



Education & Family Ministry

Families and congregations learning, living and sharing daily faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ!

Based on the Great Commission and as part of our **CALL** to ministry the Education and Family Ministry Team will encourage and equip families and congregations to serve Christ. Matthew 28:19-20

Here it is the time of Lent. Lent is the season of forty days before Easter. As baptized and claimed by God, Lent is celebrated. But why? Because it is the thing to do; because it was always done in our home; because it was always done at church. Others say it should be celebrated. But why?

As the walk of faith matures this season takes on a different meaning. It is a time to set aside for preparation of the soul for the death and resurrection of Jesus. This preparation differs for each person. It is a season of sacrifice, service, and refreshment.

As a child it is difficult to not get the importance of this season. A child does not think of seasons but days to celebrate. Therefore, he or she may not get it. Visit with a child about the season. Share experiences with a child.

People talked about giving something up for Lent. A person might say I'm giving up bread. I'm giving up chocolate. I'm giving up smoking. I'm giving up _____ (fill in the blank). Why? An individual may find "giving up" something takes on meaning. Lent is a season of sacrifice. It is not giving up something but sacrificing as evident of Christ sacrificing his life for us. Sacrifice takes on a different meaning than giving something up.

Lent, as a season of sacrifice, may not just mean giving up something. Sacrifice is a surrender of something for the sake of something else. This indicates a service to others. During these forty days as members of Christ's body we might want to consider doing something different, this may be described as taking "something on". This also describes what happened to our Lord. He took on the

sins of the world for us. During this season consider adding something, providing a service to others. If one studies the definition, surrendering something for the sake of something else, we hear a replacement of one thing for another.

Lent is also a season of refreshment, a time to take a refreshed look at life. In these forty days we celebrate baptism as a way of life. A refreshed look reminds us again what it means to be a part of the Body of Christ.

Celebrate Lent!! Lent is a time of penitence; a time to come to a humble realization of one's sins and misdeeds.

By Julia Thoel
St. Paul, Manson

If your congregation needs any assistance with ideas or programming for any areas of education or family ministry please feel free to contact one of the team members below. We would love to assist you in any way we can.

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The EFM Newsletter is a quarterly newsletter that comes out in the winter, spring, summer and fall.

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please send your e-mail to Lynn at wisle@wisynod.org

----- Winter Newsletter 2008 -----

EASTER STORY COOKIES

A wonderful craft idea that allows children to understand, in their own way, the wonder of Easter!

You need:

- 1 c. whole pecans
- 1 tsp. vinegar
- 3 egg whites
- pinch salt
- 1 c. sugar
- zipper baggie
- wooden spoon
- tape & Bible



Preheat oven to 300 F. Place pecans in zipper baggie and let children beat them with the wooden spoon to break into small pieces.

Explain that after Jesus was arrested he was beaten by the Roman soldiers. **Read John 19:1-3.**

Let each child smell the vinegar. Put 1 tsp. vinegar into mixing bowl.

Explain that when Jesus was thirsty on the cross he was given vinegar to drink. **Read John 19:28-30.**

Add egg whites to vinegar. Eggs represent life. Explain that Jesus gave His life to give us life. **Read John 10:10-11.**

Sprinkle a little salt into each child's hand. Let them taste it and brush the rest into the bowl. Explain that this represents the salty tears shed by Jesus' followers, and the bitterness of our own sin. **Read Luke 23:27.**

So far the ingredients are not very appetizing.
Add 1 c. sugar.

Explain that the sweetest part of the story is that Jesus died because He loves us. He wants us to know and belong to Him. **Read Ps. 34:8 and John 3:16.**

Beat with a mixer on high speed for 12 to 15 minutes until stiff peaks are formed. Explain that the color white represents the purity in God's eyes of those whose sins have been cleansed by Jesus. **Read Isa.1:18 and John 3:1-3.**

Fold in broken nuts. Drop by teaspoons onto wax paper covered cookie sheet. Explain that each mound represents the rocky tomb where Jesus' body was laid. **Read Matt. 27:57-60.**

Put the cookie sheet in the oven, close the door and turn the oven OFF.

