



# Partners

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

## *It's Time to Talk to Parents*

by Joel A. Nelson, Administrator-WELS Youth Discipleship



Mark DeVries, in *Family Based Youth Ministry* (1994) said it so well: "Because of the extensive exposure parents have to their own children, they leave an indelible impression that radically affects how receptive their children will be to the gospel. There is overwhelming evidence that parents are, almost always, the single most significant determining factor in the development of their children."

DeVries is so correct, and most people ministering to children agree with his assessment. But why then do so many of these same ministers have such a hard time interacting with the parents of the children they teach. It's difficult to understand why ministers don't partner better with parents. Communicating with the home is **SO** important. It does so much in the way of letting the family know we care about them. It helps them to better understand how much Jesus cares for them, too. And frankly, it's not that hard, hazardous, or hair-raising.

Below are some simple suggestions for when and how to communicate with the parents of children in your Sunday School or related ministry. Any kind of communication can be very powerful. A note, email, or card are very good. A phone call is absolutely wonderful. A home visit would be out of this world! Bottom line, communication builds relationships, and Christian relationships are a great bridge to Jesus. For

the sake of this article, the communication ideas below model phone contact, although face-to-face contact could also apply.

### Good Times to Communicate

- ◆ **When a child is doing really well in some way.** Parents expect the worst when the teacher calls. Surprise them and really stroke their child.

**Sample Phone Call:** Of course, the conversation will vary as parents respond. (To the parent): "Hello, this is Joan Johnson from St. Paul's Sunday school. Susan has just been the most helpful the past few Sundays. She helps clean up without being asked, she shares with others so well. You can be so proud of her. Susan is such a precious little girl to the Lord and to all of us at Sunday school. We love having her in our class. I just wanted to share this with you. Keep up the good work!"

You could make a similar call when you know of some special "event" happening in the child's/family's life, i.e. new baby, death of a relative, big game coming up, birthday, etc.

- ◆ **When a child is absent.** Because of all the shared custody issues with children today, perhaps a good "rule" is to have personal contact after two-three missed Sundays (or whatever day you have sessions) in a row. You can certainly do it sooner if you like, but after three, a contact with the family would be really great. A personal as opposed to written contact would be best.

**It's a Tabloid,  
It's a Website,  
It's . . . It's . . .**

**Parents i Crosslink**

*Parents Crosslink*, a new eight-page quarterly, and its partner Web site, <[www.parentscrosslink.net](http://www.parentscrosslink.net)>, are coming this fall. Both are aimed at strengthening and encouraging Christian parents for the challenges of raising children in a world that adheres to secular values. Together, they address real parenting issues with practical insights and scriptural applications. And because the issues are real, the themes and topics discussed in *Parents Crosslink* and on its Web site will resonate with all parents, making these resources perfect outreach tools and essential components of your congregation's ministry to Christian families.

The autumn issue of *Parents Crosslink* will be mailed in bulk, free of charge, in May to all WELS congregations and schools. Bulk subscription prices will range from \$2.00 to \$3.00 per copy depending on the quantity ordered. For lower quantities postage may be additional. If you'd like to subscribe to the magazine today or have additional questions, call NPH Subscription Services at 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8 or visit <[www.parentscrosslink.net](http://www.parentscrosslink.net)>.

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**Sample Phone Call:** Of course, the conversation will vary as parents respond. (To the parent): "Hello, this is Tom Weldon from Good Shepherd's Bible Hour. Justin, has missed three weeks of class, and I am just calling to see if everything is all right. (Lovingly discuss whatever may come up. Offer whatever assistance you can.) Justin is such a precious child to the Lord and to all of us at Bible Hour. We love having him in our class. We hope to see him next week."

◆ **When a child is being a little stinker.**

Let's face it, Jesus' little lambs have Old Adams just like the grown sheep do. Most times, children "act up" because their teachers have not really engaged them in the lesson. Sometimes, however, a child just wants to stir things up. Use these "tense" times as another opportunity to minister to the home in a loving way. A face-to-face interaction would be best, but if that isn't possible, try calling. Make sure your tone of voice reflects love and concern, not anger and upset.

