

A is for Apple ... and Adoration: Using Children's Picture Books to Talk about Faith

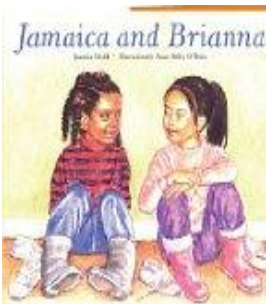
As much as we would like for faith to infuse every part of our children's existence, talking about faith in our everyday lives may seem hard at times. Children's books can provide a natural springboard for faith talk. The stories below are not "religious" books; they are not about faith. Rather, they are wonderful stories that will provide many opportunities for conversations about what it means to be a faithful person in God's Kingdom. Happy reading!

A is for apple. *The Apple Pie Tree*



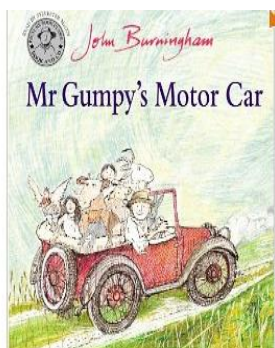
Written by Zoe Hall and illustrated by Shari Halpern. Two young sisters delight in the passing seasons as they watch the transformation of their apple tree from bare limbs in winter to branches loaded with fruit in the fall. *Faith Talk: Look out the window and talk about what you see in a tree nearby. Who made the trees and the flowers and the seasons? God created everything good on Earth for us because God loves us. Count the ways the sisters in this story show that they are happy about their tree. Psalm 148.*

B is for boots. *Jamaica and Brianna*



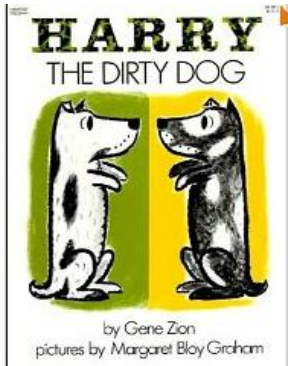
Written by Juanita Havill and illustrated by Anne Sibley O'Brien. Jamaica does not want to wear her brother's old hand-me-down boots, and her friend Brianna's comments make things even worse. Mean words in retaliation cause more trouble for the two girls. Only when each apologizes is their friendship repaired. *Faith Talk: Both Brianna and Jamaica used words that hurt. Why do you think they said hurtful things? What are some words we can use that are kind? Ephesians 4:29 and James 1:19.*

C is for car. *Mr. Gumpy's Motor Car*



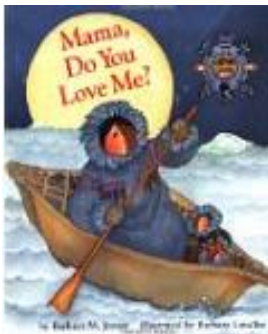
Written and illustrated by John Burningham. When Mr. Gumpy sets out for a ride in his old jalopy, all his friends want to come along. Rain and mud make for a rough go of it, though, until everyone pitches in to help. *Faith talk: Who gets to go for a ride in this story? Everybody who asks! What happens when no one wants to do any work? You may want to talk about how all living creatures get to participate in God's great creation but that we must all take responsibility for it, too. Colossians 1:26-27*

D is for dog. *Harry the Dirty Dog*



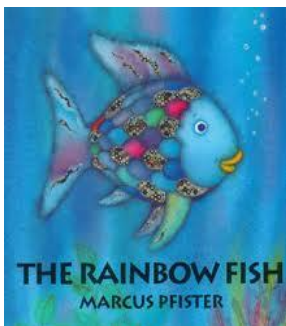
Written by Gene Zion and illustrated by Margaret Bloy Graham. Harry's day of play changes him from a white dog with black spots to a black dog with white spots, and suddenly, no one recognizes him! *Faith talk: How does Harry change in this story? Why does his family not recognize him? Would you be a different person if you suddenly had green hair or purple skin? This would be a good opportunity to talk about the relative unimportance of outer appearances and how God sees us for who we are on the inside. Look at the story of Samuel choosing David to be king in 1 Samuel 16:7.*

