serves as a focal point during sacred rituals. Altars represent an area that is sacred. By

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creating an altar, you are inviting Spirit, God or aspects of the Divine to be present.

Consider the space where you will be teaching. Is it possible to create an altar that remains throughout the seasons, for every session? If it is, the altar may be the place where you begin and end each session. If a permanent altar is not feasible, plan to create altars for the particular lessons when altars are mentioned (approximately ten times during the year). To create a classroom altar, choose a table or strong box that you can drape with scarves or cloth.

Each lesson that calls for an altar will have specific instructions. In general, the altar will hold: candlesticks and candles, images/photos, water, flowers, incense, stones, shells, etc.

Connecting With Nature

Get outside! Because Year 3 centers Earth as spiritual practice and Teacher, and because most children respond positively to experiencing the natural world, whenever possible...get outside! Some of the lessons are created to happen entirely outdoors. Many activity options take place outside. Depending on your geographic location, you may plan for all your sessions to happen in a park, garden or other outdoor space. Spending merely fifteen minutes in nature may be the highlight of the lesson for some children.

If you are in an urban area, think about the best ways to share the living, natural world. Is there a park nearby? Is there an area with shrubs, trees or a bit of grass? Can you walk around the block? Can you visit a tree in an urban courtyard, or stand near a fountain or rock sculpture that supports the life of insects, lizards or moss?

When you are indoors, bring natural objects to class as often as you can (flowers, herbs, pumpkins, apples, nuts, and seeds). Invite the children to handle the items. Encourage their curiosity by asking questions. Where do you think it came from? How did it grow? Is there an animal, bird or

insect that might use it as food? What gave it life?

Trust yourself and Nature as the teachers. If it is clear that everyone's soul is craving to be outdoors, and it is possible to do so, move parts of your lesson outdoors or soften your plans and redirect the class by using any of the "Nature as Classroom" suggestions listed in the sidebar.

Nature As a Classroom

Encourage the kids to connect directly with Nature by using their senses:

Hearing — Have everyone sit down and listen for twenty or thirty seconds. Give those who wish to share an opportunity to identify one sound they heard.

Then repeat the activity for a full minute and have the children close their eyes. Tell them to count different sounds and see how many different sounds they recognize. Afterwards, ask if they heard anything new this time. Discourage any tendencies the children may have to become competitive (e.g. shouting out how many sounds they heard). It is not about how many sounds you hear, but how much you enjoy listening. Did you hear any animals? The wind? Insects? Did you hear more natural sounds or human-made sounds, like traffic or planes? Which sounds were the most enjoyable to hear?

Ask open-ended questions to bring out discussion, rather than questions with right or wrong answers. This is about exploring the experience, not being right or wrong or winning.

Touch and Smell — You can do a similar activity with touch and smell. Ask everyone to shut their eyes and feel the breeze on their skin. Can you feel the warmth of the sun or the cool of the shade anywhere on your body? What do you smell? The scent of a shrub or flower? Traffic exhaust?

Then draw their attention inside their bodies. Invite them to feel their hearts beating. Can they

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slow their heartbeat? Ask them to notice their breathing. Can they feel their breath in their throats or noses? Can they slow their breath down? End by asking them to smile, open their eyes and look around. What do they notice now that they had not noticed before the exercise.

Vision — Take a nature walk. Invite the children to spot something special that someone else may have not noticed yet. Have them walk slowly in a line, and challenge them to walk silently. Notice things like a squirrel in a tree, a flower bud, a bird in the air, or an insect on the sidewalk. Stop and talk about any interesting discoveries.

OR ... take a nature walk and ask the children to look for anything in nature they like or enjoy. You can draw their attention to anything special you think they might have missed, but mostly just let them enjoy being outside. When you return to the classroom, invite those who wish to share anything in nature that they appreciate, even if they did not see it on the walk. End with a prayer thanking Mother Earth for those gifts.

Taste — If you serve snacks, let the children enjoy their snack outside.

The Curriculum Layout: Sections Within Each Lesson

Getting to the Heart of the Lesson

Written just for the teacher, this is an essential part of the lesson. It explains the main idea being communicated in the lesson and sets the emotional tone for the lesson's activities and story. While it may be tempting to jump right into the lesson's activities, the lesson will make more sense in the context of the Heart of the Lesson. Occasionally, there are times when some of the information in this section is appropriate for older children.

