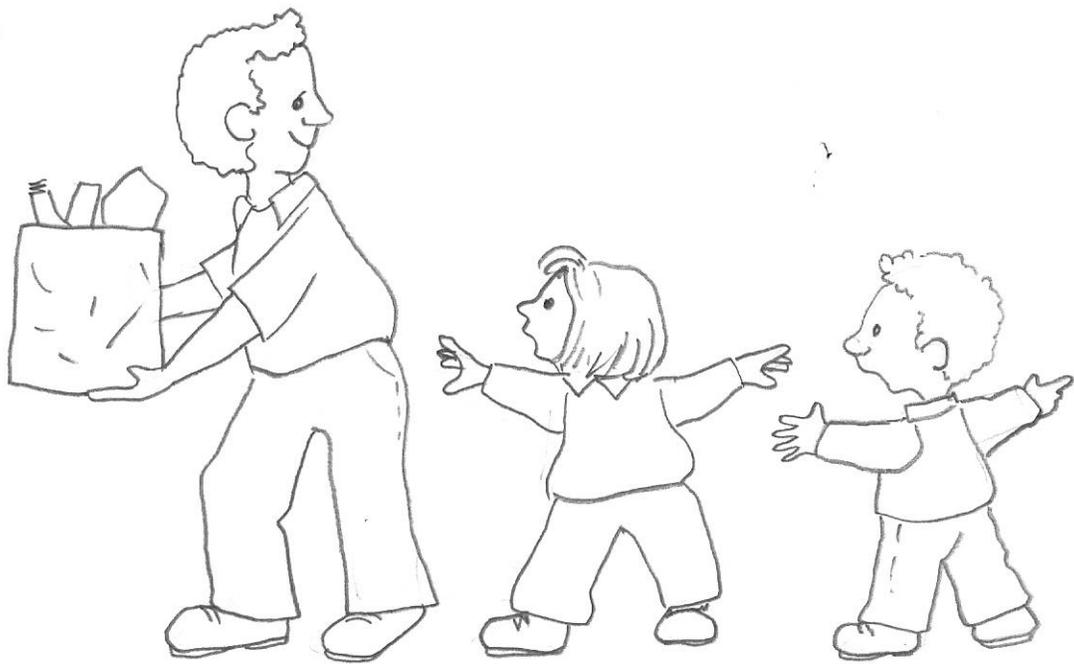


PART THREE

Easy Evangelism



CHILD INCLUSIVE CHURCH

There are two biblical concepts that are the basis, the inspiration, and the goal of the Children's Ministries Department. We are *teaching to serve and serving to teach* the younger members of the Lord's flock.

We turn to the life of Christ for principles of working with children.

Jesus as a child. Even though the account of the first years of Jesus' life is short, Luke 2:52 describes the harmony of His growth during his childhood. In the book *Desire of Ages*, p. 70, there is this promise: "Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did. As we try to become acquainted with our heavenly Father through His word, angels will draw near, our minds will be strengthened, our characters will be elevated and refined."

Jesus as an adult, relating to children. Matthew 19:14 expresses the care Jesus had for the young ones: "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them." This represented a double blessing, for Jesus "planted in their minds the seeds of truth, which in after years would spring up" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 515).

Children were also a blessing to Jesus, for the presence of the little ones "refreshed His spirit when oppressed" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 511).

What a privilege we have as leaders to follow these divine precepts! That is why the mission of the Children's Ministries in our church is "to help each Adventist child to develop a redemptive and permanent friendship with Jesus, preparing them for service and commitment to the church until His coming."

And as elders look at the various departments of the church, they will certainly ask, "How can I support, encourage and promote the Children's Ministries department in my church? How can I involve it within total church planning?"

The elder can make it a point to know the activities of the Children's Ministries and the dates of their events so that none of them are missing from the church's annual calendar. There are the traditional and familiar programmes as well as other programmes that are less familiar during the church calendar of events.¹

The worship survey (at the end of this section) will help in planning a more varied approach to running all its services. Ask the children to verbally respond to it. Listen to their dreams and include them in your worship planning.

Fortunately our world church is doing well in nurturing children in some aspects of its programmes:

- Pathfinderism
- Sabbath School
- ADRA mission events
- Church schools
- Publishing children's books

Your local church's attitude towards being child inclusive can be ascertained by filling in the *children and church questionnaire*. For most churches a good reason to improve in

this area comes from knowing that research indicates that the churches which are involving children in their services are amongst some of the fastest growing churches around the world. Working with our own children is the most inspiring and fruitful mission-field that we have available to us. It is "easy evangelism".

Part Three will look at what we are doing well and give ideas on how to easily include activities that will make our churches a place children love to attend and become active members.

Time to Reflect

1. Can you think of ways attending church can be made more attractive for you? Do you think church can be more attractive for children too?
2. Prayerfully read, or reread, the "Growing God's Love" section. Take notes of ways you could implement the ideas so your church could become more child inclusive. Put each idea on a single piece of paper.
3. Spread out these notes and put them in order of priority. Share the results with your Children's Ministries leader, pastor and church board.
4. Encourage the use of the Worship Survey. This will focus your church on being active in making services more child inclusive and more interesting for adults too.

Learn More

- *Christian Life & Children*. Publisher LBC, Crusaders & CPAS.
- *Leading Children*, by P Frank. Publisher, St Johns' Nottingham & Children's Ministries.
- *Where are the Children?*, by M Withers. Publisher, Barnabas.
- *Heirs Together*, by D Kirk. Published by Kevin Mayhew.
- *Learning Styles*, by M LeFever. Publisher, Kingsway.
- *Creating a Learning Church*, by M Cooling. Publisher, Barnabas
- *Great Worship for Kids*. A series of books published by Standard Publishing.
- *Cultivating All Age Worship*, by C Hammond. Publisher, CPAS.
- *Who Cares?* Pastoral care for under 11's. Editor A Holt. Publisher, CPAS & Scripture Union.

Useful websites.

These are included in each section of Part Three.

¹ *Children's Ministries*, by M Samojluk, South American Division. *Elders Digest* Jan/March 2008

Children and church questionnaire

Mark 0 for 'Not true at all' and 5 for 'This is clearly our church's belief and practice'.

1.	Children are considered important in our church.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2	People in our church feel comfortable with children.	0 1 2 3 4 5
3	Children in our church are happy to be there.	0 1 2 3 4 5
4	People in our church are willing to support children's work by praying.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5	People in our church are keen to see children involved in worship throughout the year.	0 1 2 3 4 5
6	Children are encouraged to join in with other church activities as well as worship.	0 1 2 3 4 5
7	The adults in our church talk to the children and know their names.	0 1 2 3 4 5
8	When the children enter the church, they are ignored, but someone greets their parents.	0 1 2 3 4 5
9	We want children in our church to keep the church going in the future.	0 1 2 3 4 5
10	There is evidence around the building of the children's involvement in church life.	0 1 2 3 4 5
11	Our church wants our children to see that God loves them and has a purpose for their lives.	0 1 2 3 4 5
12	Our church wants children to become active members of the church today.	0 1 2 3 4 5
13	We want children to be able to look back, later in life, with warm affection at what church meant to them.	0 1 2 3 4 5

15. Number the items below (from 1 to 11) that you would like to hear preached more often, in order of preference.

(1 is highest priority and 11 the lowest)

- Doctrine
- Fundamental beliefs
- Biblical studies
- History
- World Events
- Standards
- Family Life
- Christ's Life
- Controversial topics
- Inspiration
- Other (specify).....

16. How long would you like the sermon presentation to be? *(Indicate ONLY one box)*

- 15 mins. 20 mins.
- 30 mins. 40 mins.
- 50 mins.

17. Would you like to try switching Divine service time with Sabbath School time?

- Yes No

18. Would you prefer to have Divine Service in the morning or afternoon?

- Morning Service Afternoon Service

Please indicate preferences below.

- 11.15 a.m. - 12.15 p.m. 2.30 p.m. - 3.30 p.m.
- 11.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. 3.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.
- 10.00 a.m. - 11.00 a.m. 3.30 p.m. - 4.30 p.m.
- Other (specify).....

19. Would you like our service to include:

(tick all that apply.)

- An outreach segment
- A sharing time
- A Scripture Fact Spot
- Church News Spot (local & world)
- Other (specify).....

20. The programme presented each week should be:

- in the same order and have the same features
- in the same order with a variety of features
- in a varied order and have the same features
- in a varied order with a variety of features
- Other (specify).....

21. Would you like refreshments (drinks)

- After divine service? Yes No
- Between Sabbath School & Divine Service? Yes No

22. How often would you like refreshments? Weekly Monthly Never

23. Would you be willing to be part of the rota to cater for providing refreshments?

- Yes No

PATHFINDERS

The Pathfinder organisation is sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist church in the UK but is part of an organisation that spans the world and numbers over 2.75 million members.

Activities

There are opportunities to develop skills and crafts in nearly three hundred activities for which badges can be awarded and placed on the uniform. Some of the highlights of Pathfinding are: campouts, where skills in the following areas can be learnt and developed: map and compass work, camp craft, studying stars, pioneering, rope work and lashings, camp fires and outdoor cooking, nature studies, health and fitness, serving the local community as well as those abroad.

Children/young people from the church and community are attracted to the programme. Every year, there is a Pathfinder Camporee planned at regional, national or international level. This is a time when Pathfinders take the opportunity to meet and enjoy having fun with others from other parts of the UK or Europe.

The Pathfinder club involves a number of age groups in its curriculum:

Young ones

- Little Lambs, 4 years old
- Eager Beavers – 5 years old

This was first introduced for the children of those teaching Pathfinders, but is available for parents to use at home.

Adventurers

- Busy Bee, 6
- Sunbeam, 7
- Builder, 8
- Helping Hand, 9

Pathfinders

- Friends, 10
- Companions, 11
- Explorer, 12
- Voyager, 14
- Guide, 15
- Ambassador, 16-21

Mature Pathfinders

- The 16 plus age group can continue training to become Master Guides. On completion they will lead out in their local church districts or/and in the regional organisation.

For more information to your Conference/Mission website.

SABBATH SCHOOL

➤ THE MANY GIFTS OF GRACELINK

Biblically Based

GraceLink is a 12-year curriculum comprising 624 lessons, all of which are firmly grounded in Scripture. Most lessons are story-based, some on scriptural references that teach a specific doctrine. Each story has been selected to develop one of the four dynamics of the GraceLink series: grace, worship, community, and service.

Because each lesson centers on a single message, each telling of a Bible story is focused—not simply “watered-down.” Often a story is revisited elsewhere in the curriculum with another point of focus. This is a thematic curriculum; only one teaching point is made at a time from a specific Bible story.

Spirit of Prophecy Supported

Every lesson is supported by the writings of Ellen G. White. The Conflict of the Ages series is referred to most often. Other references include *Steps to Christ*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, and *Christ’s Object Lessons*. In some instances quotations are included within the story; however, in most cases references are included in the Teacher Enrichment section of the teaching guide.

SDA® Bible Commentary Use

Writers regularly referred to *The Seventh-day Adventist® Bible Commentary* series to grasp understanding of the message being taught. Editors always referred to those references during the editing process. Quotations from the *Commentaries* are often used in the Teacher Enrichment section of the teaching guide.

