

KIDS COVE SPRING NEWSLETTER

We knew it would come eventually. Spring is here!

Children and Parents Share a Worship Experience

As we anticipate an early Easter this year, we also look forward to an extra special Sunday morning church service for Eastview families. Children in grades one and higher will join their parents in the sanctuary or auditorium for an Easter Family Service. (Nursery care and Junior Kids Church programming will continue as usual.) An amusing and thought-provoking drama, an engaging video and a beautiful dance are some of the gifts being prepared for for this very important celebration. Children will be invited onto the platform to join in leading the praise and worship singing portion of the morning.

The "icing on the cake" to the morning will be the time of fellowship between services and after the second service, in the Kids Cove room and the Fireside room, where coffee and Easter pastries will be provided to help us continue the celebration as a church family. Anyone can participate in helping to make this portion of the morning very special, by bringing a dozen of your favorite pastry, and dropping it off in the kitchen as you arrive at church that day.

We look forward to marking this special date together as a church family, and we encourage you to take time that day to have a family discussion about what you experienced together as a family.

Coming this Spring to Kids Cove

Some important dates to mark down on your calendar:

Fri, Mar. 21	Good Friday services for families in sanctuary 9:30 & 11:15
Sun, Mar. 23	Easter Family Celebration for grade one and up. Nursery Care and Preschool Programming provided.
Sat., Apr. 12	Family Spring Event
Sun, Apr. 13	Parents invited to Kids Cove Grade 1-6 Program
Sun, Apr. 20	Small Group Celebration in KidsCove grade 1-6
Sun. May 11	Mother's Day - Preschoolers Sing in Sanctuary
Sun. May 25	Graduation Sunday (see note on reverse.)

SPRING
FAMILY EVENT
Saturday, April 12
4:00 - 7:00 pm

Bring your friends and come join in the fun for all ages

The party will include:

- *Mystery Scavenger Hunt.*
- *Carnival Games*
- *Potluck Supper*

Watch your mailbox for invitations.

Potluck Sign-up sheets will be posted with event posters.



Partnering with families in teaching who God is and guiding children into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

GRADUATION CELEBRATION IN MAY!

We look forward to celebrating God's faithfulness in the life of our church, by preparing a graduation event for Sunday, May 25th. On that day, families will gather in Kids Cove to say thank-you to God for a year of learning and growing together. And certain age-groups will be recognized and celebrated for advancing to the next level of our kids and youth programs.

SUNDAY MORNING OFFERING

One of the things children learn on Sunday mornings in Junior Kids Church and in Kids Cove, is that we have opportunity to share God's love with children in other countries, by praying for them and by collecting offering money to send and help enhance the lives of these children. Kids Cove Ministries are committed to sponsoring two World Vision children, as well as sending three Honduran children to school. We are grateful to our families for participating in these projects with us, and for partnering with us in training your children of the value of sharing from our hearts and our wealth.

GRADE FIVE'S AND SIX'S IN KIDS COVE

In the past few months, discussions and planning have taken place with small group leaders and parents around the very important topic of grade five and six children. This discussion was provoked by asking the question, "Is Kids Cove the best place for grade six children to learn and grow on Sunday mornings?" As we began to explore the answer, considering that grade six is a transitional time of life for kids, a potential solution began to emerge. Part of the journey towards a segregated program for the grade five and six children, is to move to an extended small group time each Sunday for this age group. This move began just this month, and has allowed the small group leaders enough time to engage these kids in more meaningful and relevant discussion around the Bible story, and how it applies to their individual lives.

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES

The last two pages of this newsletter are an article by Rhonda Rhea, a mother and pastor's wife, on the topic of children who don't want to go to church. How do we encourage a warm and positive attitude toward church in our children. As parents, you have an important responsibility to set an example and prepare your children for a lifetime of church connection. We pray that our children will grow to love God and his church, but what intentional steps can we be taking when they are very young, to foster this desire in their hearts? Hopefully you will find something helpful in the following article.

God Bless You and Your Family as you Celebrate Good Friday and Easter

Kids and Church: A Family Survival Guide

Help for making church a worshipful experience for the entire family

Sunday Morning Showdown

What to do when you hear "I don't wanna go to church!"

by Rhonda Rhea

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I felt battle-weary as I limped from my preschool daughter's Sunday school room. She had started church as a member of the newborn class—a pastor's child, no less. My husband and I had worked to help our children love church. But little Allie was shifting into battle mode, complete with her own air-raid siren, as soon as her classroom came into view. Well-meaning friends gave plenty of contradictory counsel. "Just let her cry it out, hon." Around the next corner I'd hear, "Never force her to go. She might hate church for the rest of her life." I carried the additional burden of trying to get to my class with this cute, dimpled child wrapped tightly around my left leg! If you're like most parents, you have experienced at least one of those leech-like moments. Or maybe your deathly ill child has made a miraculous recovery as soon as he's sure it's too late to leave for church. Maybe you've experienced the "pew slouch" or the classic "eye roll" from your 10-year-old. We can force our children to go to church, but can we make them like it?

