



# Partners

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

## What's Happening Out There?

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

In the summer and fall 2005 issues of *Partners*, I solicited stories from you and others about Sunday school and related ministry models being used in WELS congregations. Twelve submissions were received, and I am very grateful for getting them. Aside from people being too busy or forgetting to respond, my take on why there were not more follows:

- 1 I don't think too much is really happening out there that would be considered a new model. Many congregations still employ more "traditional" approaches with varying degrees of success or failure. In some settings, the traditional model "wasn't working" and has been abandoned with nothing to replace it.
- 2 People who are trying new, successful approaches are perhaps afraid to share for fear of criticism from others in WELS, or for fear that they'd be accused of tooting their own horn – something a good Lutheran doesn't do.
- 3 Sometimes, new things are tried but then given only a short run. If they do not prove to be the "magic bullet" they are discontinued.
- 4 Many people/congregations seem to be looking for "the binder" with all the answers and are not able/willing to dig in on their own and determine and develop what's really needed in their unique setting.
- 5 For others, the on-going, heavy lifting required to make long-lasting, systemic improvement is not being done. No one is taking on-going ownership and/or being the cheerleader for getting better and better each year, so things just grind to a halt or become so same-old, same-old that no one wants to be involved.
- 6 The bar for doing non-Lutheran elementary school (LES) children's ministry is pretty low in WELS and church leaders are not investing the time and effort it takes to create awesome Sunday schools or related ministries. In some settings where an LES exists, a conscious or subconscious philosophy/attitude exists that diminishes the role and value of any non-LES, children's ministry.
- 7 Many WELS congregations have yet to grasp how incredibly meaningful and powerful quality, Bible-based, early childhood and children's ministries can be, not only for the children enrolled but also for the overall health of families and the congregation.

You may have a different take on it, but that's what I see. I'd love to hear your views on this issue and have created a discussion board on the topic at <[www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship)>. Hit the "SST - Sunday School Talk" link. You can also join the discussion on the WELS Imprint blog: [www.wels.net/jumpword/imprint](http://www.wels.net/jumpword/imprint).

Promote CYD Web sites on Your Church's Web Site

Go to <[www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship)> and grab the CYD Web sites' images and links using the special html code snippets provided. It is a simple cut and paste.

# The “Top 12” List

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

In response to my solicitation, the following Sunday school and related ministry models came in:

- 1 Multi-week, Multi-Media: Prince of Peace Lutheran Church – Salt Lake City, UT – Pastor Mike Quandt – email: pastor@popslc.org. See description in the Winter 2005 *Partners* in the “Newsletter Archive” at [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship).
- 2 The Promised Land: Our Redeemer Lutheran Church – Madison, WI – Pastor Robert Knippel – email: bobknippel@ourredeemermadison.org. See description in the Summer 2004 *Partners* in the “Newsletter Archive” at [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship).
- 3 Traditional with Traction: St. Paul’s Lutheran Church – Muskego, WI – Pastor Jeffrey Bonack – email: jbonack@stpaulmuskego.org. See description in the Winter 2006 *Partners* in the “Newsletter Archive” at [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship).
- 4 Bible Song Sunday School: St. Matthew Lutheran Church – Appleton, WI – Mr. Jon Ruddat – jon@stmatthewlutheran.com. See description in this issue.
- 5 Intergenerational (Faith Inkubators) and Bible Song Sunday School: Abiding Faith Lutheran Church – Pinehurst, TX – Pastor Fred Schleg – email: abidingfaith@hotmail.com. \*
- 6 Sunday School Closing that Sings and Prays: Bloomington Lutheran Church – Bloomington, MN – Norm Lentz – email: nlenz@bllh.org.
- 7 ¾-¼ Traditional-Intergenerational: St. Paul’s First Lutheran Church – North Hollywood, CA – Pastor Gary Pufahl – email: stpaulsnhrevp@hotmail.com.
- 8 Modified Faith-Weavers: St. Paul’s Lutheran Church – Wisconsin Rapids, WI – Pastor Matt Doebler – email: doeblermc@yahoo.com
- 9 Four-Five Week Modules: Star of Bethlehem Lutheran Church – Santa Maria, CA – Pastor Steven Degner – email: Scdegner@aol.com
- 10 Three Weeks, Then “Fun-Day”: Trinity Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI – Mr. John Schmoller – email: johns@gdinet.com
- 11 Sonshine Club: Salem Lutheran Church – Milwaukee, WI – Anna Bartsch - albartsch2000@yahoo.com.
- 12 CrossRoads Children’s Discipleship (in development): St. Mark Lutheran Church – DePere, WI – Pastor John Parlow – email: john.parlow@stmark-depere.org.