Spiritual Affirmations

Just like in Years 1 and 2, every lesson in Year

3 is summarized with a guiding Affirmation. Affirmations are positive statements that touch the subconscious mind and affect our thoughts and behavior. Affirmations need to be repeated to be effective. Each lesson suggests a few opportunities to share and repeat the affirmation together. For a comprehensive list of creative ways to make affirmations engaging and fun, please refer to "Using the Affirmations" below, after the Closing the Lesson section.

Teacher Reflections

These reflections help teachers prepare for the lesson in a personal way. Reflections include specific suggestions, such as visualizations, meditations, and questions, that give teachers an opportunity to deepen their personal growth and spiritual practice. There may be times when it will be appropriate for teachers to share a personal experience or insight from the Teacher Reflections with the children.

Bible and Sacred Texts

We encourage teachers to include the Sacred Texts and Wisdom Quotes as part of your personal study and you are asked to choose one or more to share with the children during the lesson.

The New Revised Standard Version was used for most of the Christian and Hebrew scriptures. We encourage you to use the Biblical translation that best fits your community. For inclusive language, check out The Inclusive Bible. Unless noted, World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts was the primary resource for scriptures from other World's Religions and Indigenous expressions. Feel free to adjust language at any time.

Wisdom Quotes

Wisdom Quotes have been gathered from a wide variety of sources. They are included to expand one's understanding of the topic and to illustrate the topic's universal nature. While some of the

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Wisdom Quotes will be beyond the children's level of comprehension, they are fruit for the teachers. Please enjoy!

Preparation for Teaching

This checklist will help you prepare the needed supplies, or make arrangements to support your selected activity.

Music Options

At the end of the Preparation for Teaching checklist, or in the Activities section, you will often see this symbol:



Musical selections can help to break up the lesson with dancing, singing, reflective listening, and celebration. Music also offers soothing sounds during times of transition (arriving, cleaning-up, departure). At the time of publication, all songs can be found on Spotify or Youtube. We have highlighted artists who are young, speak to youth or are multi-ethnic. Have fun with these!

Teaching the Lesson: Opening, Story and Discussion, Activity, Closing

The children's sessions are divided into four parts that create a meaningful experience for children: Opening the Lesson with Gratitude Circle, the Story and Discussion Questions, the selected Activity/Exploration and Closing the Lesson.

A Note on Italics: Suggested teaching instruction language appears in *ITALICS* for each lesson. Of course, teachers would use this only as helpful and are encouraged to speak using language that feels authentic for you.

Opening the Lesson: Gratitude Circle (The Thanksgiving Address)

We encourage you to begin each session with some

moments of mindfully noticing where you are geographically and ecologically located. A simple way to do this is with a Land Acknowledgement that acknowledges and gives thanks for those who were living on the land before it was settled or colonized, and invites everyone present to share something for which they feel grateful. Lesson One includes more information about Land Acknowledgment, The Thanksgiving Address and some examples of how to create fun and engaging Gratitude Circles to begin each session with the children.

The conclusion of the Gratitude Circle is a good time to introduce the Spiritual Affirmation for each lesson because everyone is ideally standing in a circle (See below for suggested ways to make the Affirmation active, musical and/or embodied.). Once the Gratitude Circle is complete, you will share the Sacred Text/Wisdom Quotes and proceed to the Story and Discussion Questions.

Story and Discussion Questions

Each lesson includes a story written to illustrate the main ideas of the lesson. The creative stories for Year 3 are original stories with some being inspired by real people and their experiences, used with permission. Every story is followed by a series of questions to help clarify the meaning of the story and show how the story relates to the heart of the lesson. Teachers may use some or all of the questions to engage children in a meaningful discussion.

Activity/Explorations One & Two

The activities (choose one) are designed to help the children integrate the Sacred Texts/Wisdom Quotes, Story and Discussion through movement, music, art, action or application. The Activity/Exploration provides an experience that goes beyond passive listening. As much as possible, each lesson contains a variety of ways to open the heart, engage the intellect, or provide creative and physical activity. Please remember to review and prepare the selected Activity/Exploration ahead of

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time by reviewing the “Preparation for Teaching” checklist.

Closing the Lesson: Summary, Affirmation and Next Time section

Each session ends with a summary to review with the children and an invitation to say the Spiritual Affirmation together.

The “Next Time” prompt at the end of each lesson may include requests or instructions for the children for the next session. Please check this section for important information you or the children will need. It is always a good idea to send a reminder message to the children and their adults before the next session!