Give each child a piece of tape and seal the oven door. Explain that Jesus' tomb was sealed. **Read Matt. 27:65-66.**

GO TO BED! Explain that they may feel sad to leave the cookies in the oven overnight. Jesus' followers were in despair when the tomb was sealed. **Read John 16:20 and 22.**

On Easter morning, open the oven and give everyone a cookie. Notice the cracked surface and take a bite. The cookies are hollow! On the first Easter Jesus' followers were amazed to find the tomb open and empty. **Read Matt.28:1-9. HE HAS RISEN!**

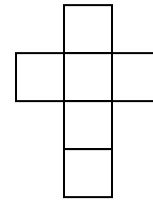
Sugar Cube Cross

Thanks to Suzanne D from San Diego, California

15 sugar cubes per child

1 strip of green construction paper 6 inches long 3/4 inches high

White Glue , a glue stick, or just a bit of water to make the cubes stick together (water seems to work best for small children)



The green construction paper should be cut such that one long edge is jagged (to look like grass).

Each child should glue 9 cubes into a 3x3 square. This will be the base of the cross. Take the remaining cubes and glue 4 into a row. Take the remaining cubes and glue them to each side of the row so that a cross is formed. After the glue on the base is dried, glue the green construction paper to the base so that it surrounds the base. Glue the cross to the middle cube of the base. The cross will last surprisingly long. My daughter brought one home that lasted for almost two years.



Easter Ideas with Eggs

Can be used at home or for Sunday School

Easter Egg Hunt

Prepare:

Hard-boil a dozen eggs.

Paint on the following letters on the shell of each egg:

A, E, E, I, I, J, L, S, S, S, U, V.

Hide the eggs in different parts of your home.

Enjoy an Easter Egg Hunt!! Once all the eggs have been found, ask family members to piece together the Easter message: *Jesus is alive*. You may repeat this activity for families in the neighborhood. When you finish, use the eggs to make egg sandwiches. Or, handle the eggs very carefully and don't hard-boil them before you hide them. Then *scramble* the eggs of your *unscrambled* message and enjoy them for Easter breakfast.

From: Davey & Goliath's Devotions, Spring 2007



Dying Eggs

Eggs are a symbol of new life. They remind us of Jesus' amazing move from death to life as well as Jesus' offer of new life to us. Here is a way you can dye eggs that will help you remember Jesus' resurrection at Easter. Hard-boil your eggs as usual. Then use regular crayons to draw Christian symbols, such as crosses, flowers, and butterflies, on the eggs. Write the words *Alleluia* and *Jesus is risen* on several eggs. When you are finished with printing and drawing, dip the eggs in colored dye. The crayon will resist the dye and the drawings and words will show through. Talk together about other reminders of new life.

From: Davey & Goliath's Devotions, Spring 2008

Are you looking for something different for your Sunday school or an addition to your Sunday school?

Reach! Out through Kid's Clubs

Kid's Club is an action packed, one or more day a week ministry that creatively introduces elementary aged children to Jesus Christ. Designed as an outreach program, it effectively reaches unchurched Baby Boomer and Generation X families. The year-round format includes Bible study, a meal or snack, recreation activities and/or crafts and a music time where the children learn songs to share with the total congregation during Sunday or Saturday night worship services.

Children in kindergarten through sixth grade respond enthusiastically to these programs and often invite their friends to join them. Three goals of a Kid's Club are:

1. To help children feel loved and accepted by God.
2. To provide Christian education in a setting other than Sunday morning church school so more unchurched families can be reached.
3. To open paths for children and their parents to participate more regularly in congregation worship services and fellowship times.

Jesus considered children very important. He was an advocate for children. The biblical passages Matthew 19: 13-15, Mark 10: 13-16 and Luke 18: 15-17, record how Jesus blessed, received and accepted little children. They also record how shocked the disciples were by Jesus' action. Reaching out to children was a radical act in Jesus' time. We are called today to reach out to children and their families in Jesus' name.

One of the **key strategies in reaching unchurched Baby Boomer** (those persons born between 1946 and 1964) and Generation X (born between 1965 and 1985) **families** is offering this outreach ministry any day but Sunday! Robert Raikes began the first religious education program in 1780 on Sundays, because that was the one day of the week when children were not working.

The challenge for growing churches today is to find the best time to reach unchurched children. It will be different in each community. In one small town, Friday night is best: parents drop off their children while they do their weekly grocery shopping. In an area of high unemployment Monday night is best. That is the only night the local boys and girls club does not serve dinner. The children come for a hot meal as well as Bible study.