Biblical Research Institute Involvement

During the editorial process, all GraceLink manuscripts were reviewed for theological soundness by the director or associates of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference. Dr. Angel Rodriguez and his associates gave close attention to all lessons and teaching guides.

Doctrines and Principles Taught

Virtually every Adventist doctrine is taught at some point during the 12-year curriculum. Even very young children learn of baptism by immersion, the state of the dead, the Sabbath, and other essential doctrines. These and others are taught through stories in coherent thematic clusters and reinforced through activities during the Sabbath School hour. The bedrock Adventist message is taught at every level with the most effective methods of instruction.

Educationally Sound

For the first time in the history of Adventism, Sabbath School lessons for children have been formulated with the use of current educational theory and methods. Curriculum consultants directed the production of the original curriculum plan and outlined the teaching methods to be used. Writers from every world division followed these plans as they participated in the development of lessons. Same message—new methods.

International Participation

During the early planning stage, Sabbath School and Children's Ministries directors from every world division met together with General Conference personnel and the curriculum consultants in England for a week to discuss and provide direction as the work moved forward. This group provided the focus for those who later developed and wrote the lessons. A few months later, more than sixty people—representing every world division—met at Andrews University to begin the writing stage. As the work progressed, over a two-year span, small groups of writers met at the General Conference to produce additional lessons for each level of the curriculum. Again, these writers came from around the world.

Active Programmes

Today we know that we must approach learning activities through a variety of methods. We know that children remember about 30 to 35 percent of what they hear, about 40 to 50 percent of what they see, and about 90 percent of what they do. The emphasis in GraceLink is placed on all three. Children are often guided through activities that incorporate hearing, seeing, and doing—and require activity. Thus today's Sabbath School classes often nurture an exuberant atmosphere in which children actively pursue learning under the direction of a leader or teacher.

These activities are reinforced through the debriefing process in which children are led to consider "What did you learn?" "How do you feel about it?" "What are you going to do about it?" This process deals with knowledge, emotion, and application. Educational research tells us that people remember more when they are emotionally involved and that pleasant emotions enhance positive learning. Debriefing is essential to active learning. It is the means by which children (and adults) understand and apply what they have learned.

Four Dynamics

The four dynamics incorporated in the GraceLink curriculum provide a balanced programme and form the core of the curriculum. These are:

- **Grace** (Jesus loves me.)
- **Community** (We love each other.)
- **Worship** (I love Jesus.)
- **Service** (We love you too.)

Grace is the demonstration of God's love for us. He sent His Son to die in our place, to redeem us, and to accept us unto Himself that we might live with Him forevermore.

Worship is our response to God's love. Because He first loved us, we love Him. Because He gave His Son to die in our place, we worship Him. We worship Him through praise, through our lifestyle, and through our stewardship of all that He has provided for us.

Community involves our relationship with those around us, with our immediate family, our church family, our friends, and with other Christians who know God's love.

Service is our outreach to others, to those who may not know and love the Jesus we serve. It is to them that we give the invitation to become a part of the family of God. It is to them that we take a message of hope for the future.

Total-Hour Teaching

Past programming for children's Sabbath School was rarely designed to complement the topic of the lesson for the day. About 40 minutes was spent on material unrelated to the lesson topic. At the most, younger children spent 15 to 20 minutes sitting in their chairs, listening to a teacher tell the lesson story as she or he placed felts on a felt board. The GraceLink curriculum provides total-hour teaching, in which every activity focuses on the central message of the Sabbath School lesson for that day. Objectives are clearly stated in the teaching guides. Activities are carefully outlined to teach to the stated point of the lesson. The entire lesson focuses on one carefully determined objective for the day.

Learning Styles

Educational research has determined that individuals learn best through a particular style or way of learning. Although each person may use all four of the identified styles or ways of learning at one time or another, most of us depend on one major application. These four learning styles are incorporated into *every* GraceLink lesson. This makes it possible for every child to grasp the point of the lesson and to understand it in her or his own way.

The four learning styles are:

- **Imaginative.** The imaginative learner asks, "Why should I learn this?" The "Readiness Activity" in each lesson appeals to this type of learner.
- **Analytical.** The analytical learner asks, "What do I need to learn?" The "Bible Lesson" section deals with the content of the lesson, the memory verse, and small group Bible study—it offers the facts, the knowledge, that the analytical learner seeks.
- **Commonsense.** The commonsense learner wants to know, "How does this work in my life?" The "Applying the Lesson" section offers the opportunity to explore how the lesson can be applied in practical ways.
- **Dynamic.** The dynamic learner wants to know "What can I do with this? How can I share this idea with others?" Opportunity to explore this option is given in the "Sharing the Lesson" section of each lesson.

Outreach—a Lifestyle

Every lesson plan includes a section that calls for sharing what the child has learned with someone else—a friend, teacher, parent, relative, neighbour, or other person with whom the child frequently comes in contact. The child is often asked to make something in Sabbath School to give that person, and while giving it tell the person something about the story or lesson they have studied that day. The goal is to help children become so comfortable with sharing what they have learned that they will continue doing so throughout their lifetime.

Bible Study Emphasis

Every lesson in every level of this 12-year programme includes Bible study appropriate to the age of the child. Even children in Beginner Sabbath School learn that the Bible is God's Word. Teachers at that level are asked to open their Bibles when teaching the memory verse and show that verse to the children, to identify the Bible as God's Word as they use the Bible to teach the memory verse. In addition the teacher is directed to show the children the verses on which that day's Bible story is based and to read those verses aloud, pointing to each word or phrase as she or he reads. Kindergarten children also learn that their stories come from the Bible. Primary children learn how to find and read texts that provide a background for the lesson of the day and/or lead to more discussion of the lesson objective. Juniors are directed to individual daily Bible study to learn more of the story or to apply concepts taught.

Inclusive Art

The goal of the art in GraceLink, provided expressly for children by illustrators who specialize in art for children, is to provide a bias-free visual commentary integral to the text. People are depicted in a way that captures attitudes, personality, and ideas—to be symbolic of the points the lesson is trying to make. More "realistic" representations of people, which usually depict one culture or ethnic group to the exclusion of others, are avoided. Realistic, full-colour detail is used, however, in depicting cultural details of life in the Middle East during Bible times, such as the kinds of ovens used in the baking of bread.

Calls for Decisions

Throughout each lesson children are invited to make decisions—how would they apply concepts studied in their own life? How could they use what they have learned to help themselves, their families, their friends? Questions such as "What could you do to . . ." or "How important is this to you and/or your family?" are frequently asked throughout the entire teaching/learning experience each week.

Recommended age groupings

It depends on the local church situation how the classes are formed age wise.

Beginner	0-2	Two year cycle
Kindergarten	3-5	Two year cycle
Primary	6-9	Four year cycle
Powerpoint	10-14	Four year cycle
Real time faith	12-14	Two year cycle (alternative to powerpoint)
Cornerstone	15-18	Four year cycle

Job descriptions for Children's Ministry and Sabbath School Personnel

- Children's Sabbath School Leader Ministry Description
www.plusline.org/article.php?id=222
- Children's Sabbath School Assistant Ministry Description
www.plusline.org/article.php?id=223
- Children's Sabbath School Teacher Ministry Description
www.plusline.org/article.php?id=224

Children's Sabbath School Lessons

Children's Sabbath School lessons are available from the following websites:

- <http://www.adventist.org> – then click on:
 - Directories
 - Directory of General Conference Organisations
 - Children's Ministries
 - Links
 - Grace Link

10-18 year olds can do their lessons online:

- <http://powerpoints.adventist.org>
- <http://realtimefaith.adventist.org>
- <http://cornerstoneconnections.adventist.org>

Teaching Resources

- Children's Sabbath School Teachers' resources
<http://childmin.com/SS/index.html>
- Mission stories and resources
<http://www.adventistmission.org/>
- Sabbath School resources
<http://www.childmin.com/eng/resources.php>
- Crafts, puzzles and links to provide fun learning resources for almost every Bible story
<http://www.mssscrafts.com/>
- Archive of ideas and activities
www.lightlive.org
- Powerpoint pictures
www.ebibleteacher.com
- All levels and components of the entire GraceLink curriculum, as well as Real-Time Faith and Cornerstone Connections, are free online to download in the English, Spanish, and French languages. They are available from:
<http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/article.php?id=17>
- Audio podcasts for Kindergarten and Primary levels of GraceLink in the English, Spanish, and French languages are available at www.gracelink.net/podcast
- Video animations for the Kindergarten level is currently available in English at <http://gracelink.net/podcast> and on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/sabbathschool> Spanish and French languages should be available shortly.
- View memory verse activities for the PowerPoint level at <http://www.juniorpowerpoints.org/>

For parents and leaders with iPhones, there is an iPhone app that covers all our resources for Beginners through CQ. The app also has Cool Tools for Sabbath School which comes in handy for Sabbath School leaders at all levels. It is available in the iTunes app store at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sabbath-school/id363595588?mt=8>

➤ TEACHING 'FAITH COMMUNITY' SKILLS

One year, Crieff SdA Church chose the building of a 'Faith Community' as its vision. This vision includes:

- faith in God
- faith in each other
- building a community that honours God

The values that we believe will deliver this vision are:

- discipleship (modelling spirituality)
- training (equipped gifts)
prayer and worship (submission to God)
- accountability (openness to each other)
- communication (cascading inspiration)

The challenge in the Children's Sabbath School is to include the children in this vision. Our Sabbath School has:

- small class sizes (eg Kindergarten/3 children)
- well disciplined children who have developed a strong interest in the Bible and things spiritual both from home and previous Sabbath School teachers
- very willing and able children with a wide range of interests and gifts
- many youth at the lower end of their teens
- considerable willingness from the earliteens to take on more responsibility
- many skilled adults who felt they had 'done their stint' in children's Sabbath School but are willing to make smaller, possibly irregular contributions
- older youth (upper teens, early twenties) who are ripe for leadership roles and full of ideas and energy and very able to model the values necessary in faith community building
- supportive parents
- a church community with good links in the wider community
- small, interleading rooms plus one large hall

We decided that one of the best ways to build such a community was to 'be one' in Children's Sabbath School. Using this as our starting point, we have put all the children and earliteens together in one group, dividing broadly along age lines for lesson study. Together, in our own Children's Faith Community, we are encouraging the children to grow the group for themselves through:

- a 'buddy system' which pairs older and younger members of the group (developing faith in each other/modelling spirituality)
- non-competitive games (building a community)
- faith journaling (growing faith in God)
- a choice between 4 'learning through doing' activities designed to teach the particular theme of the lessons for each week (training in worship, service, grace, etc)
- team building exercises and games (learning faith in each other)
- emphasis on developing emotion skills (developing accountability)
- participating in the leadership team and meeting with adult members of the team from 9.30 – 10.00 each Sabbath morning to:
 - pray for the group
 - pray for a particular child each week

- do skills training
- talk about issues arising from the previous week
- address needs of specific children
- assign tasks for the day
- plan future Sabbath Schools, etc

The intention is to help the children to develop their own Faith Community, in ways that are meaningful to them. While adults are leading out initially and provide much of the training in interpersonal skills and Bible knowledge, the aim is to transfer even these responsibilities to the older youth as they are interested in taking on more responsibility. To help them in this we have combined the Children's Sabbath School budget with that for the Youth so that we can invest in computer equipment, musical instruments, art equipment and sound and lighting equipment for the music groups and mime/drama groups. The investment in equipment is based on a 'taste and see' scheme, which borrows equipment first to see if an idea works. If it does, we will buy it.

