

PART FOUR

Tell a Child, Tell the World



THE 21ST CENTURY CHILD

In the parable of the Good Shepherd only one sheep gets lost, Luke 15:3-7. Today's statistics show that 97 out of the 100 sheep of our generation, are far away from the fold of the church.

Where are the lost? What are families like? What is their lifestyle? How can we understand the unchurched child's world? What can we offer them? Is Jesus relevant to their needs?

Family life

Today the word 'family' is becoming politically incorrect, with a move towards using the word 'household'. If you ask five different people what a family is today you will probably get five different answers. This vagueness about what your family is, and who is committed to whom, creates anxiety, insecurity and worry for children.

Here are 9 facts relating to family in the UK:

- There are more than one and a half million single-parent families.
- More than a third of all marriages end in divorce.
- The average duration for a marriage is ten years.
- Nearly 10 per cent of married couples file for divorce within twelve months of getting married.
- England and Wales have a higher divorce rate than any other country in Europe.
- One in five children can expect their parents to divorce by the time they are sixteen.
- More than half of all divorces involve children under sixteen.
- Most children of divorced parents lose touch with their fathers within two years.
- One in twelve children live with one parent. The great majority with their mother.

Sex life

- The average age for loss of virginity in the UK is fifteen years and seven months, the lowest in Europe.
- More than a third of all births take place outside of marriage.
- Between 35 per cent and 40 per cent of all conceptions are aborted.
- Over five million abortions have been performed since the 1967 Abortion Act was passed.
- Half of all teenage conceptions are aborted.

In a recent survey by Bristol University, one in six girls were found to be beginning puberty at the age of eight. The same study of 14,000 children found that one in fourteen boys were entering puberty at the age of eight. This is one of the reasons why children begin to explore sexual relationships earlier. Their bodies if not their emotions are ready younger.

Drugs and alcohol

- 60 per cent of children are offered recreational drugs by the time they are sixteen years old.
- 60 per cent of children drink alcohol illegally by the time they are sixteen years old.

The availability of drugs to children has grown alarmingly over the last few years, with primary schools finding that children are getting involved younger than ever before.

Television and the Internet

- The average child watches four and a half hours of television every day. The same child spends less than five minutes in direct communication with their father each day.
- More than 50 per cent of children under twelve years old claim to regularly watch videos with a 12 rating or higher.
- More than 50 per cent of children have access to the Internet at home.

Abuse

- 10 per cent of all children experience physical or sexual abuse by the time they are sixteen.
- More than 90 per cent of all abuse takes place in the home.
- Most abusers are friends or family to the children they abuse.

Employment and lifestyle

- Only 16 per cent of children live in a family where the father works and the mother is at home.
- Children in the UK start school younger, and have longer terms, than almost every other country in the world.¹

How to make friends with the 21st century unchurched children

Children need the love and security of knowing Jesus loves them and will never desert them. Church outreach activities are the places children should find community. They need to experience love and acceptance. Make opportunities to get to know them as they learn about God's love from you.

- **Know** the children's names.
- **Give** the child your attention. Find an opportunity to talk informally before and after outreach events, Sabbath School and church.
- **Use** conversation openers such as asking about school, family or favourite sports. Words of approval such as admiring their clothes or something they have done, always works well.
- **Find** common ground. As you talk find some interest or experience that you have in common. If we are really interested in building a friendship we will study and become interested in something the child is interested in so that we have common ground to talk about.
- **Share** life stories. Children will enjoy hearing your life story. They love to hear about your childhood, your school, your job, how you met your wife or husband and how God has led you. Be open and willing to share.
- **Share** your hopes and dreams. Children will get excited for you and even pray for you. If you are very privileged they may tell you some of their secret hopes and dreams. Treat them with great tenderness.
- **Keep** in touch and make an investment in the child. A childhood friendship can last a lifetime.
- **Use** your eyes to show the child that you approve of them.

- **Drop** to the child's height so that you can speak face to face. It makes conversation so much easier and it shows respect to them.
- **Praise** the child when they are doing something good. Create situations where a child can be commended. Encourage children to affirm each other.
- **Listen** more than you talk. Sometimes a child may need to trust you to keep a confidence. If they are finding it hard to find the words to express themselves help them to express themselves through a picture.²

TIME TO REFLECT

1. In what ways does the church limit the unchurched access to the gospel?
2. Are there ways your church can become more accepting of the behaviour of the unchurched children?
3. If you have to use nonchurch facilities for child outreach what health and safety issues need addressing? What are the steps to getting the team CRB checked and Ofsted approval?
4. Think of ways an outreach ministry can positively impact your church.
5. Take time to understand the child culture of today. Pray for the gift of love and wisdom as you interact with the children of this generation.

LEARN MORE

- *We Lose 1000 Children Every Week*, by G Reed. Publisher, Kevin Mayhew.
- *Desire of Ages*, by E G White. Publisher, Pacific Press Publishing Association.
- *Bringing Children to Faith*, by P Fank. Publisher, CPAS & Scripture Union.
- *Children Finding Faith*, by F Bridger. Publisher, CPAS.
- *Families Finding Faith*, by J Hattam. Publisher, CPAS, Scripture Union.
- *Family Friendly Church*. North American Division – Advent Source.
- *Launching a Missionary Congregation*, by R Warren. Publisher, CPAS.
- *Mission Possible*, by D Bell & R Heathfield. Publisher, CPAS & Scripture Union.
- *The 5 Love Languages of Children (& Teens)*, by G Chapman & R Campbell. Publisher, Northfield Publishing. www.fivelovelanguages.com.
- *Touching the Future*, by G Dallow. Publisher, Barnabas.
- BUC Core Skills Training Course.
- BUC DVD of the SEC "Winning Children" Conference.
- *Messy Church Book 1, Book 2*, by L Moore. Publisher, BRF.
- *The Story Lives On*. Handbook available from www.storykeepers.com
- *Pretty Much Everything You Need to Know about Working with Under Fives*, by J Wigley. Publisher, Scripture Union 2005.
- family/worship/resources:
 - www.cvmen.org.uk
 - www.familyfriendlychurches.org.uk
 - www.churchesandfamilies.org
 - www.familyworship.org.uk
 - www.engagetoday.org.uk/conference
- children's resources/worship ideas:
 - www.ss-services.co.uk
 - www.yellowmoonuk.org
 - www.orientaltrading.com
 - www.childrensministry.co.uk

www.ci2eyes.co.uk
www.lionhudson.com
www.nestentertainment.com
www.ptgroupstogether.org.uk
www.curbsproject.org.uk
www.rainbowministries.co.uk
www.myplacewithJesus.com
www.methodistchildren.org.uk
www.cgmcontheweb.com

¹*We Lose 1000 Children Every Week*, by G Reed. Publisher, Kevin Mayhew.

²*Shouting in the Temple*, by L Jenkin. Publisher, Touch Ministries International Ltd

PLANNING TO SHARE THE GOSPEL CRUMBS

Crumbs from church

The encounter with the Canaanite woman was a teaching situation that Jesus used to help his disciples understand the plight of those who did not worship in a church.

This pagan mother knew from the stories she had heard about Jesus that he had the power to release her child from the clutches of Satan. Jesus first acted in a similar way his disciples would have treated this pagan. The mother's verbal response was "Even the dogs eat the crumbs from under the children's table."

The woman's desire to have the evil spirit cast out of her daughter was a reality by the time she returned home. Mark 7:24-30. Jesus' willingness to go outside the church circle to share the gospel with a mother and a daughter challenged the disciples attitude towards non church attenders. Even they deserved the gospel.¹

Adult disciples today are confronted by Jesus to share the "gospel crumbs" with the children who do not attend church. A variety of successful ways of sharing the gospel with children have been based on:

3 beliefs about unchurched children

- children in the community have needs that the church can supply
- spiritually lost children can find Jesus as their friend and saviour
- newly saved children can become disciple makers²

Holiday Bible Schools, Jesus & Me Clubs, Branch Sabbath Schools, Pathfinders and Church Plants do reach the unchurched communities. Due to the complexities of the life style of today's children, this outreach has to be a prayer-bathed intentionally-planned mission.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is a tool used to evaluate your situation and is used widely in the business world. It can be adapted easily to apply to our church situations. However, we must always remember that we work with and for a God that can exceed all our expectations and man-made goals.

SWOT stands for:

Strengths
Weaknesses
Opportunities
Threats

How to do your SWOT

Start off by looking at your internal situation. This focuses on things about you and your church. This is the area that you have most control over.

6 Strengths

- What resources does your church have?
- What gifts do the people have?
- What are your success stories?
- Where have you seen God working?
- What activities are people most energised by?
- What are the ministries that your church is well known for?
- What other strengths could you include?

5 Weaknesses

- How many children in your church have stopped attending regularly? Do you have any idea why?
- What resources are you lacking?
- What are the gaps in the gifts of people in your church? (If only we had someone who could...)
- What are the issues within your church that may be consuming a disproportionate amount of time / resources that could be allocated to children's work?
- Who are the people groups within your church that may need extra reassurance if children's work were to change?
- What other areas of weakness could you include?

Now look at the external factors in your situation: These are factors from the world outside your church. These areas are not necessarily things you can control. (Although we can pray for change.) To find out where there is a community with children, use the internet and go to www.statistics.gov.uk, click on Neighbourhood Statistics, click 'more' – age band male/female.

5 Opportunities

- Where are the children in your community?
- What provision is there for children who are not yet in church (both in your church and outside)?
- What are the events / schools / clubs that your church is or could be involved in?
- Who in your congregation could provide links into community for children, or bring their gifts into children's ministry?
- What opportunities might there be for your church to diversify and provide something other than Sabbath School (midweek clubs / holiday clubs / homework clubs, etc)?

What other opportunities does your church have?

4 Threats:

- Are you seeing the national patterns of decline in children attending in your church situation?
- What non-church alternatives are provided for children in your area?
- What other social changes might affect the attitude and availability of children to attend church?
- Are there changes in child protection law that you need to address - who is responsible for this?

What other threats could you include?

Once you have done this - prioritise each list and draw up a top 3 from each category to focus on.

Think how you could begin to focus on these and then you are ready to set specific goals and timelines.

