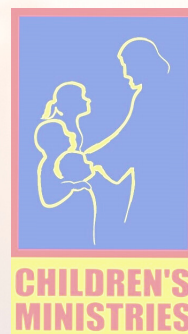


CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES



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Caring for our Children's Spiritual wellbeing

IN A TIME LIKE THIS

By Elsa Cozzi

As the COVID-19 pandemic increases across all countries, families are experiencing a new daily lifestyle filled with anxiety, fear, social distancing, and home quarantine. As we are facing this new way of life - parents managing to work from home, children having online classes, churches organising worship sessions online, all are doing their best to be resourceful, productive and keep the flow. One thing is clear: Covid-19 has a great impact in our lives and is changing our daily routines. Every political, economic, social, and spiritual organisation has been involved in this new asset of our world and it is interesting to see the impact this has on society.

UNICEF organization is also concerned for children that are involved in this pandemic and recently released the Global Multi-Religious Faith-in-Action Covid-19 Initiative Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families and Communities, a special document regarding Covid-19, children and spiritual care. "As the pandemic continues wreaking unimaginable sickness and increasing death tolls, we are particularly aware of the increased vulnerability of children, families and in particular girls. Children are facing a range of challenges to their health and safety: school closures, high levels of emotional distress, higher risks of violence and increased food insecurity.

We are also seeing an increase in the number of orphans and in those affected by other diseases due to the break in vaccination services. We are seeing a growing need for financial and material support for households hardest hit by loss of income and resulting strains. Religions for Peace (RfP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are joining forces to launch a global Multi-Religious Faith-in-Action Covid-19 Initiative to raise awareness of the impacts of this pandemic on the world's youngest citizens.

The Initiative reflects the unique and critical roles played by religious leaders and actors, in influencing values, attitudes, behaviors and actions that affect the development and wellbeing of the world's children. "One of the main concerns is also the need to "provide active engagement of networks of religious communities including faith-based women and youth, in collaboration with local governance structures, and organized voluntary services in:

Spiritual and emotional care and support for parents, children, the elderly, and those experiencing disruption and distress in order to provide a source of support, peace, comfort and hope.

Positive age-specific and gender-responsive parenting guidance and support to families in relation to the health, development, protection and social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, particularly those in low-income families and those most vulnerable and hardest to reach.

Youth-friendly communication and engagement including their support with more systematic use of technology and social media as a connective communication platform for communities during periods of physical distancing and beyond.

While it seems that life as we knew is not coming back, this may be an appropriate time to be creative in faith formation. Churches and spiritual leaders are doing their best to provide children and families with good tools and materials to continue keeping connected to God and enhance their spiritual life.

In this totally new asset parents have the opportunity to mentor their children and model faith formation in the home. A few days ago, I read the following statement on the social network: "COVID-19 will produce a new generation of Christian parents who read the Bible and pray with their children and teenagers". In fact, the confinement weeks and months are a great opportunity for parents to set new patterns of beliefs that can remain once the busy life returns. By staying at home, parents can no longer delegate discipleship process to be the responsibility of church leaders, teachers, and programs. While at home people need their parents to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of God's will. It is in this time that parents can help their children know that the Lord is a loving God and how vital it is to love our God with all their heart and soul and strength.

Let's put our energies in inspiring parents to disciple their children: encouraging, challenging and equipping them to read the Bible with their kids of 5, 10, 12 and 17 years of age. In doing so, let us remind them the biblical truth that they are the primary disciple-makers of their children. With prayers and support, parents can overcome their fears and limits to experience the joy of listening to God's Word and praying together with their children.

<https://www.unicef.org/pressreleases/launch-global-multi-religious-faith-action-covid-19-initiative>



"COVID-19 will produce a new generation of Christian parents who read the Bible and pray with their children and teenagers"

LETTERS FROM GOD

BY KEISHA DURRANT

What Do You Get When You Put an Invisible Enemy, Many Kids and One Idea Together?

On 12 March 2020, the Irish nation changed, along with many others as a result of attacks from an invisible enemy in the form of Covid-19. There was an enormous shift in our way of life, as we knew it. No one could have imagined such drastic changes in such a short space of time. The world as we knew it was no more.

With the closure of our church building and subsequently the cancellation of our Children's Church, we wanted a way of connecting with the kids and keeping a sense of belonging for them.

