



INCORPORATING KIDS INTO THE LIFE AND WORSHIP OF YOUR CONGREGATION

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY NEWSLETTER

MINISTRY DIRECTION

In his book, *Two By Fours-A Sort of Serious Book About Small Children*, the cartoonist Charles M. Schultz depicts Charlie Brown and a preschool friend looking out the rear window of a car as they pass by the church Charlie Brown attends. Charlie Brown says to his friend excitedly, "There is it! That's MY church! Well, I don't exactly mean it's MY church... What I mean is that it's MY church... Well, you know what I mean." If we are to effectively evangelize and disciple children, every child must feel as Charlie Brown felt about his church. Every child must feel, "That's MY church!"

Inclusive or exclusive?

What's your church's attitude toward children? Are they inclusive, willing that children be included in worship, service, and fellowship of the local congregation? Or is your church exclusive? Do most of the members of your congregation feel that "children should be seen and not heard", "children have their place but not among the adult members of the congregation," or that "children are to be served, not serve."

The Bible just doesn't support exclusivity, especially of children. Remember the story recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke about children being brought to Jesus. What attitude did Jesus exhibit? Yes, he was inclusive. "Let the little children come to me," (Matthew 19:14). What attitude did the people exhibit? They were inclusive too. They brought the children to Jesus. But what attitude did the disciples exhibit? They were exclusive, rebuking those who brought the children.

Jesus was very unhappy with the disciples' response. He invited the children to come to Him and then He touched and spoke blessings on each one. Finally, he let the disciples know just how valuable children are in the heavenly kingdom.

Every local congregation should be inclusive when it comes to children. Children should be invited to come. Children should be touched and blessed. Children should be highly valued.

IDEAS TO USE

Getting to Know You

The title song of a once-popular television show says, “You wanna go where everybody knows your name.” That’s true for children in church. They want to be where everyone knows their names.

Name Tag Jumble. Before service begins give each child a large nametag and colored markers. Invite the child to write his first name in large letters on the nametag and decorate the nametag as he would like. Place all the children’s nametags in a large bowl.

At the beginning of the worship service invite all the children to come up. Select two names from the bowl. Have the children stand and face the congregation. Introduce them and have them put on their nametags. Then ask the congregation to welcome them.

I Know Your Name. Before service write each child’s first name in large letters on a name tag and place it on the child. When service begins ask each adult in the congregation to find one child, learn his name and one thing about him. After this time of introductions, ask several adults to briefly introduce the children they met to the congregation.

To encourage the children to get to know the adults, ask each child to introduce himself to an adult he doesn’t know and find out one thing about him. The child may then introduce that adult to another child, sharing his name and the fact he has learned.

Balloon Prayers. To celebrate the children in your congregation inflate balloons. Write the name of a child in your ministry on each balloon. Make a large bouquet of the balloons and place it on the stage. At the close of the worship service, ask each adult or teen member of the congregation to take a balloon home and pray for that child whose name is on the balloon throughout the coming week.

Worshipping With You

Involving children in worship can be as simple as inviting several of them to be part of the praise team, encouraging them to share their testimonies, asking if they have any prayer needs, inviting them to come and pray with others in the altar. Here are some creative ideas for encouraging children to be participants rather than observers in adult worship.

Banner March. During a children’s session such as Sunday school or midweek training invite the children to create a list of praise words they use to express their love and thankfulness to God. Help the children make a banner for each praise word. The banners may be made from felt, burlap, poster board, or butcher paper. They may be decorated with fabric trim, ribbons, buttons, felt pieces, colorful markers. Mount the banners on wooden dowels.

As praise and worship begins in the adult service have a team of children march in with each praise banner. As each praise banner is brought to the stage and lifted up, the audience may respond by praising God with that particular word.

Thanksgiving Graffiti. Place dry erase boards and markers on easels around the front of the worship area. (If you do not have dry erase boards and easels, tape heavy poster paper on the walls of the worship area with felt markers nearby.) Tell or read the story of the ten lepers using children to act out the roles of Jesus and the lepers. When the story is completed, challenge each person (children included) to come to the dry erase board and write down one thing for which he is thankful. Have songs of worship playing as people express thanks to God through this activity.

Serving One Another

Children who serve when they are young will more likely become adults who serve. Provide opportunities for children to serve as well as be served in your congregation.