A good guideline for forming goals is making sure they are SMART:

Specific
Measured
Achievable (Affordable)
Realistic
Timed

4 Prayer Ideas

As you do the SWOT take time to pray for the following:

- Remember to thank God for the things he has blessed you with.
- Pray for aspects of your church or community that have caused concern.
- Ask God for wisdom as you form and implement you goals and ideas.
- In all areas try to be as in-depth and clear.

If at any stage of the SWOT there is disagreement or excessive negativity- a pause for prayer can work wonders!³

A banquet for all

The good news for the "churched and unchurched" is that there is going to be a day when those from the north, south, east and west will sit down at the heavenly banqueting table. Revelation 19:7. No one will be eating crumbs.

TIME TO REFLECT

1. In what ways does the church limit the unchurched access to the gospel?
2. Think of what you will enjoy most when at the Lamb's banquet table. Share with God the name of one person that you want to invite to that feast who knows nothing much about the Christian faith.

LEARN MORE

- *We Lose 1000 Children Every Week*, by G Reed. Publisher, Kevin Mayhew.
- *Desire of Ages*, by E G White. Publisher, Pacific Press Publishing Association

¹*Desire of Ages*, by E G White.

²*We Lose 1000 Children Every Week*, by G Reed. Publisher, Kevin Mayhew.

³*Christian Life and Children*. Publisher LBC and CPAS and Crusaders.

LOOK AT WHAT A HOLIDAY BIBLE SCHOOL CAN BRING TO YOUR CHURCH

• INTRODUCTION

Children

The thing that makes Holiday Bible School so worthwhile is the crowd of children that it brings into the church on week days (or nights). Somehow it seems right that the house of God should be filled with His little friends. Their happy expectancy is one of the biggest rewards of HBS. Many small churches, practically bereft of children, come to life in a special way when the community children come in for HBS. And best of all, many come to stay. They may join Pathfinders or come back to Sabbath School, and provided they are loved, cared for, and affirmed they will keep coming back and bring their friends.

Energy

Let's be honest now, couldn't your church do with some extra energy? Children and teens are particularly attracted to energy. They describe their favourite contemporary music in terms of the energy it generates. A church full of energy is attractive, especially to those children who need adult attention and affirmation. A pastor can help generate that energy, so can leaders and teen helpers, and of course children themselves are a natural source of energy. So let's attract it and release it at HBS this year.

Community friends

Holiday Bible School can be a great church entry event for community friends. Some adults will want to come into the children's division to see what happens there. Make them feel welcome. Provide an opportunity for them to help you and let a friendship grow.

Adults

There is no reason why Holiday Bible School should attract only children. It is a great time also for adults. You might offer seminar opportunities simultaneously or schedule them for successive nights. Of special interest are:

- Bread making
- Craft projects
- Vegetarian cooking
- Parenting seminars – apply to your Family Ministries leader
- Stop smoking clinics
- Family finances – your treasurer, an accountant, or your conference stewardship director might be able to help you with material for this seminar.

Interest

Leaders from several Holiday Bible Schools wrote to us with stories of kids who enjoyed HBS so much that they brought their parents to cooking class. The parents enjoyed the experience so much that they keep coming and whole families were later baptised. HBS is a great time for developing serious interest in your church.

Talent

When a church enthusiastically rallies to the challenge of Holiday Bible School, many talented teens and young adults will be attracted to help. You could be surprised at the talents some of these young people will bring with them, talents that they did not suspect until HBS gave them a chance to try their wings.

New Volunteers

Many parents of the children who come to see what's going on in your division are great prospects for assisting with the crafts or the teaching. Many of these people will have the potential to develop into volunteers for other children's ministries programmes because they are affirmed and challenged at Holiday Bible School.

Make HBS a matter of earnest prayer in your congregation

With the blessing of the Holy Spirit you may be surprised at what else this programme can bring to enrich your church family.

Extract on HBS from B Kendel's TED Children's Ministries Training Manual

• **HOLIDAY BIBLE SCHOOL**

What is a Holiday Bible School?

It is a Bible school which is run during school holiday time for one or two weeks.

Why run a HBS?

There are six fundamental reasons to run a HBS:

1. *To present the gospel to children* in the local community.
2. *To meet a social need in the community* by caring for the children during the school holidays. In these days where both parents are often forced to work just to keep the family going, a major problem is often what to do with the children during the holidays.
3. *To provide an encouraging environment for church-going children* in which they make positive decisions for Christ.
4. *To revitalise the Children's Sabbath School.* This is particularly important in churches where there is a mainly adult membership.
5. *To provide training opportunities* for church members to learn to be effective leaders in child evangelism.

• **GOAL SETTING**

These fundamental reasons should help us to determine the focus for a particular HBS. It is very important to focus on what you want to achieve otherwise you will expend a lot of energy and achieve nothing. If you set two or three goals relevant to a local situation it will ensure success.

Goal setting is not easy, but he who aims at nothing usually hits it!

Examples of possible goals are:

- Present the gospel to non-church going children.
- Provide a catalyst for church-going children to make a positive decision for Christ.
- Introduce a Branch Sabbath School.

If these were your goals you might find at the end of the HBS your achievements also included:

- Lay people who were trained in child evangelism.
- Friends and contacts made in the community.
- Your action has met a real social need in the community.

When setting goals evaluate them by asking:

1. Are they realistic?
2. Are they achievable?

3. Are they concrete? Can they be measured?
4. Are they relevant?
5. Do they have set time-limits?

An example of a poorly defined goal is: *OUR HBS WILL REACH OUT TO THE CHILDREN IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.*

Is it realistic?

YES if the church is in a built-up neighbourhood, where there are lots of families with young children.

NO if your church is in the centre of town where there are a few houses and lots of shops. In this situation you might want to look at running a HBS in a hired hall in an appropriate area.

Is this achievable? YES.

Is this concrete? Can it be measured? NO.

Neighbourhood needs defining. Is it the street next to the church or a block of 10 streets or the whole town?

Children needs defining. Are you trying to reach all the children in the neighbourhood? NO, only those between 5-11. If children outside this age group come they will get bored, be disruptive and develop a negative concept of the church and God. How many children can you cater for? If you only have facilities for 25 it is no good attracting 50 children.

The goal could be restated as follows:

We want to run a HBS with the aim of reaching 15 children in the community, between the ages of 5-11 and who live in A, B and C streets.

Another goal could be:

Run a craft club for 20 weeks on a Monday night between 7-9 pm and have 20 children aged 7-11 attending.

• PEOPLE POWER

To run a successful HBS you need people, not just anyone, but the best that the church has to offer. The following is a list of the *major* jobs which need to be done.

Planning Committee

The planning committee is set up by the Sabbath School council and makes the initial plans and delegates responsibilities. It should include: the pastor, Sabbath School superintendent and HBS director; as well as pathfinder leader, youth leaders and personal ministries leader, where appropriate.

HBS Director

The HBS director should be chosen by the nominating committee. His/her function is:

1. Ensure there are regular staff meetings so that everyone who is involved understands what they should be doing. He/she should be a reference point for any of the other leaders who have a problem.
2. Help recruit and ensure training for other leaders.
3. Plan registration and record keeping.
4. Work out HBS timetables.
5. Help plan follow-up.

Secretary

The secretary keeps all the HBS records. It is vital that good records are kept otherwise it is impossible to have a meaningful and effective follow-up.

Supplies

This person co-ordinates the collection of boxes, cartons, wool and any other items which could be used, as well as ordering any necessary materials.

Publicity

This person has to "sell" the HBS to the church and work out the best publicity for the community.

Finance

This person will draft the budget, record registration fees, offerings, donations and pay the bills. They need to work closely with the local church treasurer.

Refreshments

This is an ideal job for an older person, who would like to be involved, but does not feel able to cope with the hustle and bustle of the activities. This person will organise the purchase of drinks and biscuits as well as supervising their distribution.

Division superintendent

For each age group you will need one person to co-ordinate the daily activities. An important part of this job is to encourage teachers in planning their work.

Teachers

These are the people who will lead the activities with the children. They must be people who will become the children's friend, pray for them and with them, visit the parents and develop these contacts.

Craft leader

He/she will plan out the crafts for the HBS to fit in with the daily theme and co-ordinate with the supplies person in the collection of necessary materials.

It may prove difficult to find helpers and you may not be aware of people's talents. At the end of this section there is a questionnaire, which is designed to help you solve this problem. An ideal time to *complete and return it* is **between** Sabbath School and church. However, do remember first to get the minister's co-operation and help. If people take it home many will forget to return it.

You are ready to get your team and begin planning. To help you summarise and ensure that you have all covered, there is a list of participants at the end of this section.

• TIMETABLES

It takes a minimum of six months to plan a really good HBS. Once you start running as soon as one finishes then you should start to plan the next! When the planning committee meets, its first job is to set up a timetable of events. A timetable helps you to know *what is happening, when it should happen and who the people are who are going to make it happen*.

Two timetables are useful. One which lists the jobs to be done before the HBS starts and the other which lists activities and people on a daily basis once the HBS has started.

Timetable of events

- A sample is found at the end of this section. Items in "before the HBS" should be completed at least one month before the HBS starts.
- "Last minute things to check" should be done the week before the HBS starts.
- "First day" should be done on the first day!
- "After HBS" should be completed within a week of the end of the HBS.

Timetable of events

This enables **everyone** to know what is happening, when it is happening and who is responsible. It may need some minor adjustments after the first day's activities. They may take more or less time than you anticipate!

• BUDGET

It is important to:

1. Have a budget to cover all expenses.
2. Have a treasurer who will liaise with the church treasurer.
3. Have receipts for all expenditure.

Potential income

Donations/pledges

- Members who are unable to physically participate in a HBS are often willing to provide financial support. It is not just enough to say we need money, you need to explain why you need money. It is often a good idea to say: 6 pairs of scissors cost X and we need 25 pairs of scissors; 6 pots of glue cost Y etc. This will often encourage people to give as they will then feel that they have contributed something tangible.

Fund-raising/sponsored events

- The Pathfinders or youth department may like to have a sponsored car wash or sponsored walk, while the older members of the church may be willing to run bake sales, craft sales or coffee mornings. Caution – don't depend on large sums of money from this source.

Registration fees

- People appreciate what they pay for. A nominal charge is expected and will help offset some of your expenses.

