

W I N T E R CHILDREN'S LEADER 2 0 0 3

A NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE WHO LEAD CHILDREN IN THE CONGREGATION.

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Reaching Millennials Requires Change

We have been saying it for a long time: Children today are not the same as children 10 or 20 years ago. But have we truly absorbed the enormity of those differences?

Leonard Sweet, speaking at the January Adventist Ministries Convention in Monterey, California, highlighted some changes that we need to make in our approach:

EPIC Proportions

Sometimes it seems we would prefer to drug our kids so they "sit and fit" our methods--rather than change our teaching style. When teaching children in the 21st Century, our style should be **EPIC**:

Experiential--If students do not experience it, they do not get it. The activities approach of GraceLink provides opportunities for students to experience the concepts being taught.

Participatory--Involve students actively in your presentation--or you'll lose them. Try not to do for the learner anything that she could do for herself. Making your point may take more time when you involve the learner to this extent, but your teaching is far more effective.

Image enriched--Students of all ages need to see photos, news clips, diagrams, maps of whatever you are talking about. Providing lots of images helps ensure that they understand, remember, and relate to the people, places, or events that you are talking about.

Connected--For an optimal learning environment, three types of connections are needed: 1) the teacher must connect personally with each student, 2) students need to connect with one another, and 3) students need to see the connections between their life and the lesson being taught.

We've stressed being independent; now we need to realize that I can't be "me" without being "we." I need to be connected with others when I worship. And so do my kids. As the world gets progressively more global, each one of us needs stronger local identities. Church can help meet this need.

What we need to increase the effectiveness of our ministry is not for God to give us more, or to do more for us. Rather, we need to let go of the old ideas and methods we cling to so that we can receive what He has for us.

Getting Connected with Juniors and Earliteens

"Youth culture is the soup that kids swim in," says veteran youth worker Fred Lynch, of Josh McDowell Ministries. "While we are busy trying to study their world, they just live in it." If we allow young people to guide us to an understanding of their world,

we actually increase the chance that they will in turn accept our spiritual guidance.

A core value for those who work with children is that

people are more important than programs. How many of us are up front, tinkering with preparations for the program, when we should be at the door, connecting with kids as they arrive?

When we take young people on a field trip or campout--or help them prepare and lead out in a church service--we may be thinking in terms of how the event fits in with our overall program.

Let's rethink in terms of connections. We are providing memories. Later, we'll have a chance to further build rapport by indulging in a round of "Remember when we. . ." Kids love retelling those stories! Just notice the sparkle in their eyes when relating one. Making memories and reminiscing about them is important to do with kids because it allows an adult follower of Christ to intersect with a kid's life. And it all starts with that shared activity or event.

"I may have the budget of a megachurch," Lynch muses, "but if I have not a relational connection with my children, I am nothing. Budget, facilities, families: but the greatest is relational connections. If you want kids to reflect Christ, connect with them and then show them."

Search for Identity

Children--even as young as third grade today--are asking, "Who am I?" They want desperately to see themselves as being unique, secure, and competent.

Along those lines, Lynch hints that one reason youth anti-smoking campaigns may stall is that kids are attracted to the image of

the cool, grown-up-looking, rebellious loner who smokes, confidently flaunting authority.

If godly leaders can first connect with a child--affirm their uniqueness and bolster their sense of security and competence--then they can point that young person to Jesus.

The leader's need to connect with parents is equally important. Parents receive lots of toxic messages, such as "my kids don't need me."

However, Lynch says that 60 percent

of young people rate mothers as the number one need in their lives. They rate fathers second, followed by grandparents, other relatives, and youth pastors, in that order.

We can't ignore the fact that kids in single parent homes are 30 percent more likely to use drugs; in two-parent families where the father-child relationship is disconnected, kids are 68 percent more likely to use drugs. But in a two-parent family with good relationships, the teen is 96 percent less likely to

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A Call to Pastors

Bill Hybels, senior pastor of the Willow Creek Association admonishes pastors, "If you have one ministry card to play, invest in your children's ministry."

He tells how he noticed parents being drawn into what their children were learning, doing, and enjoying at church. Next, he observed how many volunteers found their ministry niche in working with children.

When his church's children's ministry department began taking active steps to participate in the church's mission--shepherding volunteers, leading kids in service projects, discipling future leaders--Hybels was convinced.

"Today I believe the single remaining common interest or entrance point for non-churched people into the life of the church is children."

~www.cmmag.com (Jan/Feb)

News & Notes

Coming Events

◆ **National TV-Turnoff Week--April 21-27.** Start your planning now by visiting <http://www.tv-turnoff.org>.

