

# Partners



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

## Start the Year with an Excellent Question

By: Joel A. Nelson, Administrator – WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship

If someone were to ask you, a teacher of God’s Word, “Why do you want to teach God’s Word well?” what would you answer? It’s an excellent question, isn’t it? In fact, it’s perhaps the best question a teacher of God’s Word can ask before beginning any Bible lesson preparation. “Why do I want to teach God’s Word well?”

### Why do I want to teach God’s Word well?

The number one answer is that it is GOD’S Word. It is the only source of absolute truth. In a world where the black and white of right and wrong have been replaced by a sprawling area of gray, children and their families need to know that there IS a source of truth that can be their foundation and guide for life. The words of the true God, the perfect and powerful Creator of the universe, the all knowing, all loving Savior are indeed right, true and worthy of our respect, obedience, and study. Psalm 86:11 says, “Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.”

**Why do I want to teach God’s Word well?** A second reason, is that it is the Word of Life. The Bible is the only book that contains the answer to the vital question, “How can I be saved?” The answer is Jesus Christ. He, and he alone, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Unless children and their families learn of Jesus, they cannot—absolutely cannot, be saved. The Good News of Jesus suffering, death,

and resurrection must be told. The story of salvation, revealed in the pages of Scripture, is what the world needs to hear. Without that Good News souls will be lost forever in the fires of hell. John 20:31 says, “These were written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”



“Teach me your way, O Lord . . .”

### Why do I want to teach God’s Word well?

A third answer is that it is what God has commanded us to share. From the time he ascended into heaven, Jesus has given all Christians the clear directive to share the Good News with others. For those in the public ministry or given a special call by a congregation to teach, fulfilling Christ’s command to share the Good News of the gospel is a unique privilege. For all believers, and especially for teachers of God’s Word, the Great Commission recorded in Mark 16:15-16 provides the marching orders: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

### Why do we want to teach God’s Word well?

- ✓ It is GOD’S Word.
- ✓ It is the Word of Life.
- ✓ It is what God has commanded us to share.

What more reasons could we want?

## Teaching Tip!

This is not a teaching tip, but an organizational practice that has worked well for us for the past decade or so. We teach three regular stories from *Christ-Light*® with the children divided into the traditional grade classifications for three consecutive weeks. On the 4th Sunday, we hold a joint “FUN-DAY” where the superintendent leads the whole group in alternating months in a game, a craft, and a special event (usually videotape, skit rehearsal, guest storyteller, etc.).

The teachers look forward to the “FUN-DAY” when they can get a break from weekly preparation, when they can schedule getaways to visit relatives, or when they can simply attend an adult class with “children their own age.”

The children look forward to the “FUN-DAY” because it is a break from the academic setting they otherwise expect. I marvel at how much more fun the regular teachers bring into their classrooms week after week, yet the children ask each and every Sunday, “Is this a “FUN-DAY?” simply because it’s different, and who cares if it’s dull. It also promotes an element of “inter-generational” activity between older and younger children.

The superintendent often incorporates questions from the past three stories in the games, or he may incorporate a service project (e.g.. New bulletin board) in the craft, but he always includes an application of how this illustrates how we fall short of God’s perfection and how Jesus died on the cross of our failures.

*Submitted by John Schmoller  
Trinity, Watertown, WI*

## Please share *YOUR* Teaching Tip!

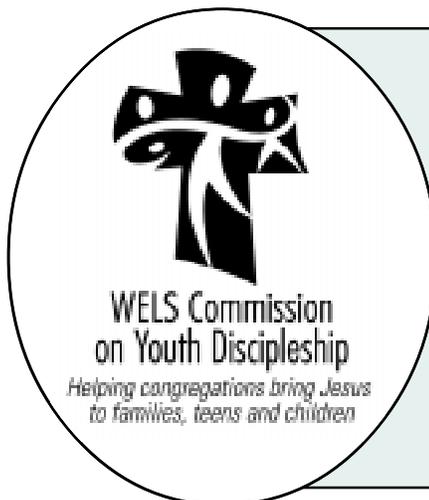
We’re continually looking for that great idea you’ve tried in your Sunday school classroom. You will notice that this is the 2nd issue that has featured teaching tips from you, our readers. If you have a teaching tip, and you all do, send to us so that we can share it others. Mail it to us at the CYD office address (WELS-CYD, 2929 North Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398) or e-mail it to: [CYD@sab.wels.net](mailto:CYD@sab.wels.net). Thanks!