Expenses

Publicity

- Costs may be cut by making your own posters. In these days of photocopiers and computers even the most unartistic person can make a passable poster. Posters should go up on local schools, shops, libraries, doctors' surgeries and the like. Handbills may be photocopied on to coloured paper.

Teaching materials

- Do not take short cuts here. If you want your teachers to do a good job provide them with the best tools available. Most material can be reused on a three-year cycle. Make a survey of existing equipment and list out what you need. Some things like scissors are a big expenditure, but if you take care of them it is a one-off expense.

Your budget could look something like this:

INCOME

Donations/pledges
Allocations from church budget
Fund-raising/sponsored events
Registration fees

EXPENSES

<i>Publicity</i>	Advertising posters Handbills Newspaper
<i>Teaching materials</i>	Leader's book Teacher's books and/or master copies Paper for duplication of activity sheets Folders
<i>Craft materials</i>	Cardboard Paper Glue Paint Brushes Scissors Pencils Crayons Rubbers Sharpeners Sticky tape
<i>Prizes</i>	
<i>Refreshments</i>	Drinks Biscuits/fruit Paper cups Serviettes
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	Card for revision posters Card for quiz scoreboards

Total

• REGISTRATION

To a certain extent your HBS and follow-up will be as successful as your registration on the first day. It needs to be handled quickly and efficiently. Parents are impressed if their child is quickly incorporated into the programme. The child is happy if he does not have to stand in a queue for five or ten minutes. On completing registration give the child a badge or sticker. This will make him/her feel recognized and important. Also have a sticker on hand for the brother or sister who are too young to stay. This will encourage the other children to come as soon as they are old enough.

Draft in extra people for registration. While the opening activities are going on sort out the registration papers, make a register and divide the children into age groups. When the children separate for their activities note who is in which group and give the teacher the

appropriate registration papers. These should be returned at the end of the HBS with any relevant additional information, ie brothers/sisters, hobbies, home details.

• EVALUATION

If you start out with clearly defined goals it is necessary to evaluate your success. Evaluation can be painful, but it is a necessary learning process. Evaluation sheets can also provide very useful insights for the next year's HBS director.

Evaluation should take place on a daily basis and at the end of the HBS. For example, the relevant questions for the first day's evaluation would be:

Registration

1. Registration
 - were there enough people to help?
 - if not how many do you think we should have for next year?
 - were there any other problems, eg pens that did not work, nowhere to hang coats, etc
2. Did it start on time – if not, why not?
3. Did the programme run to time?
4. Do any of the activities need more time/less time?
5. Did the teachers have all the necessary materials?
6. What were the positive points?
7. What were the negative points?

The daily evaluation can be done by the group as a whole in a brainstorming session or by giving out a sheet with the relevant questions and asking everyone to fill them in.

The evaluation for the end of the HBS should be done thoughtfully and prayerfully. These are the questions you need to ask. You may think of others in the light of your own goals.

1. Did you have enough helpers? If not, do you have any ideas for encouraging more participation next year?
2. Were there enough supplies? If not, list those you were short of.
3. Did the teachers have enough time to prepare their materials?
4. Was the material suitable for the children you were trying to reach?
5. Was the teacher training adequate? Can you suggest any improvements for next year?
6. How effective was your publicity?
7. How effectively did you use your equipment? Is there something that you need for next year?
8. Are there additional jobs that you think should be added to next year's task list?
9. Were your goals achieved?
10. How effective were your records?
11. What was the most positive effect of the HBS?

• FOLLOW-UP

The follow-up begins as soon as you have finished the last stone and said the last prayer.

Immediate follow-up

Cleaning up

- There will be supplies left over. Make sure those that can be used next year are carefully stored away. If they will not keep, pass them on to another department which can use them. Make sure the rooms you used are clean, neat and tidy.

Records

- Complete all records and give them to the secretary.
- Give all the bills and receipts to the treasurer. Make sure any outstanding bills are paid.
- Write up a report for the local paper and church paper.
- Leaders write a thank you note to all those who helped. This takes time but appreciation shown is a capital investment for the future.

Visitation

- Visit those who did not attend the graduation service.
- Invite all the children to your follow-up programme
- Make friends of all the parents.

Long-term follow-up

This needs to be planned in advance with the pastor and other departments of the church. There is no point in having a HBS unless you are going to build on your success and contacts. You can involve the children in:

Branch Sabbath School

- ◆ This can be held at the church or the hall where you had your HBS.

Pathfinders

- ◆ For the more active child this is the ideal follow-up.

Bible Story Hour

- ◆ This can be held in the church or a home. It is possible to have more than one if they are held in different homes at different times.

Craft Club

- ◆ Children enjoy making things. Craft clubs have proved very successful. It can be run along the lines of a mini HBS: a story, song and craft-related to the story.

Parents

- ◆ Now is the time to invite the parents to church activity. It is advisable to start with a 'soft' option, eg cookery demonstrations, Breath Free seminars moving in to Stress seminars and Daniel and Revelation seminars. These programmes should be worked out together with the Pastor and Personal Ministries department in order to integrate in with the rest of the church's outreach programme.

● **PEOPLE POWER**

(A suggested questionnaire for use in church to ascertain people's talents and availability to help in HBS.)

Dear Church Member

Your Sabbath School committee and Church Board have agreed to run a Holiday Bible School. It will only work if we have sufficient help. Would you consider getting involved? Below is a questionnaire we would like you to complete. Please fill it out and hand it to the deacons at the end of the worship service. Thank you for your help. It is appreciated.

HBS Director

I would be willing to be involved in a HBS in the ways I have indicated below. Please place a tick indicating where you can help.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Come each morning for one week. (If you can only come for part of the week indicate which mornings _____)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teach a class
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organise refreshments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organise games
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tell a story
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make posters
<input type="checkbox"/>	Play the piano/guitar/other
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lead the singing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tidy up each day
<input type="checkbox"/>	Collect pictures/magazines/boxes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare craft materials
<input type="checkbox"/>	Join a prayer group
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give out handbills
<input type="checkbox"/>	Collect children and bring them to HBS
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take children home after HBS
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make a donation

Name _____

Date _____ Telephone No _____

• **PARTICIPANTS**

Planning Committee

Minister _____

Sabbath School Superintendent _____

HBS Director _____

Pathfinder Leader _____

Youth Leader _____

Personal Ministries Leader _____

Others _____

Secretary _____

Finance/Treasurer _____

Supplies _____

Craft leader _____

Division superintendent (5-7 year olds) _____

Teachers _____

Division superintendent (8-11 year olds) _____

Teachers _____

Refreshments _____

Music/Piano _____

• **DAILY TIMETABLE**

DAY	9.00	9.30	9.45	10.15	10.45	11.00	11.15	12.00
	9.30	9.45	10.15	10.45	11.00	11.15	12.00	12.15
	Pre- sess	Open	Story	Group work sheets	Games	Drinks	Craft`	Close

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

• TIMETABLE OF EVENTS

Before HBS

Completed by

- Define goals
- Recruit staff
- Plan training/choose material
- Publicity
- Order supplies
- Plan prayer support group
- Registration cards
- Plan graduation service
- Plan follow-up
- Plan evaluation
- *Pray for guidance*

Last minute things to check

- Check details, leaders, supplies, crafts, refreshments, transport
- Does each teacher have a daily schedule?
- Is the room(s) ready?
- Are the games organized?
- Are there any problems with the follow-up plans?
- *Pray for guidance*

First day

- Register children
- Check all leaders are present
- Have a "spare" person who can get extra supplies and fill in as needed
- Evaluate timetable – do you need to make alterations?
- *Thank God for his help*

After HBS

- Evaluate your programme
- Sort, clean and store materials for future use
- See all records are up-to-date
- Make sure all HBS workers are integrated into other church activities where they can further develop their skills
- Give names and addresses of children to Sabbath School leaders
- Give a copy to the pastor
- Select next year's director!
- *Thank God for your success and lessons learnt*

Prepared by Audrey Boyle Andersson

• THE CHILDREN ACT 1989

Sabbath Schools and Pathfinder Clubs, for example, are affected.

The Children Act 1989 became law on 14 October 1991. The Act requires that anyone who provides supervised play opportunities for children under 8 years, and which run for two hours or more **must be registered with Ofsted** – Telephone: 08456 404040 / 08456 404045 or email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

STAY LEGAL

EXTRACTS FROM HOLIDAY CLUB GUIDE
PUBLISHED BY THE BIBLE READING FELLOWSHIP

Although *The Children Act 1989* only legislates for under-eights, all work with children should be of the highest possible standard. This means paying careful attention to the following aspects of the work as you plan and making sure that all leaders are constantly aware of the standards required.

Desirable standards

- *Space.* You will need enough space for the number of children you have – approximately 2.3 square metres of unencumbered space for each child.
- *Toilets.* Ideally there will be one toilet and one hand basin for every ten children.
- *Play Area.* Outdoor play space is recommended when an activity runs for more than four hours.
- *Warmth and cleanliness.* Keep group areas warm, adequately lit and well ventilated. Maintain high standards of cleanliness.
- *Food preparation.* If you are preparing food on site, the Environmental Health Officer will have to check the area before you can be registered. If children bring sandwiches, ideally these should be refrigerated. Drinks must be available at all times.
- *Special needs.* Be willing and able to accommodate children with special needs. Check ease of access to your building and toilet facilities.

Health and Safety

- There must be access to a phone on the premises. This could be a mobile phone.
- Adults must be aware of safety and fire procedures. A fire drill should be carried out regularly. Fire extinguishers should be available and regularly checked.
- Children with infectious diseases must not attend.
- No smoking should be permitted near areas where children will be.
- Children should submit a health and parental consent form before an activity. Take health forms when going off site.
- Accidents should be recorded, with a note of any action taken. The leader involved should sign the entry. A first aid kit should always be available and its location known to leaders. No medication should be administered without written parental consent. One leader should, ideally, be a qualified first aider.

Insurance

All groups need liability insurance. Make sure your activity is adequately covered by your church's policy for both on- and off-site activities.