Feedback is a very important part of our community building. We talk about what we want to do, how it relates to our overall vision of a Faith Community, how it is going, how we could improve it, how individual children in the group are dealing with issues and what we can do to be of assistance. We also plan to have a quarterly 'open session' with parents, grandparents, and anyone who is interested, in which we (children and adults) explain what we are doing, why, how it is going, and listen to other church people for their ideas, concerns, etc.

We have been using this approach and so far we have noticed the following:

- everyone has gifts, and children who feel safe are very willing to share them
- older children are taking a real interest in their younger friends – there are some great friendships forming
- younger children really thrive with an older friend – their self-confidence has grown and they feel valued in the group
- children who struggle for whatever reason are bathed in love and acceptance from their peers
- the enthusiasm of adults who 'occasionally contribute' is really infectious (they aren't worn down by the weekly routine)
- children who learn through their hands are doing really well!
- boys (even earlteen ones) are eager to participate because it belongs to them
- discipline is handled by the group rather than by the adult leaders, and is seldom required
- planning is easier because four 'hands on activities', music, theme talks, emotional skills training, journaling, etc is covered with the whole group
- the pressure of limited space is reduced because less time is spent in the small rooms
- we are all having FUN! There is such joy to be found in learning, and we are all part of it
- Sabbath School lesson teachers are able to put all their planning into their lesson
- children are showing increased responsibility toward other areas of church life and are taking a real pride in 'our Sabbath School'
- children are so comfortable that they are inviting their friends to come with them to Sabbath School

(Article by Crieff Sabbath School leadership, 2003)

WORSHIPPING WITH CHILDREN

Worship is a vital part of our life together as a church. Children are an important part of our community of faith, and they need to experience joyful worship together with other children and adults.

There are different models of worshipping with children.

Some of them are:

1. A service for children whilst their parents are elsewhere
2. A general service adults and children together
3. A service for the whole church that ensures that children's needs are met throughout the service as well as the needs of the adults
4. A children's 'spot' within a main service (story, prayer, song, etc)
5. Special children led service for the whole church, supported by adults

There are pros and cons for each kind of worship situation. Option 5 can be done occasionally. However, we tend to prefer options 2 or 3 because:

- When children and adults worship together they can learn from each other
- It is good for everyone to be aware of the needs of the others in the church
- There is a greater sense of community and shared experience
- Adults and parents can help model appropriate worship
- Adults and parents can help the leaders by assisting with the children if necessary
- The worship experience can give parents new ideas that they can use in their family worship times at home
- The children don't feel isolated from the idea of 'church' – Real church is for them too.

It's important for churches to look at their total approach to church and worship and the needs of the members and to consider how they can involve children. Children need to feel comfortable in the church service, and to feel that church is 'theirs' and not just for grownups. We often 'lose' our children's interest in church when they are infants and they realise that there's nothing for them in the service. Many of our children never switch back on to church again.

Principles underlying worship with children:

God-centred

Everything we do must point to God and give Him glory

Everything we do must fit our total understanding of who God is

God and our church

What is our church like now?

What possibilities and limitations might it have if we want to worship with children?

What gifts can our members offer? How can we use the existing physical structure and programme structure of the church? What programmes does our church already provide for children?

Consider the place where you'll hold the worship

- Is it comfortable? Is it flexible? Is it attractive?
- Does it have a good P.A. system?
- Does it have carpet for quieting extra sounds, or comfort and safety, and for children to sit on at the front, etc?
- What are the strengths and limitations of the space provided for the worship?
- What are the members' ideas about how this space should be used, and how flexible are these ideas?
- What are the ideas about children and reverence in your church?
- It's best if everyone involved in the service feels comfortable with how the space will be used.

Consider the time of your worship

- The times of our church services in England are based on the best time for farmers, to fit around their milking times!
- Why are we so rigid about service times? It's good that visitors know when church will start. It's good to have a clear routine that people know.
- Is there anything about service times in the Bible?
- Is this practical today when so many families are rushed every morning to get to school and work? Would it be more helpful to discuss the best time for the families in your church?
- How many of you have never been rushed and stressed on Sabbath morning? Does the stress and rush add to your sense of rest? What messages do children get from parents who are stressed and hurried on Sabbath?
- What about Sabbath School at 11.00am, then lunch and a service in the afternoon?
- What about a family service on Friday evening at the church, to welcome the Sabbath all together?
- What about a family service on Sabbath afternoon followed by a pot-luck tea together, and then a social activity in the winter and walk, etc in the summer?
- How often should we have an all-age/family service? - Every week? Every month? Once a quarter?

Consider the reasons you have for worshipping together

- See the bullet points on the first page of this article for ideas

Consider the skills and abilities and time constraints of those helping to co-ordinate the worship

Songs

- Expressing good theology
- Contemporary
- Lively and active
- Relating to issues children have in their everyday life
- Good music backing, either on tape or live
- Involve the children in the music – instruments

Bible

- Use a contemporary version
- Try different ways to present the Scriptures – drama, actions, visual aids, banners, etc
- Can use a simple verse and teach the children the verse in a creative way as part of the service – see ideas on separate page

- Have children read the Bible passage
- Print it out big for them to read easily, especially if they're nervous

Prayer

- Use creative ways to pray
- We often have families pray together using a creative technique
- Or use a group prayer technique
- Make prayer exciting and attractive
- Collect prayer requests and answers in interesting ways to help children learn that God listens and their prayers make a difference
- See separate section of prayer ideas

Teaching – Bible Experience

- Be creative
- Take a whole new look at the story
- Find creative and interactive ways to tell the story
- Involve all the children where possible
- Be prepared to have a large space for the experience
- Brainstorm creative ideas with the worship group to give new ideas
- Involve children in sound effects of the story, acting out scenes spontaneously, touching, feeling and doing
- Think about all the senses and how they can explore the story
- Take a modern slant on an old story
- Relate the teaching to their everyday lives
- Help them to apply the lessons of the story with a piece of homework
- Involve the family in a response to the teaching
- Don't forget to invite the children to give their hearts to Jesus.

Aim to disciple the children and their families for Jesus

Children at Worship – Did you know that some of the fastest growing churches are those that actively involve children in their worship services? What could you do to involve the children in your church services? Visit the following website for ideas and more information:

<http://www.childrenatworship.org>

Family Worship Services

There are lots of resources and ideas for family services that involve all ages at:

<http://www.familyworship.org.uk>

Strategy for change

While some changes can be introduced by just doing it, most churches will have some members who violently oppose change of any kind. Anticipating opposition and planning a process for change can be well worth the extra time. The following are some steps to take in a planned change process:

- **Identify key leaders** in the church. Share your ideas individually with them. Seek their support. (They may feel slighted and work against you if you don't. They will probably support you if you do.)
- **Share your vision** by bringing together the key leaders you have talked to. Take them through the North American Division Family Friendly Church seminar. Listen to their suggestions and start building a shared vision for a Family Friendly Church.

- **Build a consensus** by developing goals, action steps, and deadlines. Assign responsibility for follow through. Remember to plan ways to be proactive with families. Work closely with family heads; they can sell new ideas to their family. But they may not be supportive if overlooked.
- **Warm the atmosphere** every step of the way. Help people feel comfortable discussing change, progress, and their vision.
- **Maintain your objectivity**. Don't take it personally if your ideas are rejected. Affirm any step in the right direction.
- **Don't give up** when your ideas get voted down, don't assume that the ideas were wrong. People need time to accept ideas. So network your ideas before bringing them to a vote again.
- **Start implementing change** as people accept the ideas. Make a start with the ideas that are accepted easily. Report successes and affirm those involved.
- **Delegate**, delegate, delegate.
- **Stop and evaluate progress**. Chart progress.
- **Seek help** to get momentum going if you find that you are stalled. Bring in your conference leader to speak. Enlarge your steering committee. Pray, pray, pray.¹

¹ *Family Friendly Church*. NAD Advent Source.

➤ CHILDREN'S STORY TIME

How did Jesus tell stories?

- He used stories from people's everyday experiences.
- He used visual illustrations from the scenery around him.
- His stories were short and memorable.
- They pointed to God's love and grace for people.
- He let people think about the meaning for themselves.
- People could listen to Jesus' stories all day long.

Why do we have children's stories in Church?

- Children's stories are the sermon for the children.
- It needs to tell them about God's love for them and to encourage them to want to have a relationship with Him, following Him because they are drawn by His love – this is what will build their faith and help to protect them from rebelling against God later.
- It needs to teach about God's grace – not His punishment. Children have usually already learned the lesson of 'Be sure your sins will find you out' from their own life experience!
- The story is not about scaring children into good behaviour because this doesn't encourage children to follow God because they love Him. Remember that 'there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.' 1 John 4:18 NIV. The story needs to make sense for the children – to connect with their experience of life and the world around them.
- Remember that the story is for the children, and it's to meet their needs – it's not there to entertain the adults.

Think about the children

- What are the usual ages of the children who come forward for the children's story?
- Are there more boys, or girls, or is it evenly spread?
- Where do they sit during the story? Are they comfortable, can they see you easily?
- What is their world like – what are the things they enjoy and are interested in?
- How long can they concentrate? Probably 5-7 minutes is enough.

Think about the story

- Does the story tell of the love of God and His grace?
- Does it teach a positive choice in a positive way?
- Often the greatest resources are your own personal experiences.
- Keep your ears and eyes open for stories everywhere, and keep a notebook of your ideas.
- Tell Bible stories from different perspectives – the animals, different people, the children etc.
- Does it have to be a story?
- Think about the power of useful object lessons, experiments, even 'tricks' with paper, or bringing in caged pets, etc. Sometimes there are useful stories in the strangest places!

Think about yourself

- Smile! Look warm and approachable. Use vocabulary the children will understand, and use a microphone so that everyone can hear.
- Speak with a clear voice.
- If you can – wear something bright and cheerful, or dress in costume.
- Be where the children can see you comfortably without craning their necks. Some down to their level. It's better not to be seen by the adults than not to be seen by the children.
- Practice the story before hand and learn it well so you can tell it creatively and with feeling.

- Memorise the punch-line well, if there is one.

Presentation

- Bring something to show the children, or something the children can feel, taste, smell or do.
- Could you hide the object in the church and ask the children to search for it? Could you let children unpack it from a big box, etc?
- Could you illustrate your children's story with a PowerPoint presentation, or short video clip or animation?
- Could the children help you act out a story?
- Could you use some simple puppets?
- Could the children and congregation help you to make sound effects or actions to illustrate your story?
- Be aware of any noise and mess that the story might make, and consider how you will manage this.
- Think about giving the children something to take away to remind them of the story.

For a selection of simple object lesson and interactive children's spot ideas see '100 Quick and Easy Worships for Kids', Karen Holford, Pacific Press, 2004, available from the ABC.

➤ CREATING SERMON WORKSHEETS

Sermon worksheets are especially designed to simplify the message to the children's level. They encourage the children to listen to the sermon for Bible verses, illustrations and other clues, as they work their way through the worksheets and answer the questions. Sermon worksheets can help the children bond to their minister. When he encourages them to come and show the finished work after the sermon, it gives the children a feeling of importance and belonging.