**Sample Phone Call:** Of course, the conversation will vary as parents respond. (To the parent): "Hello, this is Wendy Lipinski from Our Savior's Kids' Power Hour. I have been having some difficulty with Susan, and I was wondering if you could help me with it. Susan has been talking a lot in class and disrupting things a bit. What would you suggest I do to help her see this is not appropriate? (Let parent make suggestions. That way you are co-opting them into the issue and recognizing they know more about their child than you do.) Let me think about some of the things you suggested. Could you also talk to her about it? I am very glad that Susan is in my class. God has given her so many gifts and abilities (maybe cite some), but I am not going to allow her to disrupt the others. I am confident that all of us working together can resolve this little situation. Thanks so much for your time. I'll keep you posted, and God be with you."

Whatever the situation, positively communicating with parents (or guardians) holds great potential to connect God's people to each other, to the church, to the Word, and to Jesus.



## **Next WELS Religion Curriculum**

For over two years, representatives of WELS Youth Discipleship, Parish Schools, and Northwestern Publishing House have been working on a proposal for the development of the next WELS religion curriculum post *Christ-Light*®. This proposal, which included extensive research on the needs of WELS Sunday schools and input from many Sunday school teachers, was recently approved by the WELS Board for Parish Services and the NPH Board of Directors. A tentative target date for release of the curriculum is 2011. You can still share thoughts about what you'd like to see in the Sunday school portion of the next curriculum. Email: [cyd@sab.wels.net](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net)

# Great Ideas from Great Teachers

One of the objectives of *Partners* is to communicate and to share teaching ideas, tips, and helps with Sunday school teachers, superintendents, and pastors. Each issue (as space allows) we will feature ideas submitted to the CYD office. 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).

## Easter Oval Pictures

Need something to decorate your dining area/fellowship hall for your congregation's Easter breakfast? Try this idea submitted by Vickie Walther (Christ the Lord, Brookfield, WI).

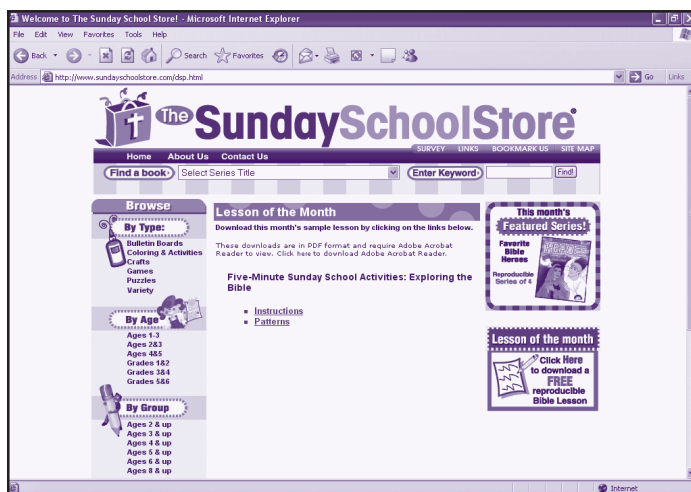
Easter pictures (a cross, butterfly, empty tomb, stained glass window) inside an oval were copied from a children's Easter book, coloring book, online. These pictures were then enlarged to the desired mural size (4' high x 3' wide) by making a transparency of the picture, projecting the image onto a wall covered with white paper, and tracing the enlarged image on the paper. The tracing was then outlined with black marker. Each group was given one to complete.

On the Sundays in the month prior to Easter, each classroom worked on coloring in their Easter oval picture – either using markers, paint, or gluing on colored squares of construction paper. About ten minutes of class time was spent for working on this project.

This is a good way for students in Sunday school to help in preparing for Easter and decorating the church for the Easter celebration. In addition, it makes the Sunday school visible to members of the congregation.

