

WHAT IS A CHURCH?

**The church exists specifically where the Word is,
and where the Lord is thereby known....
(*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines* 246)**

There are several ways to define a church. A church is a place where we worship the Lord. It can also mean a group of people with similar beliefs. The Heavenly Doctrine speaks about spiritual churches. One of these is a universal church made up of all people who acknowledge the Lord and live in good according to their religious beliefs. Another is a more specific church with those who have the Word, learn about the Lord from reading and hearing this Word, *and* live according to its truths. As the Rev. Philip Schnarr notes in *Becoming a Church*, the Heavenly Doctrine often talks about a “church” as a spiritual state with a person or group of people. Young children can learn that people become part of the Lord’s church when they obey and live what they learn from the Word (see **Spiritual Concepts about the Church**). Teenagers and adults can begin to understand the deeper concept of the church as a spiritual state within us.

ACTIVITY: What Is a Church? (*for preschool and primary children*)

Find out how the children would define a church, eliciting their ideas about what things are typically in a church building, the ways that a church is used, *etc.* Then make a book following the format of *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown, in which you tell many things about a church but end with a sentence beginning: “But the important thing about a church is....” For example: “Our church has a big window with lots of colors. There are lots of chairs for people to sit on. But the most important thing in our church is the Word on the altar.”

FAMILY DISCUSSION: The Church Is Where the Word Is

Is the church wherever we find the Word? What if the Word is left on a shelf and no one ever reads it? Where we find the Word, there is the potential to for people to learn about the Lord. But we have to do our part, reading the Word in an effort to learn about our Father in heaven.

PROJECT: Make a Picture of Your Church

Draw a picture of the place where you worship the Lord. Is it a church building? If you live far away from church, you may have family worship or “church” in your home. Either way, draw a picture of your church showing where the Word is.

ACTIVITY: Look at a Variety of New Church Buildings

Look at buildings dedicated to the worship of the Lord God Jesus Christ. Do they all look the same? In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?

FINGER PLAY: Here Is the Church...

FAMILY DISCUSSION: Visiting Other Churches (*for teens and up*)

You may have the opportunity to visit other church buildings from time to time. Friends may invite you to a church service or perhaps you will be sightseeing somewhere and want to look inside an interesting church. Look for similarities and differences between your place of worship and the others. Where do they keep the Word? Do they light candles around the Word or shine a special light on it? If you attend a service, do they read from the Word and talk about its meaning?



BUILD A TABERNACLE

**“And let them make Me a sanctuary,
that I may dwell among them.”**

Exodus 25:8

The Lord let Moses see a vision of a Tabernacle in heaven so that he would know just how to make it. The Lord also gave Moses specific instructions to pass along to the children of Israel. And the Lord called Bezaleel, filling him with the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge necessary for building the Tabernacle. He also appointed Aholiab to help him, and put wisdom in the hearts of all who were gifted artisans (see Exodus 31:1-6).

READ: “Making the Tabernacle”

READ: “The Holy of Holies” by the Rev. Robert Junge

PROJECT: Clothespin Figure of Moses *(for preschool and primary children)*

Make a clothespin figure of Moses showing his face gleaming with light.

PROJECT: The Shining Face of Moses *(for preschool and primary children)*

Make a picture of his face on tracing paper, then display it in a sunny window or shine a flashlight behind it. Talk to the children about Moses spending 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai listening to the Lord. Moses learned many things to tell the Israelites!

ACTIVITY: Exploring the Tabernacle

Use the beautiful color pictures of the Tabernacle Model (from the Glencairn Museum) to explore the furnishings of the Tabernacle.

ACTIVITY: Visit the Tabernacle Model at Glencairn Museum

This Tabernacle model was built by children in the Bryn Athyn Church School under the supervision of Bishop George de Charms during the 1920s. Today, the model can be seen in the Ancient Near East Gallery of Glencairn Museum. (For information about Glencairn Museum see www.glencairnmuseum.org.)

ACTIVITY: See a Quick Time Slide Show of the Tabernacle Model

Tabernacle Slide Show for High Speed Connection (14 MB)

Tabernacle Slide Show for Dial Up Connection (7 MB)

(Please note that the free QuickTime Player is needed. Click here for more instructions).

For those who cannot easily visit the museum, you may want to look at these pictures of the model.

(Please note that these pictures were made as a joint project of the Office of Education with Glencairn Museum, and Glencairn holds the copyright. These images may not be used without permission.)

PROJECT: Make Your Own Model of the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was like a tent except that it had wooden sides, and it had a courtyard all around it. See the *Sunday School Projects and Activities* for ways that a group of people can work together to make a model of the Tabernacle using a variety of materials.