Some ministers make worksheets every week as a natural part of their sermon preparation. If a minister, however, feels that he is unable to do so, a lay person in the congregation, who is interested in this kind of ministry, can prepare the worksheets on his behalf.

HOW TO MAKE WORKSHEETS

1. Contact the minister who is preaching and ask for the following information:

- The scripture reading and all other scriptures to be quoted.
- The aim of the sermon (the message of the sermon should relate to the listener).
- Any illustrations to be used.
- Interesting details/stories used to make the sermon understood and remembered.
- The order in which the different items will be referred to.

2. Type or write your questions and activities on a sheet of paper.

Use pictures from resource books, colour books, old children's Sabbath School quarterlies, etc. If you have a computer you might use a desk top publishing programme with some religious graphics and download from such websites as included in Part Five – resource section.

3. Make sure each child gets a worksheet.

Let the deacons also have extra pencils available.

4. Encourage the parents to help the children, or to go through the worksheet with them later in the day.

WHAT TO INCLUDE

1. Bible texts with words missing for children to complete.
2. Questions about a Bible text, passage, or illustration that is used.
3. Multiple choice questions.
4. Mark in a box the number of times the minister uses a particular word in the sermon (this is especially good with topical sermons).
5. Coded messages.
6. Activities.
7. Give the children a challenge at the end of the sheet. This should be related to the aim of the sermon.

If possible, design the worksheets in such a way that they will help the children understand and accept the biblical principles in the sermons, and to apply them in their daily lives. These ideas can also be used within the text of the sermon too.

In preparing the worksheets, always remember that this is not something you do to entertain the children, or to keep them occupied during the sermon. The aim of the worksheet is to simplify the sermon message so the children can understand it, and to help them begin to

form habits of listening to sermons instead of being occupied with private activities. If the children are not actively involved in all aspects of the worship – the songs, prayers and the sermon – they are not worshipping.

TED Children's Ministries Teachers Resource Manual

Sermon worksheets are just one way of including children in an adult church service. The church can fill in the Worship Survey (which can be found at the end of the *Child Inclusive Church* section) to understand how the adults would like to make all their church programmes more suitable for themselves and for children. Ask the children how they would like the services to be more meaningful for them and how they would like to take part. Share with the church the adults and children's responses. Form a worship team to put into place all the suggestions so that week by week church will be more interesting and spiritually nurture all in its congregation.

➤ SPECIAL NEEDS

Children 'come' in all shapes and sizes as well as with differing abilities. Those with special needs can be more challenging but ministering to these children can equally be more rewarding.

The Adventist Special Needs Association, ASNA, is the support system for such parents and carers. The annual Special Needs Camp at Aberdaron has been a place, for many years, where families can enjoy a holiday and receive physical, emotional and spiritual nurture. This camp is also financially assisted by ADRA and the campsite run by the North England Conference.

Members in the local church can find ways of being child inclusive for those with special needs. One church held a special needs 'get together' on a Sabbath afternoon. Camphill, Birmingham, made the parents and their children [some of whom were adults] feel welcomed and affirmed. One adult, a non-member, joined the class too. Bible studies took place and a baptism resulted because someone had cared for those with special needs.

Core skills training, a course for those involved with children, now includes a module on special needs and can be bought, and downloaded from the internet www.coreskillsforchurches.com.

RESOURCES FOR THOSE MINISTERING TO SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

ASNA Adventist Special Needs Association

65 St Helens Avenue, Benson, Oxfordshire,
OX10 6RU

Tel: 01491 833 395

email: asna@special1.fsnet.co.uk

web site www.asna.info

Reg Charity No: 1100447

BUILD (Baptist Union Initiative with People with Learning Disabilities)

12 Barford Crescent, Kings Norton, Birmingham,
B38 0BH

Tel: 0121 433 5417

Christian Deaf Link UK

CDL UK, First Floor, 69 High Street, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 7EJ

Deaf Christian Network (Hands Together)

PO Box 212, Doncaster, South Yorkshire,
DN2 5XA

Tel: 01302 369684 (Voice/Minicom)

Fax: 01302 739660

email: handstogether@deafcn.freemove.co.uk

web site: www.handstogether.org.uk

National Resource Centre. It can provide ministry videos in sign language for people who are deaf.

Disability Network

Whitefield House, 186 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BT

Tel: 0207 207 2135

Fax: 0207 207 2150

email: rvalerio@eauk.org

An Evangelical Alliance network working with Christian disability organizations to effect change in the Church and society.

Disabled Christians Fellowship

(Address and Fax: see Through the Roof, p.44)

Tel: 01372 749955

email: jenny@throughtheroof.org

Network of Christian fellowship groups, which also provides accessible holidays.

Hard of Hearing Christian Fellowship

PO Box 91, Reading, RG1 5YR

Tel: 01189 872166

Fellowship for hard-of-hearing Christians. Advises churches on pastoral care and loop/equipment.

Lightwing Projects

91 Park Road, Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO31 7NE

Tel: 01983 882428

email: Braille@cfan.org.uk

web site: www.lightwing-projects.org

Produces Christian books and magazines in Braille by computer.

PO Box 351, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4XQ

Tel: 0118 950 8781

Fax: 0118 939 1683

email: info@prospects.org.uk

web site: www.prospects.org.uk

Scripture Union

207-209 Queensway, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK2 2EB

Tel: 01908 856000

Fax: 01908 856111

email: info@scriptureunion.org.uk

web site: www.scriptureunion.org.uk

Special Needs Camp

Mrs Joy Bussey, 2 Shakespeare Street, Watford,
WD24 5HF

Tel: 01923 461 044

email: js.bussey@ntlworld.com

Through the Roof

PO Box 353, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5WS

Tel: 01372 749 955

Minicom: 01372 737 041

Helpline: 01372 737 042

Fax: 01372 737 040

email: info@throughtheroof.org

web site: www.throughtheroof.org

Provides disability resources for the UK Christian community. Equips and advises churches.

Torch Trust for the Blind

Torch House, Hallaton, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 8UJ

Tel: 01858 555301

Fax: 01858 555371

email: info@torchtrust.org

web site: www.torchtrust.org

Provides resources for blind and visually impaired people. Literature in Braille, giant print and cassettes. Fellowship and holidays.

New Wine

New Wine Trust, 4a Ridley Avenue, Ealing, London, W13 9XW.

Tel: 0208 567 6717

email: info@new-wine.org

web site: www.new-wine.org (Click on 'summer conferences', then 'special needs'.)

We exist to equip local churches through training, events and resources - our main event being the summer conferences – to see Jesus' kingdom grow

➤ PRAYING WITH CHILDREN

As a person with a heart for children, you have a special place in God's work and a vital evangelistic ministry.

Here is a selection of creative ways to stimulate your reflecting on the prayers for the children in your church. Why not try to find at least one method that excites you and helps you lift the 'lambs' before the throne!

ACTS of Prayer!

Adoration

Praise God for this child!

What, specifically, has God done in this child's life that inspires your praise?

Confession

Do you have any attitudes, thoughts or biases relating to this child that you need to confess to God?

Thanksgiving

Thank God for the child.

List the many different qualities and gifts of the child for which you want to thank God.

Supplication

What specific prayer requests do you have for this child?

What specific prayer requests do you have for yourself as a Pastor of this child?

Other ways to pray for children

- Create a calendar so that in your personal prayer time you are praying for one specific child each week.
- Each day pray for one of the following areas of their life.
 1. Pray for the development of the child's personal relationship with our loving God.
 2. Pray for their family.
 3. Pray for the child's school and learning environment and their teachers.
 4. Pray for their relationships with their friends.
 5. Pray for the child's future – education, friends, health, direction, spirituality.
 6. Pray for a special need you know that the child has.
 7. Pray that the child will learn something special about God in church this week.

Written prayers

- Write out personalised prayers for each of the children in your church and give them the prayers to keep.
- If you are able to do so, create attractive prayer cards on your computer, to suit the ages of the children, and give them out from time to time.
- Post prayers written in a card or on a post card. Children love to get letters in the mail.
- Send prayers by email. Visit www.dayspring.com for free e-cards that you can send to any of the children that have email addresses. More and more children have addresses, or their parents do, and children love to receive emails. Dayspring has an exciting range of inspirational animated and musical e-cards for all kinds of occasions.

Praying for the Children in Church

- Encourage the children to bring their ongoing prayer requests and needs to the class for prayer.
- Gather the children in a circle and move around the group, placing your hand on each child's shoulder as you pray a sentence prayer especially for him or her.

Other ideas

- Create your own alphabet of God's characteristics and use these to inspire your praise and enrich your relationship with Him. Do this by thinking of as many qualities of God as you can that begin with each letter of the alphabet and then use these to inspire your worship and Bible study, as well as your prayers.
- Create a prayer network between the children's class teachers to support each other in prayer and to pray for the work of the children's ministry team.
- Invite parents of the children in your church to a special time of prayer once a quarter.
- *Praying for our children* website. In 2007 Debra Harris started in the North American Division, a prayer website: www.prayingforourchildren.com.

100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids and grown ups too

Karen Holford, Pacific Press, 2003 – available from the ABC

Use these ideas with the children to inspire their interest in prayer. These activities can help you to create an interactive prayer corner in your class room. Or you can make up prayer idea cards to send home with the children for them to experience with their families. Perhaps you could make up little packs of any extra items needed for the prayers to send home with the child.

There are also some creative prayer ideas on handouts that you can download from the SEC Children's Ministries website.

➤ CHILDREN'S CHURCH

One little boy attended a church service with his parents. The sermon went on and on and the boy became bored. Looking around he saw a memorial plaque on the church wall with lots of names engraved in. "What are all those names, Mummy?" he whispered. "Hush," his mother answered. The boy kept quiet for a few minutes, then he had another go. "What are all those names?" His mother looked at the memorial plaque and whispered. "Those are the names of people who died in service." The boy thought for a moment and whispered, "In a service like this?"

It is easy to smile at stories like this, but the situation is a lot more serious. We need to be concerned when we hear children say: "Church is so boring! Do we have to go?" We need to be concerned enough to actually do something about it?

Worship has been defined as "action toward God based on knowledge and feelings about God." If there is no action on the part of the children, they are not worshipping. They may be present. They may sit quietly and pass the time colouring, reading, and constructing airplanes from the church bulletin, but they are not worshipping.

Advantages of having a children's church

- Children feel they are important.
- The children's needs are met in a special way.
- Speakers talk to their level.
- Provides opportunities for children to participate and actively get involved.
- It is a training ground.
- The pastor can build up a special relationship with the children under his pastoral care.

Disadvantages

- Loss of a sense of belonging to the church family.
- Opportunities to get to know the church leaders and adult members of the congregation.
- Worshipping together with family members instead of being separated from them.
- The value of role modelling. Children learn by observing parents and other adults.

