**God Centered Spiritual Transformation**

The U shaped model of God Centered Spiritual Transformation was created by Rev. Dr. Leanne Hadley to help those who work with children to ensure that the work that is done creates a lasting and transformative experience of God for children and the volunteers who work with them.

The model is based on the life, death and resurrection of Christ. To truly become spiritually transformed we must leave our old selves, go into the quiet heart of God and allow God’s love and care to mold and shape us into the people God has created us to be. This model seeks to create safe spaces where children are led through a spiritually enriching process each week.

The model is not designed as a new curriculum or as a replacement for curriculum. Rather it helps us organize our curriculum so that, in addition to receiving “information about God,” children “experience” God, Christ and the Holy Spirit each time they gather at church event (Sunday School, VBS, After School programming, etc).

Following the model might not feel much different from what we have done in the past but it has been proven to help children move closer to God.

The U has five basic parts:

1) Gathering: Where we welcome and build relationships with the children. Establishing relationships is central because it allows the children to feel free to be authentic with you, the teacher, and one another.

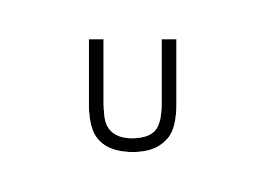
2) A Symbolic Tool and Lesson: These help the children learn the Bible story well. Symbolic tools can be an art project using a symbol from the story or related to the story, acting the story out, a game, or even simply reading the story together. During this time, the focus is to teach the story well.

3) Quiet Time with God: As the children engage with the story, we trust that God has a message for them through the story. To truly hear God and connect the story to their own personal life, children need a time of silence where they can reflect and spend time listening for God to speak. This can be a moment of silence, drawing, journaling, lighting a candle or playing in a sand box. Questions to help them start wondering are good to use as well, but they should be open ended questions that give them the opportunity to ponder instead of questions with a “correct” answer. Any tool, that helps them to spend time with God pondering and reflecting, will work. I like to have them draw or write something at the end of this time so that they will be free to listen to others and not worry about coming up with an answer or stressing over what they should say when it is their turn to share.

4) Sharing and Listening: Once the children have heard the story and have spent time reflecting about it, they will share what they are thinking. They will also be invited to listen. This process helps children to be confident in their ability to be in relationship with God and also learn from the experiences of others. This time also builds relationships because the children get to know each other on a deeper level.

5) The Blessing: As the children finish their sharing time or as they leave the class, they are given a simple blessing. The blessing has two purposes. First of all, it reminds the children that they are a blessing to God, to you, to their family, to each other and to the world. Unfortunately many children rarely hear this message and it is an important one. For children to understand that they are called to be a blessing to others, they must first know that they are a blessing to God.

The second reason for the blessing is to remind the children that the work done in the class was important work. As you bless them, you acknowledge that they are capable of having a relationship with God and that what they have shared is precious and sacred.



U Shaped Model

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A Word about Adult Participation:

Many times we, as teachers of children, are afraid to join them in discussion and reflection. However in this model you are invited to spend time in quiet and to share just as the children do. This does three things:

First, by participating you communicate to the children that the work of hearing the word of God, listening to God and praying is lifelong work.

Second, you model by example how to hear and share and also how to listen deeply to each other.

Third, you will grow spiritually along with the children. Many teachers have reported that, at first, they were uncomfortable with participating and sharing, but once they got over the initial fear, they grow spiritually each week in ways they never imagined they could.

So share, participate and enjoy being in the midst of those who Christ spoke of saying, “Unless you turn and become like a child, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”