Recommended child:adult ratio:

For 0 to 2 years	-	1 leader to every 3 children (1:3)
For 2 to 3 years	-	1 leader to every 4 children (1:4)

- For 3 to 8 years - 1 leader to every 8 children (1:8)
- For over 8s - 1 leader for the first 8 children followed by 1:12
(ie 32 children would require 3 leaders)

There should always be more than one leader for any group and if possible have at least one male and one female leader if the group is mixed. Have some 'reserves' lined up in case a leader falls ill or is unavoidably prevented from taking part for some other reason. The adult must be over 18 years old. Helpers under this age cannot be included in the adult/child ratio. For more guidelines go to Part 5 "Resources – Information on keeping children and workers safe".

CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY CHURCH

For 200 years, many, if not most, children in Britain and Ireland received Christian teaching and nurture in Sunday school. A large majority of families in today's society have no contact with the church whatsoever.

The settings in which churches work with children are now more varied than ever. Rural, urban and suburban communities often have very different needs, and the multi-cultural and multi-faith facets of society bring rich possibilities. Yet there is an openness by today's parents to sending their children to a community project that is properly run with good child care facilities and CRB/Ofsted checked. Such a programme is run by the SdA Central Coast Community Kidz Church.

Kidz church

- **The aims are to be:**
 - Christ centred
 - kids targeted
 - relational
 - applicable
 - safe
 - fun

- **Kidz church programme includes:**
 - inspiring worship
 - gift oriented evangelism
 - discipleship
 - community

- **This is a church where adults are the support team,** as the church service is for children. This means it is:
 - especially designed for children's needs
 - helps children build up a relationship with Jesus
 - explains scripture in an easy to understand language
 - helps children understand the practicality of God's love in relationships with others
 - encourages, and makes possible, an outreach ministry to the children's friends and family
 - reaches children's hearts and prepares them to make a decision for Christ.

- **Weekly Sabbath morning service includes the use of:**

– the Bible	– object lesson
– children's story	– personal involvement
– congregational singing	– puppets
– drama	– responsive reading
– multi-media screen	– sermon
– special item song	– silent prayer
	– visual display

- **Discipleship.**

The church primarily is aimed at making disciples for Christ who are Christ-like. They want the children to:

KNOW

- ◆ they are valuable
- ◆ God has a plan for their lives
- ◆ God's word is relevant
- ◆ forgiveness – there is a way out

SEE

- ◆ we care for them
- ◆ God is real to you

FEEL

- ◆ hope
- ◆ acceptedness
- ◆ OK to fail
- ◆ safe and secure – not afraid of tough issues
- ◆ feel happy to bring their friends

- **Disciple making**

During the year special events take place when the regular attenders are especially excited about discipling others.

- At Christmas and Easter there is a golden ticket service. This ticket is handed out by the children to their friends. Those who attend the special service swap the ticket for a prize.
- High Days. These are Sabbaths when special events take place and decisions for Christ are made.
- The staff model inviting children to church by keeping a list of the children they know who do not go to church. They pray for these children and invite them at an appropriate time.
- A prayer team is an ongoing part of the service. Children take their prayer praises and requests to the church. Also the team prays for the effectiveness of the church in making disciples.

- **Kidz church – "Bodyworks" team**

Planning and running a church for a hundred children is an ongoing challenge. A dedicated staff is essential. There is a job description for each member of staff. Here are two:



Kids' Church Leader

Responsibilities:

- Vision cast to Kids' Church Team
- Plan yearly Discipleship Plan and Events Calendar
- Submit an annual budget request
- Manage budgeting finances
- Liaise with support teams on plans and responsibilities
- Liaise with visiting speakers
- Implement developments
- Run staff meetings
- Facilitate team building
- Co-ordinate team training
- Evaluate goals and achievements
- Corporate reporting
- Promote the values and availability of Kids' Church to CCCC and the community



Kids' Church Administrator

Responsibilities:

- Liaise with Leader to compile yearly Discipleship Plan and Events Calendar
- Distribute Discipleship Plans, maps, and thank you notes to visiting speakers
- Distribute Discipleship Plans and Events Calendar to staff
- Administer annual budget
- Distribute letters to kids and staff for special occasions
- Contact kids for serving each week
- Maintain database of kids' and staff contacts
- Keep records of programs and attendance statistics

Annual Kid's Church Discipleship Plan

Good forward planning means the team members are able to prepare the activities in a child inclusive way. A sample is at the end of this section.

The Kidz church philosophy, planning, outlines and powerpoints are available on disc from the BUC Children's Ministries department.

A Variety of Community Churches

Kidz church is one way of connecting with the community children. Here are other ways:

- **Travelling church**

An urban church has purchased and converted a bus, which travels around local urban estates, offering monthly afterschool activities and worship for children aged 7-11. The church is meeting people where they are, and the children and their families are hearing about God in a relevant way. The church anticipates that, in time, sustainable Christian communities will develop in these areas.

- **Parents and toddlers praise**

Parents and toddlers meet weekly in the church hall for a short fun time of praise, games and a story followed by refreshments. During refreshment time, the toddlers and parents do crafts, which provides a good opportunity for sharing fun and fellowship. The end product is something for the parents and children to take home as a reminder of the day's focus. At the end of the session, everyone either goes home or to meet older brothers or sisters from school.

- **Summer club**

About 50 children of primary school age live on an estate near the church in a suburban village. For the past two years, a member of the congregation has organised a summer club, with 15 children aged 8-13 attending. The aim is to reach youngsters living on the doorstep of the church. Initially, every family on the estate was visited and leaflets were delivered. The club meets twice weekly throughout the summer holidays in a variety of venues, and involves a wide range of activities (farm visits, games and so on). There is no formal Christian teaching except when discussions arise spontaneously.

- **Toddler church**

The new minister arrived in the small market town to find an elderly congregation and no children's work. He had two young children of his own. Through contacts made by him and his wife, toddler church now meets monthly on Saturday mornings in the children's corner of the church, for a 20-minute service in which the children participate actively. After the service there is a time for refreshment and fellowship.

- **Midweek all-age worship**

In a small market town, Bible Club now meets on Thursday evenings. The children don't like church because it's boring, and the church members don't like children disturbing their traditional services. So, once a month, church members go along on a Thursday and join in the singing, watch the drama and listen to the children reading or reciting a story. It's not in church, but it is worship.

- **Godly play**

This church has introduced Godly play (see www.coreskillsforchurches.com for resources) to its Bible Club, with some success. Everyone sits on the floor in a circle, creating a sacred space. Behind the storyteller, there is a focal table with a nativity set, a

cross, a picture of the risen Jesus, a candle and a good shepherd model. Stories are told using simple materials, many of which are three-dimensional. Open, wondering questions follow the story, and then the children respond by choosing a creative activity, which reflects what they feel about the story. This all provides a safe space, allowing children to 'play with' the stories of God. Story Club later joins the rest of the congregation to share what has been done. The enthusiasm of the children has intrigued and excited the adult members, who are wondering what is happening.

- **Festival activities**

This church provided a Saturday Club in the run-up to Christmas to tell the Christmas story and make decorations and presents. It culminated in a candlelit service for the children and their parents and the whole church family on Christmas Eve. This was so successful that it will be extended to club during Easter.

- **Church football team**

This church was losing all the boys from its children's group to football, cricket and so on. It decided to change the timing of the group and recruited a football team, which included former members of the group, to take part in a local league.

- **Ecumenical children's club**

Churches in several villages in the Scottish Borders had no children's work, although there were many children living in the community. They pooled their resources to provide an ecumenical midweek after-school club. On a quarterly basis, this links into the family service, which is hosted by each church in turn.¹

¹ BUC Core Skills training course – Module 4.

Kids' Church Discipleship Plan 2004 ... page 1

Date	Theme	Bible Verse	Topic Within Theme
Jan 3	New Challenge	Anything is possible for someone who has faith. Mark 9:23	-
Jan 10			It's okay to be scared; trust Jesus and you'll beat bigger challenges
Jan 17			Making good choices can be a worthwhile challenge
Jan 24			Try new things?
Jan 31			With God, problems become challenges that make us stronger
Feb 7	God's Plan For You	God makes everything happen at the right time. Eccl 3:11	God sees things we don't; He knows the best times for things to happen
Feb 14			God has a special job for you to do – a special plan for your life
Feb 21			God is training you and preparing you
Feb 28			God uses you to do special things right now
Mar 6	Heaven	Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in Heaven. Matt 5:12	What is Heaven? A beautiful place, God lives there, facts etc
Mar 13			How do you get to Heaven? Love god and learn to be like Him
Mar 20			Heaven helps us keep things here in perspective and have right priorities
Mar 27			Store up treasures in Heaven where they will last
Apr 3	Easter	Christ died and rose to life. Rom 14:9	Kids' Church Easter – The cross and empty tomb
Apr 10			-
Apr 17			God can do things we can't, like rising to life
Apr 24			How we can choose to accept the gift of salvation
May 1	Choosing What To Do	Use your freedom as an opportunity. Gal 5:13	Anniversary Day
May 8			Choices – wise and foolish
May 15			Boredom – how to be creative, brainstorming, options of things to do
May 22			How to make your actions/choices multiply effectively (not -, not +, but x)
May 29			Don't waste time; do something worthwhile
June 5	Prayer	When I was really hurting, I prayed to the Lord. He answered my prayer, and took my worries away. Ps 118:5	How does God hear us? Facts
June 12			How does prayer help us? Emotions, perspective, attitude, direction, focus
June 19			How does prayer change circumstances? God is free to act & do cool stuff
June 26			When you can't turn to anyone else, God is there for you

Kids' Church Discipleship Plan 2004 ... page 2

Date	Theme	Bible Verse	Topic Within Theme
Jul 3	Sabbath	Respect the Sabbath as a joyful day of worship. Is 58:13	Sabbath; what is it? Facts
Jul 10			How to show respectfulness to God and the Sabbath
Jul 17			What is worship and how do we do it?
Jul 24			Why should the Sabbath be joyful?
Jul 31			The truth and our attitude to others who believe differently (eg Friday/Sunday)
Aug 7	Fully Rely On God	I trust you, Lord, and I claim you as my God. Ps 31:14	God can be trusted completely
Aug 14			I need to trust someone
Aug 21			How to trust God
Aug 28			What kinds of things will happen if I trust God
Sept 4	Following Jesus	Jesus said, "Follow me and you won't be walking in the dark": John 8:12	Knowing someone in a high place is valuable
Sept 11			Copying Jesus
Sept 18			Walking in Jesus' light means we know what's going on
Sept 25			Following Jesus means you know where you'll end up
Oct 2	Attitude	Let my words & my thoughts be pleasing to you, Lord, because you are my mighty rock and my protector. Ps 19:14	-
Oct 9			-
Oct 16			What does having a good attitude mean?
Oct 23			How your attitude affects others by your words
Oct 30			How your attitude affects you and your whole life by your thoughts
Nov 6	Baptism	Baptism is more than just washing your body. 1 Peter 3:21	How and why was Jesus baptised? Facts
Nov 13			Why does Jesus want us to be baptised?
Nov 20			Baptism is more than just washing your body
Nov 27			How baptism will change/affect your life
Dec 4	Christmas	A Saviour was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11	Why did Jesus become a human?
Dec 11			How are Santa & Jesus alike and how are they different?
Dec 18			Kids' Church Christmas
Dec 25			-

REACHING OUT TO FAMILIES

- **The Bible and Families Today – a call for action**

We can safely say that, according to the Bible, the family is God's idea. Its foundations were laid at the beginning of time, as recorded in Genesis 2. Jesus endorsed it (Matthew 19:5). In its various forms, family is important in every culture.