Sunday School Project: Ten Commandments (*The Tables of Stone*)

Sunday School Project: The Ark of the Covenant (*Sides of Tabernacle*)

Sunday School Project: Ark of the Covenant (*Courtyard*)

Sunday School Project: The Ark of the Covenant (*Curtain*)

Sunday School Project: Ark of the Covenant (*Making Ark, Lampstand, Altars, Laver, Table of Shewbread, etc.*)

Sunday School Project: The Tabernacle (*Coverings*)

Sunday School Project: The Tabernacle (*Utensils*)

COLORING PAGE: Moses on Mount Sinai

COLORING PAGE: Building the Tabernacle

COLORING PAGE: The Dedication of the Tabernacle

OFFERINGS TO THE LORD

Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring...an offering to the Lord.
(Exodus 35:21)

FAMILY DISCUSSION: An Offering to the Lord

The Lord told Moses to ask the children of Israel to donate materials for building the Tabernacle. They brought gold, silver, and bronze; fine linen threads of blue, purple, and scarlet; skins of rams and badgers as well as goats' hair; shittim wood (called acacia wood in NKJV), precious stones, spices, and oil. How did the children of Israel get all of these materials? See Exodus 11 and 12 to find out how Lord provided that they would have the natural resources for building the Tabernacle. The Lord also made sure they had people with the skills needed to fashion these materials into the walls, the coverings, and the beautiful furnishings, didn't He?

When you put money in the offertory basket, think about this offering helping to build or maintain your church as sanctuary for the Lord. Do you also have talents that you could share to help take care of your church or help your church community? Talk about ways that your family can help the church (building and community). These may include singing in a choir, making flower arrangements, serving as a chancel girl or usher, *etc.*

JOURNAL: Offering the Lord Our Best (*teens and up*)

Write about something that you would like to offer the Lord—something that reflects the very best of what you have to give Him.

COLORING PAGE: Gifts for the Tabernacle—Offerings to the Lord



THE ARK IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

The very holiness of the whole tabernacle was from the testimony, that is, the two tables of stone on which the law was inscribed, because the law signified the Lord as to Divine Truth, and thus as to the Word....

Apocalypse Explained 700:1

READ: “The Holy of Holies” by the Rev. Robert Junge

PROJECT: Make a Model of the Ark (*for preschool and up*)

Here is an easy way to make a model of the Ark using a small box.

PROJECT: Use a Modeling Compound to Make a Model of the Ark (*elementary and up*)

Read the Lord’s instructions to Moses for making the Ark and look at the photograph above, showing one way to picture it.

PROJECT: A Model of the Ark to Cut and Fold (*elementary and up*)

FOR REFLECTION: Make a “Sanctuary for the Lord” in Your Home (*teens and adults*)

Spiritually, a sanctuary is a state of mind (and spiritual development through regeneration) in which we can communicate with the Lord. Explore ways to set up a sanctuary where you can center your life on the Lord.

READ: “Homes of Our Own” by the Rev. Robert S. Junge

FOR REFLECTION: Dedicating Our Homes to the Lord

When we move into a new home, we may want to dedicate the home or our worship center. The *Liturgy: for the Use of the General Church of the New Jerusalem* (1995 edition) includes a rite of home dedication which uses these words: “You have come before the Lord in order that this house may be dedicated to the spiritual and natural uses of a home. Dedication of a place of worship in a home serves as a powerful ultimate of the family’s trust in the Lord.... The home in which conjugal love and the spiritual love of children dwell is like a refuge in which a family recuperates and gathers strength to go forth and perform uses of spiritual charity....”



THE CHERUBIM

The Lord told Moses that He would speak with him from between the two cherubim on the Ark. The cherubim symbolize watchfulness and providence, guarding against access to the Lord and to heaven except through the good of love (see *Arcana Coelestia* 9509:3). The cherubim also picture the way the Lord protects the good which is present in heaven and with a person, so that no harm can be done to it. The wings of the cherubim help us picture this protection.

JOURNAL PAGE: Protect What Is Good *(for teens and up)*

Be watchful of the good in others and yourself, looking for it and protecting it.

ACTIVITY: The Function of Wings *(ages 10 and up)*

Make a list of the good things that wings can do for birds and compare with the function of the Ark (with the Ten Commandments safe inside), symbolizing the Word?

ACTIVITY: Nature Walk with a Focus on Feathers *(for preschool children and older)*

See how many kinds of feathers you can find and compare them to see the similarities and differences. Think of each feather as a truth, ready to lift you to a higher place.

PROJECT: Make Two Wings *(for preschool and primary children)*

Draw a pair of wings on heavy white paper, then cut them out and cover with feathers.

PROJECT: Cherubim Facing Each Other

Make your own picture of the cherubim facing each other, drawing the wings so that they touch above the ark.

ACTIVITY: “In the Shelter of Your Wings” (Psalm 61:4)

“I will abide in Your tabernacle forever. I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah.”

Talk about this recitation with your child. While embracing your child, you can talk about the Lord holding us and protecting us. Or wrap a blanket around the entire family to help picture the way the Lord keeps us safe from evil and falsity by giving us the truths of His Word.