Getting started

- Talk with your pastor.
- Have church board permission.
- Prayerfully put together a team who are CRB checked.
- Arrange where/when to hold it.
- Decide whether to do it weekly, monthly or quarterly.
- Plan the curriculum. This is not another Sabbath School, so carefully choose your material.
- Remember children's church is for children and children do everything:
 - welcome church members and visitors
 - announce the hymns
 - have the opening prayer
 - do the scripture reading
 - special music
 - tape the sermon
 - collect and count the offering
 - role play a parable

- hold an illustration
- help with an object lesson
- make illustrated songs on overheads
- assist the deacons/deaconesses in preparing for the foot washing
- scripture readings with overheads (story wheel)
- Children are to understand that this is a time to worship God. Soft music played as they arrive enhances a worshipful attitude.
- Variation in topics and format helps to keep children interested in attending.
- Children leave to attend adult church, not at a set age, when they feel ready to join the other church service.

FORMAT

Worship – time of praise

Use song books, song posters, songs on powerpoint and illustrated by the children. Include songs for the older children as well as for the very young ones. Try from time to time to include some adult or youth songs. This will help the children join in the singing in the adult church service.

Giving

This is an excellent opportunity to teach stewardship.

- use scriptural reading about giving
- use material from the GC stewardship manuals
- tell a story about giving
- use an object lesson
- prepare a costumed presentation about giving

The child, who is trained to understand the concept of giving and tithe paying while young, may in a few years time be a supportive church member.

The 'giving time' also provides opportunities for children to give back to God some of their **gifts of ministry**. Even young children may learn that they can give their time, and talents, as well as their money to God. Encourage them to use their talents in ministry to one another. One child may sing, another play an instrument, draw a picture, or present a drama.

Preaching

If there is no minister available to give a mini-sermon, you will find a lot of help in any Bible story curriculum. If you use a SdA curriculum you can be sure that the material is doctrinally sound. But there is also much good material available, eg David Cooks, Group, Scripture Press, Scripture Union. Let the curriculum become your idea bank. Pray about it, study the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and other resource material.

This 'preaching' section should include a Scripture reading, a Bible story, illustrations/object lessons, etc. You may choose to preach a "first hand" sermon, that means, that you dress up as the person and speak as your Bible character. You may also choose to use a role-play, or powerpoint. Whatever you choose remember that the message is more important than the method. Be yourself and use a language that can be understood.

Illustrate as often as possible. A minister put a half-baked loaf of bread in the oven of the church, at the beginning of his Children's Church. During the church hour, the children

smelled the bread, and when it was done, they saw it, touched it, ate it, and finally listened to a sermon about Jesus being the Bread of Life. You can be sure that the children remembered that message, and I believe that the next time one of them smelled a newly-baked loaf of bread, they would remember the message of this sermon.

Do your best to insure that all the children are given opportunities to be involved. Some extroverted children will volunteer to act out every Bible story, but do not fail to recognize the quiet children as well. A shy child can hand out bulletins, hold the visual aid, or keep score in a quiz. A child who participates will be more apt to remember and apply the lesson throughout the week.

As soon as you introduce something new, there will almost always be some in the adult congregation who will be offended, especially if you use a role play or puppets. Talk to them, explain what you are doing and why (see article on Drama and the SdA church, available from BUC Children's Ministries department). Go slowly. It takes time to introduce something new. Don't ever be pushy.

Be ready in your preaching to change direction with the flow of the Holy Spirit or the attention span of the children.

Prayer

Always take time to pray with your helpers before the children arrive. If prayer is not an important part of our own Christian life, how can we help the children make it an important and meaningful part of their lives? Give the prayer time a prominent place. The prayer period is the children's opportunity to respond to God's call. It is wise to vary the prayer time and use different approaches, so the prayers do not become a boring exercise. For ideas, see the section *Praying for your Children* in this manual.

Other ideas

There are other elements that you can consider using in your programme, either on a regular basis or as an occasional special feature.

1. Children love stories. Find a good storyteller who could tell a character building story or Bible story.
2. There are a number of videos that are available with lessons for children. They can be used occasionally in place of the skit.
3. Puppets are always popular with children. Having the puppets act out a Bible story or a skit will grab the attention of the kids. (Some of your youth or adults may feel more comfortable with a puppet than acting out a skit.)
4. Interview a Bible character. Have a youth dress up as a familiar Bible character. Have the children interview him/her. This may also be done effectively with puppets. You may begin by playing "20 questions" with the children asking questions to try and guess who the Bible character is. Then have the children ask questions about a particular event in the life of this character.
5. Nature nuggets are a fun way to share God's creation. Animals, especially baby ones, are always a favourite with kids.
6. A special outdoor outing on a nice Sabbath day is a pleasant change of pace for church. Take the children outdoors to see something special or have a special story outside under a shady tree. Or have a "Bible character" tell a story. You can have a special place set up outside to look like the Biblical location of the story that is being told.
7. Some week have kids make a simple craft that will go along with the theme. The children will take it home and remember the lesson learned.

Reaping a harvest of children

It may be the prizes, the action songs, or the puppets – the fun part of Children's Church – that motivate some children to begin to attend, but as the Holy Spirit works with the children, it will be the warm and loving atmosphere we create, our friendships and love that will motivate them internally to keep attending and give their heart to Jesus.

TED Children's Ministries Resource Manual, p 226-265

➤ INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS AT CHURCH

Margaret Mead, renowned anthropologist, has said, "The continuity of all cultures depends on the living presence of at least three generations. One needs to learn how to be a child, a parent, and an elder in a particular cultural context." Intergenerational connections are important for adults as well as for children and youth. Unfortunately, today's family and community dynamics do not provide opportunities for these kinds of relationships.

Relationships that reach across generations bring richness and depth to character and have the power to influence the emotional and spiritual development of children and youth today. Hence, involving children, parents, and grandparents in intergenerational worships and activities within the church is invaluable. Mark DeVries, author of *Family-based Youth Ministry*, states, "Apart from the family... the church may be the only lifelong nurturing structure left. Only the church and the family can provide Christian nurture from birth to old age and even death." Yes, the church has the capacity to nurture people at each stage of life and connect the generations to one another.

Why are intergenerational connections so vital to the health of the family and to the church?

- 1. Intergenerational connections teach us how to care for one another.**
Older siblings spend time taking care of the younger ones; grandparents spending time with grandchildren share their knowledge and experience. In the church, the younger in faith may be nurtured and cared for by older members in the faith.
- 2. Intergenerational connections provide role models for children and youth.**
Our children today are influenced more by celebrities and peers than by adults outside of the family relationships. It is important to have children and youth to have the influence of life-changing relationships with older adults that impact their attitudes and behaviours. The church can provide these life-changing relationships through intergenerational connections.
- 3. Intergenerational connections teach us to value older adults.**
Leviticus 19:32 states, "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God." We should not segregate the elderly who can teach children a lot from their experiences. Connections to older adults provide us with a link to the past that can add richness and meaning to our lives.
- 4. Intergenerational connections allow us to pass on the traditions of faith and family.**
Not only do older adults enrich our lives through their wisdom, they also pass on traditions and memories which cannot be obtained through schools and other institutions. These traditions draw everyone together with a sense of community.

Children's Ministries leaders need this new awareness of the importance of connections in the church community. Plan and implement more intergenerational activities so as to achieve the goal of building life-changing relationships.¹

A new SdA resource, book and disc entitled 'Kids Preach' is available from the South Pacific Division. It includes sermons/programmes for an intergenerational church. Contact www.adventist.org.au – click on Adventists Connect; Children's Ministries; Kids Preach.

What makes good all-age worship?

The best all-age worship

- helps people of all ages to engage with God
- is simple
- is not childish
- involves as many senses as possible
- is interactive where possible

Eight essential ideas

1. Sense starters with all ages

Use pictures, words or sounds on powerpoint or DVD, banners or the bulletin, or by people dressed in a particular way. Get everyone to think about and maybe talk about the theme before the service starts. This helps to raise their anticipation of what is about to happen. Make sure you get permission from the writer, photographer, illustrator or publisher to reproduce any visuals, or from the composer or publisher to play any piece of music in this context.

2. Bible presentation with all ages

This must engage more than just the ears! Using more than one sense at a time will help draw people into God's word. For example, get someone to learn the Bible verses by heart and present them dramatically, perhaps with a visual backdrop or with congregational involvement in other ways. The Bible presentation should be a high spot of the service.

3. Praise with all ages

This might involve singing from a book or power point, or a simple song taught by someone from the front, either in the service or before it begins. Give people the chance to 'opt out' if they feel that they cannot sing what's shown. Ensure that language is easy to understand and doesn't exclude anyone.

4. Confession with all ages

This might involve action, to help people focus on saying sorry to God. For example try inviting everyone to wash their hands clean in some warm, soapy water, as in 'Soap Update'. Alternatively, bring a dustbin into church and throw those sins away!

5. Drama with all ages

Bible stories retold (though not *instead* of hearing them from the Bible) with repetitions and actions work well across the ages. But allow people the option of not taking part in it! 'The Patient Farmer' is scripted in this way, as are all the stories in *Telling Tales* and *Telling More Tales* by Dave Hopwood (CPAS).

6. Interaction/Being part of things with all ages

Who people are and what they have to offer in worship are important. Find some way of getting people into intergenerational 'clumps' to share their experience or knowledge.

7. Learning with all ages

Stories communicate across the age group. And it's possible to do the Bible and people's experience justice by telling, say, three real-life stories from among the following:

- the background to the Bible verses
- the story included in the Bible verses

- the story of the people who first listened to the Bible verses
- God's big story of salvation history
- the story of a Christian or other Christians, including our own church.

Invite people to tell God the story of an aspect of their own lives in response.

See *What I Mean* by Jonathan Mortimer (CPAS 1998) is full of ways of communicating with impact during the special learning time in a service.

8. **Praying and response with all ages**

Everyone has a contribution to make to the time of all-age worship, and everyone should be encouraged to respond to God in any way they can. Writing and passing on a prayer will take away embarrassment and hesitancy. An activity like 'Cross Accumulation' (put on 'post-its' words of thanks for salvation and place on a cross) helps everyone to focus on the One to whom they are praying and on what they want to say to him. Suddenly people find they can't help being involved, but they're not embarrassed.²

How an all age outreach works

- The group will include all ages, from very young children to older adults.
- Everyone will participate fully in all activities. Younger members or non-readers may need help with certain tasks, but older members of the group are not just teachers, leaders, or observers. All are full participants. Children may also give leadership in the group, or help others.
- The whole group will work together to make sure everyone is included.
- Individuals will participate at different levels. A young child can join in a drama, make puppets, or hear a story without necessarily having to understand every word or nuance.
- People may have different roles in activities according to their ability or interest. It's up to the whole group to make sure tasks are shared fully.
- Participants of different ages may learn many different things from the same experience. A young child acting out a story, for example, may simply hear and appreciate the story for the first time. An older adult in the same drama could discover some new meaning or a new question in a story they've known for years. Involvement in the group is an experience in itself. The learning that comes from being a part of a loving community is at least as important as the content of a discussion or story.³

¹ KidsNewsZone. Dr L Koh, GC Children's Ministries Director. Vol 4 #1/2007.

² From Christian Resource Exhibition Seminar – by S Marshall.

³ *The Story Lives On*. www.storykeepers.com

➤ CHURCH SCHOOLS

The Bible is clear: parents are responsible for training their children in godliness; but what about the 30 hours a week spent in a school that makes no provision for Biblical teaching and training?

