

Partners



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

Wasn't It Great?

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

Wasn't teaching Sunday school great this year? Wasn't teaching God's Word exciting? What made it so great and exciting was that the lessons you taught, the words of Scripture you shared, have power to change hearts and lives for all eternity. But that's not all of it.

Teaching was great and teaching God's Word was exciting also because of the students you taught. In your classroom, you had individuals who were gifted by God in such unique and different ways. No two students were alike. No two learned the same way. Each student was truly a special piece in the puzzle of God's family. Each student saw the world through the learning style windows God decided they should have. Each student came to class with a foundation of prior knowledge that could be built upon



and expanded. Every student liked to have fun while studying God's Word. Not one of them was a lifeless, ignorant, emotionless blob that had to be pounded into something worthwhile. They were abundantly worthwhile already in Jesus, just like you and me.

What a privilege you had, dear teacher, to help your students learn the real lesson: Jesus Christ is their Savior from sin, their Friend through life, and their ticket to the joys of heaven. What a privilege was yours to be used by the Holy Spirit to provide lessons and learning that made God's Word come to life in young minds and hearts.

Thanks for all you did this year! It's going to be even better next year!

Bible Story Power Points . . . FREE!

WELS pastor Paul Steinberg (Immanuel Lutheran-Medford, WI) has 120 Bible stories in colorful Power Point presentations. He is willing to share these free of charge. Contact him: pastors@charter.net or 715-748-2921. Pastor Steinberg also says to check these Web sites for ideas:

www.bibleactivities.com

www.childrenschurchstuff.com

www.crosswordweaver.com

Family Bible Hour

by Erik Nelson, Youth and Family Minister,
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
North Mankato, MN

We have begun a quarterly *Family Bible Hour (FBH)* at our church as a way to introduce it to the congregation. We announce the date and topic well in advance and then on that Sunday there is no Sunday school, teen class, or adult class. Everyone gathers in our gym and we have music, a skit or dramatic reading of the lesson, and then encourage families to work through some questions and an activity together. We then gather as a group again for review, music, and prayer.

For the most part, we have had a good response. There are some adults who say they don't like it because they aren't getting anything out of it. I respond that it is not designed for them to get a lot out of it. It is designed, more so for them to help teach the children and model studying the Bible. I have sign-in sheets on each table, so I can track our attendance. I also put out blank sheets for prayer requests which are brought up to the front during the closing activity. I also have a survey that people can fill out each time that we have *FBH*.

Our *FBH* adapts the *Christ-Light®* lesson that Sunday school would normally be going through that Sunday. As we go further along, I will be looking for people to take over the planning and presentation of *FBH*, but for now, I have done most of the planning and presentation—although I have gotten volunteers for skits and readings.

An interesting note that I hope has something to do with *FBH*: On the quarterly survey, people indicated they did home devotions an average of 1.05 times a week. As of our last *FBH* in January, the number is up to 2.7 times a week. I'd like to think that our encouragement at *FBH* has had an effect.

To learn more about St. Paul's *Family Bible Hour* contact Mr. Nelson:

E-mail: enelson@hickorytech.net
Phone: 507-345-4939

Seeds of Faith

by Lynn Marie-Ittner Klammer
St. John's Lutheran Church – Frankenmuth, MI

Each week it was the much the same—a big smile, enchanting giggle, and new story about Jesus as my five-year-old daughter climbed into the van. Each week when I picked her up from Sunday school, it was as if Sarah had been on the grandest adventure of all time. The excitement and wonder of the past hour lit up her little face as countless questions about what she had learned that day flowed forth. Yes, Sarah loved Sunday school, there could be no doubt.

“Don't they pretty much just play games in Sunday school at that age?” a friend once asked me. She didn't think Sunday school was very valuable at such an early age.

“Well I guess they do a lot of that” I reluctantly agreed, and maybe for some kids, just starting out with a positive, fun experience was the best foundation for future learning...but certainly not for all. For children like Sarah, that one hour a week was more than just fun and games. During that one hour tiny seeds were being planted that would sprout and grow in future years. It was clear that those seeds were already taking root within Sarah. The Bible messages each week were short and simple, but they had found a place in her heart, as had her teacher. Sarah even started calling her teacher “Mrs. Heart” a couple months after Sunday school started.

