

# Partners



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

## *The Hidden Curriculum*

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

What follows is a real conversation between a researcher and a Sunday school student. Read it and ponder the questions beneath.

Researcher: How long have you been going to church?

**Student: Since I was a baby.**

R: How do you like your classes at church?

**S: They're too much like school.**

R: How's that?

**S: They're boring.**

R: How so?

**S: We have to sit in chairs and memorize stuff.**

R: What have you memorized?

**S: Verses from the Bible. We get a piece of candy if we come with the verses memorized.**

R: Can you say the last verse you got some candy for?

**S: I don't remember.**

R: Do you remember any of them?

**S: No, I'm sorry.**

R: Well, can you remember what any of them meant?

**S: No. I guess I have a bad memory.**

R: Can you tell me what it takes for a person to get to heaven?

**S: Study hard.**

*Continued on page 2.*

## Help Your Congregation Meet Its Sunday School Staff

Many times, members of a congregation do not know who their Sunday school ministry's teachers are. So why not put together and share a short paragraph about the teachers at each level? Run the paragraphs in your church's worship folder/bulletin for as many weeks as needed.

Here is a sample from Salem Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin . . .

*Martha Deibert and Jenny Raasch work with our Toddler class, serving children 18 months to three years of age. Martha, who also serves as Salem's kindergarten teacher, graduated from Martin Luther College in 1995, and taught at St. John's, Newark, Delaware, before accepting the call to teach at Salem. The wife of Dave and the mother of Amy, Martha's favorite aspect of teaching is sharing Bible stories with God's little lambs.*

*Jenny, wife of Joel and stay-home mom of Joseph and Anna, is a former teacher who occasionally subs at Salem or other area WELS elementary schools. During her free time Jenny enjoys baking, reading, and spending time with her family.*

*"The Hidden Curriculum" . . . continued from page 1.*

- What's your initial reaction as to the realism of this conversation?
- Could this conversation apply in WELS circles?
- What might this conversation say about a "hidden curriculum"?
- What might you predict about this child's future in the Christian church?

### The Realism of the Conversation

Did you feel that this conversation represents a pretty real situation? If you did, you'd be like hundreds of other WELS Sunday school teachers to whom I have presented it. What is shown in this interview is, sad to say, very real. It happens all the time.

### Application in WELS Circles

Here again, hundreds of other WELS Sunday school teachers have expressed that this conversation could have been recorded in a WELS setting. Too often, our Sunday school classes look just like another day of school. Too frequently, our lessons are presented in less than engaging (spelled b-o-r-i-n-g) ways. And when it comes to Bible memory work, children focus on repeating the words without understanding their real meaning.

### The Hidden Curriculum

The curriculum is the well-thought out, organized, systematic course of study being presented to the students—what will be taught and what students are to get out of it. For example, in many WELS Sunday schools, *Christ-Light®* is the curriculum used. Sometimes, however, students "take away" something quite different than what the curriculum and its teachers intend. They learn something far removed from what is really desired. This is called the "hidden curriculum." In too many cases, what children "learn" in Sunday school is that studying God's Word is purely an academic exercise, that knowing the facts about Jesus trumps the relationship we have with him, that Bible study is no fun, that Sunday school is not an accepting, loving, restful, peaceful, healing oasis in the week.

### The Child's Future in the Church

Pondering this question is the saddest of all because the answer could very well be that this child will not have a future in the church. As soon as he is given the opportunity to decide on his own what he will do, or after he has worn his parents down enough, he will stop coming and may never return.

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How would the student/researcher interview go at your Sunday school? As the 2007-08 Sunday school year winds its way to a close, and you begin thinking about next year, it might be a very good discussion question for your staff to consider. Identifying strengths and weaknesses in your Sunday school ministry now can set the stage for wonderful improvement for the year ahead. Nothing is perfect, and your Sunday school ministry never will be either. But it can always improve. Pray about it, talk about it, and work at it. Then interview a student and hear, "My Sunday school and my Jesus are awesome!"



# My Sunday School Collection

by Kimberly Hierlmeier – Trinity Lutheran Church, Waukesha, WI

While preparing for our new Sunday school year, I came across an item on the Internet that reminded me of Disney World. If you've ever been to Disney World, or know someone who has, you know about the pins to collect. It's an opportunity for you to go see all the theme parks and collect a special pin at a particular stop during your visit. It's really quite a gimmick and once you start with one pin, you want to collect them all.

I found twelve pins through Concordia Publishing House ([www.cph.org](http://www.cph.org)) that just seemed to scream "Collect me!" It seemed like a great idea, but how could we apply it to our Sunday school?

Certainly, starting a pin collection series for our Sunday school might increase attendance. After all, the idea seems to work for Disney. However, the whole thing really needed to be meaningful and in focus with our mission. Clearly, it was something to brainstorm with our Sunday school staff.

