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**Faith Formation through Creativity**
We are made in the image of God and we believe God to be the ultimate Creator. What better way to honor our Creator than to do likewise? Some people are comfortable exploring music, drama and arts - they need little encouragement to explore their faith artistically. Others may not have had the opportunity to nurture their artistic side or decided their efforts weren’t “good enough.” Church is a grace-filled place to foster creativity and even a little mess!

**Art for the Worship Space**
My own inspiration for creating artistic faith formation projects stems from a lack of liturgical banners in our church, as well as my love of working with children to create art. Over the last three years at Grace United Methodist, we have created altar cloths, banners, prayer flags, prayer shawls, and collages that celebrate the liturgical seasons and relate to Bible stories.
Tips for Creating Art as a Group

1. **Encourage** participants to enjoy the mess, relationship-building, and joy of the process rather than emphasizing the final product – a great metaphor for our faith journey, too!

2. **Plan ahead** for mess and clean up. We reuse disposable containers for paint. For our large cross painting, we covered the floor in drop cloths to prevent accidents. We ask younger children to remain seated as they work in order to avoid bumps and spills.

3. **Be clear** with your artists about how creative the project is. For our Ash Wednesday altar cloth, artists were asked to paint only a black cross. For our Easter project, there was much more leeway – any symbols of new life were encouraged.

4. **Speak with your worship team** beforehand to see how the work might be displayed on Sundays. Is there a season or scripture that the piece fits well with? Be creative about placement; the sanctuary, lobby, narthex, fellowship space, and even outdoors are all great possibilities.

5. **Celebrate your creation!** Don’t forget to acknowledge those involved, post pictures on social media, and highlight the process in your church newsletter.
With these tips in mind, here are three church art projects that you can try.

**Simple Craft Project: Prayer Jar**
One of our first successful projects was a simple craft stick prayer jar. All you need is a jar or pail, wooden craft sticks (aka: tongue depressors), and markers. We placed supplies and directions out at our annual Harvest Fest potluck. There was a new energy as the congregation created and shared together. A few people remarked that their prayer jars stayed out past Christmas.

**Small Group Project: Two-sided Painted Crosses**
During one family gathering, youth were asked what creative contribution they would like to make to church. Several expressed an interest in painting “large” crosses. For Lent, a woodworker built a number of crosses with one side painted black and the other left blank. Before painting, we read the story of the Crucifixion with the black sides facing up. Then, we flipped the crosses, and read the story of the Resurrection. Families then painted symbols of new life on the blank sides. The black sides were displayed in the sanctuary on Good Friday and then turned to the colorful sides for Easter Sunday. These were a wonderful conversation piece throughout Easter.
Multi-group Collage Project: Mustard Seed Banner

When there is limited time for large groups to work together, collage is a form that allows smaller groups to make components of a larger work. Our Mark 4:20 banner was created over several Sundays during our church-wide study of the parable of the mustard seed and the sower. During coffee hour, adults and older youth were invited to create prayer “seeds” which became the centers of our banner flowers. During Sunday school, the younger children painted abstract designs which were cut into petals. Although I assembled this particular project, a circle group or other Sunday school class could have put the collage together.
Conclusion
We are made in the image of God. What better way to worship this Amazing Creator than to be creative ourselves, encourage creativity in our congregants, and incorporate their creativity into the life and worship of the entire community?

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