In the West, family has been understood as the nuclear unit of husband, wife and children. Though less common today, this pattern is still seen as desirable if it can be achieved. But in the Bible, people are identified in the wider context of their family networks: 'Jesus... was the son... of Joseph, the son of...' (Luke 3:23).

In the New Testament, the Greek words *oikos* and *oikia* can be translated 'family', 'household' or 'house'. They seem to be used interchangeably. What the New Testament passages sometimes suggest is a network which includes a wider circle of family and servants (Acts 10:24). In that culture it was likely that if the head of the household professed faith, the rest would follow.

The "Reaching Men" website www.cvmen.org.uk quoted these figures concerning the impact on a family when a man leads his household to the Lord:

- If you lead a child to Christ 3.5% of their family will follow.
- If you lead a mother to Christ 17% will follow.
- If you lead the father to Christ 93% of their family will follow.

Outreach to the whole family must be one of the evangelistic avenues.

- **Friendship building and 'proclamation' must go together**

Friendship and proclamation are inseparably linked, and where they exist in harmony, then, by God's grace, effective evangelism can take place.

In the book "Families Finding Faith" a two track approach is outlined:

Track One We want to build up relationships with those families we are seeking to bring to Christ. This we are planning by means of Track One events, informal contacts and other means that may be devised. We want people to feel easy about being drawn into the church family. We want them to be exposed to Christians and Christian lifestyle. We will be praying that they begin to seek God.

Track Two This is the information track. We will be trying hard to provide a series of 'options' apart from church services where people can discover Christian belief and be challenged, as appropriate, to make a personal response. We will be praying that people will, at their own pace, be moving from Track One to take part in Track Two events because they have come to the point where they want to know what Christians believe.

By bringing families to Christ:

- we do something to strengthen society at a time when families are breaking down
- we create an environment where children can be nurtured in the faith by Christian parents, who are the primary means for their child's spiritual growth
- we strengthen the church, because family units are the building blocks for a healthy church
- we create an impact in a community when whole families are reached for Christ.¹

- **Messy Church**

One approach to families was started in 2004 in an Anglican church near Portsmouth and is successful in a number of SdA churches too. Its creator, Lucy Moore, describes:

"Messy Church is a once-monthly time when families come together to enjoy being together, making things together, eating together and celebrating God together through his word, through music and through prayer. It's different from a children's activity day because it's an event for children and their carers or parents together, and it's more than a local authority fun day because of the element of worship that underpins it all.

With messy Church we are trying to be a worshipping community of all ages, centred on Christ, showing Christian hospitality – giving people a chance to express their creativity, to sit down together to each a meal and have fun within a church context.

Our principles, in no particular order, are:

- ❖ To provide an opportunity for people of all ages to worship together.
- ❖ To help people of all ages to feel that they belong in church and to each other.
- ❖ To help people have fun together.
- ❖ To give people a chance to express their God-given creativity.
- ❖ To invite people into an experience of Christian community.
- ❖ To introduce people to Jesus through hospitality, friendship, stories and worship."

The session runs something like this:

3.30 welcome
4.00 crafts
5.00 celebration
5.15 meal

The day and time depends on the availability of helpers and the one most popular for the attendees.

It always includes:

- Welcome
 - signing in of the attendees and giving out of name stickers
 - tables are ready for the craft session so the helpers are free to socialise with the children and parents
- Crafts
 - explanation of the various crafts laid out on the tables and what is the day's theme
 - an adult, teenager or child leader is at a table ready to give help
 - the crafts are easy to make
- Celebration
 - This takes place in the worship space where:
 - seating is child/family friendly
 - music is inviting, whether on a CD player, powerpoint or instrument

While everyone is finding a seat, children enjoy:

- a song
- watch a candle
- find a Bible
- look at a powerpoint of their messy church activities or watch a few minutes of a DVD, eg Veggi Tales or music video

The service –

This is kept short, simple and interactive. It links to the theme of the crafts. It is kept 'real' by relating to everyday life happenings and how God is a part of them.

- opening song
- story or illustration
- response song
- prayer

- Food A hot meal is provided by the cooks of the team. It is a simple meal that is started by saying 'grace'. When it is a birthday the cake becomes the pudding. The food can also reflect the seasons of the year, eg Easter – a passover meal.
- Farewell Everyone helps to clear up. Other church activities are visible on the notice board but not announced. Only explained about to the enquirer.

For more details see the *Messy Church* books and the website, www.messychurch.org.uk

According to the best available research, approximately 60% of the British population are probably beyond the reach of the churches. This proportion is much higher in urban areas and among the under forties. It is increasing year by year. Many people in this group have a belief in God; many are interested in spiritual things and in Christian spirituality. But the gap between where they are now and church is too wide to be easily crossed.²

- **The COLUMBA Scheme**

Struggling to retain their own children and families, St Columba's church in Corby recognised the churches that were growing were child inclusive in their ministry. Prayerfully they came up with a ministry "Come with Marcus", a DVD scheme to capture the interest of the children and ultimately include all the family.

COLUMBA offers a formula (and the resources) to make Bible study stimulating, engaging and fun, yet recognising the limits of volunteer enthusiasm.

How COLUMBA works.

COLUMBA targets children between ages of 5 and 11, and their parents. Access to such children can be in two main ways:

- through links with local schools
- through Holiday Clubs or Christmas services

The local school route

The optimum way to make contact with a very wide cross section of children is through contact with the local school. Even churches with a church school see only a low percentage of children at worship on Sundays.

The COLUMBA Scheme Marcus box comprises a gospel of Mark (NIV), a 60-minute *Storykeepers* DVD (episodes 1 & 2), some stickers and a board game.

Experience shows that approaching a school and giving each child, in Year 1 and/or Year 2, a Marcus box to take home has two major effects:

- the perception and image of the church is enormously enhanced with both pupils and teaching staff.
- Issuing Marcus boxes at School Assembly, the minister concerned achieves iconic status with the children – "you're the one who gave me the DVD".

Holiday Clubs or Christmas Services

Another route is to give Marcus boxes to children who come to the annual Holiday Club, or with their family only on Christmas day.

Giving a Marcus box can encourage a reminder that the Church is here for all 52 weeks! Such families are clearly well inclined towards the church's ministry and are likely to respond to the COLUMBA scheme.

Once your church has opened either of these avenues to young families the stage is set for working out your ACTION PLAN.

Action plan

1. Decide how wide you wish to throw your net. Is this a Churches Together campaign (the impact may well be stronger) or a single church mission effort?
2. Approach the local school and offer a Marcus distribution. This can be to children in a single year/class, or to two years/classes etc.
3. Order Marcus boxes to ensure that all families will have one in their home. This will serve as an ever-present reminder.
4. Distribute Marcus boxes to children/families.
5. Follow-up planning – you can/may wish to follow-up any time up to 6 months after your initial distribution.
6. A small group can plan the follow-up event (this may be a single one off, or a short course perhaps over a few weekly meetings).

7. Invite the children and their parents by both personal invitation and by poster within the school. The school may well send home your invitations for you with the children. (Responses – the St Columba, Corby experience was that only 5 children formally accepted, but 55 came through the door!) If possible invite on the basis that children *must* bring a parent, even though this may not be 100% practical to enforce.
8. Run event as outlined in *The Story Lives On* handbook.
9. Be sure to have invitations for your next relevant service to hand.
10. Hold a follow-up meeting with your small group. Be on the lookout. How many, and which, parents might become helpers next time?
11. Links with school – Marcus gifting generate strong goodwill at school – can your church build on this? Assembly, dinner lady links, RE assistance perhaps?

COLUMBA order information

Complete COLUMBA kit contains:

- Storykeepers complete 13 episode DVD kit.
- The Story Lives on Handbook.
- Scripture Union's Activity Resource Handbook with photocopiable worksheets.
- Free Internet link to 21 Collective Worship format for School Assembly.
- Marcus box sample.

Above material can be found at www.storykeepers.com.

See also in the 'Church Planting' article how Gateway used this material.³

Include younger ones

St Columba's team found in attracting children their parents and siblings attended other activities including the church services. This can be challenging as little 'unchurched' children find it hard to sit still. *Interactive child inclusive* sermons, small group meetings and Bible clubs must take place or parents will give up attending. St Columba shares some good ideas on including the youngest ones.

- **Offer help and support.** This doesn't mean taking over, but it can mean helping with tasks that are currently beyond the ability of the youngest, or encouraging and supporting their willingness to try.
- **Look for ways to include younger members in all activities.** This means often working in small groups or with 'buddies', to make it easier to pay attention.
- **Keep it short.** Don't try to sustain an activity when interest is waning. Keep discussions short. Long adult conversations may exclude young children. Longer conversations are better held in pairs, in small groups, or during the gathering and mealtime.
- **Recognise and attend to the real needs of young children** – breaks, food, drink, movement (all of us need to move and stretch, but younger members need this more). Don't meet late in the evening or delay dinner. Offer lots of healthy food and take lots of breaks. Otherwise you'll end up with cranky, tired youngsters – and oldsters.
- **Be flexible.** If someone needs a break from the group, that's fine. If it's time to move on to the next activity, or play a game, or call it a day, that's fine too.
- **Keep it simple.** Learning, even for adults, doesn't need to be heavy and complicated. Even a very simple story, statement, or question can lead to profound insights. Keeping activities simple and well prepared in advance also helps younger members.
- **Have fun.** Laughter, playfulness, humour – all help to make the experience fun for everyone. More learning happens when people are really engaged and enjoying themselves.
- **Be sensitive, patient, and caring.** Sometimes young children can be overwhelmed by a large group or lots of strangers. Paying too much attention to shy children, or trying too hard to draw them out, can increase their anxiety. Rather than pushing children (or adults) to participate, give them the time they need to feel comfortable often brings them around. Offer opportunities, but don't pressure anyone.⁴

Reaping a large harvest

Reaping a harvest takes time. The soil must be prepared, the seeds chosen, sown and 'harvesters' prayed for. Matthew 9:38 includes the promise that when the Lord of the harvest is prayed to, He sends the helpers.