\* Descriptions of models 5-11 can be found at [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship). Look for “New Sunday School Models in WELS” in the Consultation and Resources collection under Sunday School Ministry. In this same area you will find, “Conceptual Models for Sunday School” from the *Initiative for Strengthening Sunday Schools: A Report to the CYD from the Sunday School Ministry Task Force*. In that report, six additional models are given:

- The Traditional Model
- The Traditional Plus Model
- The “Family Sunday Event” Model
- The Family Bible Hour Model – Version 1
- The Family Bible Hour Model – Version 2
- The Family Bible Hour Model – Version 3



# Bible Song Sunday School

by Jon Ruddat, Minister of Administration and Family,  
St. Matthew Lutheran Church – Appleton, WI

## Imagine . . .

- . . . kids at home flipping through their Bible looking for key passages . . .
- . . . children begging their parents to take them to church . . .
- . . . confirmation four years from now when the majority of kids know 120 Bible verses from Genesis to the Revelation and can sing them back verbatim . . .

**You don't have to imagine it. It's Bible Song Sunday School!**

At St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Appleton, Wisconsin, we've experienced a decline in our Sunday School enrollment. So my senior pastor asked me to look at other curriculums available. I studied programs from Group, Concordia, Standard, David C. Cook and our own *ChristLight*®. Then I experienced *Bible Song Sunday* at a seminar in Chicago. While each curriculum I studied had its strong and weak points, *Bible Song* stood out in two ways.

1) *Bible Song* uses a different approach to teaching Biblical truths. Traditional Sunday School uses an educational model that teaches content, what the Bible says and how it applies to our life. However, we may not see it taking hold in our families. I'm sure you've experienced seeing kids disappear once they are confirmed. What happened to all that great teaching? How much did God's Word impact their hearts and lives? We wonder what could be done better or differently so that the faith gets passed on. The best answer perhaps lies in how faith is modeled both at home and in the church. *Bible Song* is a tool that facilitates better modeling. *Bible Song* is a tool that facilitates that.

2) *Bible Song* is completely customizable. So if there is an application that is weak or a doctrinal slant that surfaces, we can just not use it or edit it to be more clear and change it to be in harmony with our doctrine. Also, if a situation in a particular congregation doesn't quite fit the standard *Bible Song* format then changes can be made to make it work.

I recently interviewed Mark Schoepp, the Director of *Bible Song Sunday*. He described *Bible Song* by saying, "It's not a magic pill to cure Sunday school, but it is a program that uses the best brain research available, involves families and passes on the faith."

There is so much to say about it that I could go on and on. I'm really excited about it. At St. Matthew we're going to try a couple lessons this spring.

To learn more about it, visit Faith Inkubators' site at [www.faithink.com/Inkubators](http://www.faithink.com/Inkubators) then click on Bible Song Sunday. You're also welcome to contact me at 920-733-0916 or [jon@stmatthewlutheran.com](mailto:jon@stmatthewlutheran.com).

By the way, those imagine statements above are actually happening in families whose congregations are using *Bible Song Sunday*.



