

# W I N T E R CHILDREN'S LEADER 2 0 0 4

A NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE WHO LEAD CHILDREN IN THE CONGREGATION.

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Vol. 11, No. 1  
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A publication of the  
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## C hildren and The Passion of the Christ

On February 25, Ash Wednesday, the much-discussed movie, *The Passion of the Christ* will open in theaters across the United States. Advance movie clips and even the whole production have been previewed by many, adding to the fervor of commentators either promoting or damning it. And children are being drawn into the discussion. Even kids who do not normally watch movies in the theater or on TV hear their friends talking about it.

Some are already asking how Seventh-day Adventists will relate to the film. Do we promote it or forbid it? Will we attend? The answer depends on members. The church has already cautioned against theater attendance; what else is there to say? Plenty, it turns out.

As children's leaders at church, we should not organize a visit to the movies for our children. Doing so is likely to bring a lot of pressure on some children whose parents don't want them to attend. Families should be left to decide for themselves whether or not to take a child to see *The Passion*. However, be aware that this is not a movie for children.

One thirty-something young adult says, "I couldn't handle the level of violence portrayed. The trailer shows the hammer coming down on Jesus' hands as He is nailed to the cross. It gives glimpses of His battered and bloody face." Other reviews confirm that the producers have not spared the details.

Young children need to establish a secure friendship with Jesus. So we shield them from many of the Bible's more graphic and explicit stories until they've reached an age where they can process that information. At the same time, this public discussion of *The Passion of the Christ* affords a wonderful opportunity to walk children through chapters 74-82 in *Messiah*, a simplified *Desire of Ages* suitable for today's juniors.

As we approach this Easter season, let's emphasize, to ourselves and to our children, the central truth of Calvary: your sin and mine nailed Jesus to the cross. He suffered without complaint for me. What unutterable love! What a reason to celebrate!

~Noelene Johnsson

## National TV-Turnoff Week

The week of April 19-25 is National TV-Turnoff week. For the first time, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is getting behind the program. See the March *Kids'View*, a pull-out paper for kids inserted in the *Adventist Review*. The April calendar, published in the March issue, gives lots of TV alternatives for the month of April. Plan now to encourage families in your church to get involved.

During TV-Turnoff Week 2003, an estimated 7.04 million kids and adults turned off TV—and turned on life. If all those people stood in a line, they'd reach from Washington, DC to Denver, CO—over 1,600 miles.

One girl in New Orleans, LA, turned her phone into a TV help line for anyone "who might need consolation, conversation, or time-whittling ideas to get you through your time of need." She encouraged her friends to call her just when they were about to break their no-TV habit and reach for the remote.

In 2001, several businesses in Walkersville, MD, had special promotions on pizza, bowling, and miniature golf to encourage families to get out and do things together

during TV-Turnoff week. Think of a business in your town that you'd like to get to help promote TV-Turnoff week, and ask them to do a promotional special.

~stories and statistics from  
<http://www.tv-turnoff.org>

### Did you know. . . .

- ▶ Kids who watch an hour or less of TV each day are more likely to be able to read well.
- ▶ The average American kid sees 20,000 TV commercials every year.

### WANTED: Kids' TV-Free Ideas

The March issue of *Kids'View* (published in the *Adventist Review*) will feature TV-Turnoff. In preparation for that issue, we're collecting kids' ideas of what to do without television. You can help by encouraging the kids you know to go to <http://childmin.com> to tell us about their favorite TV-free activities. It's quick and easy!

## Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS)

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

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

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

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

For more information about MOPS and its wide range of resources, visit [www.MOPS.org](http://www.MOPS.org) or call 800-706-7419.

## News & Notes

### Coming Events

Details for these events available online at <http://childmin.com/Events>.