During the past twenty years, **contemporary family life has changed.** Children may live in families in which both parents work outside the home. For these families, Sunday is the only day to spend together.

Children are also affected by divorce. Many children spend weekends with the non-custodial parent. These children are usually unable to participate consistently in Sunday church school activities. Kid's Club in an afternoon or early evening setting can provide alternative times when these children can meet and learn about Jesus.

Twelve advantages to a Kid's Club weekday ministry:

1. KIDS Clubs provide time to make the Gospel fun "Can we do this again next week?" ask children after Vacation Bible School. A one or two-day-a-week Kid's Club held September through May is like a year-round Vacation Bible School. A typical Sunday school session does not have enough time to sing fun songs, share food or make seasonal crafts each week.

In Kid's Clubs, **children are involved with active learning**. With a 90-minute or 2 hour schedule, more fun activities can be included while teaching faith stories to children.

2. KIDS CLUBS help build positive relationships Many children come home to an empty house after school because parents or guardians work full-time jobs outside the home. These children unlock their doors with a key and then lock themselves inside. They get a snack, turn on the television, and sit down alone for one hour or more until an adult arrives home.

Children do not have the time they need to build relationships with other children, and they do not have enough opportunities to spend time with adults. In a mobile society, grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles no longer live as close to their families as they once did. Often families join a congregation and the next year are transferred elsewhere. These families do not have the support of a large extended family. Children need a time to build relationships with other children and adults. Kid's Clubs provide the time and space to build these relationships.

3. KIDS CLUBS have no dress code In most churches, Sunday's dress expectations are of a high level. Children come to Kid's Club in their favorite jeans or sweat suits. When staff members and volunteers dress casually, a more relaxed atmosphere for learning prevails.

4. KIDS CLUBS help your pastors and church staff to have positive relationships with children. On a typical Sunday morning, the pastor may not be available to visit children's classes. She or he may teach a class or preach at another church or another service. During the week, the pastor and other church staff are available to visit and minister with the children. Sharing a snack or playing a game are simple ways a pastor can relate to the children. If your church has more than one person on its staff, the staff can make the Kid's Club a priority and visit the program each week. This setting offers an excellent opportunity to meet new families.

5. KIDS CLUBS help grow your youth music program All of the children who come to the Kid's Club are part of the music program. If you already have children's choir, the program expands the number of children participating. The emphasis should be placed on upbeat songs that allow the children's joy and faith to show. The choir should sing during worship once a month or at least every six weeks. If you have two or more services, be sure to have the choirs vary their schedule so that everyone in the church will have the opportunity to hear them. Children's music is a bridge that brings unchurched families to worship.

Children's musicals will attract other children into the program and to the church. Use these musicals to teach faith and as a tool to have unchurched families attend your worship services.

6. KIDS CLUBS reach unchurched children (and their families!) The pastor or Kid's Club coordinator should contact all new families attending Kid's Club as well as non-member participants. A first day registration form, requesting church affiliation, is an excellent way to obtain this information.

Invite them to attend the next service of worship when the children sing. A phone invitation to attend the group's talent nights or potluck celebrations makes these new families feel included and welcomed in your church.

Many unchurched Baby Boomer and Generation X parents are looking for churches that have quality parents are looking for churches that have quality children's programs. They may have attended church as children and have vague recollections of Sunday School. Kid's Club is their re-entry point in the life of the church. They might first attend worship when their children sing. Recently, new members in several denominations have indicated they joined congregations because of their contact with Kid's Clubs.

Children in the program will bring their friends to the Kid's Club and these friends may invite others to come with them. Get information (name, address, telephone number) on these families and contact them after the program. pass this information on to the pastor or evangelism task force of your congregation. Even if your congregation does not now have a large number of children, it will experience renewed ministry with many new children because of your work in promoting and planning your Kid's Club.

7. KIDS CLUBS have entry level tasks for parents and other adults One way to incorporate people into the life of a congregation is through small group participation. The group offers a place for people to learn the informal stories of a congregation and to find their place within it. Workers that help with Kid's club find themselves in such a new small group.

Working with a weekday program is less threatening to old and new members than teaching a Sunday School Class. Volunteers help with snacks, play music, supervise games, help with crafts, listen to children, and discover new ways of studying the Bible. The relaxed setting develops staff friendships as a result of this ministry with children.