THE LAMPSTAND IN THE HOLY PLACE

**A lamp means faith and an intelligent understanding of truth
and a wise discernment of good, which come from the Lord alone.**

see Arcana Coelestia 9548:2

The lampstand gave light in the holy place all day and all night, just as the Lord gives us the light of truth whenever we are able to be in a “holy place” or right state of mind and heart to receive it. Olive oil symbolizes love, and when a good love motivates us to read the Lord’s Word (such as when we turn to the Word to find out how to better serve our neighbor), then the Lord can give us the light of truth in our understanding.

READ: “The Holy Place” by the Rev. Robert Junge

FAMILY WORSHIP: Light the Lampstand

Set out 7 oil lamps, tea lights, or candles in candlesticks. Let each member of the family choose a quote from the Word to read aloud. These quotes should be something that help us see how the Lord wants us to love Him and help our neighbors. After someone reads the quote from the Word, let him or her light one of the lamps or candles. Then take a minute to talk about the meaning of this quote from the Lord’s Word. Repeat until all of the candles are lit (even if someone has to take more than one turn). (See a variation of this idea below.)

PROJECT: Coloring the Lampstand

Draw a picture of the lampstand with its seven branches. Then share a loving message that the Lord tells us in His Word and color an orange flame above one lamp and a yellow glow around it, when. (You may want to write this message or the reference below the drawing of the lampstand.) Repeat until you have “lit” all of the lamps.

PROJECT: Make a Candle Holder that Looks Like an Oil Lamp

Make a clay lamp that can have a tea light nestled inside. (Note: Without the use of a kiln and special materials, we do not recommend making a clay oil lamp, as it can be challenging to make one that doesn’t leak.)

COLORING PAGE: Priest Lighting the Lamps

PROJECT: A Book of Numbers in the Word

When we read about the lampstand, we find a number that is found many times in the Word—the number 7! Make a book showing numbers used to describe the Tabernacle.



THE LAVER IN THE OUTER COURT

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean,
put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.
Cease to do evil, learn to do good....

Isaiah 1:16

In the outer court of our life, we are dealing with the challenges of bringing the Lord's teachings into our daily lives. We want to obey the commandments, but it is so easy to slip into bad habits. The water in the laver symbolizes truths that can help us wash away these habits from our lives.

READ: "The Outer Court" by the Rev. Robert Junge

ACTIVITY: Wash Yourself

Put a bowl of fresh water near your worship center. Think about (or write down) something that you are trying to cleanse from your life. Put your fingers in the water and ask the Lord to help you. Read His Word to see how His truths can help you.

Variation: Put a bowl of water near the door leading out of your house. Use it as a way to remind you of your "resolutions" for spiritual development as you go in and out of your home. This is similar to the laver where the priests washed their hands and feet before offering sacrifices to the Lord and before entering the Tabernacle.

COLORING PAGE: The Outer Court of the Tabernacle

FAMILY DISCUSSION: Baptism

What does baptism have in common with the priests washing in the laver? In doing a baptism, the minister dips his fingers in water and puts the water on the person's forehead, making the sign of the cross. During baptism, the parents promise to help their children learn what is good so that they can prepare for a life in heaven. Adults who are baptized take on learning the truths of the Word and applying these to their own lives.

BECOMING A CHURCH, A DWELLING PLACE FOR THE LORD

Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness,
and speaks the truth in his heart....
Psalm 15:1-2

Everyone who leads a good life is said to have the church within. When a person becomes a church, he or she has made a dwelling place in his heart and mind where the Lord can dwell. How do we become a church? By knowing what is evil and not doing it, for the reason that it is against the Lord.

RECITATION: Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? (Psalm 15)

Use simple hand motions to help your children learn this beautiful recitation. Show a “tabernacle” with your hands, gesture upward to a hill, walk in place with upright posture, make your hands busy at “work,” then touch your right hand to your mouth, and finally cover your heart with your hand.

PROJECT: Commandments in Our Hearts (for primary and up)

Make a heart with a door that opens to see the Ten Commandments *in* a person’s heart.

PROJECT: Angels with You (for preschool children)

Make 2 golden angels out of clothespins and slip them over the neck of your shirt or dress so that you remember that the Lord keeps angels near you at all times, protecting you and helping you do what is good. Think about these angels being like the cherubim above the Ark.

FOR REFLECTION: Speaking the Truth in Our Hearts (for teens and adults)

What is meant by speaking the truth in our hearts? We might take this to prescribe being open with others, sharing whatever is in our minds and hearts. But it seems to be suggesting something much deeper. Our goal is to have the Lord’s truths written on our hearts at all times. This means they have been received in our will. Those who know truths, comprehend them, and then will and do them, acquire a conscience. With a well developed conscience, whatever we speak and do comes from a good heart (see AC 131).