- ◆ **February 27-29, 2004**—Cohutta Springs, GA; Children's Ministries convention (Georgia-Cumberland Conference)
- ◆ **February 28-29, 2004**—Phoenix, AZ; Children's Ministries training convention (Arizona Conference)
- ◆ **September 23-26, 2004**—Reston, VA. This North American Division-sponsored convention will include tracks not just for Children's Ministries, but also for a number of other church ministries.
- ◆ **November 18-21, 2004**—Training convention in South Bend, IN (Lake Union)

### Year-End Reporting

At this point, the only year-end information about Children's Ministries activity in the entire North American Division is the information received from the 215 faithful churches that submitted year-end reports. We can only wonder what the figures might be if all 4,950 churches in the North American Division reported. Even though it's late, please help us give a true picture of children's ministries in NAD; ask your children's coordinator if a report has been sent from your church.

### Free Video Resource

Free video available while supplies last: *After the Fall* tells the story of rock climber Craig DeMartino—a freak accident that should have ended in tragedy began a triumph for him. Group Publishing is offering this free video/DVD resource along with a 12-topic leader guide, as part of their "Give Back" program. Every year Group tithes a portion of its profits by "giving back" to churches with free ministry resources. To order your copy, phone 800-747-6060 or visit [www.grouppublishing.com/afterthefall](http://www.grouppublishing.com/afterthefall). Limit one video per church.

### SCUBA Music CDs

Additional copies of the SCUBA "Sing & Play Lite" music CD are still available. Contact your local ABC (800-765-6955) or the Review & Herald Publishing order desk (800-777-9098). \$14.99/copy; discounts available for orders of 50 or more.

## VBS Follow-up: It's a Party!

*Editor's Note: Diane Wandsell led out in four separate Vacation Bible School programs in her Pennsylvania district last summer, with a total of 112 children in attendance. Several other leaders have shared similar stories of holiday parties.*

We had two Christmast parties for VBS follow-up this year. Our program in Elkland last August was the first ever Seventh-day Adventist Vacation Bible School in this small town.

Of the 21 children who attended the Elkland VBS, 17 came to our Christmas party at the home of John and Diane Spielman,



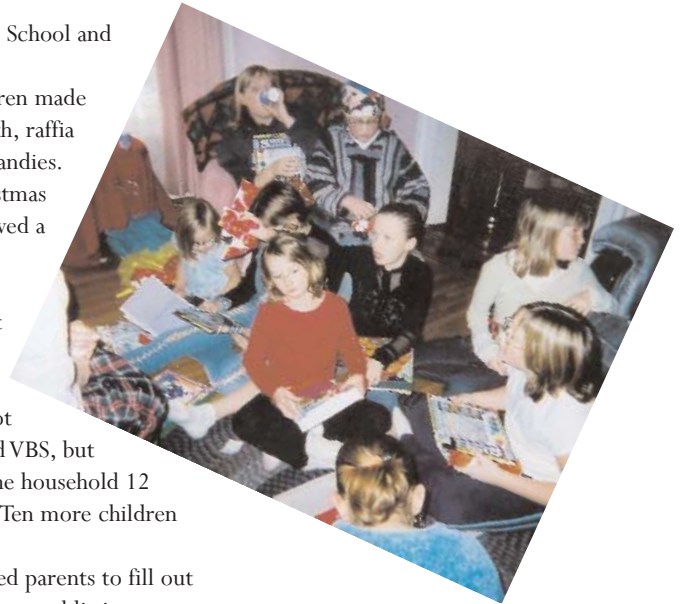
where we meet for Sabbath School and church each week.

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

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

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

Some children got much-needed boots and coats. All of the children received a *Bible Heroes* book. One little girl was so excited



when she saw the book, because it was like one she had seen in the doctor's office waiting room. She will be receiving *The Bible Story* set soon.

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

~Dianne Wandsell  
VBS director

### Intercessory Prayer Line

We have established a youth prayer request line for all children and youth in our area. They just call the number and talk to one of our staff. If no one's available to answer, they are instructed to leave a message regarding their prayer request and to let us know if they want to be called back within 24 hours.

Two teenagers help to man the line, along with my husband and me. All calls are kept confidential. Eventually, we'd like a toll free number, with someone answering the phone 24 hours a day. Please pray for this ministry.