Often non-members who work with the group will join the congregation. Let new parents know that they are welcome to help whenever they have time.

8. KIDS CLUBS grow the youth program. Many churches have found it difficult to start or to sustain a youth ministry program. One advantage of a midweek program is that **as children grow older, they will feel at home in the congregation and in the youth group.** Children who are 8 years old today will be 13 in five years and ready for a youth program. If children have participated in a program that stresses faith, fun and fellowship, they will eagerly participate as youth. Nurturing the group from a younger age offers the potential for effective Christian education throughout their lifetime.

Several congregations have also discovered **that graduates of Kid's Clubs want to come back and help.** The potential for creating new midweek youth activities exists with a group of youth who are in the pattern of attending one or two afternoons or evenings a week. Bible Study, share groups, youth choir, and youth helpers for Kid's Club can all be added to midweek activities with these graduates. This is especially important for youth who are in divorced home situations. Many of them are leaving one parent's home and returning to their other parent's home on Sunday evenings just at the time most youth groups are meeting.

9. KIDS CLUBS give more opportunities for men to participate A divorced non-custodial father commented after helping at Kid's Club one week: "This gives me my midweek high." In many congregations, men are conspicuously absent as role models in Christian education. Christian education is for all people - men, women, and children. Children need to see men of all ages participating in the congregation's ministries. Men's ministry in Kid's Clubs may be listening

to a child talk about school, supervising recreation time, directing a choir, serving snacks, or guiding craft or study times. Creative approaches to participation may attract men to the Kid's Club setting.

Shift workers can attend two out of three weeks. Some people may have flexible work hours and can switch their lunch hour from noon to 4 p.m. Children will perceive older men as foster grandfathers. Once men accept an invitation to reach out to children who may never have known a loving father or grandfather, their faith response and growth is fantastic.

A balanced community of faith should help children connect with faithful men and women. A Kid's club ministry **fosters adult-child relationship** and provides opportunities for men to participate in Christian education.

10. KIDS CLUBS provide congregation-family table time. Children need to talk about what is happening in their lives. Central to the Kid's Club is a meal or snack time. With the frenetic pace of life today, many families say that they are unable to share two meals a week together. Children do not have the opportunity to talk with adults about what is happening in their lives.

At Kid's Clubs, an adult always eats with the children. The adult leader asks the children about school, homework, hobbies, and faith. The adult leaders can help children to remember what they learned the week before. Leaders need to spend this time talking with the children, not with other adults in the kitchen.

Eating together is an important part of the setting. The meal or snack time should never be rushed. Leaders need to involve all of the children in conversations at the table.

11. KIDS CLUBS allow single parent participation. Time and money take a terrible toll on most single parents. Single parents look for activities in which they can participate. After a Kid's Club program, one new single mother exclaimed, "This church has become my family!" The Kid's Club provided her and her child the opportunity to experience love and acceptance during a difficult time in their lives.

Programs held in the late afternoon or early evening allow single parents to participate after work. Recently, a number of non-custodial fathers who have visitation one evening a week, have begun to bring their children and serve as leaders in their local Kid's Club. These programs reach out to single parent families and encourage them to have an active part in the faith community.

12. KIDS CLUBS involve more boys

Many children and adult choirs have difficulty recruiting male singers. Often boys start dropping out of church school sessions around the 3rd and 4th grades. When a program includes recreation, snack, crafts, music, and Bible study, more boys are attracted to this active learning Christian education. Kid's Club choirs singing on Sunday morning often include 30-50 percent boys.

Steps to Starting Your Kid's Club Ministry

Planning is a way to move from a hope or dream about starting a Kid's Club to actually beginning one in your congregation and community.

Pray to God about starting this new ministry. Continue praying daily through the entire planning process. God calls us to be partners in ministry with children. Once your club has started, have

each staff member pray for one child weekly. This will make a tremendous difference in the quality of your program.

Tell the story. Are parents supported and nurtured as they carry out their responsibility to care for and nurture all facets of their children's lives?

Let everyone in your congregation know about the needs of children. Share the vision of this outreach ministry to unchurched families with groups in your congregation. Parent's Day out programs, Sunday School classes, retired groups, women's fellowships, men's group, scouts, bible Study classes etc., all can be told the dream and asked for help in making it a reality. When many in your congregation learn about the vision, the excitement and enthusiasm for this ministry will grow! Do not underestimate the importance of this step!

