Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Christian Education

2017 Creative Festivals Lesson Plan:
Grades 1-3

Theme:
“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (Mark 11:17)

Goal:
To help the students understand the theme well enough to express it in art, photography, poetry, and creative writing.

Lesson Objectives:
The students will be able to:
• Recall that the church is God's house and therefore is a holy place.
• Describe what is happening in the icon of the Cleansing of the Temple.
• Identify the behaviors that are appropriate and inappropriate in church.
• Describe the structure of the church; what each part is called and used for, i.e. narthex, nave, sanctuary.
• Explain how we are also temples of God and we should keep ourselves holy.
• Discuss some ways we can help new people feel welcome in our church.

Time: 40 Minutes

Materials:
• Prayer Handout (attached - print one copy for each student)
• Icon of the Cleansing of the Temple (attached)
• Church Behavior Worksheet (attached - print one copy for each student)
• Pencils
• Diagram of the interior of the church (attached)

Background Information for the Teacher:
Notes from the Orthodox Study Bible:

"Those who bought and sold were trading in live animals to be used for sacrifices. The moneychangers traded Roman coins for Jewish coins since Roman coins, which bore the image of Caesar, were considered defiling the temple. The cleansing of the temple also points to the necessity that the Church be kept free of earthly pursuits. As each person is considered a temple of God (1 Co 3:16; 6:19), it is also a sign that our hearts and minds must be cleansed of earthly matters."
During the Divine Liturgy, specifically during the Great Entrance, the choir sings these words in the Cherubimic Hymn, “Lay aside all earthly cares.” All those things that distract us from God, i.e. work, money, sports activities, school and school related activities, etc. are to be left behind as we enter the church. When we are in the church temple, we are there as the Body of Christ in the heavenly kingdom to worship and pray to God and to become one with Him through receiving Holy Communion. Each part of the church temple is designed to bring us into the heavenly kingdom. We enter through the doors remembering Jesus saying, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” (John 10:9)

We enter from the western end of the church into the narthex, or vestibule. In the narthex, we light our candles and pray before the icons of Christ and the Theotokos. We move eastward into the nave, the main body of the temple. We face eastward and see before us the iconostasis and the royal doors, behind which is the sanctuary. On the walls are icons of the saints, our “cloud of witnesses”, and icons of Christ’s life. This is all designed to keep us focused on where we are and what we are to be doing. The atmosphere is subdued and designed for prayer.

Christ gave His disciples and us the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. On Pascha, at Agape Vespers, we read the gospel in many different languages. Christ came to save everyone, not a select few. Therefore, we are to welcome all who come seeking Christ and to bear witness to Him in our everyday lives by loving everyone whom we meet, and living our lives in Christ.

On Pentecost, the disciples were touched by the Holy Spirit and began witnessing to Christ in the languages of the people present. They all heard the good news of Christ’s Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection and many that day believed and were baptized. This is one of many reminders, but perhaps the most significant, that Christ came to call everyone to the heavenly kingdom.

**Opening Prayer:**
Give each student a copy of the prayer handout and read together the “Prayer on Entering the Church.”

**Introduction:**
“Today we’re going to learn about our Creative Festivals theme. It comes from the Book of Mark in the New Testament of the Bible: ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.’ The prayer we just said also mentioned the word ‘house.’ Whose house are we talking about? (God’s house.) What is another name for God’s house? (The Church.) Is the Church a holy place? (Yes, because the Church is God’s house, it’s a very holy place.)
Icon of the Cleansing of the Temple
Show the children the icon. Ask the following questions:
1. Who is in the icon? (Jesus, people, animals)
2. What are the people doing? Are they praying? (No, they’re selling animals to be used for offerings.)
3. What is Jesus doing? (Chasing the people who are selling the animals out of the Temple.)
4. Why is He doing this? (Because the Temple was a holy place where came to pray.)

Church Behavior
Ask the children to list some behaviors that are appropriate during services. Possible answers may include the following:
1. We are quiet; we whisper if we have to talk.
2. We walk and do not run.
3. We make the sign of the cross at the proper times.
4. We try to follow along with the service, sing the hymns, say the prayers we know, etc.

Ask them to list behaviors that are inappropriate during services. Possible answers may include the following:
1. Making noise.
2. Eating snacks in church.
3. Playing games on cell phones or iPads
4. Playing with friends etc.