KISS Club. Form a “Kids’ in the Savior’s Service” club at your church. Organize the children in your congregation by age/grade in small groups with an adult or teen leader. Meet monthly or weekly during a segment of your midweek training program. Ask each club to sponsor a monthly project that will help the local church. Suggested projects—

- Make placemats for a church dinner
- Make and write cards for members of the congregation who are shut-in or hospitalized
- Adopt an area of the church yard to weed, plant and tend flowers, mulch
- Clean and disinfect the nursery toys
- Clean up an area of the church such as the choir room, the storage area, the stage

Mentor Me. Pair older elementary children with adults who are serving in your local congregation—ushers, greeters, nursery workers, intercessors, altar ministers, teachers, deacons, etc. Challenge the adults who are mentoring to develop relationships with these children as well as train them to serve.

Church Clean Up Day. Every church has a day each quarter or year when it’s time to tackle all those clean up jobs that have been left undone. Invite children to be a part of the clean up day. Make a list of tasks that children can do. When the children arrive, have them sign up for the task they want to do. Form teams to complete each task with an adult or older teen leading each team. When the task is completed, congratulate each child on a job well done and provide a small reward for participating in the church clean up day.

Feed the Hungry. If your congregation serves at a soup kitchen or other feeding programs, this idea provides an opportunity for everyone to serve, including children. It can be done at holiday times such as Christmas and Easter or quarterly throughout the year. Ask various families with children to bake one dozen cupcakes and bring them to church Sunday morning. Set aside a segment of time during Sunday school for the

children to decorate the cupcakes. Place the cupcakes on trays. During morning worship, have the children bring the trays of cupcakes into the worship area. The pastor will ask several adults and children to bless the cupcakes and supply the needs of those who will receive them. Invite older children to go with the adults and serve the cupcakes at the soup kitchen.

Fellowship Fun

Sunday Evening Sing Along. Everyone loves to sing but sometimes there is a generation gap when it comes to music. Plan this event with every generation in mind.

Promotion. Make note-shaped invitations for this event. Encourage everyone of every age to attend.

Decorations. Have a decorating committee of children and adults. Hang musical notes of various shapes and sizes from the ceilings. Have a bulletin board with pictures of people in the congregation performing.

Activities:

Team Talent. Prior to the event compile a list of a variety of Christian songs—classic hymns, praise and worship choruses, well-known children’s choruses, etc. Write each song on a slip of paper. Form multi-age teams of four or five. Each team is to select a song and perform it.

Name that Tune. Play several notes of a Christian song. Let each team identify the song. Be sure to play a variety of Christian songs.

Encore. In this game, provide a word. Each team must sing six words of a Christian song containing that word.

My Favorite Song. Give every person of every age five seconds to share his favorite Christian song and why.

Memories: Video the entire event and view it at a later date so that everyone can enjoy the “Sunday Evening Sing Along” for years to come.

“Trim the Tree” Christmas Celebration. Plan a Christmas event involving the entire family. A month prior to the event assign each family a symbol of Christmas. Throughout the month the family is to research the meaning of the symbol, develop a brief presentation (3 minutes) on the symbol, and make Christmas ornament of the symbol..

At the celebration, each family (including children) will share the meaning of the Christmas symbol assigned to them and then hang their symbol on the Christmas tree.

Encourage the families to be very creative when planning their presentations. Presentations might include a short drama, singing, Scripture reading, etc.

New Year's Eve Celebration. This year celebrate the New Year together as a church family. Some activities that will involve everyone.

Remembering. Place a long piece of butcher or bulletin board paper on the wall where people will enter for the New Year's Eve Celebration. (You might want to place two pieces of paper on the wall. One that adults can reach and one that children can reach.) Write the past year's date (2000) in big numbers on the paper. As people enter ask them to write or draw something that they will remember about the past year.

Celebrating. Prior to the celebration, have the children of your congregation make noisemakers. (A simple noisemaker can be made by placing beans in a reusable margarine cup.) Give each person a noisemaker as they enter the sanctuary. During the celebration invite each person to share something about the past or future that can be celebrated. (No more than 30 seconds, please.) After each one shares, everyone can celebrate using their noisemakers or clapping or shouting.

Resolving. At the conclusion of the celebration let every person including children create a card that tells one thing they hope to do or be in the new year. (Provide markers and colorful squares of cardstock.) Then ask each one to find one person of a different generation to share his resolution with. After sharing with one another, they are to pray for one another.