- Make a list of the families with whom you already have contact through your church or weekday activities. You may only have tenuous links, as with the single parent who drops off a child and then drives away. But put them all on your list. They are all contacts with possibilities.
- Reflect. Pause and look at the names before you. They will represent families of all shapes and sizes, but they all have one thing in common. They are loved by a God who wants them to belong to him and to change their lives for the better. If you are looking for a mission field, here it is. You need look no further.
- Pray. Ask God for a conviction that this is the way forward for you. If it is, ask him to make you excited about what he might do! Then pray for wisdom to select from your list of names those you feel God is leading you to reach. Be realistic; pray effectively for the conversion of three families rather than thirty! Above all, ask that you will be given a 'heart' for families – and not you alone but all your church.⁵

Four tips for reaching families of the children in your children's ministry

1. **Focus on relationships.** Unchurched people who decide to begin attending church – and who stick with it – usually do so because of relationships they've built with people in the church. Make the most of opportunities to get to know the parents of your unchurched kids. Consider setting out a snack table near the classrooms where the superintendent, teachers, or a designated 'parent pal' can chat with parents when they drop off their children.
2. **Create a list of topics.** As you build relationships with class members, ask questions about their hobbies and interests, and listen as they talk about themselves. Many of the bits of news they share – from their soccer games to a sick puppy – can work as conversation starters with parents. Put these topics in a mental list or even on paper.
3. **Talent Show.** Rather than waiting for parents to come to you, invite them. They allow kids to present individual talents, if they want (singing, telling jokes, playing the flute, etc.). Each age-group also prepares a skit to present. Other ideas:
 - Have families work together to present a talent or skit.
 - Give a brief devotional based on Romans 12:4-5 about how we all have different things to contribute to the group.
 - Serve refreshments.
4. **Pray for families—and let them know it. Ideas:**
 - Prayer Pals. Find people in the church to serve as Prayer Pals for class members' families. These Pals can contact 'their' families occasionally by phone or note to ask for requests and let them know they're being prayed for.
 - Class prayer. Every week, have class members pray together for one or more of the children's families. Get the kids to sign a postcard, and mail it to the prayed-for families. Ask them to send requests via their children.

Preparing the local church for new families

What those participating in Kidz Church, St Columba's scheme and Messy Church have in common is the spiritual eyesight of recognising church must meet the needs of the 21 century child and parents.

Church members who prayerfully look for ways to reach out to their community will be willing to turn their 'Sabbath morning club' into a service that will attract non-members. Where this is happening families are joining the church. Your church can do this too by:

- providing an opportunity for people of all ages to worship together
- helping people of all ages feel they belong in church and to each other
- helping people have fun and be creative together
- introducing Jesus through hospitality, friendship, stories and worship.

¹ *Families Finding Faith*, by J Hattam. Publisher CPAS, Scripture Union.

² *Messy Church*, by L Moore. Publisher, Barnabus, BRF.

³ St Columba's advertising leaflet.

⁴ *The Story Lives On*. www.storykeepers.com.

⁵ *Families Finding Faith*, by J Hattam. Publisher CPAS, Scripture Union.

CHURCH PLANTS

- **Traditional Methods**

Outreach to children frequently becomes a basis of a new church. This happens through:

- **A Branch Sabbath.**
The church manual outlines the procedures of how the Mother Church supports its 'baby'. Kingstanding, in Birmingham, is an example of how members from Camp Hill supported 'The Fit Chicken' outreach. Children from reception to 12 years old attend the summer club held in the community centre. Parents are invited to the Sabbath services too. The stories, prayers and care given by the team to the children make it obvious that it is "God's love that makes the world go round."
- **Holiday Bible Schools**
The Battersea church, London, began as a Holiday Bible School in the front room of a member's home who had a heart for reaching out to the children in their community. The HBS section in this manual gives a clear outline of how to run one, and ideas for follow up, not only for children but parents too. When a child has obviously enjoyed a HBS a parent is open to attending a programme relevant to their needs, eg parenting seminar, health programme, family fun day, baby dedication etc.

- **Church Planting Movement**

Examples of outreach:

- Sutton Gateway
- Watering Hole

The development of the Church Growth department, working with the Personal Ministries department, has motivated a vibrant awareness of the necessity to start new churches. Often these are in new districts and specifically aimed at reaching the post modern unchurched individuals.

Sutton Gateway, a core group of five living in Sutton Coldfield, attended the training. They did the SWOT research. The results directed them to three areas of outreach to

- Those of their generation
- Those no longer attending church
- Children within their community through HBS

This HBS material is available on disc from the BUC Children's Ministries department.

'The Watering Hole', in Totton, Southampton, is a team who have the local church as their base. In The Watering Hole (WH) there is no distinction between children and adults. All are included in obeying Jesus' command to "go into all the world", all people in the WH church plant are maturing disciples and all are trained, equipped and encouraged to "make new disciples".

Here is their outline of how they are doing this.

Kidz Discipleship Track

Befriending	Belonging	Believing	Baptising
Gymnastics Club Family Fun Days Town Festivals Kidz Club	Gymnastics Club Kidz Club Community Ministry Activities Serving in Church	Kidz Club Kidz Church	Kidz Church Small Group Individual Studies

Becoming what God wants me to be in body, mind & spirit	Apprenticing & Mentoring	Leading
Small group – Living with Jesus series. 1 – welcome to God's family 2 – talking and listening 7 – having faith 4 – love for me and others 6 – choose 5 – strongholds	Living with Jesus series: Special times and gifts Fighting together Assuming specific roles and responsibilities	Leading a small group Using my spiritual gifts in church and in the community

IN-REACH

Small groups (that we call 'life groups' because in a life group 'we do life together not just attend a weekly meeting').

This is where discipleship and growth of existing members happens. Where we build up one another and encourage each other through praying for one another, encouraging each other's gifts, realising the reality of Jesus in our everyday lives, and growing in love for Him and our fellow human beings. Cultivating a love for God and for each other – nurturing a passion for those who don't know Christ. It is a place of support and accountability.

In the WH we have chosen not to have intergenerational life groups but have separate groups for children, teenagers and adults. The children's group is led by an 11-year-old who is mentored and supported. The teenage group is led by someone no longer a teenager but with close cooperation with the teenagers.

WH services – preaching and teaching have been placed in the afternoon as we have discovered that Sabbath morning is an important time for ministering to our community. During these services time is allocated for discussion and prayer over the topics presented in the teaching and preaching. This is when we are challenged to apply what we have heard. Topics always are presented and related to how the Good News influences our relationship with God and those around us. (We see the relational aspect of the gospel as one of the main ways God wants to speak to us and to those who don't yet know him.) During these discussion times we encourage intergenerational groups to meet. Children are actively involved; because it is application of God's Word this is appropriate to any age or situation in life. One child's view on this was, "I never knew Bible study could be such fun."

Fun Kidz church service

As part of disciplining we hold a church service for children once a month. This service focuses specifically on catering for different learning styles and is interactive and fun. Parents are encouraged to stay with their children and discover more about God, the Bible and Christian life TOGETHER.

REACH, Reaching Everyone And Changing Hearts, puppet team. This witnesses in shopping precincts and at the Totton community carol service. REACH have started a puppet team for junior aged school children.

Local school and Watering Hole Gym club

WH monthly prayer letter gives an insight into the way a local school is working with one of the outreach methods to contact children and parents.

"The new sport-acrobatics club, which has been started by the WH (Gordon) in October, have been given the use of the school hall, and after the introduction evening 19 local children booked to join. These children include many from families who attend other WH events and some we first got to know because they were in Carolyn's class (a WH member) at the school. Gordon is continuing to help with the gym club for younger children run by the local school, but this new club aims to reach the wider community and the children who left to go to secondary school. We would be very grateful for your continued prayers for this venture, for the local school (especially for Carolyn), for the relationship between the WH and the school and for the children and families who we are in contact with."

A church member is a teacher at the school and helped to link the church with the extended school's programme. The first gym club is so successful WH has started a second one. A member of WH is now an elected member of the school board of governors.

Teen outreach

We also realised an opportunity for the WH teenager who wanted to do something for her school friends – therefore we set up a girls' club which meets once a month for fun activities they wanted to do like card making, making bath bombs, having a 'ready, steady, cook' evening, etc. From here we are offering a twice-monthly small group for those who are interested in looking at life issues for teenagers from a Christian perspective. The club runs separately from the small group – so that the girls do not feel pressured to come to the small group.

'Permission to speak' – a two-day training course in how to share one's faith, whether it is in the neighbourhood, school, college or workplace. With plenty of practical seminar time and role-play, children fit very well into this and find it enjoyable and relevant to their stage of discipleship.

Spiritual Gifts based approach

All have exposure to this aspect of Christian life. There is no nominating committee but all take the spiritual gifts course, fill out an inventory and then receive a personal visit during which time they are prayed for, their passions or interests explored and a place found in church life where they can use their gifting. One child said, "I loved getting the chance to speak about things and have something to do that I like doing." Children hold KEY ROLES.

