

SUPPORT NETWORK FOR ADVENTIST PARENTS

"Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

Issue 19 – April 2010

Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to Issue 19 of SNAP newsletter. This one is a big one, thanks to a number of good contributions.

We hope you benefit from this issue. Please contribute your responses & be encouraged.

Blessings

Mike & Vicky

Topic For Discussion

THIS ISSUE – TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION

In this issue the question for discussion is:

What are you and your church doing to involve the children in the life of the church both internally and in outreach? In this way we can give each other ideas of what might benefit both our children and our churches.

Debbie Mason (Bournemouth)

At our church in Bournemouth we have about 24 children ranging from 0-14 years. In the past we have run an outreach club called Messy Church which was very popular with the children in and outside the church. The reason why we had to stop it was that it became too much for the few people who ran it each month and we had no one else who would commit the time and energy it required. We began with table games and colouring etc and general chat as the children arrived and then quickly went on to an activity time to do with our Bible theme for the month. These activities could have been crafts or games or quizzes etc. As Messy Church was open to all ages, we had to have a variety (usually 6) of activities to do. After about 45 min we then went into the church for a hands on dramatisation of the Bible story/theme. Finally we all had a hot evening meal together at the end. The whole thing was free, but we did have a donation pot for the food.

For several Christmases we have done a nativity play in local nursing homes and at other times the children have joined the youth and performed some songs.

During church services children often perform songs/poems or short sketches. The children are sometimes involved in announcing hymns, taking up the offering and saying prayers. Once a year, usually at Easter, the children also have their own 'last supper' communion service complete with foot washing!

Gemma Proctor (Leamington Spa)

At Leamington we run Messy Church on a Sabbath afternoon as frequently as we can manage (we are trying to get you a monthly schedule organised).

I wrote a letter to the church board recently asking that children be considered more during the service as we have an awful lot of pre-school and primary school aged children. As a result of this, most weeks the children now assist the Deacons with the collection bowl during the offering. Also during our prayer time a microphone is handed around to anyone who would like to offer a prayer, usually the person passing the microphone around is now a child - if they are quite young the Deacons keep an eye on them as they go around. It's a start!

Recently the Kindergarten and Primary classes ran a 13th Sabbath programme to show what they had been learning in the first quarter, this went down really well.

Lastly, the Family Ministries team decided to focus on doing something special for both Mother's and Father's day this year. So far we have only done Mother's day, but we got the children to hand things out and read out some things as part of this celebration.

Sandra Nel (Dundee)

To share with you how we as a church, in Dundee, are involving the children in the church: Firstly is having the children take part in the adult Sabbath school through reading the mission story, praying and saying their memory verses. We also get them to collect the offering during the main service. We are encouraging them as outreach to bring their friends to church and we take them for ingathering for ADRA. When there are outreach programmes in the church we get them to help the youth distribute leaflets around the neighbourhood. The youth are starting an outreach of distributing Ellen White books.

We are looking for more new ideas, so please share as children do get bored in doing the same things all the time.

Thanks and God bless all of us to help with the children to outreach to those around us.

Winnie Nsimbi (Edmonton)

Briefly, we have provided children's activity packs for Divine Service. The children loved them. However, a few of the parents wanted them to be related to the sermon, in order to encourage the kids to follow it.

Now we will liaise with the Church Secretary in order to tailor the packs to the sermon. Alternatively, we aim to provide generic questions when we are not aware what the sermon topic will be.

The plan is to have a reward system for kids who demonstrate that they followed the sermon. Also, when we know what the sermon covers, I would personally like to see that we give kids a 'head-start' by summarising its relevance and essence, so that they understand the importance of the message to their lives.

Besides that, Edmonton Church tries to give the kids more choice as far as activities or events are concerned, to ensure the kids know we value their opinions & happiness.

Also, the AY Dept got the kids to help out in surveying community members, regarding their needs. Children also gave out flowers to community members on Mothers' day. During AY the kids hold the song service; they seem to love being on stage. The Church bulletin has a kids' corner.

We held a presentation on the importance of engaging the children more in Church activities following the JSS (Junior Sabbath School) Training, and it appears that it was thought-provoking to the kids' benefit. (That is not to say that the Church was not involving the kids previous to that; there is always room for improvement, however.)

Mike & Vicky (Cheltenham)

The children at Cheltenham range from babyhood to 13 yrs old. For a long time they have enjoyed taking up the offering during the main worship service.

We have started to encourage them to read the bible passages for this service as well.

We try to give the children a sermon related activity most weeks to encourage listening, but this is not always easy to do – some preachers don't decide on a sermon topic until the last minute!

Once a quarter we have a family service where there is participation from all ages including the children (an idea we gleaned from the Kettering church).

Last year we started a monthly music club for the children, where we encourage any children who play an instrument (mainly guitars and a couple of recorders) to bring it along and others to come and sing and use percussion instruments if they want to. This has resulted in one family of several children taking up new instruments including guitar, and ukulele for the smaller ones. One 10 yr old guitarist swiftly became proficient enough to join the main weekly worship group along with an 11 yr old already playing regularly. Beginner guitarists are able to concentrate on one chord per song and can play with the more accomplished guitarists in this way. We have encouraged the children's music group to play at family services which they have much enjoyed, and hope to be able to take them to old peoples' homes and perhaps carol singing in town later in the year.

Another event some of the children enjoyed was our Seniors Appreciation Day. In preparation, the children made presents (lavender bags) and invitations for Sabbath lunch at church for the seniors. On the day, 5 of our most senior members gave a short testimony about how they became Adventists, were presented with a gift and a card with a message from the children thanking them for specific things they do for our church, and were then waited upon at lunch time by the children, who also washed up afterwards. The children said afterwards how they didn't know it would be so much fun. I think the seniors enjoyed it too.