Using the Spiritual Affirmations

Using Spiritual Affirmations with children is a fun and lighthearted way to communicate the essence of the topic being taught. Because Spiritual Affirmations need to be repeated to be effective, we are suggesting three places to say the Spiritual Affirmation during each lesson:

1. Introduce the Spiritual Affirmation for each lesson as the Gratitude Circle is ending. Because everyone is already standing in a circle (ideally), this can be a good time to repeat the Spiritual Affirmation with gestures and bodily movement (see below).
2. The Discussion Questions are also a good time to repeat the Spiritual Affirmation. Invite the children to look for the Spiritual Affirmation in the character and events of the story.
3. End the session by repeating the Spiritual Affirmation using any of the suggestions below.

Please adapt these suggestions to include the Spiritual Affirmation repetition creatively and make it connect to your lesson plan. Consider repeating the Spiritual Affirmation during

transitions in the lesson. There are many ways the Spiritual Affirmations can be used to expand and deepen the lesson themes and activities. Here are some ideas:

- Sing to a simple melody.
- Make up a clapping rhythm.
- Create motions or a sign language way to express it.
- Say or sing as a round.
- Use different voices (like a mouse, like a giant, like a tiger, like a robot, like a bird, etc.).
- Use a beanbag and have the children stand in a line. Toss the beanbag to each child down the line and have them say one word until the Spiritual Affirmation is complete.
- Discuss why the illustration does or does not express the Spiritual Affirmation.
- Let the children create a dance to express the words.
- Have the children illustrate the words.
- Make a Spiritual Affirmation banner to hang in the classroom.
- Email the Spiritual Affirmation to the children midweek as a reminder of the lesson.
- Create cards that express the Spiritual Affirmation and send them to friends or family.
- At the end of the year, see how many of the Spiritual Affirmations the children remember.
- Make a list of the year’s Spiritual Affirmations for your bulletin board.

Nature Crafting and Seasonal Ceremonies

Four times during Year 3, the lesson plans pause for two back-to-back sessions: Nature Crafting and a Ritual Celebration to honor the gifts of the season at hand.

The **Nature Crafting** session provides ways for the children to learn about and get ready for the pending seasonal change and/or holiday as well as to honor the gifts of four elements: earth, air, water and fire. The intention is to generate excitement and genuine anticipation for the upcoming

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ceremony and celebration.

The **Ritual Celebration** offers a simple ritual liturgy to co-create with the children, and your greater community, as desired. This happens at the following times:

Dates for the Northern Hemisphere:

- Autumnal (Fall) Equinox (September 19-22, date varies)
- Winter Solstice (December 20-22, date varies)
- Vernal (Spring) Equinox (March 19-22, date varies)
- Summer Solstice (June 20-22, date varies)

Dates for the Southern Hemisphere:

- Autumnal (Fall) Equinox (March 19-22, date varies)
- Winter Solstice (June 20-22, date varies)
- Vernal (Spring) Equinox (September 19-22, date varies)
- Summer Solstice (December 19-22, date varies)

Each **Ritual Celebration** is designed to be intimate (you and the children) or larger so your greater community and/or community partners may also be invited for a time of prayer, ceremony and celebration. The Ritual Celebration might be twenty minutes or it could become a half-day festival that happens on or off site. Be creative! Build community! Celebrate!

Christian Context: Liturgical Season and Church Calendar

In the opening section of instructions for all four Ritual Celebrations, beneath the heading “Additional Christian Context,” there are suggestions for ways to connect the seasonal ritual and celebration more directly with the church calendar and seasonal liturgy.

Finally, a Message for You, the Teachers of a Joyful Path, Year 3

The most important goal of Year 3 is that the children have good feelings about what happens in the learning you share together. If the children feel curious and more ready to create strong and whole relationships with other humans and our more-than-human relatives, you have done your job well!

If children leave each week with one gem of wisdom or key learning, the lesson has been successful. This might be something as simple as, “It’s OK to be angry.”

Teaching a children’s curriculum can present particular challenges. These challenges include: calendar management, limited or shared space, lack of financial resources, inconsistent participation, a wide ranges of age or maturity level.

For Classroom Management tips and suggestions for when things are not going well, please visit Appendix Three.