## Do You INSTALL YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS?

At the beginning of a new Sunday school year, many congregations publicly install their Sunday school staff members in a special ceremony during a worship service. Some congregations also issue staff members an actual call document. Sunday school staff installation serves several purposes:

- 1) It brings a wonderful spiritual focus to the start of the year.
- 2) It reminds staff members of the special calling and solemn responsibility they have been given by God and the congregation.
- 3) It reminds the congregation of its God-given responsibility to spiritually, physically, and financially support the Sunday school staff and its ministry.
- 4) It provides a nice way for congregation members and Sunday school families to see who the Sunday school staff members are.
- 5) It communicates to parents and students alike that the Sunday school staff members are qualified and approved.
- 6) It makes the volunteer Sunday school staff members feel valued and appreciated.

The WELS Youth Discipleship office is in the process of developing a Sunday school staff installation ceremony and call document for congregations to use. We would also like to develop a file of samples that could be shared with congregations asking for ideas. Please send your samples to WELS Youth Discipleship, 2929 N. Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, WI 53222 or to [cyd@sab.wels.net](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net). Thanks in advance for the help!



## *New CYD Logo!*

The CYD has a new logo. It represents cross-generational ministry with family, teens, and younger children all represented on the cross. The cross and a fish symbolize Christ, the One we serve, and the focus for all we do.

WELL DONE,

# Good and Faithful Servant!

For the past 2½ years, the Commission on Youth Discipleship (CYD) has been blessed by the ministry of Mr. David Zubke. In 2000 Dave was called to be the WELS Sunday School Assistant, and was to work with as many WELS Sunday schools and congregations as possible in order to assess the condition of Sunday school ministry synod-wide. Dave's "findings" will become the catalyst for improved CYD effort in this area.

## Who Dave Saw

- ▶ Participated in 59 multiple congregation conferences with 189 congregations.
- ▶ Visited 46 Sunday schools.
- ▶ Visited 15 individual congregations.
- ▶ Had contact in one form or another with 1,263 Sunday school teachers, pastors, superintendents, and lay members.

## Critical Issues Identified

- ▶ **Improving Parental Involvement**
  - Too many churches still see themselves as the primary spiritual trainer of children rather than recognize the primacy of parents in this area.
  - Most Sunday school programs have minimal contact between parents and teachers and the contact that exists is one-way and passive.
  - Non-WELS parents who have children in Sunday school seem to be treated less enthusiastically.
  - Follow-up on absentee children is too delayed or not done at all.
- ▶ **Improving Teacher Training**
  - Many congregations have no regular Sunday school staff training. For many congregations that do offer some kind of staff training, what's offered is not meeting needs.
  - Congregations with regular staff training, report low teacher attendance.

- Congregations do not allocate sufficient funds for staff development.
- Many teachers would benefit from increased lesson preparation time to prevent the all too common teaching right out of the teacher's guide.
- The cognitive dimension of lessons (the facts—the head) is stressed and the affective dimension (how does this apply to me—the heart) is short-changed.
- Memory work is not really taught but rather "assigned" for students to do.

### ▶ **Increasing Pastoral and Congregational Support**

- Very few Sunday school programs undertake any kind of regular, focused evaluation.
- At a minimum, 25% of Sunday school staffs have no training offered by the pastor.
- Too many Sunday school cultures/atmospheres are not warm, welcoming, and user-friendly.
- Congregations need to develop options to provide Sunday school staff members with adult Bible class opportunities other than during the time they teach Sunday school.
- Using the Sunday school for reaching out to the community should become a higher priority.
- In congregations that also have a Lutheran elementary school (LES), too little is done to reduce the friction and competition between Sunday school and LES and to promote the Sunday school ministry.

With any evaluation that points out some negatives, the risk is that readers will assume everything is negative, and by extension, that the evaluators themselves feel negative. Nothing could be further from the truth. CYD views all of the above as great opportunities and feels extremely positive about the present and future of Sunday school ministry in WELS. While improvements are always needed, some tremendous things are going on relative to Sunday school ministry in WELS. The most positive thing, is that precious children and their families are learning about Jesus through Sunday schools and their staff members.

