

Partners



Partners is published quarterly by the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship to assist those in Sunday school ministry.

Soon, Soon It Will Be June

by Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Administrator-WELS Youth Discipleship

I coined the above phrase when I was teaching all eight grades in a one-room school. While I hate to say it, reciting that rather unspiritual and self-pity-laden mantra did help me to make it to the end of the school year sometimes. If I am going to be totally honest, I have to admit that some years I mumbled the mantra quite early – I think November was the record. “Soon, soon it will be June” may also be the phrase or thought that has helped to get you to the end of this Sunday school year. If you have been/are still mumbling that mantra – I understand, totally.

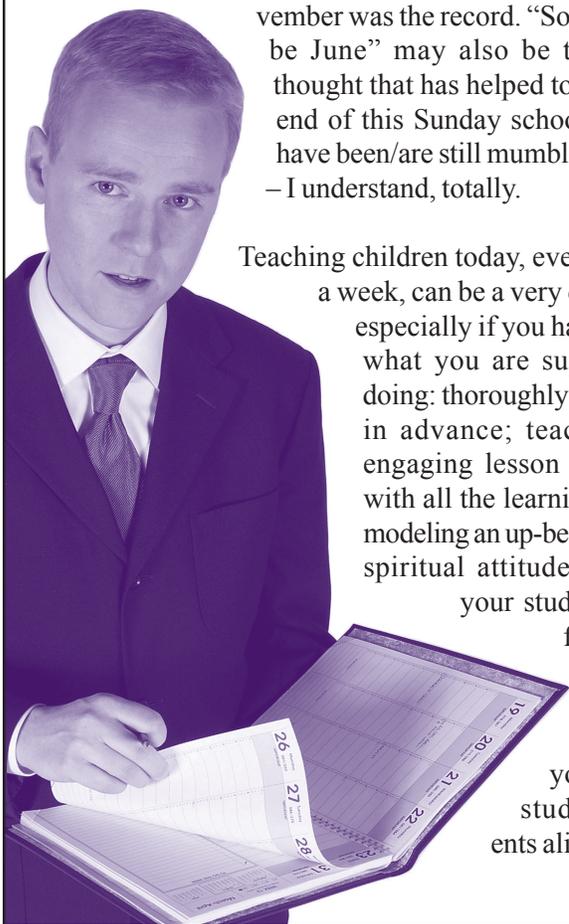
Teaching children today, even for one hour a week, can be a very draining thing, especially if you have been doing what you are supposed to be doing: thoroughly preparing well in advance; teaching a truly engaging lesson that connects with all the learning modalities; modeling an up-beat, positive, and spiritual attitude; praying for your students and their families; and personally sharing yourself and your faith with students and parents alike. If you have

been doing that, then your teaching tank is probably close to the empty mark about now. Add to that the spiritual/psychological/emotional labor invested as you contemplate the impact you are having on children who sometimes seem to have so much working against them, and you wonder how you made it this far at all.

I take turns teaching 23 seventh graders in my congregation’s Sunday school. Our average attendance is 19. Our class is 50/50 Lutheran elementary school and public school students. Gearing up for this class and then really delivering on the weeks I teach is one of those exhilarating/exhausting things. Usually after class, I need to go home and change out of my sweaty clothes. But while pooped, and particularly so at this time of the year, I have to say it is an incredible and exciting privilege. I know you feel the same way, otherwise you would not be involved as you are.

It is an incredible and exciting privilege to learn more about Jesus through my personal devotion and lesson preparation. It is an incredible and exciting privilege to share Jesus with students and parents who so need his grace, mercy, and peace in their lives. At this time of the year, I want to say thank you. Thank you for being one of the 5,311 Sunday school teachers in WELS who are sharing the gospel with 34,654 children. Thank you for giving of your time, talent, and frequently your treasure to provide for your students.

We may not always see the results, but we trust God’s promises that his Word works. We also have the ultimate promise that gets us through to our ultimate end: Soon, soon it will be eternity...with Jesus!



Share More About Your Feelings on the Year:

Log on to the *Sunday School Talk (SST)* discussion board at <www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship>. Click on the SST link in the "Discussions" section and share your thoughts on this topic and a host of other Sunday school related topics.

We Need Your Support

Partners is currently made available to 8,500 called and lay ministers. As you know, it comes free of charge. In order to maintain this level of service and continue this ministry effort, we could use your help. If you are benefiting from this newsletter, please consider a financial gift to WELS-CYD and *Partners*. Thanks so very much!

Partners On-Line

What would be your opinion about making *Partners* a totally on-line newsletter with no more hard copies mailed out. Please email your thoughts to <cyd@sab.wels.net> or add a comment on the SST Discussion Board at www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship.