Here are ten valuable things to remember as you bring A Joyful Path, Year 3 to life:

1. **Take excellent care of yourself.** Use the Teacher Reflection as part of your own learning and spiritual formation. You are worthy and deserve time for spiritual practice and self care. When you are not able to take full advantage of the Teacher Reflection options, be kind to yourself. God and Earth do not judge: we have much to learn from them.
2. **Model curiosity, courage and kindness.** Nurturing positive feelings about the experience of learning outweighs the specifics of any lesson.
3. **Prepare each lesson at least one week in advance.** It will be more fun to teach and less stressful during class.
4. **Trust your inner wisdom. You are God’s instrument serving the children you are**

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teaching. Be open to insights and inspirations that come to you about the topic.

5. **Spark the children's attention at the beginning of the lesson.** Start on time, even if your students are still arriving. Maintain a good flow throughout the lesson so students don't get restless.
6. **Give the children time to switch gears between activities and plan ahead for transitions.** Plan how you will end one activity and smoothly move into the next activity. Alert children before the transition is going to occur. Some non-verbal ways to alert children to an upcoming transition include: ringing a bell or chime, flickering the lights or playing music.
7. **Encourage discussion and sharing among everyone.** Some children like to talk all of the time. Other children will not say a word. One way to involve everyone in a discussion is to have children sit in a circle and pass a "talking object." A child may speak only when he/she/they are holding the object. When applicable, use an object that relates to the story or Bible verse, or Affirmation. For example, when discussing kindness, use a heart-shaped rock; when discussing St. Francis, pass around a bird's feather. Always give children the option to "pass" "right to pass" if they prefer not to talk.
8. **Vary the group size.** Sometimes children will become more involved in the topic when interacting with a partner or in a small group rather than the whole class. For example, have children pair up with a partner to talk about a story's discussion questions. After a few minutes, bring the whole class back together to share their answers.
9. Surprise your students by occasionally doing something unexpected. In ways that are fun for you, play an instrument, wear a costume, bring in an unusual object, or give each child

a special note as he/she walks into the room.

10. **Be flexible to adapt to the needs that arise.**

Pay attention to the needs of your students, and adjust the lesson accordingly. Be aware of the time. Stretch or eliminate activities as needed. When a "teachable moment" happens, leave the lesson plan and focus the group's attention on the learning at hand.

And as much as possible, ENJOY! Your attitude is contagious. Having a happy, joyful attitude will make your classroom a place children want to be... and so will you! Your willingness to share these lessons -- to plant the seeds -- in the hearts and minds of the next generation is beyond valuable. Thank you for your willingness to serve in this way. Blessings upon your journey through A Joyful Path, Year 3!

>> Appendix One:

Spiritual Foundations for Year 3 Curriculum

The 8 Points of Progressive Christianity

By calling ourselves progressive Christians, we mean that we are Christians who:

1. Believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;
 2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;
 3. Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to: Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, Believers and agnostics, Women and men, Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, Those of all classes and abilities;
 4. Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;
 5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;
 6. Strive for peace and justice among all people;
 7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth; and
 8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love.
2. We can and do relate to the universe as a whole since we are a microcosm of that macrocosm and that this relationship “intoxicates” us. (Aquinas)
 3. Everyone is a mystic (i.e., born full of wonder and capable of recovering it at any age; of not taking the awe and wonder of existence for granted.)
 4. Everyone is a prophet, i.e., a “mystic in action” (Hocking) who is called to “interfere” (Heschel) with what interrupts authentic life.
 5. That humans have to dig and work at finding their deep self, their true self, their spirit self; thus the role of spiritual praxis and meditation and community confrontation which can itself be a yoga. If we do not undergo such praxis we live superficially out of fear or greed or addiction or someone else’s expectations of us. That salvation is best understood as “preserving the good.” (Aquinas).
 6. That the journey that marks that digging can be named as a four-fold journey: **Via Positiva**: delight, awe, wonder, revelry; **Via Negativa**: darkness, silence, suffering, letting go; **Via Creativa**: birthing, creativity; **Via Transformativa**: compassion, justice healing, celebration
 7. Everyone is an artist in some way and art as meditation is a primary form of prayer for releasing our images and empowering the community and each of us. Art finds its fulfillment in ritual, the community’s art.
 8. We are all sons and daughters of God; therefore, we have divine blood in our vein, the divine breath in our lungs; and the basic work of God is: Compassion.

The Principles of Creation Spirituality

1. The universe is basically a blessing, that is, something we experience as good.
9. Divinity is as much Mother as Father, as much Child as Parent, as much Godhead (mystery) as God (history) as much beyond all beings as in all beings.