E is for Eskimo. *Mama, Do You Love Me?*



Written by Barbara M. Jooose and illustrated by Barbara Lavallee. No matter what outrageous behavior this little Inuit girl dreams up, the answer to her question, "Mama, would you love me?" is always, "I would love you." *Faith Talk: Talk about the emotions the mama in this story imagines – sorrow, anger, sadness, fear, etc. Talk about when you have felt these things. Remind one another that no matter what we do, God still loves us. Psalm 136:1.*

F is for fish. *The Rainbow Fish*



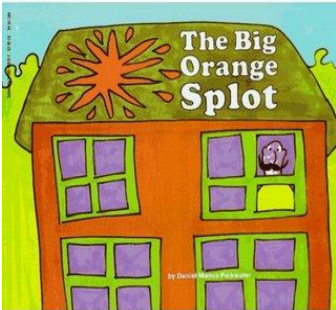
Written and illustrated by Marcus Pfister. The most beautiful fish in the entire ocean learns that the secret to happiness is in sharing what you have. *Faith Talk: Why do you think that the Rainbow Fish was unhappy before he gave away his scales? God has given each of us special gifts to share with other people. What are some of your gifts? 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.*

G is for gorilla. *Little Gorilla*



Written and illustrated by Ruth Bornstein. Little gorilla is a beloved member of his family and of the wider jungle community. Even when he grows BIG, everyone still loves him! *Faith talk: reminisce about how much your child was loved when he/she was a baby. Ask: Why do you think that everybody still loves you? Talk about how much more God loves us, not because of what we look like or what we can do, but because God made us. What would it be like to love others in that way? Ephesians 2:8-10*

H is for house. *The Big Orange Splot*



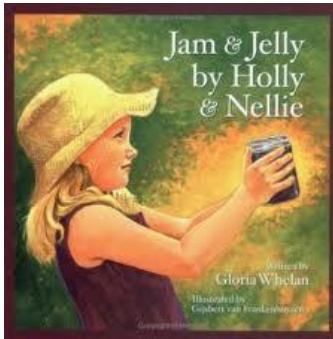
Written and illustrated by Daniel Pinkwater. When a seagull drops a can of orange paint on Mr. Plumbean's house (no one knows why), the neighbors on his very neat street are aghast. Mr. Plumbean sets to work turning the big orange splot into his dream house, and the neighbors follow his example. *Faith Talk: I wonder what Mr. Plumbean talked about with his neighbors when they came to see him late at night? I wonder if he was a good listener? Jesus tells us that we can help change the world by talking to other people about God's plan for us. Look at the Parable of the Mustard Seed in Luke 13:19.*

I is for insect. *The Very Quiet Cricket*



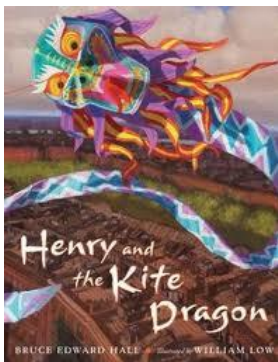
Written and illustrated by Eric Carle. There are a number of beautiful insects in the world, but it is only when the cricket encounters another cricket that he is able to make music. *Faith Talk: This book provides a good opportunity to talk about the special gift of our faith communities. How can we make music together with our friends in church? Psalm 133:1 and Ephesians 5:2, 18-19*

J is for jam. *Jam & Jelly by Holly & Nellie*



Written by Gloria Whelan and illustrated by Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen. Times are hard, and Holly's family may not have enough money to buy her a coat and boots for the cold Michigan winter, but Mama is resourceful. Mother and daughter gather and process a summer's worth of wild fruit, turning it into jam to sell. *Faith Talk: Look through the pictures in this book and name all the things you see that God created on the earth. Talk about how God has provided food for us to eat. Look at the Creation story in Genesis 1:29-30.*