◆ **Growing a Family of Grace Convention:** Mark it on your calendar--**October 16-19, Portland, OR.** This convention will include tracks not just for Children's and Family Ministries, but also for Adult Ministries, Adventist Community Services, Youth and Adventurer Ministries. Watch for details coming soon to <http://adventistleadershipconventions.com>.

Talking to Children about War

Children have lots of questions about what is going on in Iraq; what better place to go for answers than to church? So be prepared next week to open up your program--to give kids a chance to ask questions and express their feelings. Use this as an opportunity to connect.

A variety of resources linked from <http://childmin.com/Issues> provide information including family activities, sermon ideas, and suggestions for talking with children about war or terrorism.

Ideas Unlimited

This CD offers a brand new electronic collection, loaded with nearly 4,000 ideas, resources and links covering all aspects of children's ministry: Sabbath School and Vacation Bible School, staff training, fundraising, games and more. Available from *AdventSource*, 800-328-0525 or online at <http://adventsource.org>.

Resources for Junior/Teen Leaders

Did you know that you can access puzzles, PowerPoint presentations, and a variety of other teaching resources to support the Junior/Teen Sabbath School lesson online? You'll find a growing list of helpful links at <http://sspm.gc.adventist.org/ss/teen.html>. Watch this site as well for news of the new Earliteen curriculum under development.

The Scoop on SCUBA Vacation Bible School 2003

This summer, Vacation Bible School goes on a Super Cool **Underwater Bible Adventure**. We're happy to bring you some tips from folks who have already navigated these waters.

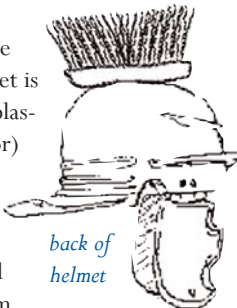
Dramatizing the Bible Story

Make costumes and props as convincing as possible; they draw children into the wonder of the Bible story so they experience it for themselves. Get started early on making or assembling your costumes and props.

Firefighter Outfit. On Day 1, a firefighter helps tell the story of Elijah on Mt. Carmel. Borrow a firefighter's outfit from your local volunteer fire department, or improvise with a black or yellow rain slicker and toy fireman's hat.

Roman Soldier Costume. Day 4 has a wonderfully effective activity involving a Roman soldier. The more authentic the soldier looks, the more real the experience will be for the children.

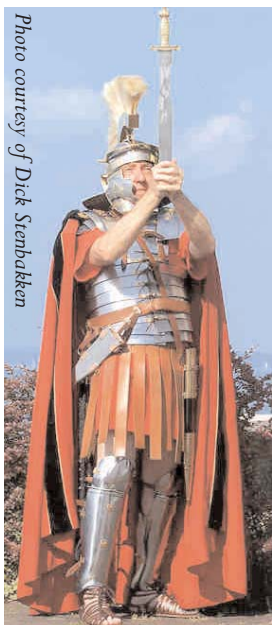
A fairly believable Roman soldier's helmet is easy to make from a plastic hard hat (with visor) covered with foil. Turn it back to front as shown and add ear pieces, a wrap-around visor, and a soft broom head on top.



Tips for authentic costuming (including detailed patterns) are available online at <http://www.larp.com/legioxx>. Also, many costume supply stores rent realistic-looking soldier outfits.

Campfire.

Day 5 calls for a realistic campfire. Real-looking "fires" have been fairly easy to find in stores during the past year. Or actors can make a fire of sticks seem real by improvising as they pretend to build it up and warm themselves.



Day 4 offers a wonderful opportunity to lead children to Jesus. You may want to order copies of the booklet *Coming to Jesus* for each child. This colorful booklet is available in English, Spanish, and French, (see <http://adventsource.org>) and takes kids through the steps to a commitment to Jesus.

Asking Questions. In the SCUBA leader materials, each question the leader asks is followed by an answer in parentheses. This is not meant to be the one and only correct answer, but represents a sample of what kids are likely to say. The suggested questions are designed to get kids thinking about and applying the lesson concepts, not just to elicit a "right" answer. Children are much more likely to contribute once they realize that no answer will be labeled "wrong."

Memory verses may not always be written out in the leader materials. So keep your Bible handy and use it. Even if you have the verse written out, the kids need to see you read it from the Bible. This emphasizes that the lesson comes from God's Word.

Not enough material? Last year, some leaders indicated that they had trouble keeping

the children busy for 20 minutes at each learning center, inferring that not enough material was provided. Further inquiry usually revealed that these leaders had chosen to admit all or portions of an activity. If you follow the script provided, do the activities, **and debrief the activities**, allowing kids time to tell what they think about them, you'll have plenty of material at each center.