>> Appendix One:

Spiritual Foundations for Year 3 Curriculum

10. That we experience that the Divine is in all things and all things are in the Divine (Panentheism) and that this mystical intuition supplants theism (and its child, atheism) as an appropriate way to name our relation to the Divine and experience the Sacred.

This list is from: *Confessions: The Making of a Post-Denominational Priest* by Matthew Fox

Principles of Indigenous Wisdom

There is no way to encapsulate the rich tapestry of Indigenous wisdom and spirituality into agreed upon principles. However, this list (4) from Indigenous Corporate Training does an excellent job at describing some common values.

What does Indigenous Knowledge (IK) mean? That's a big question because 'there are approximately 370 million Indigenous people in the world, belonging to 5,000 different groups, in 90 countries worldwide. Indigenous people live in every region of the world...' (5) At this point, there isn't a hard and fast definition accepted and recognized by all; it can mean different things to different societies and cultures.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) uses this definition:

Local and Indigenous Knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life.

This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual and spirituality.

These unique ways of knowing are important facets of the world's cultural diversity, and provide

a foundation for locally-appropriate sustainable development. (6)

Indigenous Knowledge is:

Adaptive. It is based on historical experiences but adapts to social, economic, environmental, spiritual and political changes. Adaptation is the key to survival.

Cumulative. It is a body of knowledge and skills developed from centuries of living in close proximity to nature.

Dynamic. It is not rooted in a particular point in history but has developed, adapted, and grown over millennia; it is not static.

Holistic. All aspects of life are interconnected, are not considered in isolation but as a part of the whole. The world is believed to be an integral whole. Indigenous knowledge incorporates all aspects of life - spirituality, history, cultural practices, social interactions, language, healing.

Humble. Indigenous knowledge does not dictate how to control nature but how to live in harmony with the gifts of the Creator.

Intergenerational. The collective memory is passed, within a community, from one generation to the next orally through language, stories, songs, ceremonies, legends, and proverbs.

Invaluable. It has been argued that Indigenous knowledge, not capital, is the key to sustainable social and economic development. There is a growing recognition and respect for IK and a desire to collaborate with Indigenous communities on environmental monitoring projects.

Irreplaceable. There is nothing western science can do to replace or replicate Indigenous knowledge. An aspect of Indigenous knowledge that is sometimes overlooked by scientists, and others, is the critical connection between IK and language. Indigenous languages are in decline

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and as languages die, so goes the Indigenous knowledge that is part of that language and the collective memory of the speakers of that language.

Moral. There is a morality in Indigenous knowledge — a right and wrong way to interact with nature; there is a responsibility given from the Creator to respect the natural world.

Non-linear. Time, patterns, migrations and movements of animals are cyclical.

Observant. Since Creation, Indigenous leaders have observed their environment and made decisions for their community's well-being based on those observations. But their decisions also weighed what would be best for the community seven generations in the future.

Relative. Indigenous knowledge is not embodied at the same degree by all community members. Elders will obviously carry more knowledge than younger community members.

Responsible. Indigenous Peoples generally believe they are responsible for the well-being of the natural environment around them.

Spiritual. Indigenous knowledge is rooted in a social context that sees the world in terms of social and spiritual relations among all life forms. All parts of the natural world are infused with spirit. Mind, matter, and spirit are perceived as inseparable.

Unique. Indigenous knowledge is unique to a given culture or society. While there may be many similarities of IK between communities, it is the lived experience of each community that informs IK.

Valid. It does not require the validation of western science.

For more information visit: What Does Indigenous Knowledge Mean? A Compilation of Attributes. (<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-does-indigenous-knowledge-mean>)

>> Appendix Two:

Recommended Anti-Racism Resources

Excellent list of resources:

<https://www.washington.edu/raceequity/resources/anti-racism-resources/>

Trainings:

United Church of Christ with Rev. Dr. Velda

Love - Sacred Conversations to End Racism

https://www.ucc.org/sacred_conversations_to_end_racism/

Middle Church with Rev. Jacqui Lewis

<https://www.middlechurch.org/store/education/>

Podcasts:

Excellent list of podcasts:

[https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/](https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/antiracismresources/allies/podcasts)

[antiracismresources/allies/podcasts](https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/antiracismresources/allies/podcasts)

Be Antiracist with Ibram X. Kendi Podcast

The Anti-Racism Daily Podcast with Nicole Cardoza

Books:

Freedom Is A Constant Struggle by Angela Davis

How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi

Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America by Ibram X. Kendi

Between The World And Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Me and White Supremacy by Layla Saad

White Rage by Carol Anderson

Sister Outsider by Audre Lorde

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White

People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo

The Fire Next Time by James Baldwin

>> Appendix Three:

Classroom Management Tips

Creating a Positive Environment

Establish positive relationships with the children. Warmly welcome children to class by greeting them at the door with a smile. Make eye contact and say their names.