K is for kite. *Henry and the Kite Dragon*



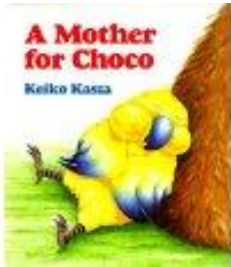
Written by Bruce Edward Hall and illustrated by William Low. Henry helps Grandfather Chin build the most beautiful kites in all of Chinatown, but when they fly the kites from the rooftop, the kids from Little Italy throw rocks at the kites and stamp them to bits. Just when it looks as if the two groups of children will come to blows, they discover that they are both trying to share the same sky. *Faith Talk: I wonder why Tony threw rocks at the beautiful kites? Who said, "I'm sorry" in this story? Why is it important to say, "I'm sorry"? Can you include an "I'm sorry" in your prayers today? Ephesians 4:31-32*

L is for lamb. *The Snow Lambs*



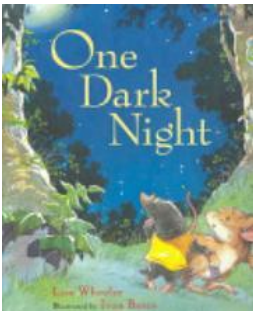
Written and illustrated by Debi Gliori. Sam worries about his missing dog Bess as a snowstorm picks up strength and howls around his house. In a parallel story, the reader can see Bess bravely rescuing a missing sheep and bringing her safely home. *Faith Talk: Why do you think that Bess worked so hard to bring the sheep home? How did Sam's family feel when Bess and the sheep came home? Jesus tells us a story about a shepherd who searched for a missing sheep, too. Read Luke 15:3-7.*

M is for mother. *A Mother for Choco*



Written and illustrated by Keiko Kasza. Choco is a funny-looking little bird, and no matter where he goes, he cannot find a mother who looks just like him. Finally, Mrs. Bear demonstrates that it is not what we look like but how we treat one another that makes us a family. *Faith Talk: Name the members of your family. Now talk about other families to whom you belong – perhaps your church family or the family of humankind. How do we treat members of our family? Jesus often told stories about how we should treat one another. Look at Luke 10:29-37.*

N is for night. *One Dark Night*



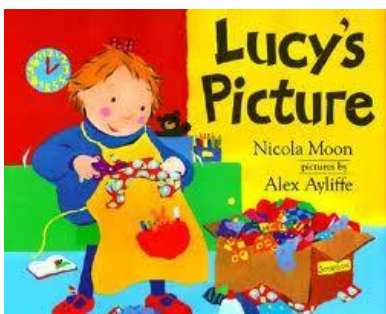
Written by Lisa Wheeler and illustrated by Ivan Bates. A tiny mole and a tiny mouse get lost in the woods. Meanwhile, a big growly bear paces as he waits for his snack. The tension grows, but in the end they sit down to an enormous prearranged tea party, and we discover that the three are the unlikeliest of friends. *Faith Talk: Talk about the things which frighten you. What did you think the mouse and the mole were frightened of when you first read the story? God is aware of our fears and comforts us. Read some of the great scriptures of comfort: Psalm 23, Isaiah 41:9-11, Romans 8:38-39.*

O is for Olympics. *Koala Lou*



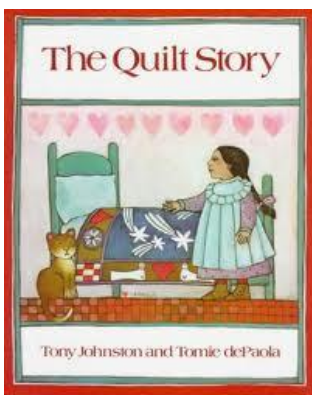
Written by Mem Fox and illustrated by Pamela Lofts. In an effort to get her distracted mother's attention, Koala Lou decides to train for the Bush Olympics. On the big day Koala Lou loses the gum tree climbing event, but her mother greets her with the words she most wants to hear: "Koala Lou, I DO love you! I always have and I always will." *Faith Talk: Sometimes we think that we have to be the biggest or the smartest or the fastest to receive love. What did Koala Lou do to get her mother's love? God loves us no matter what, too. Psalm 136:1.*