Presentation on Children's Ministry Models

In November, CYD Administrator, Dr. Joel Nelson will give a sectional on children's ministries at a multi-congregation workshop. Part of the presentation will focus on new and innovative approaches that are being tried in WELS congregations. If you are doing some exciting things that are being well received, please share your story with Dr. Nelson, so he can share it with others. If you know of others who are doing so, pass on their names. Email: joelnels@sab.wels.net.

Check out the 42 entries in the "Sunday School Ministry Resources" folder in the "Consultation and Resources" collection on the CYD Web site <www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship>.

Have You Seen It Yet?

This fall, a new tabloid/newsletter will be unveiled along with its companion website. Both will be called *Parents Crosslink*. Northwestern Publishing House (NPH), and the WELS Commissions of Youth Discipleship (CYD), Parish Schools (CPS), and Adult Discipleship (CAD) have partnered together on this exciting venture.

The tabloid/newsletter is an eight page, two-color print resource sold via individual and bulk subscriptions. WELS Sunday schools, Lutheran elementary schools, and congregations will be able to order *Parents Crosslink* for all their families.

The website <www.parentscrosslink.net> will expand on the tabloid/newsletter content and also provide a much larger array of resources, information, links, and interactive ways for parents to connect with each other via discussion boards, live chats, and Q&As. Watch for more details on the WELS website <www.wels.net>, in *Forward In Christ* magazine, and on the *WELS Connection* video.

One WELS congregation, Abiding Word in Orleans-Ontario, Canada has already placed its order for *Parents Crosslink*, even before they have seen it! This is what Abiding Word's pastor, Kevin Schultz, had to say about their decision:

"We were disappointed to see Lutheran Parent magazine come to an end. Our people really benefited from it each month. But we're excited about the new Parents Crosslink publication. It sounds like an excellent tool for the families in our congregation. When I first read about Parents Crosslink, I said to myself "This is exactly what our families are looking for and need." So, we put in our subscription order right away. The more good quality Christian materials we can get into the hands of our families, the more we will see the Word change their lives and their homes. WELS has always produced excellent materials for families. I'm sure Parents Crosslink is no different. That's why we didn't even have to see it first before we ordered our subscription."



What Was God Thinking?

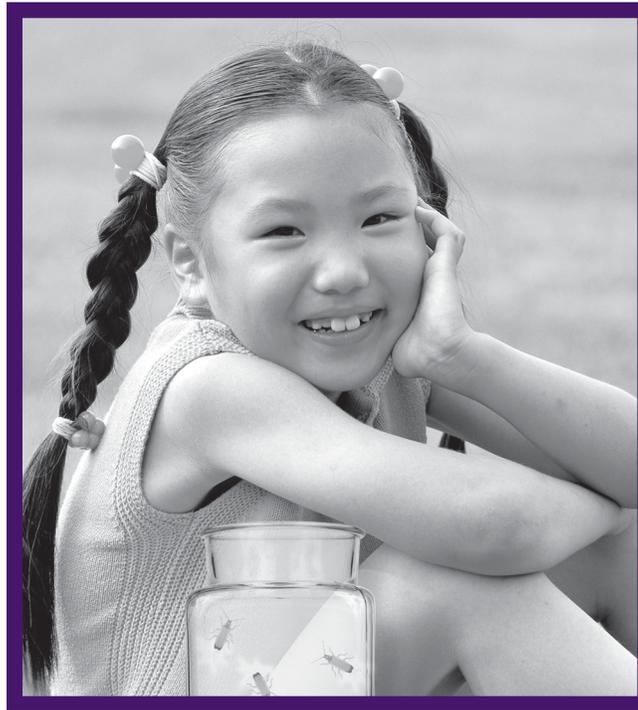
from Mikey's funnies – www.mikeysfunnies.com

What is the deal with lightning bugs? I mean, here is this rather ordinary looking flying insect, but wait . . . it has a glow-in-the-dark rear end! What was God thinking?

I'm sure science has all kinds of explanations about how this fluorescent fanny is useful for mating and other stuff, but why did God choose to make the lightning bug glow? I wonder if, when God was creating all the animals and everything around us, he came up with the idea of the lightning bug and said, "The kids are gonna love this."

We know that God loves us enough to create all the things we need to survive, but does God love us so much He created some things just to make us smile?

Just seeing lightning bugs takes me back to those warm summer nights of my youth. I'd be running around the back yard with my empty Mason jar, racing



toward the flashing lights all around me. I can still feel the joy and hear the laughter echoing through my memories. Lightning bugs were as much a part of summer as fireworks, fresh tomatoes, and big ice-cold slabs of juicy watermelon. (I also have a theory of why God made watermelon seeds the perfect size to spit, but that is another story.)