“Why do you always call your teacher “Mrs. Heart” when you know her name is Mrs. Zehnder?” I asked her one day. Sarah's expression turned serious as she replied, “I call her Mrs. Heart because I love her so much.”

I think parents often minimize the importance of Sunday school to early Christian instruction. After all, what can one hour a week of games and songs really teach a five-year-old child? Sure it's fun, but what do they really learn? As adults it's easy to forget that children need to start small. Bible games and silly songs can seem trivial to the adult mind, but for a child they are like the first signs of life—the tiny seed from which the plant of faith will grow.

From birth many Christian parents are already beginning to expose their children to what their faith means, but Sunday school is the first step in formal Bible education. It's a valuable developmental step that should not be undervalued. Sunday school is where many seeds of faith are planted.



Parents' Day for Sunday School

by Laurie L. Sawatske

Reprinted from the CYD Web site <http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?2617&collectionID=717&contentID=1635&shortcutID=2150>

Do you, as Sunday school teachers, ever feel that the spiritual training of the children in your congregation rests primarily on your shoulders? Do you ever wonder if the Sunday school books are ever opened at home during the week? Why aren't the worksheets completed, the Bible verses memorized, the songs practiced?

The teaching that we do on Sunday mornings should be an extension of the spiritual training found in the home. Parents need to be aware that their important role in their child's Christian education goes beyond dropping off their child at the church door.

Often all it takes to create interest in the work of Sunday school is to get the parents involved. A good way to open the doors of understanding is to open the classroom doors. How do we get parents in the door? Invite them!! Have a "Parents' Day" for Sunday school.

Plan a "Parents' Day" early in the Sunday school year. The end of September is a good time. It gives the children time to become familiar with their teacher and her routine. It also provides ample time to promote this special Sunday. Set your date and begin preparations.

Introduce "Parents' Day" to the Sunday school children as their special day for their parents. Prepare invitations for the child to take home, invitations personalized by the child.

On Parents' Day set up chairs in the classrooms to accom-

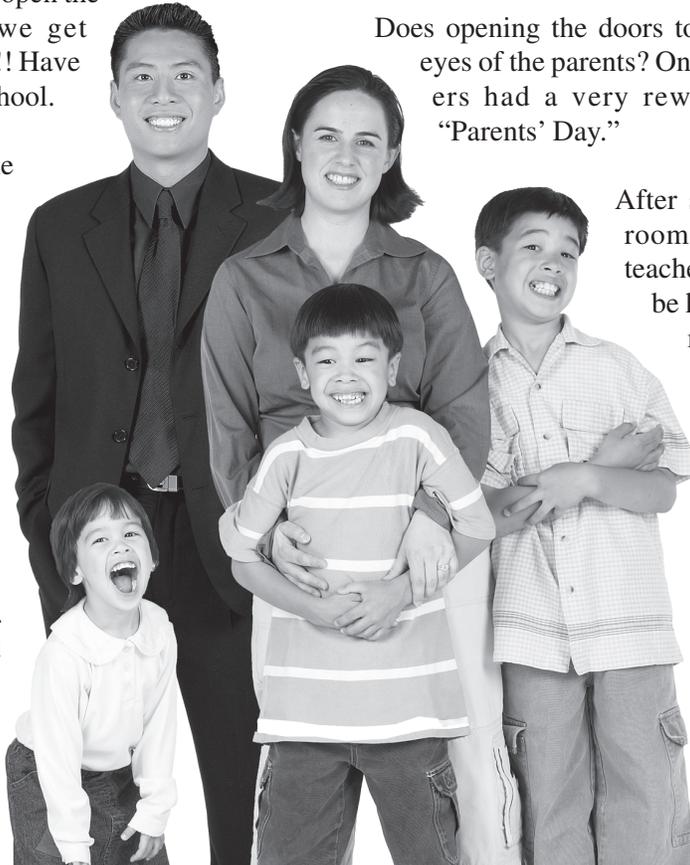
modate the visitors. Encourage circulation between classrooms if the parents have children in several rooms. Hand out an outline of the lesson and the purpose of each step so the visitors may follow along. Use this opportunity to familiarize the parents with their child's book. Emphasize how the book can be used at home to review the story, learn memory verses and complete worksheets. Tell the parents how important they are to their children and you, the teacher!