~Alishia McDonald  
Jordan Street Adventist Church  
Pensacola, Florida

## Energize Your Ministry— Bathe it in Prayer

Ask church members to become prayer partners for your ministry—to pray for leaders and children by name. Specifically, they can pray that God will rebuke Satan and keep him far away. Pray that the Holy Spirit will fill their homes with love and joy and peace. Pray that a love for Jesus will be awakened in children's hearts.

This is the single most important thing that you can do—just bathe your ministry in prayer. Get everyone at church to help; it takes a church to save a child.

Report to your prayer partners about every victory you experience. And be honest about your challenges. If you don't admit them, you can't ask someone to pray about them, right?

Prayer builds commitment and connections within the church family. Prayer also makes a huge difference in the life of a leader. A modern version of *Desire of Ages* says:

"The more time we spend with Jesus in prayer and devotions, the more we will become like Him. We will have clearer insights and better judgment. Then we will do great things for God. Christians can always get the best education at the greatest school—they can sit at the feet of Jesus." ~*Messiah*, p. 153

Read this passage again, replacing the pronouns "we" and "they" with your own name. Make it real; claim it before the Lord. And when you go back to your class you will do great things for God.

## From the Front Lines: Kids Are Late as Usual. . .

**Q:** The kids consistently come late to our class; what can I do?

**A:** This common challenge tempts leaders to blame parents. What would happen if instead, leaders asked, "What can we do to motivate children to **want** to be in Sabbath School on time?" If children are insistent about not missing a program, parents will usually get them there.

Try some of these ideas to up the excitement in your class:

1. **Start Sabbath School with a really interesting readiness activity** (not

### Great Sabbath School Helps Church Grow

One Sabbath morning about three years ago, a little family warily walked through the front doors of the Orchards Church in Vancouver, Washington. They were greeted with smiles and warm handshakes. In the lobby they met the pastor's wife, Karen Wesslen, who offered to take 8-year-old Tyler to the primary room. "Don't worry, he'll be okay," she assured his parents, Chris and Candy Conrad.

After Sabbath School, Karen met Tyler at the door just to be sure that he would find his parents. She asked him how he liked Sabbath School, and he said, "I really liked it. We're going to come back here." Then he added, "My parents have been looking at different churches, but we didn't like the priest at the last church, so we are going to come here."

The Conrad family came back the next Sabbath and the next, and Tyler told his parents that he still liked the Sabbath School. "How he enjoyed the class really had a lot to say," Candy said. "If he had come back from class with the same reaction that he had to the other churches we had visited, we would have probably kept looking for another church."

Chris and Candy became faithful members, and Tyler says that he wants to be baptized soon—all because of a great Sabbath School and its leaders.

~Richard Dower,  
North Pacific Union *GLENER*

with singing). And refer to that activity later in the program so that latecomers hear about what they missed. Or better yet, offer a choice of activities.\*

2. **Praise kids extravagantly when they are on time.** Tell them how good it makes you feel to see them there.
3. Write to the kids or call them during the week and tell them some of the things you have planned. Try to make it so they don't know quite what to expect when they get there.
4. **Don't let Sabbath School become predictable.** Always have at least one thing that is unique about each week's program.
5. **When people enter your class, have everyone say "Hi, (name)!"** It warms up the atmosphere when people call you by name.
6. **Put a lot of emphasis on activities—** and do them along with the kids. Remember, people want to join a group that's having fun.
7. **Plan a GraceLink party.** Award points for participation: 10 points for being on time, 5 points for being there within the first 15 minutes; 10 points for saying last week's memory verse; 10 points for daily Bible reading and prayer. (Family worship

can count.)

Post a list of points that can be earned. And keep a running class total, not an individual total. Work out ahead of time a reasonable number to set as the



goal. When that number is achieved, celebrate with a class party.

Inviting everyone to the party, whether they earned a lot of points or not, models grace. The party idea itself will give your class a boost.

8. **Ask kids what would make Sabbath School exciting for them.** Try out some of their ideas.

~Noelene Johnsson

\* Books like *52 Easy Program Ideas* and *Creative Bible Learning Activities for Junior-Teens* (AdventSource) provide a wide range of ideas, many already adapted to the GraceLink lessons.

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