God created so much diversity in this world, much more than is needed for mere survival. He made all of this for us, and He wants us to enjoy it.

We can get so busy surrounding ourselves with man-made goods that we don't notice the living tapestry God has laid out all around us.

I guess lightning bugs do have a purpose after all. They are a reminder of a creative God who loves us so much, He'd even paint the rear end of a bug . . . just to see us smile . . .

Survey Says...

Recent research on WELS congregations revealed the following data:

- ✓ Nine in ten WELS congregations conduct VBS.
- ✓ 91% conduct VBS on consecutive days during the week – usually over five days.
- ✓ 73% of congregations surveyed said VBS is a key component in their outreach efforts.
- ✓ Biblical accuracy was listed as the most important factor in choosing a VBS.
- ✓ User friendliness was also a key factor.
- ✓ VBS survey-takers want lots of crafts, skits, music, and activities from which to choose.
- ✓ While cost and reproducibility were concerns, high quality was listed as more important.
- ✓ Congregations rate the NPH VBS materials high in biblical accuracy, quality, user-friendliness, and use of interesting themes.
- ✓ 85% of WELS congregations felt NPH should continue to publish a VBS curriculum.
- ✓ Congregations asked that the "return policy" for unused materials be reviewed.

Resource Recommendations

Build on the Rock

You can't go wrong building on the Rock. *Build on the Rock*, the 2005 WELS and Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) vacation Bible school curriculum is ready for purchase. The lessons focus on Jesus as our Rock and incorporate a building theme. *Build on the Rock* features a station approach, Bible story skits, devotional skits, Buzz the Builder, a game board for upper levels, souvenir music CD, adult/teen Bible studies, and an all new one-day VBS option across levels. The 2006 VBS – already in the works – will have the nautical theme “Set Sail!”

You can go to <www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship> and click on the *Build on the Rock* picture to obtain more details and order information.

Gr. 5&6 Catechism Lessons (Cycle 1)

Available in Summer 2006

Faith Foundations: The Basic Truths of the Bible

This two-cycle course, used primarily in grades 5-6, will include:

- ◆ Student workbooks, teacher's guides, and copy master CDs
- ◆ Brief opening and closing devotions
- ◆ Contemporary story and full-color art
- ◆ Copy masters that review, apply, and look ahead
- ◆ Alternate teaching strategies

Cycle 2 of this substantial revision of *Catechism Lessons* will become available for the following school year.

Books for Sale

Pastor Karl Heck, St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Williamsburg, Iowa (ELS) has the following *Christ-Light*® materials that he would like to make available for the shipping costs:

- ◆ Copy masters – *Jesus' Passion* through *The Disciples Early Ministry* – IV
- ◆ New Testament – Set 3 – A Lessons Teacher's Guide
- ◆ *Jesus' Passion* through *The Disciples Early Ministry* – IV
- ◆ New Testament – Set 3 – A and B Lessons.

You can contact Pastor Heck for more information — email: gotoheck@avalon.net / phone: 319-668-8961

Share the News

If you know someone who would benefit from receiving this newsletter, please contact the CYD office. If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter in the future, do nothing; however, if you would like to stop receiving it, contact the CYD office (414) 256-3274 or email cyd@sab.wels.net.

Contact the CYD office for address changes and/or your Sunday school staff changes.



Great Ideas From Great Teachers

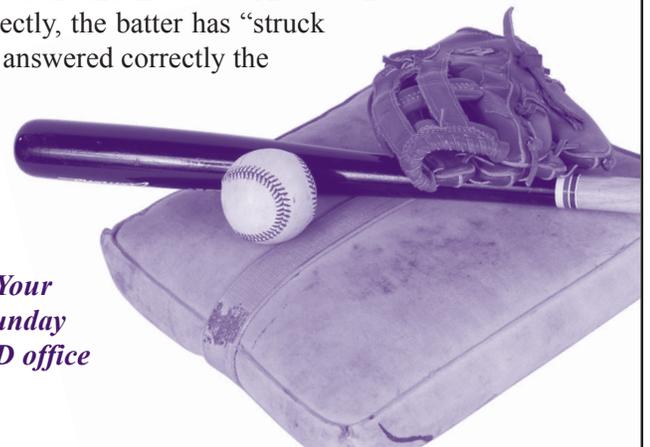
One of the objectives of *Partners* is to communicate with fellow Sunday school teachers, superintendents, pastors and teachers. Just as we encourage our children to “share” Jesus with their friends and relatives, we would like you to encourage each other with your tips, helps, and other information that you think your fellow teachers, superintendents, and pastors and teachers would benefit from. Each issue (as space allows) we will feature ideas submitted to the CYD office. Send your ideas to us via snail mail (WELS-CYD, 2929 N. Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398) or email (usr62@sab.wels.net).

