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FORWARD

Children's Ministries is a "young" department which has grown out of the Sabbath School and Family Ministries. The General Conference has produced excellent materials for this department. The British Union Conference has developed its leadership "Core Skills" certificate training and has now responded to the need for a twenty-first century manual on "inreach and outreach" child evangelism.

Heartfelt thanks go to all the children and adults who have moulded and inspired Karen Holford and myself to write from our hearts concerning the salvation of God's younger members of His family. We want to give thanks to God for the way he has led in developing our ministry. To Karen this has meant the entwining of her ministry with her husband, Bernie, and for me a lifetime of ministry with my husband, Paul.

It is to the Holfords' special three offspring – Bethany, Nathan and Joel and the Haworth's trinity of children – John, Leanne and Bryan that we dedicate this children's ministries manual. They are not only gifts from God to us but in them we also see a reflection of God's love for us and all His children.

Heather Haworth
BUC Children's Ministries Director

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The old African proverb rightly states, "It takes a village to bring up a child." This thought can be echoed regarding this volume, "It takes a team to produce a manual." In this case it includes:

- ❖ all those in the British Union Conference Children's Ministries team
 - Pastor Bernie and Karen Holford, specialists in Children's Ministries, and their secretary, Anna McLarty, who typed up stories.
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Without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit you would not be holding this manual. God motivated all these individuals to help share in a clear and urgent manner that the mission of the church is about bringing salvation to all, and that means children too.

God bless,

Heather

BUC Children's Ministries Director

INTRODUCTION

The most popular Christian festival is Christmas. Even non-church attenders find it appealing not just because of the festivities but because it centres around a baby. The birth of a baby is still the greatest miracle of human experience. More time, money and love is invested in a child's welfare than almost any other relationship. Driven by paternal love, a child can take a centre stage in a home. The commercial world thrives on such love and aims its advertising at parents for the first and second year of childhood. Thereafter the adverts are geared at the child. By the age of sixteen it is the media that has the most influence in our child's life, not the parents, not the church.

What the secular world has recognised the church is slowly making steps in addressing. This manual is one such step in awakening the church leaders, parents and congregations to the necessity of not judging how children should be involved in church according to their own era. What the twentieth century teenager experienced is now the culture of the "tweenies" – pre-teens 8-12 year olds.

"Children who are currently in our churches are called the Millennial Generation or Postmodern kids. They are children born between 1980 and 2001. Postmoderns believe that reality or truth is always subjective. It grows out of one's perspective and life experiences. What is true for one community is not necessarily true for another. Hence, there is no common standard to measure or judge others' beliefs, behaviour, or values. Postmoderns also believe that reason is not the only way to discover truth. Emotions, intuition, and other modes are valid as well.

Postmodern children are cyberliterate and technology dependent and are able to multitask. They value freedom of choice and are tolerant of differing opinions, cultures and lifestyles. They are experience-oriented."¹

How would Jesus respond to the 21st century child? In the first chapter 'Children Matter to Jesus' there is an insight to what his response would be to this question. How would Jesus challenge us to respond to His children? His answer to the enquiry "Which is the greatest commandment?" gives you and me His guidance, "love God and love your neighbour". Who is my neighbour? Is it only adults? No, neighbours are teens, tweenies and toddlers too. When we love God we put Him first in our life. When we love our neighbour then we are willing to put their needs before our own.

The children in your neighbourhood, your children in church will not respond to the gospel or continue attending church until the adult Christians truly live out the greatest commandment in a caring and practical manner. The doctrinal truths must never alter as they are Biblical but the cultural and traditional views of the church must respond and prayerfully look at how 'church' is done. The worship survey, in part three, will help the church form ideas of how this can be done. Sharing this manual will also enlighten, and bring awareness, to the easy ways we can evangelise children and prevent prodigals.

Children want to evangelise too. Most attendees at Holiday Bible School and clubs are brought along by their church-going friends and family. When we invest in running child-inclusive mission projects the church benefits enormously.

"Children do not keep good news to themselves. They are great salesmen. Before you know it, they are telling their friends and neighbours as well as their parents. Pretty soon your room is filled to capacity with curious children who want a share of that interesting story. What a wonderful sharing mechanism!