OUT-REACH

Small groups – each week the small groups have half an hour of 'networking' time, where we spend some time praying for our non-Christian friends and contacts. We encourage one another to build meaningful relationships with our non-Christian friends – allowing God to build our friendships, so that we are loving and honest friends revealing the love of God. We also plan 'Friends nights'. Once a month, instead of getting together for our normal small group meeting, we will intentionally spend time with our non-Christian friends/contacts – getting to know them

better and praying that God will create opportunities for us to share Him. We do 'normal' social stuff with our friends, eg going bowling, inviting them round for lunch, and going out for a meal just to 'be' with our friends. We also organise social events for the entire church plant group to which we can invite our friends to – eg games evenings, birthday parties, summer BBQ's etc. If members of the small groups live in the same vicinity/community, they are also encouraged to see what they can do as a group for the community, eg litter pick, gardening for the elderly/infirm, helping out in local youth centre – really whatever gifts and opportunities there are in that neighbourhood.

We have discovered that children are experts in inviting friends to these events and to more spiritual events. As they discovered that their church is strategically and intentionally child-friendly they are not worried about the reception or experience that their friends will have when they come – so they bring them.

Debt advice and money management. Frontline Totton are continuing to serve the local community every Tuesday by offering free debt and benefit advice. The team is gradually learning all that is involved and God is sending people who can benefit from their support. Please continue to pray for God's work in this area, so that people will know and experience a God who cares in their struggle with debt. In addition to the debt advice the WH has also been asked to provide money management seminars in November and December in the Waterside area.

WH members are also encouraged to join local clubs, eg badminton, tennis, football etc where we can make new friends/contacts. (Often if we have been SDA's for many years, we find we only have SDA friends.)

WH finds out the needs of the local community – through a questionnaire on the street, investigating what others are offering and arranging meetings with local organisations in order to assess how we might 'fill the gap' in what is provided locally. We have discovered that supplying what the community needs raises the profile of the church, changes people's attitudes to it and brings many opportunities for sharing the Good News.

Prayer walking in our communities – praying that God will take away the veil from people's eyes and give them a hunger for something more. Praying for opportunities to meet people, and that those in the community will respond to the way we are aiming to meet their needs. Prayer walking includes the children who have also been assigned territory to pray for. Prayer walking also gives us opportunities to mingle with the people in that community.

WH wants to follow the plan of Jesus, as described by Ellen White, that He first mingled, then met people's needs. He showed sympathy for them and won their confidence, **then He said follow me.** This is our plan – therefore the intentional activities of making time for non-Christian friends/contacts, meeting needs in the community. We are intending to run other life-issues courses, eg Alpha marriage course, parenting courses and finally something like the Alpha course – as we introduce Jesus' plan to give us eternal life and abundant life now.

In relation to this our small groups are also able to offer intermediate group meetings (a meeting which is used as a step into the small group) that are basically discussion on every life issue – which we call 'Explore'. Here we give our friends an opportunity to ask questions, to discuss life in a safe environment, and where we also have room to tell our own stories about how Jesus affects our lives.

- **Winning Children**

The South England Conference Children's Ministries and Church Growth departments facilitated the one-day 'Winning Children' conferences for those running outreach to unchurched children. This is available as a DVD from the BUC Children's Ministries department.

• Small Groups

Possible Shapes

Children's home groups can comprise a wide range of types:

- choice of content (Christian basics or 'Just looking', Bible-study based, or questions-based)
- timing (weekly, fortnightly, monthly, after school, Saturday lunch, Sunday tea, a continuing group or a short course, eg six weeks)
- occasion (preparation for baptism, communion, or a follow-up to a one-off event for those who want to dig deeper into faith)
- age-groups (mostly for those over seven years old, but also parent and toddler daytime groups)
- ideally less than ten members
- single-sex or mixed group.

Things to consider

- How are you going to get a group of children together? Do the children you already know want to bring friends? If you are starting from scratch, what is the first point of contact with the children?
- What will you do when the group gets above optimum size (say, over fifteen)? Have you got more leaders for another group? Are you praying about this yet? Plan for growth.
- Who will lead the group? How can you make sure they are able Bible teachers, not just those who are willing and have spare time? Do you need to plan the timing so the right leaders are available, rather than the other way round?
- How will you share the vision for the home group with the church?
- How will you support the leaders? Who are their 'line managers' and how will they carry out that task?

First ideas

- *Choose a good venue which is comfortable* – in the home of a leader or group member, or a room at church. A church member might be willing to host the group without actually leading it. Meet round a kitchen table or in a front room.
- *Put together a relaxed and informal programme* to include some or all of the following: food, some input and prayer, games and a simple response activity. Aim to be together for around an hour.
- *Be **very** careful about child protection issues.* These apply as much in a home as on church premises, and perhaps need even more care in an informal setting. Make sure that the ratio of adults to children is always appropriate.
- *Let the group decide their own name* – it might relate to who goes and when it happens, or where it meets.

For the whole church

- Plan who will support the group in prayer. You might be able to create a link between an adult group and the children or young people's home group. Or ask individual adults to take on a commitment to pray. Provide them with information and progress reports so that their prayers are informed.
- If your church runs adult home groups, your children's home group could sometimes follow the same programme – adapted in an appropriate way. This would help the group to feel part of the church, and help parents and children to talk about what they are doing in their groups.

- Work on how to link the home group members in with the life of the wider church. For example, agree to meet for breakfast one Sabbath and go to the service together. Or give the group a task to do within the life of the church.¹

The book "Heirs Together" by Daphne Kirk, gives a wealth of information on starting an intergenerational cell, small group, church. This method of outreach runs age appropriate small groups and links them with adults in the intergeneration group meetings.

Before starting their cell each child was given a few weeks' training on subjects like

- What is a leader?
- Confidentiality compared with secrecy.
- What needs to change in my life if others are going to follow me?
- Praying for my group.
- Identifying and bringing down strongholds in my group.

However the most significant part of their training has been what they saw role modelled in their intergenerational group.

"Landscapes for Children" is 28 lessons for children in Intergenerational Cells by Lisa Engelkemier. It is available from the BUC Personal Ministries department.

• **Extended Schools**

Every child matters

The government through its children's act "Every Child Matters", encourages putting the needs of children on a high profile in every community. This is partly being done by the policy to have, by 2010, schools offering various activities for children and their families. These are called 'extended schools'.

Funding is available to enable schools to partner with agencies to provide appropriate activities.

Building bridges with the school

Building a good relationship with your local school is a very important part of a whole-church strategy for evangelism among children and young people – after all, it is where they spend most of their time. However, it is not simply a case of strolling into a school and saying 'We're from the church...' The relationship between the church and teachers (particularly the head) needs to be a trusting and honest one. They need to be sure of your motives and sure that what you want to do is in the best interests of the children and in keeping with the school ethos. Make sure that you build this relationship carefully and over time, so that the church is associated with good relationships and quality activities rather than difficult and weak ones. Consider the following:

- Start up a club or help a Christian teacher with an existing one. A club will serve to support church children and to reach out to others. Clubs need to be lively and fun to compete with break time. The Watering Hole church plant has done this successfully, eg the 2 gym clubs.
- Start a Christian Union or prayer group. This would primarily support Christian children and young people but would also provide an excellent base to do outreach and evangelism with the group members.
- Put on an event over a number of days with a number of different events, groups, talks and discussions that children could come to and hear about Jesus.²

This is a God-given opportunity to be funded to do outreach and enrich the community who attend or live near extended schools. It is serving in this way that the unchurched connect with church members and, through them, to Jesus.

¹ *Mission Possible*, by D Bell & R Heathfield. Published by CPAS, Scripture Union.

² *Ibid.*

TELL A CHILD, TELL THE WORLD

Children Evangelise in the Rockies

"Praise God for Jesus powered kids!" exclaims Byard Parks, pastor for the Colorado Springs South and Franktown, Colorado, churches. During June and July, a half dozen mini evangelists from these churches prayed door to door with more than 900 people. Pastor Parks can be excused for his exuberance!

Pastor Park's children evangelism strategy is simple: children go two-by-two to people's houses, and say: "Hi my name is Chelsea and this is Michelle; we are part of the WAY the Whole Armour Youth. We wanted to do something nice for the people in the community and the nicest thing we could think of was to pray for people. Because we all can use prayer, can't we? (SMILE) Some people are having us pray for their health, some for their families, and some for their finances. What specifically can we pray about for you?" (SMILE and wait). All right, let's pray about that right now." (Pray)

That done, the kids write the person's name and request in a prayer journal, assuring the person that they will continue praying for them the rest of the summer. With more than 91 percent of America believing in prayer, according to a recent Newsweek survey, the response rate to these children is not surprising. On an average day, the children will have a nearly 80 percent acceptance rate for prayer.

But the children's evangelistic efforts don't stop there. The children actively look for people willing to start a 'Neighbourhood House of Prayer.' At every home where the Whole Armour Youth find a spiritually responsive individual they say, "We are trying to get one house in every neighbourhood that will systematically and regularly pray for their neighbours. You just register your name and address with us, and then we will send you regular mailings on how you can pray more effectively for your neighbours. Would you like to be that house?"

Since the programme's start on the first of June, these kids have started up forty seven "Neighbourhood Houses of Prayer." With such an overwhelming response to the programme, a separate organisation, 'Operation HOPE' (Helping Others Pray Effectively), which the kids thought up, had to be set up just to keep the praying houses supplied with prayer information. Along with networking all of the houses of prayer, this intercessory prayer organisation now puts out a bi-weekly newsletter to these non-Adventist pray-ers as they effectively pray for the spread of Bible truth.

Pastor Parks explains that the goal of Operation HOPE is to allow the Holy Spirit to impact families and lives through intercessory prayer. Over and over it has been witnessed and verified that when communities start praying, problems such as child abuse, divorce, drugs, alcohol, crime and vandalism drop dramatically.

The WAY kids started their campaign by distributing door hangers to every home in their community. The door hangers read: 'Can prayer really make a difference? YES!' Listed on the back of the hangers are two phone numbers. Church members answer the phones and compile prayer requests. Several relationships have developed from the WAY ministry. The kids, enthusiastic about their work, helped start a Voice of Prophecy Bible Correspondence school and have send several dozen Bible studies through the mail.

Now that the kids are heading back to school and the door-to-door programme of the WAY is finished for the summer, efforts are focused primarily on Bible studies resulting from the summer work, and on the continuation and strengthening of Operation HOPE.

"Wow, I am proud of the children in my church!" Parks beams. Just the other day, he and a 12 year old boy had a lady accept Christ right on her doorstep. "We prayed," Parks recalls, "leading her through a prayer of confession, repentance and revival. She has asked to study to be part of our fellowship."