Plan to sing in church that "Parents' Day" Sunday. This encourages families which are not regular in their church attendance to stay for the worship service. The pastor should dedicate this Sunday to the parents' role in Christian education. After the service have the Sunday school children serve the refreshments to their guests.

Does opening the doors to our classrooms also open the eyes of the parents? One of our 1st and 2nd grade teachers had a very rewarding experience after her "Parents' Day."

After sitting in her daughter's classroom, a shy mom confided to the teacher, "I had no idea that I should be helping with the worksheets and memory verses. I also want to come to church more. I can see how important it is to be there for my little girl." Two years later this mom is now a member of the church and has brought two other friends and their daughters—one of whom was recently baptized.

Is it important to have a "Parents' Day"? We surely think it is.



Share Standards You'd Like to See

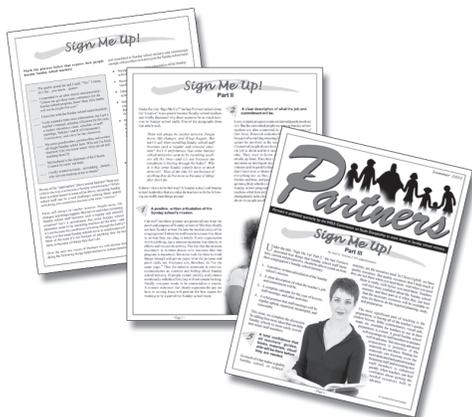
We have started a new discussion on the SST (Sunday School Talk) discussion board on the CYD Web site (www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship). The discussion is called "Sunday School (or similar ministry) Standards" and has threads called Atmosphere, Curriculum, Staff/Teachers, Staff Training/Development, Facilities, Pastoral Involvement, Congregational Support, Budget, Parental Involvement, Outreach, Publicity/Promotion, etc. Under each thread, share your opinion for what the "standards" should be or look like. Based on these comments, CYD will work toward further developing and finalizing a set of standards Sunday schools (or similar ministries) could use to make themselves better.

Recruiting Staff for Next Year?

If you will be recruiting Sunday school staff for next year, you may want to look over a series of articles published in *Partners* under the title, "Sign Me Up!" The first article appeared in the Winter 2002 *Partners* issue. Additional articles followed in the Spring 2003 and Summer 2003 issues. The articles stressed that recruiting and retaining Sunday school staff is enhanced when we provide...

- Positive, written articulation of the Sunday school's mission
- Clear description of what the job and commitment will be
- Complete calendar for the year: lessons, meetings, activities
- Staff meetings: regular, upbeat, organized, meaningful, and reasonable
- Confidence that all guides, books, materials, aids will be there
- Sure trust that the rest of the ministry team is just that - a team
- Unending appreciation from your congregation's leaders
- Meaningful budget that provides for Sunday school's support

Another article that may help as you plan for next year is one that appeared in the Fall 2003 issue. It was titled, "Shaping a Better Sunday School Culture." You can find the past issues at www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship. Look in the "Newsletters Archive" collection and then in the *Partners* folder under the corresponding year. If you don't have access to a computer or the Internet, contact the CYD office for reprints.



Are You Coming?

Building from the Ground Up The 2nd Biennial WELS Youth Ministry Conference

Friday-Sunday, September 15-17, 2006
Chaparral Suites Resort – Scottsdale, AZ



Only At Sunday School!

A pastor was speaking to a group of second-graders about the resurrection of Jesus when one student asked, "What did Jesus say right after He came out of the grave?"

The pastor explained that the Gospels do not tell us what He said.

The hand of one little girl shot up. "I know what He said: He said, 'Tah-dah!'"



Three Keynote presentations...

- The Family Is Foundational
- Parents Are Primary
- Youth Matter

Sectional presentations and displays will provide ministry insights and resources for...

- Families/Parenting
- Early Childhood
- Children and Teens
- Catechism/Confirmation
- Sunday School and Related Ministry
- Special Needs Families
- Vacation Bible School
- Lutheran Boy and Girl Pioneers
- Lutheran Camps.

A special pre-conference workshop on the popular, "Faith Stepping Stones" program will also be given (fee is extra).

\$225.00/person includes:

- Two nights lodging
- All meals
- All conference materials

Watch for registration details coming in late spring, 2006.

Great Ideas From Great Teachers

Let the Children...Teach!