The Adventist church in Britain has embraced the vision and need for church schools for over one hundred years. Educating children has become an increasingly costly enterprise, but the truth is that Adventist education must be regarded as one of the most effective channels for evangelism and outreach presently in use. The sound philosophy in which each of our schools is rooted is Christ-centred and its distinctive characteristic points to the aim of true education: to restore its students into the image of their maker.

So why should parents choose to send their child to an Adventist school?

Each parent who has done so will cite a number of good and convincing reasons for their choice, but those common to all must surely be:

- The school has created a climate in which my child is more able to understand God's will, commit his/her life to Him and experience the joy of helping others;
- The school has an organised programme, which integrates and leads its students to spiritual, physical, mental, social and emotional development. It understands the importance of educating the 'whole child' and actively pursues that aim;
- The school encourages its students to be seekers of truth and to think deeply and critically;
- The school develops in my child a wholesome appreciation and respect for the home, the church, the school and the community, which is a powerful, collaborative effort for his/her ultimate good;
- The Christ-centred education my child receives helps him/her to see the world differently;
- Christian values are taught, modelled and practised and they reflect the values that are important to us;
- The school provides my children with the tools that will help him/her to weather the challenges and demands of life;
- The school encourages my child to excel in all things; to be challenged to see an opportunity for learning in every mistake.

It is deeply regrettable that it is not possible for every church to have a school. Parents who have no choice about sending their children to an Adventist school can contact the Education Department at the BUC for further support. Parents can also encourage the Education officer of their church to co-ordinate a programme and events to ensure that the children in their church have access to the "hidden curriculum" as further enrichment and support.

With joined-up thinking we can support our children to be successful, serving members of the community and people who are confident and assured of God's grace.

A Pilmoor – BUC Education Department

ADRA

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) was initiated by the Seventh-day Adventist church. The basis for its existence, its reason for being, is to follow Christ's example by being a voice for, serving, and partnering with those in need.

ADRA seeks to identify and address social injustice and deprivation in developing countries. The agency's work seeks to improve the quality of life of those in need. ADRA invests in the potential of these individuals through community development initiatives targeting Food Security, Economic Development, Primary Health and Basic Education. ADRA's emergency management initiatives provide aid to disaster survivors.

ADRA and children

We believe that kids can make a huge difference in our world. By helping kids connect with what life is like for kids around the world, we hope that the seeds of compassion, respect and care toward others will be planted. Our vision at ADRA-for-KIDS is to help kids learn new things, explore new places and have a lot of fun in the process.

ADRA website for children, www.adra.org/kids, is an easy to use, colourful and informative site where children can be inspired to help in ADRA projects. The pages are aimed at the children and include:

- Kids-in-Action Kit
In this kit you will find fun ideas and activities. You can take action with a parent, with a friend or in a group! Download free.
- Kids-in-Action Stories
Don't forget to email or write to us and let us know about how you take action. Send your photos too. Your story might even be featured on this site! Get permission from your parents, please.
- ADRA Kid-Boxes
Well, they're pretty cool. There are many kids around the world who don't have the simple things that you and I do, like school supplies, blankets, or even enough food. An ADRA Kid-Box is a special box of items on the ADRA Kids site, filled up by kids for kids. By filling up an ADRA Kid-Box, you help make a difference in the lives of kids around the world.

The boxes are:

- Health Kid-Box
- Refugee Kid-Box
- School Kid-Box

Children are instructed – "Choose your items from this webpage. These are items from the ADRA catalogue. Make sure you do this with your parents as they will need to pay by credit card. You will need to repay them!"

- Fun foods.
Recipes from around the world can be printed off and used for a family mealtime.

- Colouring book.
Pages to print off or use the curser and colour while on line.
- Be a kid in another country.
Find out how 5-year-old Khadeja from the Yemen lives in her village. Meet Khadeja's family; find out what food they eat and what work she does to help support her family.
- Find Adraena.
Adraena is a pretend rabbit who travels with the ADRA people as they go to work on different projects. Adraena is hidden in the pictures of the project.

Games and puzzles are also available in this section.

- ADRA in the UK and Eire.
Annually a collection is taken up for world-wide projects which includes supporting the Special Needs camp at Aberdaron in North Wales.

The BUC children's Ministries department produces a page of ideas to help children know how they can participate in this annual ADRA appeal

The ADRA UK shoebox annual appeal for Christmas presents is another activity that children enjoy supporting through their local church.

A YEAR OF IDEAS

Here are a few ideas to consider when planning some activities for your children throughout the year. Just pick a few that appeal to you and would work in your setting. If you can only manage four events a year you could plan something social, something outside, a special children's service and an outreach event.

Remember that it is alright to hold outreach social events where the only spiritual content is a prayer for grace said by a child. It is most important that children feel safe enough to bring their friends along. Good evangelism practice understands that we need to make friends and help people feel comfortable first, and then give them the space to ask spiritual questions if they want to learn more about our faith.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Go to www.familyfun.go.com for a wonderful general website of seasonal ideas, crafts and things you can easily print and use with your children for all occasions.

Go to www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk and then click on the tab for 'Ideas' to find crafts, sketches, and ideas for all kinds of Bible based events and activities throughout the church year.

Go to www.raisingkids.co.uk which is an excellent general website for all kinds of ideas for families with children, including seasonal ideas, child development, help in understanding and managing children's behaviour, etc.

The Christian Publicity Organisation at www.cpo-online.org.uk produce Holiday Bible School material, children's outreach comics, anti-Halloween tracts, excellent posters and a kit for holding a Light Party (Christian outreach alternative to Halloween). You can subscribe to their catalogue which produces high quality seasonal outreach materials.

Try www.bakerross.co.uk for lots of cheap and seasonal craft packs for children's groups, prizes, small gifts and ready to use activities for family fun days and church picnics.

JANUARY

Sabbath School Breakfast Party

Start the year with a Sabbath School Breakfast party before Sabbath School. Invite the whole family so they can come early to church together and not have to eat breakfast at home.

Thirteenth Sabbath

Don't forget the traditional Thirteenth Sabbath Programmes. You will find resources in the children's and teen's mission appeal book. Even something simple that the children enjoy doing, such as a lively song, is a special treat for the adults. If you recite memory verses, find a creative way to tell them, or make a lovely PowerPoint background to accompany each verse as the child recites it. Perhaps you could show elements of your Sabbath School class to the whole church and let the adults see a whole programme, and what happens behind the scenes! Some churches give each children's class one Thirteenth Sabbath a year. This helps to reduce stressful planning.

Sabbath School Room Decoration

Invite older children to help create new room decorations for the younger classes, their own classes, sponsor a room in the church to keep tidy and attractive, or create an attractive display for the church foyer.

FEBRUARY

Christian Home and Family Week/Valentines Day

Children can make cards to tell people of God's love, to let people know what love really means on Valentine's Day.

Let the children host a special banquet for the married couples in the church, or even just a reception with a special cake and a drink. Perhaps they could also do a short, humorous sketch about being married, and give the couples a few questions to discuss based on the sketch.

Baby Dedications

Prepare a simple item that children can do to welcome new babies in the church, such as a lullaby song, or a gift from the Children's Department, such as a Toddler Bible.

Pancake Day/Shrove Tuesday

Hold a pancake party to which the children can invite their friends. Provide the pancakes and invite the children and their families to make and bring different savoury and fruit fillings. Write the invitations on pancake shaped pieces of paper. Play some team games themed around pancakes – eg. musical 'pancakes' instead of musical chairs, using pancake-shaped pieces of paper to stand on, pancake tossing competition – See how many times a child can toss a felt or fun-foam pancake in one minute, etc.

MARCH

Mother's Day

Search the web, especially www.familyfun.go.com and find lots of ideas and crafts for children to give to their mothers. Hold a tea-party for mums and make it pretty and special. Children can help to make invitations, sandwiches, decorations, simple gifts, cold drinks, etc, and learn how to serve things carefully.

APRIL/EASTER (sometimes in March)

Easter Cards

Make Easter cards that witness of Jesus' resurrection.

Resurrection Morning Celebration

Hold a Resurrection Morning Celebration with a simple early morning praise time and a tasty brunch. You can do this outside if you can find a place to hold a barbecue or serve hot food. Plan some fun activities to celebrate such as the Good News Easter Egg Hunt below.

Good News Easter Egg Hunt

Have an Easter egg hunt to find A4 printed and laminated Easter egg shapes that you have hung out of the children's reach, but where they are clearly visible. On each numbered Easter egg write a 'good news' verse about Jesus' love, and His salvation. Give each child a pencil, clipboard, and a pre-printed sheet on which they can write the verses down as they find them, next to their appropriate number. Give each child who completes the hunt a plastic egg in which you have hidden a small treat and a Bible verse telling them how Jesus has saved us. Find stickers and erasers in your local Christian Book Shop, or go to www.bakerross.co.uk and find bulk bags of bendy smiley people and other happy face toys. This can be an outreach activity if the children invite their friends and you could hide chocolate Easter eggs if you wished, and play traditional games such as egg and spoon races, etc.

MAY

Clear-Out Sale

Encourage children to take part in spring cleaning and bring their unwanted toys and clothes to a sale at church to raise funds for ADRA. Remember that the TED has a special ADRA project for AIDS orphans in an African village that is being supported by the children of our Division. For more information contact your Children's Ministries department.

Sponsored events

This could be a good time of year to hold a sponsored activity for ADRA fundraising, or to raise money for a local church project that would benefit the children.

Half-Term

During half term you could hold a special children's event such as a Sabbath School Outing.

JUNE

Father's Day

Children can make cards and gifts for their dads. See www.familyfun.go.com for ideas and things you can easily print off for the children to make and do.

Plan a children and dad's event such as a kite making project, sports activity or even a men's prayer breakfast where the children serve the food. Be sensitive to children who may not have fathers who could come, and find a safe and comfortable way to include them, too, where possible, by including grandfathers and uncles, or even mums.

JULY/AUGUST

Holiday Bible Schools

This is a good time to run a holiday club. There is a list of materials available from your Children's Ministries department.

Try www.childrensministry.co.uk and www.scriptureunion.org.uk for good packs of materials. Try www.bakerross.co.uk for quick, cheap, easy and crafts with good results.

Outings and picnics

Summer is a time for outings and picnics, especially for children whose families may be unable to take holidays during the summer.

Church camps

Don't forget to encourage your children to attend the excellent church camps run by the youth, junior, teen and family departments.

SEPTEMBER

A back to school party

Hold a fun party to 'celebrate' going back to school, or starting school. Provide goody bags with school items, perhaps with Bible texts printed on them. Have a special prayer time of blessing for the children, their classes, and teachers.

Scripture Union produces an excellent resource called 'It's Your Move' for children moving into secondary schools. Find out more at www.scriptureunion.org.uk/itsyourmove/

Harvest

Involve children in the Harvest Festival by helping to collect food, parcel it up, and take it to needy people. Prepare an item for the Harvest Service. Find Harvest resources at

www.barnabasinchurchesorg.uk website given on the first page, and search the net for 'harvest resources for children'. Several charities produce excellent harvest resources each year to help children think about mission projects and needy people.

OCTOBER

Family Togetherness Week

Perhaps you could help to plan a fun event for the families in your church, focussing on them doing something together. One idea is to give each family all kinds of junk and a stapler, scissors and sellotape and then asking them to create something, such as dressing a child in a fancy dress costume, creating a new kind of animal, or making the components of a wedding (one family dresses a groom, another a bride, and others make a church, cake, car and bouquet, etc!)