Connect with children in a personal way. Find out about their interests, hobbies, achievements, and special events in their lives. Pray for them throughout the week, feeling appreciation for them as unique expressions of God.

Create a caring community. Provide opportunities for children to get to know one another by varying where they sit. Let children know they are an important part of the class by giving them classroom responsibilities, such as passing out supplies and cleaning up the room. Do not allow teasing, negative comments or clique formation among your students. Model respectful, caring words and actions.

Explain and practice procedures and routines. You may want to post a brief schedule so that children know “what’s next.” Establish specific procedures for common classroom activities, such as asking questions, moving around the room, and getting supplies.

Encouraging Positive Behavior

Share your expectations for behavior. Clearly explain to children how you expect them to behave during class. Provide examples of what it “looks like” and “sounds like” to follow the rules. Phrase expectations positively. Rather than saying, “Don’t run,” say, “Walk slowly.” Instead of “Don’t interrupt,” say, “Wait to speak until the other person has finished talking.”

Point out positive behaviors when they happen. Let children know you notice them paying attention, listening during the discussion, or waiting patiently. You may acknowledge them by saying their names, whispering a comment to them, or giving them a non-verbal message through a

smile, nod, or a “thumbs up” signal.

Use rewards consciously and sparingly. Rewards for positive behavior may motivate some children to behave appropriately, but they can also backfire and cause problems. Use them carefully.

Responding to Misbehavior

Notice potential problems and respond quickly to keep them from escalating. Often standing close to the child is enough to prevent or stop misbehavior. For that reason, it is a good idea to move around the room during the lesson. Another effective non-verbal cue is making eye contact with the child. You can also use gestures, such as raising your hand when you want a student to stop a behavior.

Preserve a child’s dignity. Children will often go to extreme lengths to save face. Avoid public power struggles. Do not use words that would embarrass a child in front of his/her/their peers. Speak quietly and calmly with a child, privately if possible. If you have to intervene, be as unobtrusive as possible. Keep the lesson going with a minimum of disruption on your part.

Clearly communicate consequences for misbehavior. Decide on consequences before misbehaviors occur and explain them to the class. Help children understand that behavior is a choice, and that all choices have consequences. Knowing the results of their actions can be a motivator to behave appropriately.

Choose consequences that relate to the misbehavior. For example, if a child repeatedly interrupts others during discussions, withhold the privilege of sharing aloud for the rest of the discussion period.

Follow through with consequences every time. When you are firm, fair, and consistent, children learn you mean what you say. It may take only a few times of follow-through to eliminate undesirable behavior.

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Classroom Management Tips

Involving Parents/Adults

Inform parents/adults about the topics their children are learning. Discuss ways they can reinforce the topic of the lessons throughout the week.

Share your expectations for children's behavior with parents/adults. Do not wait until there is a problem to talk to the adults. Tell them about their child's successes regularly and often. Find out how they encourage positive behaviors at home. Then, if a problem arises, you can work as a team to find a solution.

Footnotes

(1) Anytown Las Vegas is the longest-running antiracism youth program in Nevada and has served over 4,000 high school students since 1983. At Anytown Las Vegas, young people learn about social justice in a nonconventional way that takes lectures and study groups out of the equation and replaces them with a hands-on approach. Our program is a social investment in creating a pool of today's leaders that sincerely care about breaking down barriers and building up communities.

Through audacious thinking, creative programming, and action-based work, we equip youth with the tools to combat racial inequalities and breakthrough structural barriers. Our youth work is based on a general belief that young people are today's leaders and the face of multicultural relations rests in their minds and hearts. Therefore, we put youth in the driver's seat to strategize, innovate and transform.

(2) <https://www.cokesbury.com/9781580512158-The-Inclusive-Bible>

(3) <https://www.paragonhouse.com/xcart/World-Scripture-A-Comparative-Anthology-of-Sacred-Texts.html>

(4) <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-does-indigenous-knowledge-mean>

(5) <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/issues>

(6) <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/links/related-information/what-is-local-and-indigenous-knowledge/>