Kids, with all their energy and enthusiasm, are a powerful tool in God's hands. Your kids, too, can start praying for people. Or find their own outreach ministry. Ask them for ideas. Project WAY began with fewer than a dozen children willing to commit 8 weeks of their summer (2 days a week). Through this small Gideon band the appreciation and admiration of 1000's of community members has been won and the children have seen God do might things. What could God be waiting to do with the children in your church?

Pathfinders for Unchurched Kids!

"We enjoyed the time with the Pathfinders last night," write Dana and Leslie King, church planters in Yeovil, South England. "We had two main questions to pose for Teen Alpha - 'What do you think of the Bible?' and, 'Is the Bible relevant to you?'"

It is not an easy task to make the Bible appealing and enjoyable reading to a group of twenty unchurched 10-15 year old kids! The answers give us an insight into the views of 10-15's:

- 'What do you think of the Bible?' Boring, too much writing, OK for Christians. It is so bitty! Why does it not have just one story? Long words. I don't understand it. Very educational. It's for everybody. It's alright for little children.
- 'Is the Bible relevant to you?' Yes - it tells how we can live forever. No - it says nothing about boys or fashion. Well I don't know. No it's not relevant. And, this observation from a 14-year-old - "Why does half the town get taught the Bible and the other half just get alcohol and drugs?"

"Next Monday we shall be introducing prayer during our Alpha time," write Dana and Leslie. "This is a supernatural experience. We plan to really challenge these children with a key issue in their life. It is often at this point that they come to a conclusion as to whether God is real / relevant to them. We will really need your prayers for these Pathfinders in

preparation for Monday." Dana and Leslie also have plans to experiment more with an interactive visual model of exploring faith issues.

Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS)

Looking for an outreach programme that will meet needs in your community and draw families to your church? Consider starting a MOPS group at church. Mothers of Preschoolers International (MOPS) is a non-profit, truly inter-denominational organisation that provides resources and training for mothers with small children.

A MOPS group offers a haven for busy mums - a caring, accepting atmosphere where each mother has a chance to share concerns, make friends, explore areas of creativity, and connect with a MOPS mentor. MOPS cares for children through MOPPETS, a loving, learning experience for preschoolers which meets while mums are together. (The programme uses a curriculum developed by Group Publishing just for them.)

What can MOPS do for your church? Whether or not you have mothers with preschoolers in your congregation, offering a nationally recognised programme like MOPS opens doors in your neighbourhood. One leader writes, "We are thrilled about what God is doing in our MOPS group! Nine people accepted Christ, and six couples signed up for Bible study!"

A pastor adds, "One of the biggest blessings from having MOPS in our church to see young women develop their gifts and talents. The next generation of women leading ministries is coming from our MOPS graduates."

For more information about MOPS and its wide range of resources, visit www.MOPS.org.

HBS for Mums

Mums who drop off their children at the HBS are welcomed to stay and enjoy:

- ❖ 15 minutes socialising
- ❖ Welcome & small gift
- ❖ Short Christ-centred devotional (no SdA jargon)
- ❖ Brunch, with time for announcements and chatting
- ❖ Crafts or speaker - topics include beauty tips, preparing children for school, first aid, nutrition time management, parenting skills.

HBS Follow-up: It's a Party!

We had two Christmas parties for HBS follow-up this year. Of the 21 children who attended the HBS, 17 came to our Christmas party at the home of John and Diane Spielman, where we meet for Sabbath School and church each week.

At the party, the children made wreaths using pieces of cloth, raffia and individually-wrapped candies. After snacks, we sang Christmas carols, and each child received a Bible and one other gift.

The Westfield Church had a total of 40 children at their HBS. Invitations were sent out for the Christmas party, inviting not just those who had attended HBS, but all children in the household 12 years or under. Ten more children signed up.

We asked parents to fill out a form telling sizes and listing things the children wanted or needed. The children were delighted with their gifts and parents were impressed with the quality.

Some children got much-needed boots and coats. All of the children received a *Bible Heroes* book. One little girl was so excited when she saw the book, because it was like one she had seen in the doctor's office waiting room. She will be receiving *The Bible Story* set soon.

We've already begun planning for next year's Holiday Bible School.

Practical kindness makes a difference

Some years ago, a minister friend of mine told me about a family in his church where the parents and three teenage children were all converted around the same time. The family was experiencing unemployment, had little food and the young teenage daughter was already pregnant. A member of a local church offered some practical kindness, and as a result, the family was drawn into one of the church's small groups which at the time were inviting outsiders to meals and other evangelistic activities. This is where the family found Christ.

The church continued to support the family, helping them to grow in the faith, encouraging them as they reorganised their lives, and helping to find employment for the father and older son. The change in the family was so dramatic that one day a neighbour called and said, "I just wanted to come across and tell you how glad I am that you've moved in here. It really has made such a difference! The people here before you were always having drinking parties and keeping everyone awake for half the night. You should have heard their language! The kids were awful and the garden was full of weeds. It's great to have you here!"

"Well, as a matter of fact," came the reply, "we've been living here for thirteen years!"

Winning Children

"Sit on a table facing a blank wall while listening to a sermon in Chinese for an hour and a half, once a week," the 30 participants at the 'Winning Children' workshop were told. This is what church can be like for many children for the first ten years of their life.

Stanborough Park church was the venue to explore creative approaches for reaching out to children in the communities around their churches, and to discover fresh ways to evangelise and win the children who already attend our churches each Sabbath morning.

The day began by using dozens of black and white postcards of children to help the group explore different aspects of most children's experience of church today, and then what God wants them to experience as an active part of a spirit-filled community. Several groups who are actively involved in children's outreach projects shared some of their experiences and prayer requests.

Learning about messy church, creative ways to encourage children to pray, creative storytelling, using parachutes and flags in worship, child protection, how children learn, how to access community funding for children's events, ways to involve children in a church service, and how to run small groups where children can explore the Bible and develop their faith in a loving God all made for a very active day.

People left the Stanborough Centre at 5.00 pm buzzing with ideas to enrich their ministry, and comments such as "This should be a regular event, for it is very important... I wish that as leaders/teachers in Children's Ministries, we get more help with support so that we can help children know Jesus. They are not only the future church; children are also the church of today... If we don't value the children today, they won't be here tomorrow... We need to do all we can to include the children in our church services and ministries, and help them to discover and use their spiritual gifts."

The outreach group in Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, used successfully C S Lewis' way of copying Jesus' method of telling a parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, to get across the plan of salvation. At the end of the week every child had been crowned as a son or daughter of God and pledged to wear the crown of salvation, hold the shield of faith and use the sword of the spirit. This was the write-up in the local newspaper:

'Children in Sutton have enjoyed a packed Easter programme at Gateway to Narnia, a new children's club in the town.

Gateway is a Christian group and this, their first children's club, took place at Good Hope Social Club on Bedford Road.

The club's activities were based on the CS Lewis book and film - *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* and included the 14 children present making hand-puppets, shields, banners and model figures.

The club now intends to plan future events such as after school clubs and art and craft clubs for adults and children.'

Another style of HBS was held in August 2005 by Chris Rogers and Susanna Matthan, with friends Bronwen Stainsby and Debbie Simpson. They had a great time running a holiday Bible Club in their village of Billingham. 15 children between the ages of 5 and 9 attended. Through the theme 'Taking to God' they introduced the children to the idea

that God wants to be their special friend. They shared ideas for several ways of communicating with Him - through song, the written word, the spoken word, craft, food, but most of all through a joyful relationship.

The children praised and worshipped God through some wonderful music led by Chris. They got to play xylophone, cow bells, a cabasah, lollipop drums and much more! They played parachute games, shared daily 'agape' feasts of fresh juicy fruit (a new idea for some of them), and created a beautiful booklet that they could take away. The parents were invited to a mini praise and worship session to finish off with.

"We were inspired by our week at Family Camp in Chapel Porth and came back with zillions of Karen Holford's ideas to share with the children," says Susanna. "We are also inspired by the leading of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these unchurched children and we want to serve more. Please pray for the children and families of Billingham in Lincolnshire, a rural and somewhat deprived village."

A HBS is not just the evangelistic way to meet children, it is the start of building up a series of events to which they and their families can attend. When you touch a child's heart with the love of God you also touch their family.

To me an exciting aspect of doing a HBS is that it gives our children a chance to practice what we preach to them - share your faith. A majority of those who attend are invited by our children. Remember to congratulate and thank the children for doing this and do not forget to do the same to your teen helpers.

Dusty the Dustbin - inviting children to care for their community

St Albans' Church was looking for different ways to serve their local community, so Gillian De Villiers, the local Community Services Leader, visited the city volunteer bureau to explore all the different kinds of ways church members could use their skills and interests to serve others.

Through this contact the church discovered Open Door - a charity that cared for homeless people. We found out that they needed supplies of tinned foods, and toiletries.

In order to involve the children we created Dusty. Dusty is a metal dustbin with a friendly face. Big padded eyes were sewn from circles of white and black fabrics, and softly stuffed. Black chenille pipe cleaners were used to create some eyelashes, and a big mouth was created from red velvet cut into smiling lips, gently stuffed, and with a short line of stitching across the middle to create a more realistic lip effect. A pair of yellow knitted gloves were also softly stuffed and stretched to fit onto the two handles of the bin. So that the metal lid doesn't clatter too noisily in church, some padding was stuck inside the rim of the lid.

Dusty is friendly, but also hungry, and now, whenever it is time for the children's story at St Albans church, the children bring supplies to put into Dusty, which Gillian then takes to Open Door.

Gillian tells the children stories about Open Door, and recently we had an unusual harvest programme where the children and young people brought bright new household goods, instead of fruit and vegetables, to be given to the families who were being housed through the Open Door project.

God's Promises - Welsh Mission Kids Rally Day

At the Cardiff church, Mrs Anette Moore, Children's Ministries sponsor for the Welsh Mission, teamed up with Mrs Jane Wells, Women's Ministries sponsor, to plan and run a fun activity time not just for our own children to enjoy but for their non-church attending friends too. We often put our children on a guilt trip for not being little missionaries but really we are at fault as we do not put on programmes to which they could feel comfortable to invite their friends to.

Did it work? YES. The children brought along their parents, grandparents and friends. Heather Haworth ran a parenting seminar for the adults.