Children's Sabbath

Children's Sabbath is the last Sabbath in October. Materials are usually produced by the North American Division and placed on their website at www.childmin.com then click 'Children's Sabbath', but often not until September. If you do nothing else all year, try to make this Sabbath special for the children. If it's too much to have the children take the service, make sure you have a special service catering for the children's needs throughout. If you need resources ask your Children's Ministries department.

Anti-Halloween Party

Halloween on October 31st is growing in popularity. Why not hold an Anti-Halloween party? CPO (website address on first page) produces a kit of materials to help you run an alternative 'Light Party'. Other ideas for Christian alternatives to Halloween parties can be found by searching the web.

NOVEMBER

Packing Shoeboxes for ADRA

Organise a special day when children can pack Shoeboxes for the ADRA appeal. Provide the shoeboxes and wrapping paper, sellotape and labels, etc and invite the children to bring their goodies to wrap and pack. Give families a list of useful things to pack in the shoebox.

DECEMBER

End of year party

Hold an end of year party on a day when parents can take a break and go shopping without the children. Perhaps you could show a film of the Nativity Story, have a party and even make cards and gifts for the children to give their parents, or goody bags to give to the older people in the church.

Carol Singing

People always love to see children singing carols and you could hand out tracts about Jesus or Life.info magazines to passersby. Or sing in homes for the elderly. Rather than collecting money, give away small gifts such as wrapped sweets, satsumas, or small candles.

Nativity/Advent Concert

A nativity/Advent Concert can be a good outreach opportunity and can be useful for children with non-Adventist parents, as the parents are likely to come to an event where their child is performing. Sell hot-spiced apple juice and other seasonal refreshments to raise funds for ADRA projects, etc.

CREATE YOUR OWN CALENDAR

What could you manage to do in your church this year?

MONTH	POSSIBLE ACTIVITY
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
October	
November	
December	

ANY OTHER IDEAS?

10 MORE WAYS OF INCLUDING CHILDREN IN CHURCH

Involving children in your worship services and other events.

Research indicates that the churches which are involving children in their services are amongst some of the fastest growing churches around the world. Working with our own children is the most inspiring and fruitful mission-field that we have available to us. It is easy evangelism.

• Ten ways to involve the children in the congregational prayer:

1. A group of children could write different sections of the congregational prayer and then pray them in sequence.
2. Older children and teens could be invited to create an attractive PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the different sections of the prayer, the people and situations being prayed for, etc.
3. Train a group of children how to pray for others in a simple way. Invite people who would like someone to pray for them to put up their hands. The children could then find a person who needs their prayers, ask about their prayer requests, and pray a few sentences on their behalf.
4. Invite a small group of children to act out the Lord's Prayer with actions (see website for instructions) or to teach it to the rest of the church.
5. Give each person in the congregation four A5 pieces of paper as follows:
 - Yellow paper with the word 'Praise' written on it
 - Blue paper with 'Sorry'
 - Green paper with 'Thanks'
 - Pink paper with 'Please'

Also stick one of these papers on each of four gift bags, the same colours as the paper, to make matching the words to the bags as easy as possible. Have pencils and pens available. Allow time for everyone to write a sentence or two of praise, sorry, thanks or please prayers on each of their sheets of paper. Place the four labelled gift bags at the front of the church and invite everyone to come forward and post their prayers into the relevant bags. Then pick up each of the bags in turn and read a selection of the prayers inside. This is a prayer that involves everyone.
6. Ask the children to bring objects that represent the things they want to thank God for, or praise him for. Make a collection of the objects on a table at the front of the church, and interview the children about their choices. Use these objects to inspire a prayer of thanks.
7. Ask the children to create attractive prayer postcards, decorating them with their artwork, or a simple collage. Use these cards to let home-bound or sick church members know when the church has been praying for them, or write a short prayer on the card and post it to their home.
8. Give each child a piece of white play dough (or model magic – which is a very clean and light dough). Ask the children to make a model of something they want to thank God for, praise him for, or say sorry for. They can reshape their dough several times during one prayer or bring their sculpted objects forward as part of the prayer time. They can make shapes that represent the things they want to say sorry for, and then reshape them into white heart shapes, to represent the way God takes away our sins and gives us a pure heart again. Adults often enjoy this prayer activity too!

9. Find a small 'tree': a bare, twiggy, branch that you can place in a pot. Give everyone, including the children, green card leaves that have a hole punched in one end, and a short piece of raffia or string attached. Invite people to write the names of those who are sick and need healing onto the leaves, including some brief details of their illness or injury. The leaves can be brought forward and tied onto the tree, and the whole tree of healing prayer requests can be presented to God. The tree can have a place in the church, and, when healing has occurred, a coloured paper flower can be stuck to the leaf representing the person who has been healed. If someone dies a white flower can be attached to their leaf and talk about how healthy they will be when Jesus raises them from the dead.
10. Invite the children to write a praise prayer to God. Give them lots of large photos of nature scenes (such as those from calendars) and let them choose one and take it home. Ask them to write a sentence or two praising God for the things they can see in the picture. Then let them hold up their picture for everyone to see, and say their praises as part of your prayer time. Remember that it's alright for us to pray with our eyes open! God doesn't mind!

Ask the children to share their ideas for ways in which they could be involved in your prayer times.

For further ideas see '100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids and grown-ups too!' Karen Holford, 2003, Pacific Press, available from the ABC.

- **Ten ways to involve the children in the Scripture reading:**

1. A group of children could each learn one of the Bible verses in the passage, and then repeat their memorised verses in sequence to complete the Scripture reading.
2. Older children and teens could be invited to create an attractive PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the Scripture reading.
3. Ask children to read the scripture readings and then say a few words about what the passage means to them.
4. Invite a small group of children to act out or mime the action in the Bible passage as it is being read.
5. If the Bible passage is also a scripture song, a family or Sabbath School class could learn the song and sing it instead of reading the verses.
6. Choose a significant and repeated word in the scripture passage and invite the children to perform a silent action each time the word is mentioned.
7. Older children could research the context for the passage and say a few words about the background to the verses before the Scripture reading.
8. Ask several artistic children to draw a series of pictures to illustrate the Scripture reading. Scan these into a PowerPoint presentation to show as the verses are being read.
9. Make a word-search puzzle using an internet puzzle-maker site. Include the key words from a long scripture passage, or all the words from a shorter reading. As the children search for the words during the service, the important message from the scriptures will be seeping into their memory. Or create a coded text or Rebus version of the passage for the children to unscramble.
10. Be creative! Choose one or two verses for a Scripture reading and then find an interesting way to teach the verses to the children. Write each word on a different shape appropriate for the text, and hide the shapes around the church for the children to find and bring to the platform. Then stand the children in the correct order so that the verse can be read by the congregation. Give the children small gifts with the key text written on them, or design your own printable bookmarks.

Ask the children for their ideas about how they could be involved in your Scripture readings.

- **Ten ways to involve the children in the offering time:**

1. A group of children could collect the offering under the supervision of a deacon or deaconess.
2. Children, or the whole congregation, could come forward and put the offering into an attractive gift bag, to remind them that God has given us everything we have and we are giving a small part back as a way of saying 'Thank you!'
3. Involve children in praying the simple prayer dedicating the offering to God. They can write a few sentences ahead of time and read the words out loud, or they could sing a song of thanks to God for the money.
4. Print envelopes with an appropriate design that links with the sermon theme and give everyone an envelope into which they can place their offering. The children can then help to collect the envelopes and bring them to the front to be placed in an appropriate container. For example, when the sermon is about the story of The Lost Sheep, the envelopes could be printed with sheep, and placed in a box lined with green velvet, that looks like a field.
5. Have a special offering for the children when they come up for their children's story. Collect the offering straight away so that they aren't distracted by the money in their hands during the story. Use a special, interesting container for collecting the money from the children. Perhaps someone in the congregation could make one, or the children could help to decorate a special container for their offerings.
6. Give each child a plastic or cardboard tube, such as an empty denture tablet container. Ask them to decorate the tube and bring it back in a month's time filled with coins.
7. Supply children with their own colourful offering and tithe envelopes, or give them blank ones to decorate to celebrate the money they are giving back to God.
8. Some churches have a special offering that the children collect each month, and that money goes towards a special church project that will bless the children, such as a Holiday Bible School event, or a special item for their Sabbath School rooms.
9. Invite each of the children's Sabbath school classes to design and decorate offering containers that can be used for a special event, or for a whole month. Perhaps they could link their designs with the current preaching theme.
10. Instead of playing music while the offering is being collected, invite some children to come and tell the congregation what they are most thankful, or how God has provided for them in a special way.

Ask the children to share their ideas for ways in which they could be involved in your offering times.

- **Ten ways to involve the children in the sermon:**

1. As you write your sermon, think about how the children will hear what you say and which points will be relevant to them. Pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire you to find fresh and creative ways to involve the children in your sermon. If you find it hard to be creative, ask your local children's ministries leaders to help you come up with different ideas, or contact your Mission, Conference or Union Children's Ministry leaders for help with ideas and resources. Please give at least two weeks' notice before your service if you are asking a busy person to help you.
2. Tell the children's story during the sermon. This can break up the long sermon time for the children and give them something to listen out for. Otherwise they can often find it very hard to listen to the sermon as they have often learned that nothing else happens for the children in a church service once the story has finished.
3. Find a creative way to involve the children in the theme of the service. As part of a story about Noah, children could find small plastic animals hidden in 7s and 2s around the church. They could bring them up to the front of the church and place them safely in a boat. Or they could look for lost sheep, the characters needed for your Bible story, or different objects that illustrate your sermon points or create a scene.
4. Use a science or nature object lesson as a sermon illustration, and demonstrate it to the children during the sermon.
5. If you are using PowerPoint slides to support your sermon, choose a small object that is relevant to your sermon and hide pictures of these objects throughout your slides. Ask the children to look for the hidden pictures quietly and secretly, and count how many they can find.
6. Create a simple worksheet that is linked to the message and give it to the children for them to complete during the sermon. This is not being irreverent because it helps them to think about the sermon, and many children actually listen better when they are doing something else at the same time. There are many books of copiable worksheets on a wide range of themes. The Children's Ministries Departments can help you to find worksheets for specific ages and themes.
7. Give each child a small piece of play dough to use during the sermon. Crayola's Model Magic is especially good as it is clean, doesn't make a mess with dried crumbs, and doesn't make the children's hands dry and sore. Ask them to model something that relates to the sermon – an object you mention, what the sermon means to them, something that helps them to understand God's love or forgiveness, or a scene from the Bible story. After the service encourage the children to show you what they have made and, if the child is older, to tell you why they chose to make their model. Children can take their models home to dry out and be preserved, or they can return the dough/clay to a sealed container to be recycled at another service.
8. Give each child in your church a special Spiritual Memory box. This is a place where they can collect items that are spiritually significant to them. Each week choose a small and inexpensive object that has a link to your sermon, and give one to each child as they leave church. Make the connection between your message and the item very clear, and remember that under-sevens may find it hard to understand abstract meanings for objects. You could give out a large nail when talking about Jesus' death, a small piece of map or tiny compass when talking about how God gives us direction, a tiny smiley person when talking about joy, etc. Encourage the children to use the boxes during their own worships and family devotional times to remind them of God's loving care. A notebook can be added to the box so that they can write down what each item represents, and other ideas they may have.