P is for picture. *Lucy's Picture*



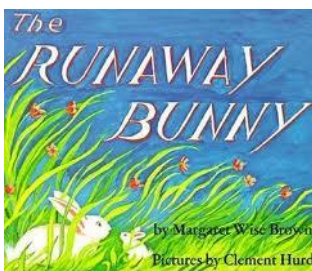
Written by Nicola Moon and illustrated by Alex Ayliffe. While the rest of her classmates paint pictures, Lucy makes a special collage of fabric, sand, leaves, and feathers for her blind grandpa to “see.” *Faith Talk: Why did Lucy decide not to use paint for her Grandpa’s picture? Kindness is a way of showing love for people. How can you show love to someone today? Would you like to make a picture for someone you love? Think about that person for a minute and then decide what sort of picture they might like. 1 Corinthians 13:4*

Q is for quilt. *The Quilt Story*



Written by Tony Johnston and illustrated by Tomie dePaola. Two little girls, separated in history by perhaps a hundred years, are both comforted by the beauty and familiarity of the same patchwork quilt and by the love of their mothers. *Faith talk: Talk about objects that your child finds comforting. The little girls in this story feel lonely when they are in a new place. When do you feel lonely? Did you know that God is always with you, and can be your greatest comfort? Psalm 119:50.*

R is for rabbit. *The Runaway Bunny*



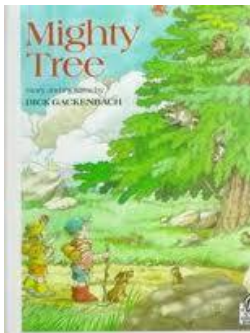
Written by Margaret Wise Brown and illustrated by Clement Hurd. No matter where the little bunny imagines he might run away, his mother imagines a way of following him. *Faith Talk: Imagine other places the little bunny might run and how his mother would find him. Talk about how much God loves us and how God is willing to follow us everywhere in order to love us. The Bible tells us about a man named Jonah, who tried to run away from God. Read Jonah 1-2.*

S is for soup. *Stone Soup*



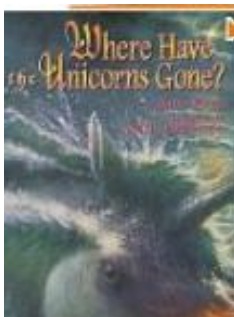
Adapted and illustrated by Marcia Brown. When they arrive in a village marked by poverty and want, three hungry soldiers are refused food. They then set up a huge pot of boiling water, drop a rock in it, and announce that they can make stone soup. One by one, the curious villagers contribute bits of food to add to this wondrous feast. *Faith Talk: Why do you think that the villagers did not want to share their food at the beginning of the story? What happened when they did share? Jesus tells us that when we care for those in need, we are really caring for Him. Matthew 25:31-40.*

T is for tree. *Mighty Tree*



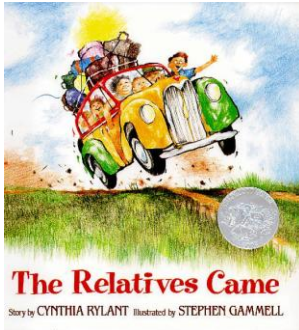
Written and illustrated by Dick Gackenbach. Three tiny seeds grow into three strong trees. One tree is cut down and made into all manner of useful things. The second tree is cut down and taken to a big city, where it is decorated and brings great joy to many people. The third tree remains in the forest, where it provides shelter to dozens of living things. *Faith Talk: Look around you and name some things that are made of wood. Who might live in the trees near your house? We are all part of God's great creation. Say a prayer of thanks for the Earth. Psalm 24:1.*

U is for unicorn. *Where Have the Unicorns Gone?*



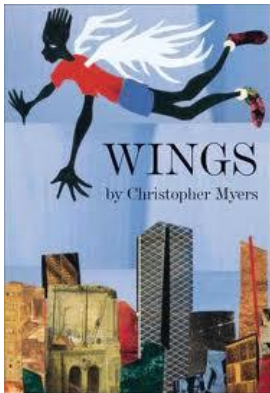
Written by Jane Yolen and illustrated by Ruth Sanderson. The unicorns flee from beautiful lands as, time after time, civilization makes its mark upon their earthly paradise. Eventually they return to the sea, the last haven for these wild creatures. *Faith Talk: God created our beautiful Earth and all that lives on it, and God called it good. Talk about all the things the unicorns are running away from. Who made those things? Think about how we should treat God's earth. Genesis 1:20-21.*