Make a List

A good place to start is asking your child why she doesn't want to go to church. Help her talk about her feelings, remembering that they can be difficult to express. As she talks, make a list. Then you can begin to work through her concerns, item by item. While you're listening, carefully guard your responses. When I hear, "My Sunday-school teacher doesn't like me," my natural response is, "Of course your teacher likes you." Instead, I can guide my child in a positive way: "I'm sorry you feel your teacher doesn't like you. Can you tell me why you feel that way?" Cindy Layman, a 13-year children's ministry veteran, says parents should check to make sure there isn't a legitimate problem with the class or Sunday school teacher. Investigate by asking specific, but non-offensive, questions, and try sitting in on a class. If you notice areas that need improvement, speak privately with the teacher. If the problems persist, express your concerns to the church's leaders. Often, however, the problem isn't with the teacher or the class. Kids have their own reasons for resisting church, and their struggles usually disappear with time. In the meantime, there are several things parents can do to minimize the battles.

Examine Family Routines

Think about your Saturday-night bedtime and Sunday-morning routines. It might help to try an earlier bedtime, especially if your child is having trouble getting up for church. You can also help relieve Sunday-morning stress with a little advance preparation. With five children, if I don't plan ahead, I end up with ten Sunday shoes but no pairs—and plenty of stress to pass on to my children. Work ahead on getting ready for church just as you would make early arrangements for a party. And give your kids some choices along the way, such as whether to wear the blue dress or the yellow one. But don't offer the choice to boycott church.

Check Yourself

It's possible your child's objections to church reflect some of your attitudes. To find out, ask yourself these questions:

- > Does my child hear me speak disrespectfully about people at church, especially a teacher or pastor?
- > Does my child see "duty" or "privilege" reflected in my attitude toward church involvement?
- > Do I have negative attitudes toward church that the Lord wants to change?

As it is in many struggles, prayer is your best offensive weapon in the Sunday-morning battle. Pray for your child and for yourself, asking the Lord to make you a good example of positive church relationships.

Plan Special Events

Make an effort to tie fun into churchgoing. One couple encourages their child to invite friends home for visits after church. Since children get excited about giving gifts, let your child choose a gift for her teacher. Also, consider inviting your child's teacher to dinner so they can get to know each other on your child's turf. To help increase a younger child's comfort level, take him on a field trip to church during the week. Tour the classrooms, including yours, and let him know what you do while he's in class.

Give Good Reasons

Explain to your child why your family goes to church. Read Hebrews 10:25 and show her that your family obeys God by attending church and worshiping with other believers. Show her the instruction for kids found in Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Remind her that your family is able to learn about Jesus and minister to people through the church, as well as receive ministry from others.

Reassure Younger Children (ages three to seven)

When leaving a younger child in Sunday school, tell her where you will be and when you will pick her up. Show her the clock and where the hands will be when you come. Build trust by returning then. At drop-off time, don't stay in the classroom more than five to ten minutes. Crying usually stops in less than 20 minutes, even though you might see it start up again at pick-up time. Don't give in to those tantrums. Psychologist E.L. Thorndike reminds us, "Behavior which achieves desirable consequences will recur." If your child likes what happens when she throws a tantrum, she will repeat the behavior. Instead of reinforcing the tantrums, encourage good behavior with rewards.

Inspire Older Children (ages eight to twelve)

"If it's important to you to have your child in worship, it should be important to you to find out what your child is receiving from worship," says Cindy Layman, who has trained hundreds of teachers. After church, Cindy and her husband ask their children what they learned, and then they help their kids apply what they heard. Sometimes planning a special lunch to discuss questions provides a surprising and intimate sharing time. If your child doesn't have friends in Sunday school, encourage him to invite friends to attend with him.

Don't Give in to Guilt

Should parents make kids come to church? Think about proper health and nutrition. We often have to make our children eat vegetables and go to bed on time. It's not pleasant, but we do it because it's good for them. Children aren't the best judges of what's best for them. That's one reason God gave them parents. After Jesus ordered his disciples to let the children come to him, "he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them" (Mark 10:16). I've seen him bless my children—and I've been blessed, too. Gradually, the battles have died down. We've kept the consistency in attendance, answered a number of our children's questions, and invested much prayer. And now that Allie is back in her class, I've regained the circulation in my left leg.

—When she's not speaking or writing, Rhonda Rhea incites her five children to hassle-free church attendance at the St. Louis-area church where her husband, Richie, serves as senior pastor. This article first appeared the July/August 1998 of CHRISTIAN PARENTING TODAY.

THOUGHT PROVOKERS

- ~ Having a child who's unhappy about church can put a huge damper on a church worshipping experience. How has an unhappy child impacted your experience? What steps did you or might you take to improve it?
 - ~ What sorts of worries run through you mind when your child goes through an "anti-church" phase?
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