## EduTech

# EduTech: A Great Opportunity

EduTech 2006 (June 26-29, Oshkosh, Wisconsin) is an opportunity for educators of all types to learn about some of the innovative ways God has provided to us lately to teach and preach the good news of Jesus Christ. Martin Spriggs, WELS Chief Technology Officer, says, "I'm excited about this kind of forum that will promote and facilitate idea sharing — all centered around the common goal of being the best stewards we can be."

Keynote speaker, Dr. David Walsh, president of the National Institute on Media and the Family will discuss brain development, adolescence, the impact of media on children, and the factors that influence school performance, literacy, and violence prevention. Mr. David Warlick, director of the Landmark Project; "The Three Ts of Teaching" will share ideas to turn the classroom into a dynamic, exciting, and highly effective learning environment. Several other sectionals and break out groups will round out the event.

For more information, visit the EduTech 2006 website: [www.wels.net/jumpword/edutech](http://www.wels.net/jumpword/edutech) or call the CPS office at 414-256-3222.



# Improve Your Staff via Teacher/Lesson Evaluations

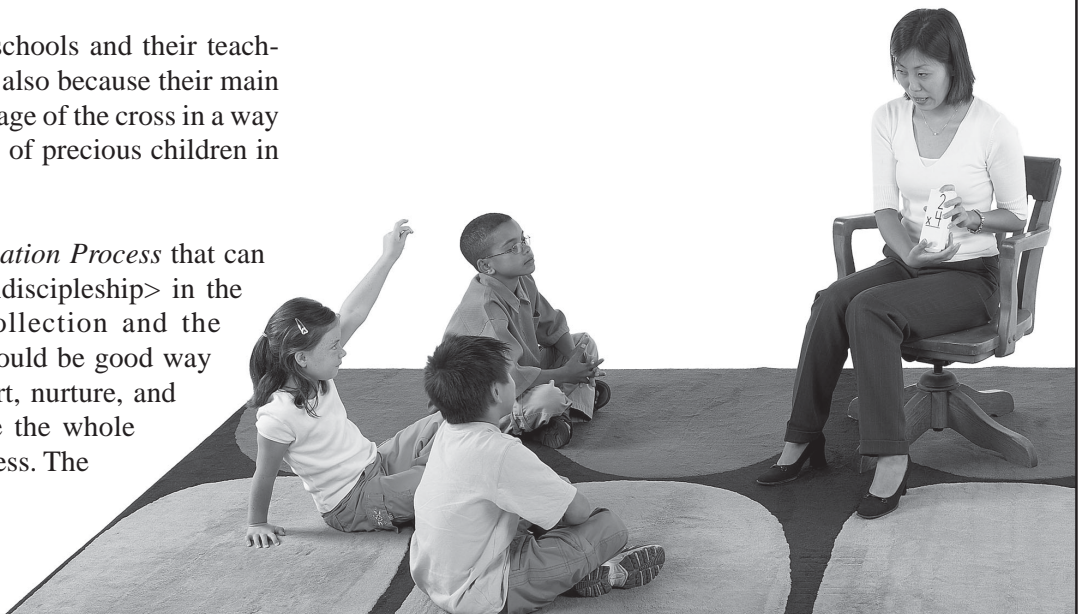
Any organization that relies on people to perform certain duties and tasks and wants the duties and tasks performed well must provide opportunities for the people to grow in their knowledge and expertise. More knowledgeable and expert people means a stronger, more focused, and more effective organization.

described on the Web site provides a format for observing teachers as they present lessons and then privately discussing the observations with them. The observer could be the Sunday school superintendent, the pastor, another Sunday school teacher, a former Sunday school teacher, or a congregation member who is knowledgeable about the Bible and teaching. The teacher/evaluation format provided covers productive teaching techniques, personal relations, and class management.

Go to the Web site, look over the Teacher/Lesson Evaluation Process described, and give it a try. You'll find it to be a great way to learn and grow in your wonderful calling as a Sunday school or related ministry teacher. If you like some of the process but not all of it, feel free to modify it to meet your unique needs.