By Jolynn Pfeiffer, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Crandon, WI

Our Sunday school lesson was on the Feeding of the 5000. I started out saying, "Today we are going to learn about five fish and two loaves that . . ." Suddenly, Ashley's hand shot up and she said, "I know that story!" So I said, "How about you be the teacher today." Ashley smiled and proceeded to tell the story quite well. The children remembered the story when I did the quiz game at the end of class. This got me thinking that I should let my five students teach lessons more often. So I suggested it to my little lambs, and they were excited! At the first and second grade level they love to be the teacher.

We decided to go in alphabetical order because they all wanted to be the teacher – next week! So we worked together to assign *Christ-Light*® stories to each other. If it was a female story like Martha and Mary I encouraged the girls to take it. If the main characters were men, the boys did it. I gave the students the page the lesson was on and told them they needed to have their parents help them find it in the Bible and learn it together. I stressed that they needed to present the lesson well and teach it with emotion and feeling.



After the story was presented to the class, each student was asked to share what they felt was the most interesting part of the lesson. Each child needed to say something different. It ended up being a great way to learn and review the lesson. Children tell you the most wonderful things that they get out of a story sometimes. Many times, they open my eyes as much as I open theirs. We end each lesson by looking at our scripture verse for the day and then doing a project relating to that. All in all, it is a great variation on presenting the lesson.

Jolynn teaches in her congregation's Youth Bible School, a Wednesday after school ministry that has between 95-100% attendance of congregation children. Learn more about this ministry and her teaching: hilesjo@yahoo.com

Video Shoot and Share

Begin making plans to shoot this year's Advent or Children's Christmas Eve for your shut-ins. Be sure to shoot a video that includes the fully decorated church, all activities, and close-ups of the congregation. Then make several copies of the video to deliver to shut-ins. Shut-ins enjoy viewing the service and decorated church. But mostly they will enjoy the fellowship of the children and teens who deliver and explain the video in detail.

Adapt this idea for Thanksgiving, Easter, Sunday school picnics, and other special church events to build support between your children and the elderly people of your congregation.

(Taken from "Partners in Christian Education," Summer, 2000.)

Storytelling – Surprise Pictures Using Glue Rubbings

Using a lead pencil, sketch out your Bible story on poster board. Don't worry if you are not a great artist; stick figures work fine. If you wish you can also trace the elements of the picture. "Draw" over your lines with a heavy line of Elmer's Glue and let it dry thoroughly. When it's dry, paper clip or tape a blank piece of paper over it. As you tell your Bible story, rub over the parts of the sketch you are talking about with the flat side of a pencil or crayon. The story will appear. Children will enjoy repeating this activity themselves as they retell the story. Save the material for reviewing the story during the coming weeks.

(Taken from "Partners in Christian Education," Summer, 2000.)



What's going on in your Sunday school? Please share your great ideas with us. Our readers appreciate time tested projects and ideas that really work. Send your ideas to us via email cyd@sab.wels.net or by surface mail (WELS-CYD, 2929 N. Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398).

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Check These Out!

Learn By Heart

Need help in getting your Sunday school students to learn the chief parts of Luther's Catechism as well as key Bible verses? Then check out, *Learn By Heart* a multi-level curriculum developed by WELS Pastor Roger Huffman and his wife, Karen (Peace Lutheran Church-King of Prussia, PA). To obtain more information and samples, contact: Pastor@PeacewithGod.com or call 610-256-5522.

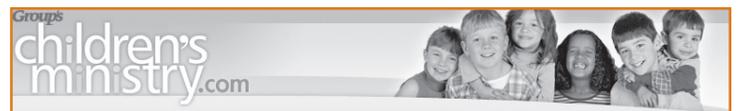
J.A.M. (Jesus in the Afternoon for Me) Session

Have you been wanting to start a midweek afternoon, outreach ministry for children in your congregation's area that could be a community service for families and children who have no church or Sunday school home? Would you like another fun ministry option for your congregation's children? Then con-

tact WELS Pastor Paul Steinberg (Immanuel Lutheran Church-Medford, WI) and find out about his *J.A.M. Sessions*. Contact: pastors@charter.net or call 715-748-2921. You can also check out the church Web site and learn more about the *J.A.M. Sessions* at www.diedforme.com.

www.ChildrensMinistry.com

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Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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