



A NEWSLETTER FROM THE MICHIGAN DISTRICT CHILDRENS MINISTRY COMMITTEE

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IN THIS ISSUE . . .

Fish Food Devotional	2
Advent Ideas for the Sunday School Classroom	3
Halloween Alternative Party	5
Children's Ministry Contacts	2

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT . . .

Tackle Box Resources
Life Savers
Fish Net Outreach Ideas
Fish Fry Service Opportunities

Welcome

to the newest tool for those who work with children in our Michigan District of the LCMS. In recent months our committee has found that many churches do not know that our District provides various avenues of help for Sunday Schools and Children's Ministry programs. It is our aim to provide you with ideas and resources to help your ministry to children.

In this issue, which will come from the district office four times a year, we want to give you ideas for this fall. We will also be giving you our contact numbers so that you are able to reach us for specific questions about these activities or any other aspect of children's ministry. We will even come to you for program consultations or resource sharing. Please feel free to offer your ideas for us to share with other churches in the District.

We do hope you will contact us for any ideas, thoughts or questions you have for Children's Ministry.

Cynthia Brown

John Hagge

Bekki Koehn

Sue Regner

Chris Stodola

Rev. Galan Walther



Fish Food - Devotion by Cynthia Brown (Faith, Troy)

“His love for vulnerable children encouraged me to keep moving forward in ministry.”

One month ago I was living the dream of a lifetime - two amazing weeks in the Holy Land. One sunny day (they all were!!), we sat in Capernaum in a lovely church that seemed to be suspended between earth and sky. Gazing at the beautiful large wood carvings encircling our group and depicting events in Jesus’ life, my eyes kept returning to a child and a cross, both part of the breathtaking art. In the quiet, God seemed to speak to my heart. His love for vulnerable children encouraged me to keep moving forward in ministry. His ultimate loving sacrifice filled me with the desire to continue



to lay down my life for Him as He so calls. The weariness that accompanied me on my trip suddenly seemed to dissipate. The gift of those quiet moments brought renewal and reassurance of His plan and presence.

An awareness of God’s presence is not restricted to Capernaum. God holds this gift out to me - and you - every day of our lives. My problem is moving too fast to hear His quiet voice speak to my heart. Calls to make ...

weeds to pull ... people to see ... meetings to attend ... I wonder if living with these same pressures (minus the phones and email) is what moved Jesus to find those alone places we saw first hand throughout Israel’s countryside. “Very early in the morning, while it was still day, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.” (Mark 1:35)

If He needed His Father’s direction and strength, how much more so do I need it! And the wonderful thing is, He gives it!

Ask me sometime how we’re doing together.

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Drop us a line!



Celebrating Advent in the Sunday School Classroom - Chris Stodola (St. Mark, Kentwood)

Blessing Book- Each week of class, children take turns making a page for the “Blessing Book”. Children may be creative, using crayons, markers, construction paper, etc. or older children may just write blessings to add to the book.

Gifts for Jesus Box- Before the Advent season, each child should think of an item that represents something they can give to Jesus during Advent. Things like a watch could represent time given to Jesus, a key could represent “opening the door to your heart”, a poem, or sheet of music, or markers could represent a talent that they will use for Jesus. Children should bring the items wrapped and place them in one large classroom box. Just before or just after Christmas, the class can open each of their gifts, explain them and tell how they gave that gift during the Advent/Christmas season.

When you pray in your classroom during this season, close your prayers with “I love you baby Jesus”.

Make and use and Advent wreath in your classroom. Share what the four candles represent. There are different thoughts on this, but one tradition is: Prepare, Watch, Rejoice, Hope, Christ Candle. Another is: The Prophets’ Candle, The Bethlehem Candle, The Shepherds’ Candle, The Angels’ Candle, The Christ Candle, another is: Hope, Love, Joy, Peace.

Write a Litany- Provide students with a list of prophecy verses and challenge them to write a litany to share during a worship service or with another class.

Make a paper chain with a link for each day of Advent. Place a prayer thought on each chain link. Tear off one link each day and pray for the topic on the link.

Make hot cocoa for your class and share family Christmas traditions. Maybe make up a class book of ideas to share with each other’s families.

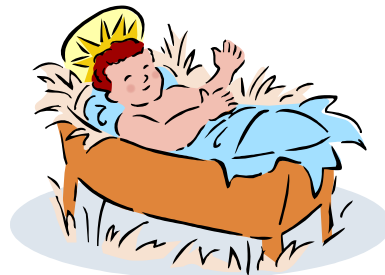
Set up a Christmas puzzle (or 2) in your classroom and leave it up for children to work on as they enter each week. Spend some time just chatting with your students as you work on the puzzle. Encourage them to get to class a few minutes early for puzzle time.