Problems with Memory Work?

Alice Lembach (First Lutheran, Elkhorn, WI) had students who had problems memorizing their memory verses. They would forget or just not know them. So she came up with the idea of “Football Memory Work.” She writes, “We go over the memory verse a few times. The verse is written on the board. As the children read the verse I erase different parts of the verse – one word at a time. I have a small soft football. The person to whom I toss the football has to say the verse – gradually all the words are erased – by then they know it from memory. The kids love it!”

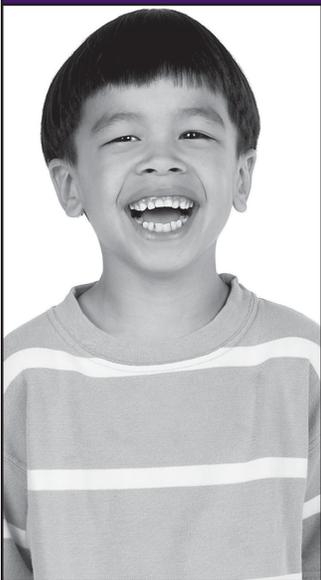
Bible Baseball

A fun way to review the lesson questions! You will need to divide the class into two teams. Be sure to divide the teams according to ability so that both teams have a chance to succeed. Before the game begins, make a poster board cube (with triple, double, home run on one side each and single on the other three sides) or assign them a number on a pair of dice. Make a list of at least 20 review questions from the lesson(s). Each team should choose a name. Put the bases in various places in your room with a home plate. The batter stands on home plate while the teacher reads the question. If the question is answered correctly the batter rolls the cube to see how far they will proceed around the bases. The student goes there and waits for the next person. If the student answers incorrectly, the batter has “struck out”. The next player comes to “bat” and is given the same question. If answered correctly the game proceeds. If not, another out is given. A limit of five runs can be scored in one inning by a team. After three outs or five runs by a team, the opposing team comes to bat. (submitted by Lori Plenge, Mt. Olive, Monroe, WI)



These items were taken from “Become a Better Partner – Swap Your Ideas” booklet that was compiled after the 2003 National WELS Sunday School Conference. You may still obtain copies by contacting the CYD office (414) 256-3274 or <cyd@sab.wels.net>.

Only At Sunday School!



A 4th grade Sunday school teacher asked one of her students why the first two men in the lesson of the Good Samaritan passed by on the other side. “Because the man lying by the roadside had already been robbed,” the student replied.

At the beginning of a lesson that would talk about marriage, Mrs. Johnson asked her 6th grade students if anyone could suggest a Bible verse that says a man should only have one wife. A hand shot up. “Well, my dad told me once it’s the passage that says no man can serve two masters.”

The pastor of a small church that had the public address system volume controls in the pulpit, tried to reassure the parents on a Sunday when the youngsters were particularly restless. “Parents don’t worry about your children being too noisy today, I have a button up here to take care of it.” Little Jimmy, who had been quite rambunctious up to this point, immediately settled, slowly leaned over to his father and gently whispered, “Daddy, what will happen if he pushes that button?”

Partners

Christ-Light II

A revision of WELS religion curriculum for gr. PreK-8 is under way. Northwestern Publishing House has committed \$4.5 million to this vital project. The WELS Commissions on Youth Discipleship (CYD) and Parish Schools (CPS) have each committed \$10,000/year over the next five years. Work is in progress—with professional marketing research, updated strategies, and an experienced and creative team of editors leading the way. Feedback from field-testing will also help shape this curriculum.

Features:

- ◆ Options more user-friendly
- ◆ More student involvement
- ◆ Stronger focus on learning modalities, higher level thinking, multiple intelligences, building on prior knowledge, and appeal to senses

- ◆ Stronger encouragement of parent/child spiritual interaction

New Products:

- ◆ Administrator's Resource
- ◆ Large teaching pictures
- ◆ Music CD's (hymns, Bible passages, lesson-related songs)
- ◆ Special Effects DVD
- ◆ Copy Masters available on CD
- ◆ Packets of six seasonal lessons
- ◆ Additional Bible studies for grades 7&8

Thanks to those of you who responded to the last Partners' request for input. Some great ideas were given. Your on-going prayers and support are essential to the success of this monumental project. Keep watching for more updates.

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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