

Ideas for the Sunday School Teacher

Advent Banner
on Display in Boston



Making Banners

Group projects are a wonderful way to foster a sphere of connection and cooperation in the classroom. Although the initial planning may take more time than planning for smaller individual projects, these larger projects may span several weeks and so take less planning in the long run. They work well for camps, weekly lessons, or as an on-going project during summer services. Teach your lesson, discuss the ideas and then start on your project.

Before you start, think about how you will be using your finished project. Do you want to display this banner in your church sanctuary, or in a hallway? Will it be displayed annually at camp? Do you expect it to be on display for a month, every Easter, or permanently? Depending on how you envision displaying (and storing or preserving) your banner, you will want to make it more or less “finished” in feel.

Materials and Supplies

You will need a large piece of fabric for the background. Felt is often used because it is inexpensive, it is available in large pieces, and because the edges of the fabric do not fray. It also hangs flat when displayed. (The edges will not curl inward, as many knits do.) If your banner is for short-term display, this works very well. You will not need to worry about hanging. Simply tack it up to a bulletin board.

If your banner will be on permanent or seasonal display, you may want to invest more money and time in a heavier weight fabric such as velvet. (Remnant tables are a wonderful inexpensive resource. Also, if you think ahead, you can get great bargains after the holidays.) Sew a backing on it to prevent fraying and provide a nice finished edge. Think about how it will hang.

Ideas for the Sunday School Teacher

You can sew fabric loops to the top and insert a larger dowel or inexpensive metal curtain rod through them so that it will hang nicely. Alternatively, you can turn the top edge down and sew a continuous loop for your rod.

Involve the students in as much of this process as you think they can manage. For a younger group, you may get the basic framework of the banner all set before class. For an older group, you may involve them in decisions about what shape the banner should be (e.g. a plain rectangle, a pennant, or a shield). The more the students are involved in the process, the more they will take ownership and pride in the finished product.

Other materials you will need: small felt squares of various colors, scissors, paper, markers, glue, “special effects” (e.g. glitter, beads, ribbon, artificial flowers, pompoms, seeds, trim). If you make these banners over time, you can build up a “banner box” supply. This makes banner making much easier. If you choose to use more specialized fabrics, you can seal the edges with glue (sold in the United States under the brand name “Fray-check”) or iron them to freezer paper (a paper with plastic backing) before you cut them out. For a banner that you wish to display more permanently, choose materials that will not fade or fray as easily.

Banner Title

A title can tie together all the individual pieces of a banner and can communicate the basic message of your lesson. It will help the students remember key ideas later when it is on display. If you plan to use felt lettering as a heading, an old-fashioned stencil is a helpful tool. Students can stencil directly on to the felt and cut out the letters. This will give uniformity to the letters and is a nice job for someone who does not feel particularly artistic. Alternatively, you can purchase ready-made punch-out letters, have a student type the heading out on the computer, or have a student write the heading out nicely on paper or cardboard.

Two Methods for Constructing a Non-permanent Banner for Display

1. The class will work *together* to make a banner with a *single* picture and message. (See the sample Easter Banner picturing Jesus and Mary and The Lord Calls 12 Disciples banner.)

Teach the lesson. Discuss with the class how they would like to depict the story.



banner.

Assign responsibility for pieces of the banner to individual students (e.g. one student makes Mary, another makes Jesus, several students make the lettering).

Once the pieces are cut, place them all to see how they fit, then glue them down. (Helpful hint: write out the lettering that you are using for the title. Students often become confused about spelling when they do things letter by letter.) Display



Ideas for the Sunday School Teacher

2. The class will work *individually* to make different *components* of a banner with a unified theme. (See the samples “Parables of heaven” and “Thank you Lord for your loving care.”) Teach the lesson. Assign different parts of the story to individual students. They will each work out their own picture and bring the finished piece to be put on the banner. The “Parables of heaven” banner



class.

was illustrated on paper with pre-printed titles. The illustrations were mounted on a felt background.

“Thank you Lord for your loving care” was illustrated with felt pictures, and the students wrote the parables on paper. Notice the large size of this banner to accommodate a large



Other More Permanent Group Projects

Students in the Oak Arbor Sunday School worked during one summer to make a tablecloth for a worship altar. The theme chosen for the cloth was grapevines. A plain white commercial tablecloth was purchased. With adult guidance, children sewed “grapevines” (green piping trim) and cut out and glued leaves and grapes. The cloth was later used for monthly services.



Children in Boston have made numerous banners that are on permanent display in their church hall. These were made using more permanent choices for fabric, and were sewn with backing and mounted on dowels for display.

Woman Clothed with the Sun
Banner on Permanent Display
in Boston New Church.