Chadder's Adventures video. One of the strengths of the Group VBS approach is that every activity emphasizes the day's Bible point. While it does contain some nature footage, the main purpose of *Chadder's Adventures* video is to help children apply each day's Bible points. They watch as Chadder struggles to believe, obey, trust God, etc.

Additional nature facts or object lessons will be valuable only as they can contribute to reinforcing each day's Bible point.

Crew Leaders. In the eyes of a child, the crew leader is a key person at VBS. Make sure that your crew leaders know what is expected of them. Giving them a personal copy of the *Crew Leader's Pocket Guide* can make all the difference in their attitude and effectiveness.

Linda Koh Joins General Conference Children's Ministries

Dr. Linda Koh, formerly Director of Children's Ministries and Women's Ministries for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division has accepted the position of Children's Ministries Director for the General Conference. She replaces Dr. Virginia Smith, who has moved to the West Coast.

One of the writers for the GraceLink curriculum, Dr. Koh is energetic, enthusiastic, well-informed--and just happens to be Chinese. She has an education background and will be a great asset to children's ministries in the world church.

Dr. Koh is one of the featured presenters at this fall's *Growing a Family of Grace* convention in Portland, OR.



Getting Connected

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use drugs. As leaders, our role is to connect with parents in order to provide encouragement and support--to help them strengthen the connections with their children.

"Behind every child's pain is usually an adult," admits Josh McDowell. Whether it's the pain of loneliness and perceived rejection or of abuse, relief can come with the help of

Christian adults who care enough to connect.

A key fact for both parents and leaders to remember is that kids spell love, T-I-M-E. It takes time to build connections and memories with young people. But that time represents an investment in relationship. And relationship provides a foundation--a reason for kids to listen when we talk about God.

Growing a Family of Grace Convention

This year's North American Division-sponsored Children's Ministries training event will be held in Portland, Oregon from October 16-19. The convention will feature a wide variety of ministry tracks:

- ◆ Basic Children's Ministry Certification, Tracks I & II
- ◆ Advanced Children's Ministry Certification
- ◆ Spanish Children's Ministry Certification (Sabbath)
- ◆ Family Friendly Church (Friday)
- ◆ Adventurer Staff Training
- ◆ Family Ministries Certification
- ◆ Spanish Family Ministries Certification (Sabbath)
- ◆ Youth Ministries
- ◆ Adventist Community Services
- ◆ Adult Ministries

You won't want to miss this smorgasboard of ministry training opportunities.

From general sessions with speakers like Fredrick Russell and Karl Haffner, to presentations from Bailey Gillespie, Edwina Neely, and Debra Brill, you'll return home with a wealth of new ideas.

Registration and class schedules will be available online in April at <http://adventistleadershipconvention.com>. For more information or a copy of the convention brochure, phone 301-680-6425.

New Ministry Database

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has opened a new website with you in mind. Registering at <http://adventistministry.com> allows you to receive specific information for each ministry area in which you are involved.

For instance, if you check "children's coordinator," you'll automatically receive information tailored to that position, such as a new e-newsletter from NAD Children's Ministries for Children's Coordinators. If you indicate that you teach primary Sabbath School, you'll get news about resources that apply specifically to primary. You won't receive information about Pathfinders unless you also checked that area.

Sign up right away so that you don't miss anything! If you teach, witness, pray, share, or volunteer, this ministry database is for you. All you have to do is register.

The Year 2002: Children's Ministries Overview

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2001</u>
Conference year-end reports	23 (40%)	21 (36%)
Conferences reporting VBS	26 (45%)	26 (45%)
Vacation Bible Schools held	446	365
Enrollment	22,181	18,225
Percent non-Adventist children	44%	42%
Branch Sabbath Schools	155	93
Leadership training meetings	122	84
Participants in training events	3631	2091
Baptisms resulting from children's outreach	511	300
On-going Bible study classes	260	155
Children witnessing	2,902	2,597
Congregations with other weekly programs for children	223	201
Congregations with children involved in church responsibilities	459	582

Children's Sabbath 2003: Open Hearts, Open Hands

If you enjoyed *Hand in Hand* last year, we invite you to look forward to planning for Children's Sabbath 2003. Traditionally scheduled for the first Sabbath in October, Children's Sabbath is a time for churches all over the world to focus on some of Jesus' favorite people--kids.

Open Hearts, Open Hands will feature a program centered around service. It offers an opportunity for children to report on out-

reach projects they've conducted, and spotlight the ways they're using their gifts to serve.

This year's materials will include a program guide for the church service, as well as a "cookbook" of outreach and sharing ideas. A variety of other items, such as pins, posters, and postal cards will also be available.

Watch for more information about Children's Sabbath materials online at <http://childmin.com/ChildrensSabbath>

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