



Exploring Spirituality With Children Through Books

Just like adults, children are curious about big questions, such as: Who made the world? Why am I here? How can I help people? Why do people die? Where is heaven?

We think it's important for people of all ages to explore these questions. With children, a story can be a good place to start.

Here is a list of children's books that we like to use at Beach United Church. Most of the books on this list are illustrated stories, suitable for reading aloud or for young readers to read on their own. They're organized by topic, but the topics are simply suggestions. A good story can prompt discussions about all kinds of things!

When discussing a story with children, simple, open-ended questions are best. How did the story make them feel? What part did they like the best?

Children will engage with a story at whatever level they are ready for, and they often dig more deeply into a story than we'd expect. You may find that children are grappling with bigger issues and concepts than you'd realized.

We are always excited to learn about other good books for children. If you have a book we should know about, please let us know at office@beachunited.com or by sharing it on our Facebook page: facebook.com/beachunitedchurch.

BIBLE STORIES

The Brick Bible by Brendan Powell Smith

The Old Testament stories illustrated with Lego bricks, in the format of a graphic novel.

Does God Have a Big Toe? by Marc Gellman

A collection of stories by Rabbi Gellman, who says "The stories in the Bible are so rich and deep and packed with a thousand different meanings that they cannot be explained in just one way. The best way to understand a story in the Bible is to make up another story about it." This book was written for adults, but the stories are suitable for teenaged readers or for reading aloud to younger children.

Bible Now! by the American Bible Society

Easy-to-read Bible stories for young readers, illustrated with cartoons.

We're All In The Same Boat by Zachary Shapiro

Noah's ark is very crowded and the passengers are getting cranky. But they'll all need to get along to save this voyage. Luckily, Noah has just the right words to bring everyone together.

CHANGE AND GROWTH

Rooting For You by Susan Hood

"It's time! Time to grow up, to break out, and to embrace the sky." Children enjoy opening the page flaps in this picture book to discover what's hidden beneath.

What Do You Do With An Idea? by Kobi Yamada

This is the story of one brilliant idea and the child who helps bring it into the world. As the child's confidence grows, so does the idea itself. Then something amazing happens.

The Dot by Peter H. Reynolds

Vashti paints a dot on a piece of paper, and that's the beginning of her journey of surprise and self-discovery.

Something From Nothing by Phoebe Gilman

Adapted from a Jewish folktale, this story about a boy and his grandfather shows how anything can be recreated into something new.

I Will Make Miracles? by Susie Morgenstern

What if you could make miracles? What would you do? This picture book explores the ways a child dreams of making the world a better place.

Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney

The story of Alice Rumphius, who longed to travel the world, to live by the sea, and to do something to make the world more beautiful.

How To Catch A Star by Oliver Jeffers

Once there was a boy who loved stars very much. One day he decided he would try to catch a star of his own, but first he had to think of a plan.

CHRISTMAS

Star Child by Claire A. Nivola

The Star Child watches the Earth from far, far away. He wants to go to this wondrous world, but to do so he will have to be born as a human child.

Wombat Divine by Mem Fox

Wombat loves everything about Christmas, but he especially loves the Nativity play. At last he's old enough to try out. But will there be a part for him to play?

Three Wise Women by Mary Hoffman

Three women meet on a path of starlight to follow where it leads, and each gives her own present to the baby it shines down on.

The Small Ones by Alex Walsh

A young boy is heartbroken when he has to sell his favourite donkey. The donkey's new owner is Joseph and the donkey will carry Mary to Bethlehem.

COMPASSION

The Three Questions by John J. Muth

When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do? This book is based on a story by Leo Tolstoy.

Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox

When a small boy finds that his friend has lost her memory, he's determined to help her find it again.

How Full Is Your Bucket? by Tom Rath and Mary Reckmeyer

We each have an invisible bucket. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it is empty, we feel awful. A boy learns how everything he does can fill or empty his bucket - and also fill or empty other people's buckets as well.

Lily and the Paper Man by Rebecca Upjohn

Lily is afraid of the gruff and untidy-looking man who sells papers on the street. But when the weather turns cold, she sees the Paper Man differently.

CREATION

After The Beginning by Carolyn Pogue

The Divine Family is celebrating the completion of the universe. Then Little Angel suggests that there could be one more planet, one where things aren't the same all the time, and things begin to unravel.

The Blessing Seed by Caitlin Matthews

The story of Adam and Eve, with a twist. When God makes the world, he helps the first Man and Woman explore four paths: the path of wonder, the path of emptiness, the path of making and the path of coming home.