V is for vacation. *The Relatives Came*



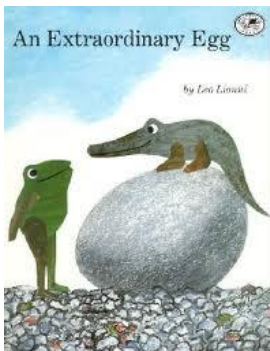
Written by Cynthia Rylant and illustrated by Stephen Gammell. When the relatives crowd into their old car and drive the many miles to our house, the days are full of hugging and eating and playing and working together. *Faith talk:* What are some fun things about having people come to visit? (We get to play and talk together.) What are some things that are hard about having visitors? (We have to share our toys, and we have to wait longer for our turn.) What are the special talents that God gave you? Can you name some talents your cousins have?
1 Corinthians 12

W is for wings. *Wings*



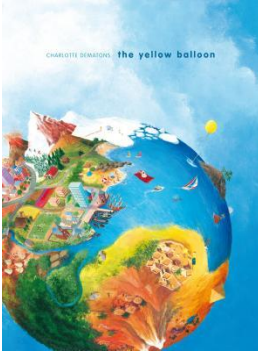
Written and illustrated by Christopher Myers. Ikarus Jackson, the new boy on the block, has wings. While the other kids make fun of him, the young girl who narrates the story recognizes Ikarus' gifts and defends him. *Faith Talk:* Do you know anyone who looks different or acts differently than the rest of the kids in class? How do people treat that person? Do people ever make fun of you because of your differences? How did the girl in this story treat Ikarus? Over and over again Jesus spent time with people who were different. Talk about the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-9.

X is for eXtraordinary. *An Extraordinary Egg*



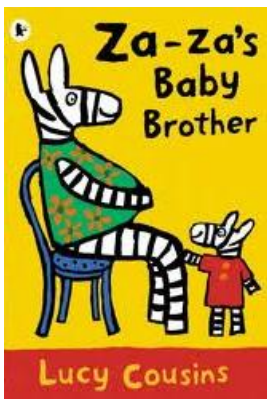
Written and illustrated by Leo Lionni. Three frogs watch as what they think is a baby chicken (in reality a baby alligator) hatches out of an egg on Pebble Island. This 'chicken' saves one of the frogs from drowning, and they are inseparable friends ever afterward, until the 'chicken' is reunited with its mother. *Faith Talk:* Do you think that a frog and an alligator would normally be friends? Why do you think that Jessica the frog and the little chicken are friends? Who can your friends be? The apostle Paul said that we can all be Jesus' friends. Galatians 3:28.

Y is for yellow. *The Yellow Balloon.*



Written and illustrated by Charlotte Dematons. In this wordless picture book, a bright yellow balloon sails around the world, over deserts, cities, mountains, jungles, and rivers, and in and out of history. In each intricate picture, the viewer can see dozens of interlocking stories while trying to find the tiny balloon. *Faith Talk: We are a part of a story that is much, much bigger than our own. Pick one double-page spread and try to tell all the stories you see there. Look at the Table of Contents of a children's Bible and see the big story of God. Are you part of that story?*

Z is for zebra. *Za-Za's Baby Brother.*



Written and illustrated by Lucy Cousins. After her baby brother arrives, Za-Za cannot get any of her parents' attention. Dad is always busy with the baby. Mom is always busy with the baby. Za-Za discovers that she can play with the baby, too, and that when he goes to sleep, her parents do have time for her. *Faith Talk: It is hard for Za-Za to share her parents' time with her new brother. Even Jesus' closest friends struggled with wanting to make sure that they would always be close to him. See Mark 10:35-4. How can you tell that Za-Za's parents still love her? God will always love us, too.*

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