Create a Mural- Use a large sheet of paper to create a mural in your Narthex or Education area. Have your class add something to the mural each week of Advent. Choose a theme that is appropriate for the age of your children

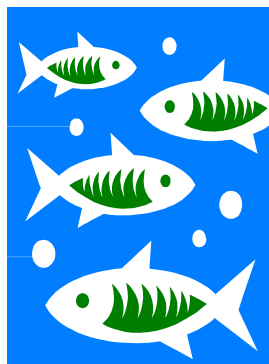
Have an empty space / chair in your classroom to remind you that Christ is coming and you are waiting to welcome Him. Revelation 3:20

If you have preschoolers, hide one piece of the nativity and let the children hunt for it when they come to class each week. Place the figure at the manger when it is found.

(Continued on page 6)



School of Fish - Conferences & Trainings

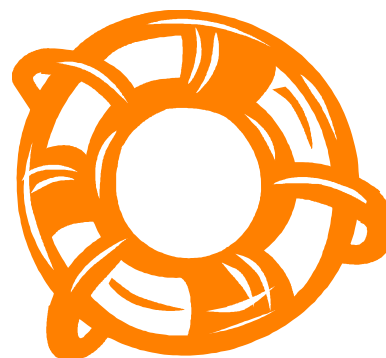


Children’s Ministry Leadership Training equips volunteers and professionals in effectiveness as they engage in ministries with and to children and their families. Each workshop is four weeks in length led by a Concordia University Professor and / or practitioner. Weekly readings, practical applications and a one-hour conference call connect participants with lively discussion and helpful learning insights. Each four-week workshop is \$100 per person plus materials. Participants receive six hours of CEU upon completion of each workshop.

If you’re aware of a Conference that you have enjoyed in the past and would recommend to others, let us know!

Life Savers - Tips to save you from drowning

We encourage all Children’s Ministry Leaders to do a background check on all volunteers. This helps protect the children, the church, and you. One resource we recommend is “Reducing the Risk II Resource Kit” (\$49.95). It is available for viewing at the District Library. You can check out their website at: www.reducingtherisk.com.



Tackle Box - Resources

This is a place to share resources of books, articles, websites, or anything else that has been helpful to you in your ministry. Be sure to check out the District website, as well as the Synodical site for children’s ministry ideas at www.lcms.org.



Halloween Alternative - Sue Regner (St. Luke, Ann Arbor)

A Halloween Alternative Party is a great event to bring to your church. It can be a wonderful outreach, as well as fun fellowship. So how do you go about bringing a Halloween party to your church? The first thing you need to do is pray, pray, pray, and then continue to pray. Form a task force that has a desire to offer a fun, safe, Halloween alternative with a Christian atmosphere. Together, seek God's guidance on His plans for your event. Then, start planning!

Treats and food are a must, so to help in this department we ask each family attending to donate a bag of candy. Church members are asked to bring it in a week early so we have lots of candy to set up in the rooms. We offer hot dogs on a stick, chips, veggies, fruit, donuts and drinks. We decorate the tables in a festive theme of fall and hand out pumpkin prayer pages. Children are told they can dress us in any costume, but we discourage scary ones so the little ones will not be afraid.

We have many rooms set up that the kids and their parents can "visit." When families arrive, they are greeted and told to follow the pumpkins (cut-out or real) to the party location. They are given a bag and map to all the rooms. Each room has a theme and a host or two whom are dressed in Bible Character costumes. They talk for a moment about the room as the children come in. Then the children get to play a game and receive a prize or candy.

To give you an idea of where to start, here are some of the room themes we have at St. Luke:

1. Daniel and the Lions Den - The children are greeted by Daniel as they come in and throw plastic balls covered with Velcro at three large felt Lion heads. The balls will

stick if they throw it on the Velcro whiskers.

2. Jonah - The children are greeted by Jonah, as they walk into a huge whale, made from large pieces of black plastic with a fan at the end by the tale. The fan blows up the whale and allows about 20 children to enter at a time. Inside the whale, Jonah tells them his story, and then they pick a treat out of a basket. The title of the room is, "What else did the whale swallow?"

3. Israelites - The children are greeted by an Israelite as they enter the room, which is decorated with a pillar of fire and a pillar of water. They try to "catch the quails," which are made of felt placed over a ring toss game.

4. Fruit of the spirit - The children are greeted by a person dressed up like a grape. There are fruit shaped bean bags and fruit shaped baskets, and the kids try to get the right fruit into the right basket. There are trees decorated with fruit in the room, and fruit of the spirit posters are hung on the walls. The treat in this room is a type of fruity candy.

5. 'Putting' the Red Sea - The children are greeted by Moses and handed a putter. They try to hit plastic balls painted gold between two walls made from blue sheets, with fish attached to them.

6. "Are you as strong as Samson" - This room is a huge hit, as the children hit a large metal ball with a mallet to see how high they can make it go up. It is built on a stand that is between two pillars with Philistines painted on the wall.