Fortunately, we were meeting soon to gear up for Fall. I had picked up a "Colors of Faith" lanyard – a nametag holder of sorts the width of a shoelace, done in a striping of various colors each representing something special ([www.oriental-trading.com](http://www.oriental-trading.com)) - along with clear plastic name badges and name tags. I attached each of the pins from Concordia onto the lanyard as an example for our staff. I said, "Check this out! This is so neat and there must be a way we can use it in Sunday school! What do you think?"

Our staff agreed. The potential was phenomenal for this simple lanyard of pins. Our challenge was figuring out the best way to use it. After all, Sunday school wasn't just about showing up to get pins. With the Lord's guidance, we put together a great program for our students: it is simple, lasts the entire year, and gets the kids introduced and involved in our church outside of the Sunday school hour. We designed the program for our students to meet leaders in our church, learn more about our congregation and hear about opportunities to serve God at our church. Here's how we mapped out the twelve pin collection:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Baptism Pin</b>     | September – Pastor Oelhafen                                       |
| <b>Luther Rose Pin</b> | October – Music Coordinator                                       |
| <b>Trinity Pin</b>     | November – Pastor Schaumberg                                      |
| <b>Christmas Pin</b>   | December – Participate in the Christmas Program and/or Family Day |
| <b>Service Pin</b>     | January – Head Elder  |

## **Prayer Pin**

February – Our Elementary School Principal

## **Cross Pin**

March – Attend any mid-week Lent service (we sing on March 5th)

## **Lord's Supper Pin Evangelism Pin**

April – Pastor Gates  
Bring an un-churched or non-member friend to Sunday school

## **Law & Gospel Pin**

Say all 10 Commandments to your teacher

## **Bible Pin**

From your teacher (teacher discretion)

## **Attendance Pin**

For faithful attendance

When these church leaders learned the details of the pin program, they eagerly agreed to be a part of it. They each agreed on a visit date, to lead our devotion, to share their job in the congregation, to tie the specific pin assigned to them into their devotion or duties and to provide a question/answer combination for our students to collect the pins from them.

At least one day after our leaders visit Sunday school, our students can seek them out to collect the pin. Our students are easily recognizable because they wear their lanyards. The only catch to collecting the pin is answering the question. Once the question is answered, the pin is collected from that church leader. The question/answer combination is introduced during the devotion when our guests visit, it is reviewed on future Sundays and it is posted on our Sunday school bulletin board. The question/answer combinations are fairly simple. For example, for the Baptism pin, our students see Pastor Oelhafen and he asks "What does Baptism do for you?" The answer is "Washes away my sin and gives me saving faith." Our student then collects the pin from Pastor Oelhafen and adds it to their lanyard.

This simple activity of collecting pins encourages attendance at our church beyond the Sunday school classroom. It has given our students an opportunity to see, learn and participate in our congregation. In fact, it's been fun to see entire families involved in meeting these leaders and participating in the question/answer combinations to collect the pins. Next time, I'll let you know how we have been involving families throughout the entire Sunday school year. God's blessings to you as you carry out his special work in your Sunday school!





# “Partners” Going Electronic

by Jeremy Bakken, Administrative Assistant – WELS Youth Discipleship

At its October 2007 meeting, the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship voted to discontinue print production and surface mailing of *Partners*. The increasing costs of conducting all CYD ministry and the reality of decreasing Synod budgetary dollars for CYD required some cutting back. As a result, CYD will no longer mail printed copies of *Partners* to its subscribers. This change will take effect after the Summer 2008 print edition of the newsletter is mailed out.

Production and mailing of CYD’s three newsletters (*Sowers & Seeds*, *Partners*, and *REACH!*) to over 50,000 subscribers annually, costs CYD over \$32,000. Because no subscription fees are charged, the money was taken directly from CYD’s yearly operating budget. As CYD’s allocation from the synod budget has decreased over the years while costs continue to rise, adjustments to CYD ministry must be made. One such adjustment is taking the newsletters online.

The Commission felt better stewardship would be practiced if all CYD newsletters were delivered solely online via a Youth Discipleship Web site archive or via e-mail. This would make the production and distribution dollars currently used for the newsletters available for other CYD ministry. The change would also keep pace with how peo-

ple today are getting more and more of their information on demand via the World Wide Web.

**From now on, you can get *Partners* in one of two ways:**

- 1) On the CYD Web site. Go to [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship) and click on “Newsletter Archive” on the right-hand side. Browse through the appropriate folders to see the most recent issue. Read it online or print it out for yourself and others.
- 2) Go to [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship) and click on “Newsletter E-mail Service” on the right-hand side. Follow the instructions for subscribing to receive e-mail notification each time a new issue is released.

New issues will be available online according to the following schedule:

- Fall – late August
- Winter – late November
- Spring – late February
- Summer – late May

We thank you for your understanding as we make the switch to solely online distribution. We hope you continue to find *Partners* timely, relevant and helpful in your Sunday school ministry. Questions and comments can be directed to [cyd@sab.wels.net](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net).

## Only At Sunday School!



A little boy had just gotten home from Sunday School and mom was cooking lunch. “Mommy, is it true that before you’re born you’re just dust and after you die you go back to being dust?”