9. Give older children a piece of squared paper and a pencil and ask them to create a simple cross word or word search puzzle using the key words in your sermon, plus other words that they hear you use. Or ask them to make a word search using as many words as possible from your key texts. This helps them to concentrate on what you are saying and helps them to remember the important parts of your message.
10. Dress a few children as the characters in your chosen Bible story and help them to create scenes to illustrate the story. You could also give them cards with clearly written words for them to speak at the appropriate moment. Talk to the children about how they would feel if they were different characters in the story to add another dimension to the Bible story.

Ask the children to share their ideas for ways in which they could be involved in your sermon times.

- **Ten ways to involve children in your church's welcome and blessings:**

1. Train children as part of your church's welcoming team. They are often very good at smiling and greeting people and they can easily give out bulletins and Bibles.
2. Children on the welcoming team can greet the other children who come to church. Children may prefer to be welcomed by other children, and they can be given their own children's bulletin or sermon-related worksheet to encourage them to listen to the morning's message. They can also be offered a children's Bible to use during the service. Perhaps your church could purchase a set of colourful and interesting Bibles that have been especially designed for children
3. Trained children can be a part of the welcoming team at the opening of the divine service, and invite the church to enter a spirit of worship. They can work with a mentor to write out their words and practise them so that their welcome message is appropriate and clear.
4. Children can welcome visitors by giving them a small gift such as bookmark or a flower.
5. Every child can be paired with a senior member of the church and be given the responsibility of welcoming their 'adopted' grandparent to church each week, in a personal way. This can be done informally in the time between the services, or the child and older person can meet briefly after the service. It is best practice when a parent or guardian keeps an eye on their own children to make sure they are safe when relating to other church members.
6. Children can help your church deaconesses distribute the flowers from the Sabbath arrangements to those in your congregation who will be blessed by them.
7. If your church serves drinks and snacks after a service, two children a week could be involved in helping to pour drinks and collect cups or tidy away afterwards.
8. Station a trained child by the church doors to say goodbye to the children leaving after the service, and to say something encouraging and appreciative to each child.
9. Think about how your church manages the benedictions and blessings at the end of the service. Try different ways of involving the children in these times. Adults can stand and hold hands in a circle around the children as they are blessed, or lay hands on them.
10. Children can receive a special short prayer of blessing during the communion service – as the adults are being served the children can wait in line to be blessed by a person who is good at communicating with children. Encourage the person to give each child a different and personal blessing.

Ask the children in your church for their ideas of different ways they can be involved in the greetings and blessings that take place in your church.

- **Ten ways to involve the children's artistic gifts in your church:**

1. Invite the children of your church to take it in turns to design the cover of your bulletin. If you photocopy in black and white, then they can do a simple pen and ink style design. If you have colour bulletin covers for special occasions, then the children can draw, paint and create collages. Encourage the children to work with a safe adult who can mentor them as they create their design. Or ask the children to create different designs to suit your different sermon topics. When visitors see that you welcome and value the children they will know that they are more likely to be welcomed and valued too.
2. Encourage your children's leaders and any graphic designers or artists you have in your congregation to work with the children to create seasonal collages and thought-provoking posters for your church's external notice-board.
3. Let the children design envelopes for special offerings, especially offerings that will be used to help children. They can draw their designs on ordinary white envelopes.
4. Ask the children to design welcome postcards for your church, or cards to be sent to people who haven't been able to come to church for a while, or those who are ill. Give them plain white postcards and ask them to draw something on the blank side. You can ask them to incorporate an appropriate text into the design, too.
5. If the Scripture reading has been chosen several weeks ahead of time, an artistic child or teenager can be asked to create a picture that illustrates the reading. This can be scanned into the computer and made into an illustrative Power-Point slide to be shown when the scripture is read. Interview the child about how they chose to create their picture and what the scripture means to them. This has the added advantage of encouraging the child to think more deeply about the Bible passage.
6. Invite someone who is good at sewing and design to help the children create a banner to be used in your church on a weekly basis, or for special occasions. There are several books of banners you can use as inspiration, or surf the net for Christian banner designs or witness t-shirts with simple, thought-provoking designs that can be adapted to create a banner.
7. Children can boost your church building fund by designing a calendar that can be sold. There are computer programmes and printing companies that can incorporate 12 of your children's scanned pictures into a calendar format. Encouraging Bible verses can be included in their designs to create a witnessing tool, as people will often buy these to give to friends, neighbours and family members.
8. Children often listen better to a sermon when they have something to do. Ask them to draw a picture that illustrates one of the messages in the sermon. At the end of the service let the children place their drawings on a special notice-board where others can see their work. Encourage the adults to look at what the children have drawn and to look for any new thoughts and inspiration in the children's drawings.
9. If your church has a website, include some of the children's drawings in a gallery on the site. This will encourage the children, their family members and friends to visit your site. If you keep your site interesting and up to date the visitors may also discover what else your church is doing, and be encouraged to come along.
10. Nominate a gifted adult to mentor the creative and artistic talents of the children and youth in your church. Encourage them to look for ways in which children can use art to deepen their spiritual understanding and experience, and to develop workshops where children can design Scripture bookmarks, witnessing T-shirts, greetings cards, banners, etc.

Whenever the children in your church are going to be involved in an artistic project, invest in good quality materials. Provide clip-boards if they will be drawing in church, so that they have

something to lean on. Use quality paper, not the backs of unwanted printed paper, or paper that is tatty and torn. Fresh felt-tipped pens, sharpened crayons and pencils and other good materials are more likely to inspire the children and show that their art-work is truly valued by the church.

Ask the children to share their own ideas for ways in which they could use their artistic gifts in your church. See *involving children's creative gifts* for more ideas.

- **Ten ways to involve the children's musical gifts in your church:**

1. Invite children who are learning instruments to help accompany a worship song, or instrumental music in your service (such as during the offering). This is less threatening for the child than playing a solo piece and the experience can help to build their confidence. Also, if they do make a mistake it is less noticeable if other people are singing at the same time.
2. Encourage your worship leaders to choose one or two of their songs and hymns well ahead of time. If a child is given several weeks to practise a special piece, it can help them to have a goal to work towards and time to become comfortable and confident with playing the music.
3. Use at least one contemporary children's hymn or song each week in the worship service. Children's songs are often neglected, and there are hundreds of beautiful and worshipful songs for children that everyone can enjoy. Many churches are choosing two contemporary songs or hymns, one traditional hymn and one children's song as a good mix of worship styles to suite the average congregation. Or you can have two traditional hymns and one contemporary hymn instead. When choosing a song for children make sure that the words are clear and understandable, and that the content is relevant to their life experiences.
4. Encourage your children's teachers to discover new songs to teach the children. If the teachers aren't musical, they can use DVD's that play the music and have the words and actions on the screen. There are also lots of children's worship and praise CDs and many Christian book shops will play you a CD so you can hear the songs before you buy. (www.WesleyOwen.com)
5. Develop a library of good children's music DVDs and CDs for families in your church to borrow, so that they can learn new songs together. Follow copyright and licensing guidelines to model an appropriate honest and respectful response to Christian songwriters and musicians. Pay for downloads and share the music with all the children in your church so that they can learn new songs at home, or on their MP3 players and ipods, and make music worship a part of their everyday lives.
6. Nominate a gifted adult to mentor the musical talents of the children and youth in your church. Encourage them to look for ways in which children can use music to contribute to the worship experience of your church, and to feel valued and involved. Music mentors can also take an interest in all the children who are learning to play instruments, or developing a singing voice, and support them with prayer whenever they are performing or taking graded examinations.
7. Encourage the music mentors to hold occasional workshops where children can learn more about music, such as how to use percussion instruments appropriately, or how to use hand-bell systems, so that all the children can be involved in a shared musical worship experience. (www.belleplates.co.uk)
8. Work with your music mentors and worship team to plan for a children's religious musical performance, start a children's choir, or hold a children's musical concert.
9. Regularly invite a child to work with a trusted adult to choose a favourite hymn or worship song for your service. Interview the child about why they like the song and why they have chosen the piece. This can be a live interview, or an adult can speak for the child if the child is shy. This encourages the children to think about why we sing hymns in church and how they are chosen to work with the theme of the service and enhance the worship experience.
10. Invite a musician to come and help the children create a worship song for a special occasion, or as a theme-song for your church. Find a way to involve as many children as possible in writing the words, helping to compose the tune, playing the accompaniment, learning the

piece, creating an illustrated PowerPoint of the words and teaching the song to the congregation.

Invite the children to share their own ideas for using their musical gifts in your church.

TELL A CHILD, TELL THE WORLD

Adventurers Visit the Elderly

Sabbath afternoon, January 16, found the Charlotte, North Carolina, Adventurer Club visiting the Wesley Care Centre. Adventurers sang and shared skits. The children made special handcrafted cards and presented them to each resident, along with a *Happiness Digest* inscribed with the note "We love you all, from the Charlotte Adventurer Club," and included their phone number.

One man told the group he could no longer see and/or read, but an Adventurer encouraged him to leave it on his bedside table and maybe someone else would enjoy the book. Two days later a woman phoned to say she had read three chapters and was enjoying it very much.

The Adventurers expressed positive comments about their visit. One little girl remarked, "A grandma hugged me real hard and told me she loved me!"

A woman visiting a resident told us she had never seen her friend smile all the while she had lived in this care centre until now - thanks to the Adventurers' visit.

Passionate Preachers

Cesar and Juan are two eleven-year-old boys who live in Arequipa, Peru. They have a strong desire to share Jesus with others in their neighbourhood, specifically in Cierro Colorado, a mountain region. Armed with their bicycles, they rode each day to this mountain village to invite their friends to meet together for small groups in their own village. Dividing up the Bible topics, they both led out in study, singing, and sharing of experiences. There were difficulties along the mountain trails as they peddled their bikes daily to invite friends and neighbours. But nothing could dampen their spirit, nor deter them from their mission. Yes, heaven rejoices when six of their friends made the decision to be baptized.

Child Preachers Workshop

Child evangelism is an important component of the children's ministries department of the Grenada Conference. On the weekend of March 3-5, a child preacher's workshop was conducted. Pastor Nord C. Punch of the Caribbean Union was the main facilitator in the training of the children ages 8-13 to be effective child preachers. They were taught how to select and prepare the sermon, and how to deliver and get decisions. The children were given opportunity to preach at children's church, vespers and open-air evangelistic meetings. During the Easter and summer vacations this year the children will be conducting more evangelistic meetings.

Youth Involvement in Children's Ministries

Young people of the Annankatu Church in Helsinki have been actively involved with children in their church. This past summer they planned programmes for children, such as excursions and a field trip to the local zoo, a Kid's Day programme filled with fun and games, and spiritual activities.

Some of these youth were enthusiastic in teaching the children in the children's Sabbath School. They find it very rewarding when they see how they can impact the lives of these children spiritually, mentally and socially. Many find their own lives changed when they pray with children and mentor them to grow in Jesus.

One young lady, Anni Pilois, told the Children's Ministries director that working with children is one of the most rewarding and fulfilling experiences she has had. Praise the Lord for such youth involvement!