(Continued on page 6)



Alternative Halloween Party (cont. from page 5)

7. Knock down Goliath - Jonathan and David greet children as they arrive to knock down a seven-foot Goliath, painted on 4 cardboard boxes. We decorate the room with lambs.
8. The Garden of Eden - This room is our largest room and has five different games in it. It is decorated with palm trees, huge paper flowers, and green streamers coming down from the ceiling, so it looks like a beautiful garden. The children can throw plastic apples at several snakes coiled up, or toss plastic bananas to the monkeys hanging on a hoop, or toss rings around blow up plastic animals. The rings are cardboard covered with fake fur to match the animals. There are several other fun games, all having to do with animals.
9. Help the frogs into the ark - This room is hosted by Noah and his wife. We have a large ark made out of several boxes with round holes cut out. The children toss the bean bag frogs into it.
10. Knock down Jericho - The children are greeted by Joshua as they enter this room. They are given kazoos and march around a wall of 60 boxes while Joshua tells his story. When the kids blow the kazoos, someone in the middle of the boxes knocks them down. You can sponge paint moving boxes to look like bricks. The kids keep the kazoos.
11. Pin the Crown on Queen Esther - The children walk into a room decorated like a castle with gold lame and purple fabric about. They are blindfolded and given a crown to “pin” onto the drawing of Queen Esther on the wall. Afterwards, they pick a prize from a treasure chest filled with toy necklaces and rings.

This has proven to be a safe outreach event. People love it and many return year after year. We had over 250 people attend last year, including visitors from over 16 churches in the community. Have fun with it and all attending will too!

Celebrating Advent and Christmas (cont. from page 3)

Buy jingle bells and have students tie them on their shoelaces for “joy” Sunday. Tell the children the bell will remind them to share the joy of Jesus with others that day and week.

Alternative Christmas Market- Students would research and develop a list of organizations that people could give monetary gifts to in the name or in memory of someone. Students could do everything including the research, organization, publicity, table displays explaining each organization and why they were chosen, to manning the gift tables and purchasing of certificates. Students could then be responsible for sending thank you cards and notes that a gift was given in someone’s memory or honor.

Allow younger children to ring bells, chimes, or rhythm instruments during your music time to celebrate Christmas. (cont. on top of next page)



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Cookie Decorating- Buy or have your senior ladies make Christmas cut out cookies for your class. Frost and decorate the cookies for giving to homeless shelters, food kitchens, an adult Bible class, adult group home, or wherever there is a need in your community.

Coat, Mitten, Hat Drive- Older classes could organize a coat, hat, mitten, and boot drive for a shelter.

Christmas Gift Tags- Ask congregation members to bring in Christmas cards that have been sent to them. Have students cut off the pictures using scrap book-scissors to trim the pictures. Package the cards, tie them with pretty ribbon, and give them away to members to use as gift tags this Christmas.

Fish Net - Outreach Ideas



Pop Can Outreach—This can be done at the public schools any time of year. Be sure to ask the Principal for permission ahead of time. Hand out a bottle of pop, water, or juice with your children's ministry contact information. Be sure to stay on the sidewalk and not on the school property.

Fish Fry - Service Opportunities

~Honor the veterans in your church by having the children make patriotic cards and pass out to the veterans in your church. The Veteran's hospitals are always happy to receive cards, and especially visits!

Start thinking about it now...

~If you have members of your congregation serving in the military overseas, fill stockings and send early November to soldiers overseas. Contact VFW if you need names of soldiers in your community.

~Call a local nursing home and get the names of people who do not often receive mail. Send each one a beautiful Christmas card. Enlist your many scrapbookers and stampers to help you make these cards a work of art. Ask them to share not only their stamps, scissors, special embossing powders etc. etc., but also their expertise and time with your class.



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Sunday School / Children's Ministry Director

Welcome! Welcome! Welcome! Welcome! Welcome!

Welcome to the first edition of the "Fish Hook"! If you're reading this, we assume you know kids, you like kids, you have kids, or you work with kids.

That's what we're about – KIDS! We believe that it's most important to nurture that seed of faith in the hearts of kids to prepare them for the potential of a life centered on a relationship with God.

Six men and women serve on a Michigan District task force with the sole purpose of serving you and helping you minister to kids. We'd

like to introduce ourselves.

Cynthia Brown, works at Faith, Troy as Children's Ministry Director.

John Hagge, the group's current chairman, works as a DCE at St. James, Montague.

Bekki Koehn serves as volunteer Sunday School Superintendent at Emmanuel, Cadillac.

Sue Regner, Children's Ministry Director, works at St. Luke, Ann Arbor.

Chris Stodola, serves as Children's Ministry Director at St. Mark, Kentwood.

Rev. Galan Walther is the District Representative.

As you can tell, we live and work all over the state of Michigan. We sure do not have all the answers – we are right in the trenches with you. But we are here to serve, support, encourage and share what we have learned along the way. If there's any way to do just that, start with John Hagge (jbnbb32@yahoo.com) and he will let the rest of us know how we can help meet your needs. That is one way to make us smile.