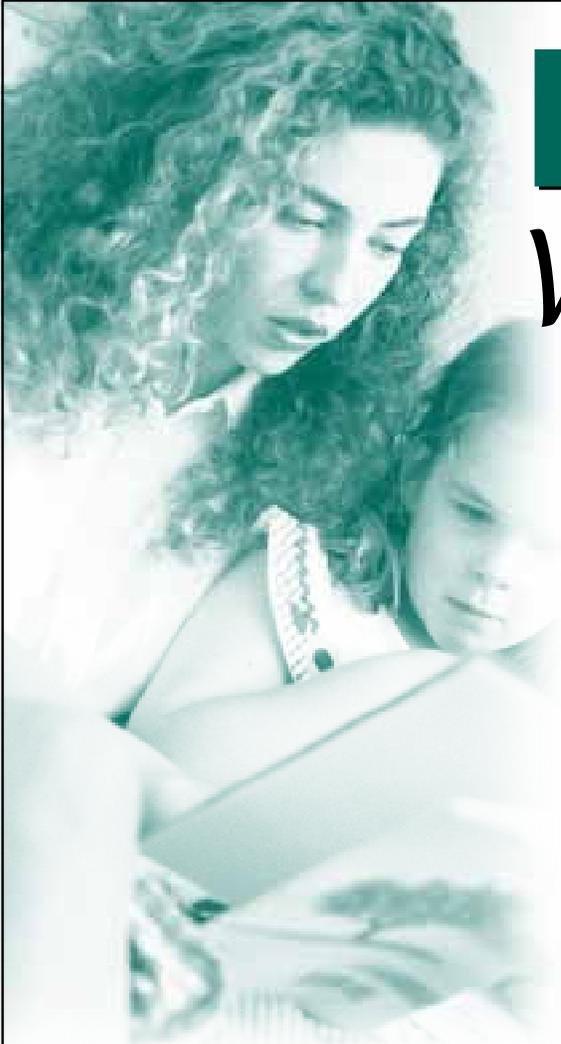
***WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION  
ABOUT THESE EXCITING EVENTS!***

### ***INCREASING CONNECTIONS***

WELS National Youth Counselors' Workshop  
September 27-29, 2002  
Camp Lutherdale, Elkhorn, WI

### ***PARTNERS IN THE PROMISE***

WELS National Sunday School Conference  
Saturday January 18, 2003  
Antiqua Bay Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI



# Partnering With Parents!

**Involving parents/guardians in the Sunday school program in more proactive ways accomplishes several things:**

- Parents feel more a part of the ministry and better informed about what's going on.
- Parents have opportunity to use their God-given talents.
- Children see their parents and the parents of other students actively, happily involved, better communicating and modeling the partnering concept and the body of Christ in action.
- Parents can work side by side with their own children, strengthening the biological and spiritual bonds.
- Life-long Christian relationships—teacher to parents, parents to parents, parents to children—are forged.
- It's a researched fact that children participate and perform better in any endeavor in which their parents are actively involved with them.
- More gets done in the Sunday school program and perhaps new opportunities become possible.
- Additional voices can cheerlead about, advocate for, and encourage Sunday school ministry in the wider congregation.
- Sunday school as "family" is easier to see and feel.

**Creating ways for parents to get involved in Sunday school ministry can be really fun and is limited only by your own imagination. Here are some ideas:**

- Have parents who can play musical instruments accompany students when they sing in church or for weekly group openings and closings. You may have enough parents to have a Sunday school orchestra!
- Have parents who enjoy making crafts and doing art-related projects assist in classroom craft activities.
- Have parents who enjoy baking, make refreshments for classes and teachers, too!
- Have parents who enjoy teaching, but can't commit to every week, take turns as teachers' aides or team teach with another person.
- Have parents sign up to sit with classes when Sunday school sings in church.
- Have parents and children make a Sunday school family choir that can present songs during worship.
- Have parents plan and present Sunday school family events like movie nights, game nights, trips to sporting events, talent shows, costume parties, etc.
- Have parents who enjoy video recording, make tapes of Sunday school lessons and activities for sharing with the other members of the congregation and community.
- Have parents who are really into computer technology

design a Sunday school web page or create a family e-mail directory.

- Have parents who enjoy writing and desktop publishing, put together a Sunday school newsletter.
- Have parents who are into dramatic performance re-enact Bible lessons for classes.
- Have parents serve on committees that evaluate the Sunday school ministry, select the lessons to be taught for the year, present reports on the Sunday school ministry to the Board of Education and/or voters' assembly, plan ways to use Sunday school as an outreach into the community.

Involving parents helps to make your Sunday school ministry a winner. And you know what they say: "Everyone wants to be connected to a winner."

## **Discuss Sunday School Topics at SST**

CYD has created an electronic discussion board for WELS Sunday school staff members. It's called "Sunday School Talk"—SST for short. To participate, go to the WELS website ([www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net)). In the top right hand jump word box, type SST and hit enter or the icon. You will be taken to the discussion board where you can share ideas and insights on 12 different Sunday school topics. Try it out to see what you can learn from and share with your partners in WELS Sunday school ministry.

# Lutheran Parent: A Great Sunday School Partner!

A good Sunday school ministry, in addition to teaching children about Jesus, tries to increase the number of Sunday school families who make a conscious effort to get into God's Word on a more regular basis. Studies done during the last decade on the religious activity of WELS families revealed that less than 5% of our families were considered to be devotional. That meant that 95% of WELS households were, for whatever reason, not taking the time to read devotions, say morning, evening or table prayers, engage in talk of God or the Bible, or read Bible stories to their younger children with any kind of regularity. Worse, the study revealed that the homes of pastors and teachers—those who one might expect to be leading the charge—were often failing to set the example for others in spite of universal agreement that Luther's ideal of daily family Bible reading, prayer and instruction for the young was clearly what was needed.

