

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Kid's Church has been up to lots of fun this year, with our theme of 'Let Your Light Shine' from Matthew 5:16.

Curriculum

This year, I have continued using the Lectionary as a guide for our sessions. By doing so, children and parents hear the same Bible readings each week, hopefully making it easier for families to chat about Church after the service.

Last year, we had the over-arching theme of 'Growing Together in God's Love'; this year, we have 'Let Your Light Shine'. I liked how having a theme meant that I could connect different sessions back to the same idea, and it worked well for our group. I've been more flexible with it this year, as some sessions don't connect back to it depending on the Bible story and lesson. However, it's an effective tool when suitable and has been a nice way to differentiate the years. The theme also correlates with the Kid's Church board in the social lounge, which helps make the space feel more homey for the kids.

I've also been sticking with the session format I established last year. It varies week to week to keep things interesting for the kids, but having a baseline structure has been extremely helpful for planning.

1. *Opener*: This can be an object lesson, group discussion question, quick activity or game - anything to engage the kids from the get-go!
2. *Bible Story*: This is usually through a video, acting it out, or playing a game of fill-in-the-blanks, mad libs, hangman, etc.
3. *Game or Activity*: We play a wide array of games which link the main lesson or thinking point of the Bible story into the game.
4. *Craft*: Once we have thought about the main lesson a bit while getting some energy out, we sit down and do a craft that further explores the lesson or theme.

Logistics

I have found some great online resources for forming the sessions, especially as most Sunday School websites post weekly lessons, crafts, and games based on the Lectionary. My current go-to's are Bible Explore, Rfour's Children's Sermons, and Ministry to Children. I often draw from these for a lesson theme, then do some more searching and thinking to pick and choose the activities based on our group and what I

think would work. Each week ends up being an assortment of different ideas pulled from various sources.

This year, I've implemented a weekly group email to parents to let them know what we will be up to in the session that Sunday. I also let them know of any specific church notices or reminders. This has been a great way to keep steady communication with parents, as it's often challenging to connect with everyone after the service each week. It also offers an 'onboarding' to new families. I've found that new families who are on my mailing list are more likely to come back to St. Aidan's on Sundays. This year, I've added quite a few new families to the list - it's exciting to see it grow!

Community

Attendance has increased this year, with about 14 children returning for sessions, despite some families moving away. However, it's rare that everyone shows up each week, with weekly attendance usually sitting around 6-10 children. However, we had the usual drop in attendance during winter, with numbers typically around four children. Now that it is warming up, numbers are back up again.

One of my goals this year was to engage more with the parents, as I've found that most of my time and effort goes towards prepping and running the Sunday sessions. While Sundays are my main focus, I wanted to pay more attention to the family ministry side of my role. One way I've addressed this was by planning the Young People and Families potluck lunch with the other young adults. It was an enjoyable afternoon with lots of food and games! However, I spent most of the time facilitating the kid's games, so I didn't get to chat too much with the parents - but hopefully, the lunch provided the chance for parents to speak with one another. Overall, it was a successful lunch and is something I'd like to organise more often to keep the community strong.

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