We also have church picnics, barbecues and even skittles to get everyone together as it is important for the children to feel part of one big church family.

Submitted by EP in Southern England

Passover Party! - Easter with not an egg or chocolate in sight!

I'd always wanted to use the major events in our calendar as opportunities for evangelism, especially for my children, for them to learn and to witness to their non-Christian friends. It was purely the Holy Spirit working to bring many things together for us to have a 'Passover/Easter Party' in our garden last Friday. 20 parents and children had fun with crafts, songs, acting and stories. These were all based on making the amazing links between the old and new testament which pointed towards Jesus' birth, death, resurrection and giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. What fun to have a Swiss Christian family, Israeli Jewish family, 2 secular English families, an English Baptist family interested in Messianic Judaism and our own family being the only Adventist one there!

The children painted stones and then played a 'stone hunt'! We also made greetings cards with felt hearts, a little wooden cross and glue and glitter spelling 'God loves you'. One mum actually asked the best question you could ever hope for - 'What's love got to do with Easter?' to which I said, 'all will be revealed...'

We started off with everyone getting nice and active with the 'Father Abraham has many sons' song. Then, on blankets and cushions placed on the grass, we 'experienced' the Passover/Easter story. With 8 pictures drawn on lining paper, held like a scroll by two of the older children, I told the stories of Moses in the bull-rushes with the caption, 'Moses leads Hebrews'. This linked to 'Jesus leads all' with a picture of the stable and star. To liven the story-telling, some of the children jumped into a big wash-basket to act like Moses sleeping soundly, while everyone else rustled a parachute to illustrate the water underneath; then slept like Jesus in the manger while we held the parachute above us, as if it made the stable walls and roof. You can imagine how much the kids loved being inside the parachute! Next, we had a picture entitled, 'The Passover', which linked to 'The Crucifixion'. Here the kids acted as if they were painting the blood on their doorposts, then we broke unleavened bread made by one of the mums and acted as if we were drinking and relaxing on the cushions, just like the real Last Supper of Jesus (not the stilted pictures we get from classical paintings, with Jesus and the disciples sitting at a table). Here, I ask for everyone's prayers that Jesus being the lamb of Passover, loving us enough to die to save us from our slavery to sin, will be understood more and more by those who were there. Next, the children enjoyed acting out the story of Jonah being in the fish's belly for 3 days (with wash-basket and parachute again, but with the special effects of rain and lightning courtesy of the kids' voices). This pointed to the resurrection, and the penny dropped as to why we'd been painting stones, as they linked them to the stone being rolled away from Jesus tomb after 3 days! The 7th idea was the Festival of Weeks/1st Fruits which Jews celebrate exactly 7 weeks after the Passover. It is exactly 49 days (7 weeks) after the Crucifixion that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and so I was impressed to draw a picture of people holding hands in a circle with flames above their heads, rather than a dove or other usual symbols we associate with the Holy Spirit. And we finished off the proceedings, before having a picnic in the sun with 'If you're happy and you know it'. My prayer is that as time goes by, each of the families will more understand the tremendous link between Easter and Love; to come to know that God actually IS love and the personification of that is in Jesus and what he did.

Any other family with children could enact the same scenario, with a children's Sabbath school, vacation Bible School, or just with friends in our community as we did. I'd be happy to speak with anybody who would like to use any of the above ideas. God bless and thank you for your prayers.

COMMENT – It's great to see what is happening in some of our churches. If any others have ideas or feel inspired to take up one of the ideas mentioned above do let us know how it all goes.

*For discussion in the next issue of the SNAP newsletter:
We thought you might like to choose the next discussion topic. Please send us ideas based on your passions as parents or questions you may have to do with parenting. To give everyone a chance to contribute, please can we have your suggestions by 31st May. If there are several, we can use some of them for future newsletters.*

SNAP Prayer Network

Let us pray that our churches will encourage the children and youth to become more involved in the life of the Church.

In addition we have also received the following specific prayer request from one of our members in southern England:

"After attending a Church-planting study weekend about setting up a 'Simple Church', which is like a house church, very relaxed and for un-churched people, I've had the message loud and clear from God to go down this route and start up an Adventist Homeschooling group (within the ARC network which is being endorsed by the BUC) in my area. The amazing thing is that God used a Muslim friend to give me the impetus to start, through a phone call on the Sunday morning, as I'm about to walk into the room for the morning's first seminar. All I said was that I was at a conference, then after a while she asked, if I was researching how to start up a homeschooling group, and that she'd definitely come, even if it's Christian; she continued saying that she'd been to an Anglican school as a child and they'd spoken a lot about Jesus and God and that she hadn't disagreed with anything! Praise God for direction and guidance and please pray for more of the same as we set this much needed group up in our area, plus pray for other Adventists to catch the vision and become co-leaders with me."

We would also like to hear about any other of your specific requests.

[Useful Links for Parents](#)

Cornerstone Counselling Service (South England Conference)

Phone or email to speak with a counsellor about issues that trouble you, or to make an appointment:

Telephone 0207 723 8050 or 0845 741 3602

ccs@secadventist.org.uk

Rainbow Counselling Service (North England Conference)

Telephone 0161 740 3602

PLEASE NOTE THE ABOVE TELEPHONE LINES ARE OPEN PART-TIME ONLY.

SEC Family Ministries link for Resources and Information

www.secadventist.com/dept/familyMinistries.php

Reference can also be made to the BUC website for resources and information.

[Your Contact Details](#)

Please be sure to let us know if your contact details or family circumstances change so that we may update our records.

[Our Contact Details](#)

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Please ensure all contributions reach us for the next issue by 30th June 2010. We are aiming to get the next issue produced shortly after. Thank you.