Give each child a pencil and the “Church Behavior Worksheet.” Read it aloud and help them fill in the blanks if necessary.

The Church is Designed to Help Us Come Closer to God
If you are able to take a tour of your church, do so and talk about the different activities we do in each space and name the various parts of the church. Have the children take along their prayer handout. (If you can make arrangements with your priest or deacon to take you and the children on a tour of the church, that would be ideal.) If you are not able to tour your church at all, use the diagram of a church included in this lesson and discuss what we do in each section:

1. We say a prayer as we enter the church. (Point out the prayer on the handout that was said at the beginning of the lesson.)
2. The Narthex is the lobby or vestibule. Here we light our candles, venerate the icons, and say special prayers. (Say the prayers before the icons.)
3. In the Nave we sit or stand for the services. We sing and recite the prayers as appropriate for the services. (Talk about the icons and where they are placed in the church.)
4. Point out the sanctuary. Discuss how it is a very holy place and only the clergy and altar servers are allowed to be there. Point out the Holy Table where the Eucharist is prepared.

**Our Bodies are Holy Temples**
Discuss how when we receive Holy Communion, Jesus lives inside of us. Our bodies are Temples of the Lord. What are some things we can do to keep ourselves holy? Answers may include the following:
1. Loving and worshipping God.
2. Loving others as God loves us.
3. Praying every day.
4. Following the Ten Commandments.
5. Attending church services.
6. Learning more about our faith.
7. Being kind to everyone and helpful to those in need, etc.

**A House of Prayer for All Nations**
“Jesus said, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.’ What do you think that means? Do you think only some people are allowed in, but not everyone? (No, the Church is supposed to welcome all different types of people, from all different places.)

“When new people come into our church, what are some things we should do to make them feel welcome?” (Greet them, talk to them, introduce them to other people, invite them to sit with us, help them follow along with the service, give them holy bread, invite them to coffee hour, invite the children to Sunday Church School, etc.)

**Closing Prayer:**
Recite the “Prayer on Leaving a Church” from the prayer handout.
PRAYER HANDOUT

Prayer on Entering a Church
I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear I will worship toward thy holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before me, that with a clear mind I may glorify thee forever. One Divine Power worshipped in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer on Leaving a Church
Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen they salvation, which thou has prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Prayer Before the Icon of Christ
We reverence thy spotless icon, O gracious Lord, and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God; for of thine own good will thou wast pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh, that thou mightest deliver from bondage to the enemy those whom thou hadst fashioned. Wherefore, we cry aloud unto thee; thou hast filled all things with joy, O our Saviour, for thou didst come to save the world.

Prayer before the Icon of the Theotokos
Forasmuch as thou art a well-spring of tenderness, O Theotokos, make us worthy of compassion; Look upon a sinful people; Manifest thy power as ever, for hoping on thee we cry aloud unto thee: Hail! As once did Gabriel, Chief Captain of the Bodiless Powers.
CHURCH BEHAVIOR WORKSHEET

On Sunday, I Go to Church to Worship God
I have fasted that morning from food and drink, so that I may be thinking about God when I receive Holy Communion. I ask forgiveness from anyone I have sinned against. I think about how God has blessed me this week, and about the people I want to pray for. Then, when I arrive . . .

1. I may light a c __ __ __ __ __ and say a __ __ __ __ r. I kiss the icon.

2. Because the Church is a holy place, I b __ __ and make the Sign of the __ __ __ __ __ __ when I enter and when I leave.

3. I p __ __ __ and sing during the service and think about the words.

4. I __ __ __ when I hear the word “bow” in the service.

5. I __ __ __ __ d, especially during the Gospel and the Great Entrance, and when Father is blessing or censing.

6. I bow and make the sign of the cross many times:
   - when I pray to the “ __ __ __ __ __ __, Son, and Holy Spirit,
   - when I sing the Trisagion Hymn, “ __ __ __ __ God,”
   - at the Great Entrance when Father passes by,
   - before and after Holy Communion.

7. When it is time for Holy Communion, I quietly stand in line with my arms __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ over my chest. This shows my humility.

8. If I have to leave the service and enter again, I wait if it is during the L __ __ __ __ __ Entrance,
   - the Epistle or Gospel,
   - the Great __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __,
   - the Consecration, when we say “A __ __ __” three times the Creed and the Our Father.

God made me and loves me and saved me—that is why I behave with great respect during Divine Liturgy.