Our Sunday schools and their teachers want to be the best they can be also because their main goal is to share the wonderful message of the cross in a way that will touch the hearts and lives of precious children in the best possible ways.

The simple, *Teacher/Lesson Evaluation Process* that can be found at <[www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship)> in the Consultation and Resources collection and the Sunday School Ministry folder, would be good way for Sunday school staffs to support, nurture, and develop better teachers and make the whole Sunday school stronger in the process. The teacher/lesson evaluation



## Only At Sunday School!

A Sunday school teacher was carefully explaining the story of Elijah the Prophet and the false prophets of Baal. She explained how Elijah built the altar, put wood upon it, cut the steer in pieces, and laid it upon the altar. And then, Elijah commanded the people of God to fill four barrels of water and pour it over the altar. He had them do this four times. "Now," said the teacher, "can anyone in the class tell me why the Lord would have Elijah pour water over the steer on the altar?" A little girl in the back of the room started waving her hand, "I know! I know!" she said, "To make the gravy!"

A Sunday School teacher was describing how Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, when little Johnny interrupted, "My Mummy looked back once, while she was driving," he announced triumphantly, "and she turned into a telephone pole!"



# It's not Your Standard Discussion

We have started a new discussion on the SST (Sunday School Talk) discussion board on the CYD Web site ([www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship)). The discussion is called "Sunday School (or similar ministry) Standards" and will have threads like: 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.

# Check Out Sowers & Seeds

If your ministry involves younger children, you may be interested in receiving *Sowers & Seeds*, the WELS Youth Discipleship produced, quarterly newsletter for those engaged in early childhood ministry. It's free, just like *Partners!* You can see previous issues in the "Newsletter Archive" at [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship). To subscribe call 414-256-3274 or email [cyd@sab.wels.net](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net).



# Great Ideas from Great Teachers

by Bob Mateske – Administrative Assistant, WELS-CYD

What's going on in your Sunday school? Please share with us your "great ideas" (strengthening teachers, children, and families, teaching, community outreach, etc.) in your Sunday school. Our readers appreciate time tested projects and ideas that really work. 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](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net) or by surface mail (WELS-CYD, 2929 N. Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398).

## Go Fish!

Here is an idea that worked very well for my class of third through eighth grade students. The lesson for the day was the book of Jonah. We played a game of "Go Fish." I made a set of cards using construction paper. At the top of each card I wrote in large underlined letters a key word or words from the story. Underneath the key word I wrote a question or instruction related to the word, which introduced the points I wanted to make from the lesson. When a student matched a pair based on key words, they then read out loud the card or instruction, and we discussed it before returning to the game. They really enjoyed the class, and I'm thinking it will work for other lessons as well, especially those with fish in them! (Submitted by Nina Jahns, Peace, Green Lake, WI.)

## Activity: Door Hangers

Make a door hanger out of poster board. Collect and have on hand appropriate pictures from church bulletins (here's an idea to use up those used bulletins with pictures on them.), magazines, greeting cards, etc. Let the children cut these up in any manner they choose (providing they don't cut them in micro-small pieces), and then glue them to the doorhanger, completely covering the hanger. Have them write, on a piece of white paper (or self-adhesive mailing label), a Bible verse from the story they are studying. Cut out the verse and glue (place) on top of the pictures. (Submitted by Jan Koepsell, Living Word, Montrose, CO.)

## Personal Experience

Share with children how a particular Bible section applies to you and your personal life of faith. Kids love to hear personal anecdotes, and often will then "open up" and share how God's working in their lives, too. Be sure to keep them short and to the point! (Anonymous)

# Partners

## **Building from the Ground Up**

### **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennial WELS Youth Ministry Conference**

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

*Sponsored by the WELS Commissions on Youth Discipleship, Adult Discipleship, and Parish Schools*

### **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, and all conference materials.

Watch for registration details coming in late spring 2006.

*"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain."*

**Psalm 127:1**

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

WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship  
2929 N. Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398  
E-mail: [cyd@sab.wels.net](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net) Phone: 414-256-3274