## Resource Catalog – Rainbow Publishers

If you are looking for time-fillers, bulletin board ideas, worksheets, etc., for your Sunday school classroom, check out this site <www.sundayschoolstore.com>. Phone number is (800) 522-5005. Although the materials were not created by WELS, many of the ideas/suggestions can work in your Sunday school classroom. Download an activity to check it out! <www.sundayschoolstore.com/dsp.html>



## All About Me

To get to know the children in your Sunday school class, send home a flier for the children to complete with their parents and return the next Sunday. With this information, you'll be able to add a personal touch to your care.

## All About Me

I'm so glad you're part of our class this year! Please take a few minutes with your parents to fill in the following information, and then return it next Sunday.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

My address is \_\_\_\_\_.

My phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.

My birthday is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

I'm in \_\_\_\_\_ grade and attend \_\_\_\_\_ school.

My email address is \_\_\_\_\_.

Parents, with your permission, we'd like to send an occasional e-card to your child. If we have your permission to email your child, please sign here:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite color is \_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite thing to do is \_\_\_\_\_.

The following people are in my family  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to complete this and return

it to me. My name is \_\_\_\_\_

and I'm the teacher for \_\_\_\_\_ grade at

\_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church.

If you need to reach me, my phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.

My email address is \_\_\_\_\_.

# Resource Recommendations

## Teaching with a Heart Like Jesus



Jesus chose each of the first twelve disciples, "that they might be with him..." (Mark 3:14). This is always God's top priority and our greatest privilege. So before you prepare a new lesson, greet your students, or fuss with paperwork, take time to "be" with Jesus.

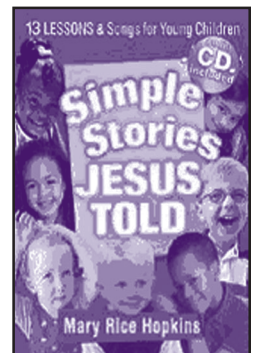
The above is one of over 106 spiritual encouragements, wire-bound in a desk top flipbook, and created for anyone who teaches God's Word to children. You'll enjoy the focus this resource brings to your day and the constant reminder of how precious your students are to Jesus and you.

**Order *Teaching with a Heart Like Jesus* from Christian Tools of Affirmation (CTA) <[www.ctainc.com](http://www.ctainc.com)>. On Sale! \$3.99.**

## Simple Stories Jesus Told: 13 Lessons and Songs for Young Children

**GROUP Publishing <[www.grouppublishing.com](http://www.grouppublishing.com)>. ISBN: 0764427962 \$29.99**

It's sing-along time with Mary Rice Hopkins! Loved by young audiences everywhere, these Hopkins hits help children to know Jesus. In song, teach your preschool and kindergarten students about the parables of Jesus. They'll learn about the Good Samaritan, The Lost Coin, The Unmerciful Servant, and more! *Simple Stories* includes 13 lessons with songs, activities, crafts, games, prayers and more to bring children's joyful noise to life! Each 1-hour lesson instills a simple, age-appropriate Bible point. Includes book and CD with the songs.

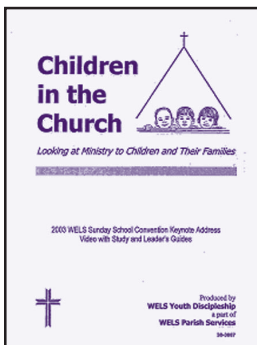


*"This publication is a good supplement for teaching PreKindergarten and Kindergarten children the parables of Christ. Good usage of multiple learning styles."* (Lisa Stellick, Hope Lutheran Church, West Chicago, IL and member of the WELS Southeastern Wisconsin District Youth Discipleship Committee.)

