

Potluck sanctuary

Children's Story

Cycle C, Epiphany 7, February 21, 2010
is the first Sunday of Lent, and another
children's time suggestion for this Sunday in
Lent is in *Leader: Equipping the Missional
Congregation, Winter 2009/10, p.33.*

Title: Potluck Sanctuary
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Church: Northgate Mennonite
Brethren Church, Dawson
Creek, BC
Text: Luke 9:28 – 36
Theme: Praying with Jesus in a
special place.
Needed: a paper towel, basin of water,
and a clear cup.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder why we need quiet and lively times in our churches.
- I wonder what special quiet places we have for praying with Jesus.
- I wonder what would happen if we slowed down and prayed with Jesus in special places more often.

Gathering Activity:

Invite the children to come and join you in the space that is reserved for the children's story time. Thank them for gathering and invite them to become quiet, way down where they can feel God is near. After a sense of holy expectation has grown, show them the scripture text in your Bible, and share that in today's Scripture text, it tells us about one very special time when Jesus went up on a mountain to pray. Ask them about the special places where they like to pray and just be quiet. Invite them to listen for Suzy's special place in today's story.

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Story:

Suzy and her mom were at a big church potluck. It was noisy! There was talking and laughing and singing. Forks and plates were clattering. Kids were running around and chairs were being moved. Suzy smelled food, damp clothes (because it was wet outside), and that special church basement smell. It was warm and the chairs were hard. Suzy was five and loved her church's potlucks, because they were big and friendly and noisy. They were fun. You never knew what treats would be there and you often got to try tiny bits of new foods. Potlucks were wonderful. ... *(slowly)* But not now. Suddenly it seemed awful. ... *(quickly and slightly louder)* The lights were too bright. Everything was too loud. The kids were running too fast. There were too many smells. It was too hot and sticky feeling. Suzy wanted to run around like crazy and sleep at the same time. Suzy did not feel right at all.

Suzy found her mom and tried to tell her everything was yucky, but Suzy couldn't even understand what her mom was saying. Her mom's words seemed to swim around in the air and get all garbled. Suzy started crying. Mom smiled gently, took Suzy's hand, and walked her out of the basement into the sanctuary. Mom picked Suzy up and put her on her lap. *(slowly)* The sanctuary was cool and calm and quiet. The smell of hymnbooks and snuffed candles was gentle. Suzy and her mom sat quietly for a moment. ... Suzy could see her mom was praying so she folded her hands and just leaned into her mom as she prayed. She felt like she was snuggled on Jesus' lap.

"Feel better?" Suzy's mom asked. "You were a little over-stimulated, and I think you needed some quiet time away with Jesus." Suzy nodded, "I feel like I'm on Jesus' lap, just like on the picture we have at home." Her mom hugged her and got very quiet, just thinking about that.

Suzy was quiet for a while, too, and then she said, "Do we need to be quiet to be with Jesus? Isn't Jesus everywhere? Isn't he in the noisy potluck, too?"

Mom smiled. "Yes, Jesus is everywhere, including the noisy potluck, but sometimes it's too busy, too noisy for us to hear him or feel him. Then we need to come away to a special place, a quiet place, so we can hear and feel him again. Then we can go back to the noisy, busy places and still hold that feeling inside us. Even Jesus would go and pray away from everybody, to spend quiet time with God. Then he would come back to the noisy, hurting world and help people."

"Thank you mom, I feel so much better. Can we go back to the potluck now?" "Sure thing," Mom answered as Suzy hopped off her lap and headed back downstairs.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, that we can sit with you and talk with you. Thank you, that we can be quiet with you. Help us know when to go to a special place and be alone to pray with you. Thank you that we feel you loving us when we talk with you and that being quiet with you helps us play happily again later. Amen.