On The Day You Were Born by Debra Frasier

When a baby is born, the natural world celebrates and welcomes the baby to our human family.

DEATH AND LOSS

What Happens When Someone Dies? by Michaelene Mundy

A child's guide to death and funerals.

Water Bugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children by Doris Stickney

A fable about a water bug that transformed into a dragonfly

The Flat Rabbit by Bǫdur Oskarsson

A dog and a rat come across a flat rabbit, lying silently in the road. It all seems rather sad, and so they decide to give the flat rabbit the send-off she deserves.

Is Nothing Something? by Thich Nhat Hanh

Kids' questions and zen answers about life, death, family, friendship and everything in between.

The Heart and the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers

One day, after something sad happened, a girl she hid her heart away in a safe place. But after that the world seemed even emptier than before. Would she know how to get her heart back?

For Heaven's Sake by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

After his grandfather died, Isaiah was told that Grampa had gone to heaven. But no one could tell him what heaven was or where to find it. Isaiah was determined to find out.

EASTER

The Story of Easter by Aileen Fisher

Tells the biblical story and describes Easter customs celebrated around the world. For older readers (aged 8 and up) or for reading aloud to smaller children.

Love One Another: the last days of Jesus by Lauren Thompson

Bold pictures illustrate a retelling of the Easter story that emphasizes Jesus' focus on forgiveness and love.

FRIENDSHIP

Three By The Sea by Mini Grey

Dog, Cat and Mouse live happily together until a mysterious stranger turns their world upsidedown.

Sam And Dave Dig A Hole by Mac Barnett

Sam and Dave are digging a hole and they will not stop until they find something spectacular.

One Of Us by Peggy Moss

Roberta feels like she doesn't fit in at school. Then she discovers some kids just like her: everyone's different and they like it that way!

Just Josie and the Lucky Number by Emily Gale

Josie's neighbour Zac has a dog that does tricks. Josie doesn't have a dog. But she does have a little sister. Hmm....

GOD

God Got a Dog by Cynthia Rylant

It's hard to be God. There you are, looking out at the world and everything in it, and one day you just might want to see what it's like to be part of it all.

What Is God? by Etan Boritzer

This picture book explores a very big question. Boys and girls, grown-ups and old people, everyone wants to know, 'What is God?'

God's Paintbrush by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

Exploring children's questions about God: What does God look like? Is God ever sad? Where would you look for God? What does God want you to do?

Where Does God Live? by August Gold and Matthew J. Perlman

This picture book uses everyday examples to help guide children down their own path of spiritual self-discovery, reminding us all that this world is full of wonder.

Does God Ever Sleep? by Joan Sauro

This picture book helps young readers imagine God's role in bringing nighttime to the world around them.

How Does God Listen? by Kay Lindahl

This picture book helps children use all of their senses to explore how God is always present in their everyday lives.

Does God Know How To Tie Shoes? by Nancy White Carlstrom

Based on the Psalms, this book tells the story of Katrina who asks her parents many questions about God. Good for reading aloud, particularly with children aged 4-8.

God In Between by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

A tale about a topsy-turvy village where people need God's help, but aren't sure where to look for God. They soon find that the answer is much nearer than they thought.

JESUS

The American Bible Society publishes a series of children's books about the teachings of Jesus. We have three: ***The Good Samaritan***, ***Zacchaeus*** and ***The Calming of the Storm***. They have great illustrations and include thought-provoking comments with the stories.

MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

Where is God? by Lawrence and Karen Kushner

This board book for very small children explores how God is with us every day, in every way.

A Handful of Quiet: Happiness in Four Pebbles by Thich Nhat Hanh

A simple guided meditation that uses pebbles to help relieve stress, increase concentration, nourish gratitude and deal with difficult emotions.

Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents) by Eline Snel

Simple mindfulness exercises for children aged 5-12.

Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children by Thich Nhat Hanh and the Plum Village Community

Written for adults, this book shares readings and activities about mindfulness that can be explored with children.

The Quiet Book by Deborah Underwood

This picture book for very young children explores all the different quiet times that can fill a child's day from morning to night.

NATURE / ENVIRONMENT

You Are Stardust by Elin Kelsey

Grounded in science, this picture book explores the big and surprising ways that kids are connected to the natural world.

Butterfly Wishes by Frank Glew

The amazing story of the monarch butterfly.

Song For The Whooping Crane by Eileen Spinelli

A celebration of one of North America's most rare and beautiful birds.