## Chapel Talks for Christian Children 2005-2006

These 43 devotions, one for each week in the school year, are based on the Epistle readings for each Sunday. In these lessons, children will hear God speaking to them as the gospel is proclaimed and they apply it in their lives. New this year is the inclusion of separate devotions for Ash Wednesday and Ascension if you choose to have a special devotion for those days. Each devotion examines a Bible text with an object lesson, followed by discussion questions and applications for Christian living. Copy masters for short worship services are also provided. Age Level: Grade School. Papercover. **NPH Stock # 06N5005 Price 24.99**

## Children in the Church



*Children in the Church* (2003) is a WELS-CYD produced video and print resource for anyone involved in children's ministry: Sunday school staffs, Lutheran elementary school faculties, VBS staffs, early childhood ministries.

The four part video and companion study guide encourage participants to seriously evaluate the ministry they are doing with the children in their congregations, and by extension, their families. While the future of our congregations rests with our children, connecting these children and their families to Jesus, is what ministry is really all about.

***Children in the Church* is \$19.95 plus shipping and handling. Order from WELS Youth Discipleship: <[cyd@sab.wels.net](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net)> or 414-256-3274**

## 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](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net). Contact the CYD office for address changes and/or your Sunday school staff changes.

# Survey Says...

- ✓ Only 19% of churchgoing adults say they usually learn a lot from their pastor's sermons.

*Group Publishing Poll of Church-goers, 1992*

- ✓ Only 46% of churchgoing adults and 42% of churchgoing teenagers say their church challenges their thinking.

*Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations, Search Institute, 1990*

- ✓ Only 35% of 5-6<sup>th</sup> graders say their church classes make them think.

*Group Publishing National Survey, 1992*

- ✓ Only 40% of adults and 45% of teenagers say their church encourages them to ask questions.

*Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations, Search Institute, 1990*

- ✓ Only 23% of churchgoing adults typically attend any weekly Bible study class.

*George Barna, What Americans Believe, 1991*

- ✓ Only 12.3% of churchgoing WELS adults typically attend any weekly Bible study class.

*WELS Statistical Report and Parish Services Consultation Data, 2003*

- ✓ After surveying 11,000 adults and youth from churches in several denominations, researchers Peter Benson and Carolyn Eklin said, "Christian education matters much more than we expected. Of all the areas of congregational life we examined, involvement in an effective Christian education program has the strongest tie to a person's growth in faith. While other congregational factors also matter, nothing matters more than effective Christian education. And this is as true for adults as it is for children."

*Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations, Search Institute, 1990*

## Only At Sunday School!

A minister told his congregation, "Next week I plan to preach about the sin of lying. To help you understand my sermon, I want you all to read Mark 17."

The following Sunday, the minister asked for a show of hands from those who read Mark 17. Every hand went up. 4<sup>th</sup> grade Natalie's hand also went up. She waved it wildly and yelled, "Pastor, Pastor!"

"Yes, Natalie," the pastor responded.

"The book of Mark only has 16 chapters," she said.

The minister smiled and said, "That's right, sweetheart. I will now proceed with my sermon on the sin of lying."

### Midweek Joke

Q: Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible?

A: Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

### Messages to God

Dear God,

Please put another holiday between Christmas and Easter. There's nothing good in there now.  
Carlos

Dear God,

Thank you for the baby brother, but what I asked for was a puppy. I never asked for anything before. You can look it up. Kim



# Partners



## 2004 WELS Youth Ministry Conference

Keynote Speech Videos Still Available!

**Building from the Ground Up:  
The Importance of Parents and Home**

*Pastor John Boggs*  
*Dean of Students-Michigan Lutheran Seminary*

**Building An Outreaching Ministry:  
The Importance of Sharing Jesus with Everyone**

*Mr. Kevin Festerling*  
*Teacher-St. Marcus Lutheran School*  
*Milwaukee, WI*

**Building a Ministry of Strong Partnerships:  
The Importance of Working Together**

*Pastor Bruce Becker*  
*Administrator WELS Parish Services*

**Building for All Eternity:  
The Importance of the Gospel in Today's World**

*Pastor Ron Heins*  
*Director WELS Parish Assistance*

Cost for all four on two cassettes is \$11.99 including shipping and handling.  
Order from WELS Youth Discipleship: [cyd@sab.wels.net](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net) 414-256-3274

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

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