“That’s right son, why?”

“Well that’s just what they said at church today,” the boy replied.

“Run up stairs and wash your hands son; lunch will be ready in a few minutes.”

About 10 minutes went by and the mom called out for her son to come down. “I’ll be there in a minute,” the boy replied.

As they were about to sit down at the table, the little boy asked again about being dust before being born and after you die. Once again mother said “Yes, son.” With obvious alarm on his face, the little boy looked at his mother and said, “Then you better get up to my room because under my bed someone’s either coming or going!”

***Kids Comment on the Beginning...***

- In the beginning, God split the Adam and made Eve.
- Adam and Eve were naked, but they weren’t embarrassed because mirrors hadn’t been invented yet.
- Adam and Eve had a son Cain who hated his brother as long as he was Abel.

# You Have Our Permission!

Yes, you have our permission to make the Sunday school lessons you teach more diverse and engaging with some clearance priced products from WELS Youth Discipleship and Northwestern Publishing House (NPH)! Here's a sample:

## • CALLED TO SHARE

(38-3018: Now just \$0.10)

Appropriate for grades 4-8, this pamphlet provides true-to-life friendship evangelism examples for your students to see and practice in their daily interactions. Give one each to 100 students for only \$10.00!

## • "YOU'VE GOT THE FACE" DOOR HANGER

(38-3100: 100 for just \$5)

Advertise your Sunday school (or VBS) with these easy-to-personalize door hangers. At a cost of just pennies a piece, let your entire neighborhood know about your Bible-based youth ministries. Or, get your students involved in your church's outreach ministry by sending a few home with each child and encouraging them to share the information with their neighbors!



## • BELIEVER BEAVER PUPPET SERIES 1 & 2

(38-4008, 38-3012: Puppet curriculum under \$4 each)

Introduce a new twist on the traditional Sunday school lesson by teaching Bible truths through puppet shows. Each kit includes a Sunday school friendly curriculum, instructions/patterns to make the necessary props and puppets, scripts and more. A great way to visually engage your Sunday school children. Also a great way to get your congregation's teens involved in teaching Sunday school lessons to others!

## • BIBLE STORIES IN PICTURES

(now just \$0.35 each)



These have been very popular products, but the inventory needs to be reduced! Consider using these as a take home to reinforce your Sunday morning lesson throughout the week. Assign readings to be discussed the following Sunday. Use them to deepen/broaden your students' knowledge on a Bible topic. Give to parents as a way to encourage spiritual interaction with their children at

home. Books available include: *The Beginning to Abraham* (38-7284), *Moses* (38-7285), *In the Promised Land* (38-7286), *Jesus Is Born* (38-7287), *Jesus Is the Son of God* (38-7288), *Jesus Dies & Lives* (38-7289), and *The Early Church* (38-7290).

Other products have also been reduced, so checkout [www.nph.net/welsproducts](http://www.nph.net/welsproducts) to see the great deals. The sky's the limit...but your budget doesn't have to go that high!

## Set Aside Time for True Rest

It's so hard to slow down and pause for spiritual rest and refreshment in today's fast-paced, gotta-have-it-now world, but it's absolutely imperative, especially for the teacher of God's Word. It will require special effort to do—and more so during times of the year when we are so busy. Jesus is our model in this regard. Consider what he did...

- "After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone..." (Matt. 14:23)
- "After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land" (Mark 6:46-47).
- Jesus withdrew again to a mountain by himself... (John 6:15).

If Jesus' example isn't enough, consider these:

- God called Jacob to become Israel when he left everyone in his camp for some time alone (Gen. 32).
- Moses encountered God when he was alone, in the burning bush (Ex. 3) and on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19).
- God called to Samuel only when he left Eli and was alone (1 Sam. 3).
- Elijah couldn't hear God's soft whisper until he was separated from other turmoil (1 Kings 19).
- John received his great Revelation when he was alone on Patmos. (Rev. 1)

Is it time for you to set aside a period of solitude and spiritual rest so you can better hear God's voice?

# Partners

## Another User Weighs In on WNU Training

Brian wrote...

*Thank you for the Sunday School Mini-Courses. We intend to have our Sunday School teachers begin taking these courses this Winter.*

*As someone who is not a teacher, I found the course "Teaching the Way Children Actually Learn" most helpful. I'm sure the material in this course is old hat for professional teachers, but most church members who volunteer to teach Sunday School are not trained educators. The concepts in this course were eye-opening for me. I especially liked the section on the unintended curriculum. The course got me to see the value of Sunday School in a child's spiritual growth.*

*I enjoyed the course. I think it would be valuable for those of us who are not already teachers to have some good examples of how we can make the jump from understanding the concepts of how children actually learn and apply them to the classroom. You could create a follow-up course or add to the existing one, but I think more examples would help. Thanks again . . .*

**You can find all the FREE Sunday school staff training courses at [www.wels.net/jump/wnusstraining](http://www.wels.net/jump/wnusstraining).  
Log in and start to grow!**

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