From this, "Letters from God" was born, an initiative of the Ranelagh Children's Ministries Department, Dublin. The thought of children ripping through the envelopes, of children finding letters addressed specifically to them with gleams in their eyes, unable to contain their excitement about its content and thinking, "Someone took their time amidst all the chaos to write to me!" was a motivating factor in the development of the idea.

Adapting to changes can prove difficult for adults, let alone kids, so the "Letters from God" were supposed to be source of comfort for the kids in these troubling times.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Also to alleviate their fears and anxiety with an assurance that God is always in control no matter what is happening around them. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).



"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1)

It is an affirmation of God's unfailing, unconditional love. His love is not moved by the storms of life, it endures forever. "For God so loved the world, that He gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)

Letters from God started with 64 kids in Ranelagh church, Dublin and now we have 112 throughout the Irish Mission with 3 kids in America. Finland has started using the letters and around the world some directors have registered an interest in the idea.

In this changing world, now more than ever, we all need God. As the daily struggles and death tolls increase, we can easily fall into despair. What better way to remind them that God will not leave them in the darkest moments; His love will strengthen them and when life gets tough, God's love does not waver.



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Messy Church

OROSHÁZA CHURCH,
HUNGARY

In January 2019 we started our family mission and began preparation for our first Messy Church. Our first task was to form groups of church members, where spiritual gifts were considered, and the following groups were formed.

Messy Church Team:

- Worship group made up of 5 members who organise the presentations
- Technical crew: 2 teenagers from our youth group who provide sound, lighting, and music effects
- Dining group: 8 members who prepare the delicious dinner
- Craft & Creative group: 6 members who help prepare the crafts and decorate the room
- Welcome group: 5 members who help and assist the guests in the car park
- A prayer group: Entire team
- Messy Church messenger group where we raise the importance of prayer to members every day.

Messy Church Preparation:

- Worship Team meets to set dates and topics 6 months in advance
- Design Poster
- Update Facebook page
- Send notifications out to friends

We try to look for topics related to each other. For example, last winter's theme was biblical heroes - three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace, the story of Gideon, David and Goliath.

During Christmas time, we focused on the greatest hero, Jesus. Although as Christmas approaches in Hungary, at least here in Orosháza, there are lots of balls and festive occasions that affect families, especially parents.

In November and December, it is very difficult for children to come with their parents because there is always some kind of city event that collides with ours. It made us a little frustrated, but then we realized that our own children were just as important and our messy church became more for our own families, organised with the same enthusiasm.

It has been a positive experience forging together with the church membership. Since sharing our experiences members of the congregation who are unable to personally attend the Messy Church programs have begun to appreciate our family mission and are increasingly supportive, either by prayer or a cake for the evening supper.

We also have people who are not members of the congregation involved in the program, helping the craft and dining groups. In our recent programs, people who are not members of our church have been involved in helping out with the children's songs.

Our church children enthusiastically invite their friends for these occasions and are an integral part of the worship service. The children are very fond of participating in rehearsals and learning the texts they are given. It has been a very good opportunity in the field of mission. We can only encourage everyone to embrace and do something for the families in their city, open for the families in the city and make friends with other families. The team get tired after every program, but nobody complains, instead we tidy and clean up with a smile on our faces.

We think it is important that at our crafting events, the kids make items that do not end up being thrown away. Crafts should be useful and remind the child of the stories he or she has heard. This spring we have chosen the treasure hunt topic.

To do this we used the parables of Jesus. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus intervened here and we had to postpone two occasions so far. For this occasion, we printed a small treasure-booklet, in which the children were able to collect gold coins to win a prize. The prize included one free participation at the Holiday Bible Camp organized by the Children's Ministry of the Hungarian Union, and the second prize is a half-price reduction from the trip.

We started this outreach opportunity to be more visible in the city while at the same time there are many families and 20 children in our church as well. It was also intended as a mission to keep the children and a mission to make new friends or re-connect with old ones. Of course, we have had some difficulties while some positive experiences as well:

We have experienced challenges in our local church by individuals who make our job harder with their criticisms. The solution to this is prayer and we have repeatedly talked about our positive experiences on our Sabbath morning services.