Select a task force. Invite adults of all ages who love children (men and women), education committee members, youth representatives, evangelism committee chair or members, pastor and/or other paid staff, and children's ministry coordinator.

In addition, include someone from the church council (property committee), worship committee (children will be singing in worship), finance committee (include this ministry in the budget), and church service organizations (they can help).

Go to the congregation council for approval to plan this new ministry. The task force will meet several times and plan the following logistics: Meeting day(s), time, and place for the Kid's Club ministry; transportation (a key issue in children's ministry); fees (should we charge?)

NOTE: An outreach ministry is most effective when no fees are charged. Families are more inclined to invite others to the program when a financial contribution is not requested; curriculum (see recommended resources at the end of this piece.); recruiting volunteers (who will invite? And how will we ask for volunteers? an ideal ratio is one adult for every five to seven children.): publicity start your publicity no later than four weeks before the opening date for your Kid's Club (see the resource list at the end of this article about where to get creative publicity and promotion ideas).

Train volunteers at an orientation meeting. Share schedules, first day registration plan and discipline policy. Covenant to pray for each other and with the children. Tell the volunteers where supplies can be found and who they can go to for help.

Celebrate your first day with the children! Plan an easy schedule, special snack and extra volunteers to make that first day go smoothly. Have a quick meeting with your Kids club leaders/volunteers afterward to work out possible problems before your next gathering.

POSSIBLE PROGRAM FORMATS

Afternoon Schedule

- 3:45 - 4:00 p.m. Recreation & "early bird"
- 4:00 - 4:15 p.m. Snack and table talk
- 4:15 - 4:45 p.m. Study Program
- 4:45 - 5:15 p.m. Music

Evening Schedule

5:30 - 5:50 p.m. Early Crafts Craft specials

5:50 - 6:30 p.m. Dinner

6:30 - 7:10 p.m. Music/Short worship

7:10 - 7:40 p.m. Study

7:40 - 8:00 p.m. Recreation Total 1 « hours Total 2 «/ hours

(Families with longer work days can miss craft time)

Models Across the Country

Kid's Clubs exist in congregations across the United States and Puerto Rico. They are a part of congregational life and ministry in inner-city, ethnic, rural, small town, and suburban congregations. All follow the basic four part format (activities, bible study, music and snack), but there are many variations in how these are implemented.

The **ministries which have been most effective in reaching unchurched families have stressed music**, with children singing in worship on a regular basis combined with a 20-30 minute musical once or twice a year. Music has provided the bridge to bringing parents and friends into the congregation for the first time. Some of these families have not been to church for 20 years.

Critical to their returning a second and third time is the way they are greeted before and after the worship service. **An intentional guest-follow-up program is necessary** to encourage the continuing worship participation of those who have been unchurched!

Suggested Curriculum Resources

Good News Bearers (Augsburg Youth and Family Institute) provides a complete kit for a year-round after school ministry for third through fifth graders. The curriculum includes guidelines, program, drama, large activities, musicals, leadership training, newsletters, and more for this ministry. Order Good News Bearers (Code 34-100-3193) from Augsburg/Fortress Publishers, Minneapolis, MN 55440-1209 or call: 1-800-3284648

Close Encounters Ministries provides a Kid's Clubs curriculum which is Christ-centers and learning center oriented. The six-year plan includes 12-week sessions on the Old Testament, New Testament and relationships. To order the Close Encounters Kid's Clubs: 911 N. Center St., Corry, PA 16407; Phone (814) 655-9071.

Pathways to Discovery (Abingdon Press) is a complete 40-week kit including curriculum, music, craft ideas and mission projects. Pathways to Discovery can be purchased from: Cokesbury, PO Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202-0801; Phone 1-800-672-1789.

Writer: Miriam Campbell

It's that time of year!

Have you started planning your
Vacation Bible School yet?



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curriculum to offer!

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Or check with our **Bible Camps** to see how they can help you!

Lutheran Lakeside Camp
712.336.2109

Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp
712.337.3306

VBS Decorating Tip:

Decorations can help get the kids in the mood and more involved with your theme. This spring watch area schools and ask if you can have their decorations after prom. Many of them just throw them away so why not recycle. Use your creativity to produce some wonderful decorations and save money as you do it. You can also share decorations with area congregations that might be using the same curriculum that you are.