One Well: The Story of Water on Earth by Rochelle Strauss

Water has the power to change everything. How we treat the water in Earth's One Well affects every species on the planet, now and for years to come. For readers aged 8-12.

The Cloud Spinner by Michael Catchpool

A small boy can spin clouds into thread. When the King demands that he spin more and more thread, the world around him begins to change. This tale explores the fragility of our natural world, and the wisdom and courage needed to protect it.

Whaddayamean by John Burningham

When God sees what a mess has been made of the world, God invites two children to convince everyone to help make it the lovely place it was meant to be.

PEACE AND JUSTICE

The Big Book for Peace by various authors

Filled with stories, pictures, poems and even a song, this is a book about many kinds of peace. For young readers aged 7-12.

Peace by Wendy Anderson Halperin

Illustrated quotations from many cultures explore the question, "How can we bring peace to the world?"

We Are All Born Free: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures

published by Amnesty International

Everyone on this planet is protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Wherever we live, whoever we are, these are our rights, and no one should take them away from us.

A Child's Garden: A Story of Hope by Michael Foreman

A little boy's world has been reduced to ruin and rubble. Can a tiny green shoot bring hope to a bleak landscape?

Wangari's Trees of Peace by Jeanette Winter

A girl in Kenya is afraid that soon all the forests will be destroyed. So she decides to plant nine seedlings. As they grow, so do her plans...

Nasreen's Secret School by Jeanette Winter

Young Nasreen has not spoken a word since her parents disappeared. In despair, her grandmother risks everything to enroll Nasreen in a secret school for girls. Based on a true story from Afghanistan.

What Does Peace Feel Like? by V. Radunsky

Children around the world share their answers to the question, "What does peace feel like?"

PRAYER

Thank You For This Food by Debbie Trafton O'Neal
A collection of action prayers and blessings for mealtimes.

The Hockey Sweater by Roch Carrier
Sometimes God doesn't answer our prayers in the way we hope for.

A World of Prayers by Jeremy Brooks
A good prayer makes you think, and it may even make you laugh. This collection of prayers reflects universal themes of love, forgiveness and hope.

My First Prayers by Jeremy Brooks
Simple prayers from around the world, chosen for very young children.

WORLD ISSUES

The Barefoot Book of Earth Tales by Dawn Casey and Anne Wilson
Folk tales and craft projects help children learn about the ways that different cultures around the world set out to live in harmony with the rhythms and patterns of nature.

If The World Were a Village by David Smith
Imagine what it would be like if the whole world was a village of just 100 people. This book can prompt discussion about the world's languages, population growth, energy consumption, food security and other global issues.

Children Just Like Me by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley in association with Unicef
Photos and facts about children in 30 countries around the world.

Whole World by Christopher Corr and Fred Penner
The world is ours to take care of, with all its wonderful diversity. This picture book and music CD include tips on what we can do to keep the earth healthy and happy.

Children Map the World: Selections from the Barbara Petchenik Children's World Map Competition
One hundred maps created by children convey a powerful message of optimism, anxiety, tolerance and hope.

WORLD RELIGIONS

Food and Faith by Susan Reuben and Sophie Pelham
Six children from share stories about the food they eat as part of the rituals and celebrations of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

Helena's Voyage: A Mystic Adventure by Paul Harbridge

A young girl gains an understanding of Judaism, Christianity and Islam through a dream-like voyage.

OTHER BOOKS WE ENJOY THAT DON'T FIT INTO EASY CATEGORIES

Capturing Joy: The Story of Maud Lewis by Jo Ellen Bogart

The life of Canadian folk artist Maud Lewis. For readers aged 8-12.

Pablo Neruda: Poet of the People by Monica Brown

The story of the Chilean poet who wrote about the people and things he loved. For readers aged 6-9.

Giant or Waiting for the Thursday Boat by Robert Munsch

Based on an Irish folktale about St. Patrick and a Giant. For ages 5-9.

The Wolf's Story: What Really Happened to Little Red Riding Hood

by Toby Forward

A different slant on the classic fairy tale. For ages 3-5.

Caterina and the Lemonade Stand by Erin Eitter Kono

Caterina has a brilliant idea for her lemonade stand, but how can she make sure it is a success? For young readers.

How I Became a Pirate by Melinda Long

When pirates invite Jeremy Jonah to join them, he jumps right on board. But is being a pirate really what he wants to do? For ages 3-5.

FOR ADULTS:

Ready or Not: Children, Spirituality and Journeying Together edited by Ruth Harvey

A collection of essays, stories and poems exploring how being with children can offer adults a glimpse of God.