Another difficulty that causes us a great deal of trouble are some of our parents. The kids would love to come for these occasions, but their parents pull them back. It is much harder to build trust with parents, and it is much harder to convince parents to bring their children. We still have a lot of work to do and think about while asking for God's help to break through this wall. But we take comfort in the following verse: 'Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.' 1Cor 15:58

Church Pastor: Róbert Bicskei
Messy Church coordinator: Ildikó Rajki

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MAY, 2020

Quick & Easy Worship Ideas

PRINCE OR PRINCESS FOR THE DAY



Bible Stories

The New Jerusalem -
Revelation 22

Mephiboseth - 2 Samuel 9

King Joash - 2 Kings 12

King Josiah - 2 Kings 22; 23

Things you will need:
Anything to make your child feel like a Prince or
Princess for the day
A Crown
Special clothes
Your child's favourite foods for every meal
Special cloth to cover child's chair

Worship activities:

1. Help your child feel like a prince or princess: a. Let the child dress up if he/she likes to. b. Serve his/her favorite foods (whatever they are). c. Grant three special requests for the day. (Offer the child five possible choices to limit the requests to things you would be willing to do!)
2. In worship time talk about how this is a special day and your child is being a prince or princess just for today.
3. Tell your child that in God's eyes he/ she is a prince/princess every day, and everybody else is a prince/princess in His eyes also.
4. In heaven everyone will be princes and princesses forever, and they will have a real gold crown and special clothes to wear. In heaven they will have all the time they ever need to do what they want to do. Their choices will not be limited in heaven!
5. Thank God that we are all princes and princesses in His kingdom because He is the King and we are all His children.

From: Holford K.: 100 Quick & Easy Worship Ideas for Kids. Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa, Idaho, USA, 2004

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

FROM THE HANDBOOK CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Discipline can be a problem for teachers in clubs, classes or Sabbath School. Teachers often ask themselves. How much obedience should I demand? How permissive should I be? Sometimes a situation with a student can get out of control and almost beyond endurance. An undisciplined class is demoralizing to the child, teacher, and other children. Here are some preventive keys to ensure productive learning time:

The Teachers Attitude. This is the first key. Be genuine. Show a sincere interest in the children. Be accepting of them and love them unconditionally, just as God loves and accepts us. Develop a positive attitude toward the students and try to make positive comments on their behaviour. Always be in control of your temper and your tone of voice; never allow anger to flare up in the heat of the moment - no matter how hot it gets! Pray for yourself and your children. If you are too busy to pray for your Bible teaching ministry, then you are just too busy.

Preparation. This is the second key to good discipline. Prepare well in advance and adequately. Preparation will give you confidence and develop the children's trust in you as their leader. A warm, caring environment helps children know they are loved and accepted. Understand how God has designed your learners - physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually and equip your surroundings to meet their needs. Many teachers spend most of their time and patience struggling to keep learners seated in chairs that were not designed to hold children their size. Know your learners' home situations. Insight in this area will help you understand their backgrounds and perhaps their negative behaviour. Learn the names of all your children - not just the ones of those who get into trouble.

An Age-Appropriate Schedule. Gearing your schedule to your class's age is the third key. Children are not miniature adults. They are children with specific needs. To avoid feelings of pressure, allow children plenty of time to move from one activity to another. Provide them with choices to motivate their interest. Encourage those who are reluctant to join in. Provide movement that engages both large and small muscles. Variety in the type and pace of activities helps to eliminate boredom and restlessness. Involving learners in activities as soon as they arrive is especially crucial in averting any likely trouble. Always be ready and waiting for the first arrival.

The Teacher's Behaviour. Be a model in all you say and do. Direct learners by statements rather than by questions. Make good use of nonverbal communication - eye contact, a smile, a touch on the shoulder, a stern look. Take time to listen to your learners. For many of them, negative attention is better than no attention at all, and they will do what they have to in order to get it. Encourage your learners through praise of specific positive behaviour.



Mutual respect, Effective communication, Encouragement, Solutions, Empower. Positive Discipline encourages the use of verbal rewards like gifts and privileges.

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VÅLD I NÄRA RELATIONER

Hur kan vi förebygga, upptäcka och agera?



4-6 september
Adventkyrkan i Göteborg
Huvudtalare:
Sarah K. McDugal

För mer info: adventist.se