The number of lay homes that might, by definition, be termed *devotional* has crawled from less than 5% to perhaps 8% over the last ten years. Anecdotal information suggests that devotional activity in parsonages and teacherages has increased significantly. One of the reasons for this improvement has been *Lutheran Parent* magazine (*LP*), and this fall *LP* launches three substantial changes to help families even more:

- ◆ An new, eye-catching inside look and layout.
- ◆ More fun, faith strengthening material, especially for families with younger children.
- ◆ Much greater variety and depth in devotional offerings.

What will not be changing is the wealth of inspirational, insightful articles and the top notch, Christ-centered parenting advice and counsel that have been hallmarks of *LP* from the very beginning. *LP* has always received high marks in every

quarter of the synod. The changes will make *Lutheran Parent* even better!

A greater change relative to *LP* doesn't even involve *LP*. It involves Sunday schools. Currently 7,000 families subscribe to *LP*, but did you know that there are roughly 70,000 families in WELS? Add to that the number of families that are mission prospects in our Sunday schools, and you can see

that a tremendous amount of families could be benefiting from *LP*. Over the last 10 years, something else has been learned: given the choice, the majority of families will not choose to subscribe to *LP* on their own. There may be many reasons, good and bad, for this, but that does not need to stop *LP* from getting into these homes. If the obstacle is money, as often is the real or perceived case, there are plenty of ways for the congregation to finance a project that places *LP* into every Sunday school family's home—a memorial, a sponsoring group within the congregation, or grants from a fraternal organization, to name a few.

Dear Sunday school partner, you often see, first hand, the heartbreak of family life that is inconsistent with God's design for the godly household. *Lutheran*

*Parent* represents a powerful voice in reinforcing the same values taught in your Christian classroom and from your church's pulpit. As another Sunday school year begins, please consider what you, your Sunday school ministry, and your congregation can do to get *LP* into every Sunday school home? Someone has to be the messenger, carrying the message that Christian families need to make God's Word a regular part of everyday life. Someone needs to be the cheerleader, enthusiastically telling others that *Lutheran Parent* magazine is one of the best ways to actually make that happen. That someone could be you! For subscription information, contact [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net) or call 1-800-662-6093 ext. 5785.



*Please contact us with any questions or for further information.*

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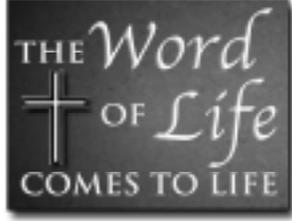
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# Partners

## *The Word of Life Comes to Life*

Two years in the making, the Commissions on Youth Discipleship and Parish Schools, proudly present a new and exciting, video assisted teacher training course for Sunday school and Lutheran elementary school teachers. It's called, ***The Word of Life Comes to Life*** and was produced with the help of Emmy award winning Boettcher Productions (Steve Boettcher is a member of Calvary Lutheran Church in Thiensville, WI). ***The Word of Life Comes to Life*** will help teachers prepare and present Bible and *Christ-Light*® lessons that truly come to life for students. It discusses why we want to teach God's Word well and shares fascinating insights on presenting lessons that better connect with visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Research on the human brain and interviews with Cynthia Tobias and Diane Weis, nationally recognized experts on learning, round out the five segments. ***The Word of Life Comes to Life*** (video, leaders guide, and participant lessons) will be available for purchase after October 15, 2002, through Northwestern Publishing House (800-662-6022) and [www.shopwels.net](http://www.shopwels.net). The cost—not determined at this time—will be approximately \$25.00 plus shipping and handling.



## *God's Promise*



***God's Promise: An Interactive Journey Through the Bible*** is a one-of-a-kind CD-ROM program that brings the Bible to life. 12 sections offer helpful video presentations summarizing part of the Bible. A "friendly guide" appears to introduce and conclude scenes. Biblical characters actually tell their stories with one click of the mouse. 85 interactions help you understand important Bible people and themes. Tour 3-D worlds when you visit the tabernacle or follow Jesus during his last hours. Produced by Northwestern Publishing House and the WELS Commission on Adult Discipleship, ***God's Promise*** can assist teachers in their Bible lesson preparation and presentation. It can be purchased for the special price of \$32.99 before December 31, 2002.

Contact Northwestern Publishing House at 1-800-662-6022 (item stock number 35N0116) or order on-line at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net)