Yes, if you tell a child, you'll tell the whole world. This calls for more urgency to strengthen and enlarge our ministry to children so that they can impact the world around them. However, for the last several years, children's leaders everywhere have been talking about the need to adapt and change our ways of working with this *postmodern* generation. Ministering to them may require that we understand their worldview or we will not be effective in telling them the good news of salvation."²

Jesus' second coming is near. It is time not just to talk about the need to adapt and change. It is time we did it! The baby around whom the first advent centres is coming again. At His second advent Jesus will ask, "Where are my lambs?" What will be your answer?

¹ KidsNewsZone, GC. Vol 3, #2, 2006

² *Ibid.*

QUOTATIONS FROM ELLEN G WHITE

Church leaders and members to call children to salvation

- When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages – to officers of the church, to ministers, helpers and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, ‘Suffer them to come;’ as if He would say, They will come if you do hinder them.

Do not speak of religion as something that children cannot understand, or act as if they were not expected to accept Christ in their childhood.

The Desire of Ages, p 517

- As the Holy Spirit moves upon the hearts of the children, co-operate with His work.

Teach them that the Saviour is calling them, that nothing can afford him greater joy than for them to give themselves to Him in the bloom and freshness of their years.

The Saviour regards with infinite tenderness the souls whom He has purchased with His blood. They are the claim of His love. He looks upon them with unutterable longing. His heart is drawn out not only to the best trained and most attractive children, but to those who by inheritance and through neglect have objectionable traits of character.

Evangelism, p 580

- God wants every child of tender age to be His child, to be adopted into His family.

Counsels to Teachers, p 169

- It is during the first years of a child's life that his mind is most susceptible to impressions either good or evil. During these years decided progress is made in either right direction or wrong one.

Counsels to Teachers, p 132

- Children of eight, ten or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion. Do not teach your children with reference to some future period when they shall be old enough to repent and believe the truth. If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners, and of the way of salvation through Christ.

Testimonies, Vol 1, p 400

Adults to be loving positive role models

- ... there is danger that both parents and teachers will command and dictate too much, while they fail to come sufficiently into social relation with their children or scholars... If they would gather the children close to them, and show that they love them and would manifest an interest in all their efforts, and even in their sports, sometimes even being a child among them, they would make the children very happy and would gain their love and win their confidence...

Child Guidance, p 265

- It is because so many teachers and parents profess to believe the Word of God while their lives deny its power, that the teaching of Scripture has no greater effect upon the youth. At times the youth are brought to feel the power of the Word. They see the preciousness of the love of Christ. They see the beauty of His character, the possibilities of a life given to His service. But in contrast they see the life of those who profess to revere God's precepts.

Sermons to include children

- At every suitable opportunity let the story of Jesus' love be repeated to the children. In every sermon let a little corner be left for their benefit. The servant of Christ may make lasting friends of these little ones. Then let him lose no opportunity of helping them to become more intelligent in a knowledge of the Scriptures. This will do more than we realize to bar the way against Satan's devices. If children early become familiar with the truths of God's Word, a barrier against ungodliness will be erected, and they will be able to meet the foe with the words, "It is written."

Gospel Workers, p 208 (1915)

God wants children as little missionaries

- God wants every child of tender age to be His child, to be adopted into His family...

In their early years children may be useful in God's work... He will give them His grace and His Holy Spirit, that they may overcome impatience, fretfulness, and all sin. Jesus loves the children, He has blessings for them and He loves to see them obedient to their parents.

He desires them to be His little missionaries, denying their own inclinations and desires for selfish pleasure to do service for Him: and this service is just as acceptable to God as is the service of grownup children.

Adventist Home, p 486

Children will work when others cannot

- When heavenly intelligences see that men are no longer permitted to present the truth, the Spirit of God will come upon children, and they will do a work in the proclamation of the truth which the older workers cannot do because their way will be hedged up.

In the closing scenes of this earth's history many of these children and youth will astonish people by their witness to the truth, which will be borne in simplicity, yet with spirit and power.

They have been taught therefore of the Lord, and their hearts have been softened by a careful and prayerful study of the Bible.

In the near future many children will be endued with the Spirit of God and will do a work in proclaiming the truth to the world that at that time cannot well be done by the older members of the church.

Adventist Home, p 489

For more quotes go to www.childrenministries.gc.adventist.org under E G White and Children.