

If You Look for Me at Christmas...

Author Unknown

If you look for me at Christmas,
you won't need a special star;
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem,
I'm right there where you are.
You may not be aware of Me
amid the celebrations.

You'll have to look beyond the stores
and all the decorations.

But if you take a moment
from your list of things to do,
and listen to your heart, you'll find
I'm waiting there for you.

You're the one I want to be with,
you're the reason that I came,
and you'll find Me in the stillness,
as I'm whispering your name.

Love, Jesus

Blessings to all,

Clair

Clair Sanches-Schutte
Children's and Women's
Ministries director
Trans-European Division



NEWS FROM THE GREEK MISSION

Paulina Papilia, Children's Ministries Director

News from Greece

1) Last year a member of our church was diagnosed with cancer. He and his family live far away from Athens, the capital of Greece, and it's difficult for us to visit them. So, some kids from Athens' church decided to create banners in order to comfort him. They wrote some verses from Psalm 23, "Lord is my shepherd....." and "get well soon". He was really moved and encouraged by that.



2) In 2018 one member of our church, Elena, got pregnant. She and her family had just moved from Switzerland to Greece and the kids decided to throw a baby shower to welcome her and her new baby!



3) Something that made all of us very happy in 2018 was that 3 children and adolescents from Pyrgos' church got baptized this autumn.

Pyrgos is a village 400 Km away from the capital. Some kids from Athens' church visited them and celebrated all together their "new life".

The baptism took place on the beach so many people who were swimming there stayed and watched the whole ceremony.



NEWS FROM THE DANISH UNION

Anne-May Müller, Children's Ministries Director

Greetings from Denmark! We are happy to invite you to see what we are doing for the children's ministry department here. We are happy for the inspiration that you share with us – hope this can inspire you too.

We have two big nationwide events, that comprise the majority of our work. But the most important is what happens every single week in our churches. The Children's Sabbath School is where we see development of faith and where the basis for the children's lives with Jesus is. This year a group of active Sabbath School teachers have made a resource for other churches. They have recorded a bunch of Sabbath School songs, so that it is easy to sing along, if you have only a few children, or the teachers are not good at music. A very useful tool, which is also used to learn some new songs.

Camp meeting

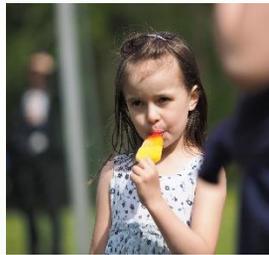
Every year in May we gather at a big camp and have four days together as a church. The children have their own meetings and activities while the adults are in the big tent for meetings. This year over 60 volunteers made an effort to make camp meeting a highlight for the children in three different age groups. Some met Jacob who slept on a stone, some were detectives trying to find the invisible army of angels, like Elisha, and others prepared a big "Sabbath-party" with balloons and party-food, because the Sabbath is a delight. The older children got a tour of the tabernacle in the desert, where they saw, smelled, touched, tasted and heard what that would have been like.





On Sabbath afternoon we invited everybody (even the adults) for ice cream on the big lawn, and afterwards some of the adults joined us in playing a ball-game. Those times, where children, teens, youth, and adults meet and have fun together are invaluable in creating important bonds and relationships.

I met two boys on their bikes after the divine service, where they had been on an exciting scavenger hunt. One looks up at me with very serious eyes, saying: "This is the best camp meeting that I have ever attended!" the other boy was not very impressed: "But it is only your second camp meeting ..." But it tells us how important it is to have fun, age-appropriate, and interactive programmes for the children, so they make good relationships with God-fearing and loving adults. The boy in the story above is not used to going to church, but his grandparents brought him. Thank God for adults who have a burden for our children!



Children's Camp

This year we had the privilege of having 90 children for our week long Children's Camp. This year I had the opportunity to be the main speaker and it was sooo much fun to explore how God loves even unruly children, how God never gets angry with us, how God is full of grace, when we fail, how we all have equal value, and how forgiveness can repair broken relationships, and how good friends are worth the world – all values that we get from the Bible, but we learnt them through the stories of famous Swedish author, Astrid Lindgren (Pippi Longstocking, Emil and others).





A week packed full with fun, friends, songs, performance, swimming, football, camp fire and prayer. Being the speaker gave me an opportunity to have spiritual conversations and prayer with precious children. About 1/3 of them coming from homes, where Christianity is not practised – so again: Thank God for godly leaders, who bring children, and who give one week of their vacation time to this important work!



Our many volunteers also need to be inspired. This year I took 9 volunteers to the Netherlands on a weekend trip to experience first-hand the excellent work that Madelon and her team do with KidzRally. What an experience! Firstly, we were hosted like royals – secondly, it was awesome to be part of the work done for the children and get new ideas to our own work where we are. Thank you for your hospitality and thank you for the inspiration!



NEWS FROM FINLAND

Eliisa Saarinen, Children's Ministries Director

Children enjoy serving others!

Children's Summer:

In the summer, there were four different camps for children and families.

Summer Camp-meeting: The first meeting was a joint summer camp-meeting between 7th and 10th June. Throughout the camp-meeting, there was a programme for children and also for families. This event is in every two years and this is when most of our church members come. This year we had about 1,200 participants, out of which about 100-150 children.



Family Camp:

Next week after camp-meeting, we went to our own campsite where a family camp was held from 12 to 17 June.

Children's Camp: The children's camp was held on June 2-6. This is for children aged 7 to 10 years. For the first time, our speaker was one of our volunteers, an active mother of two children, Pauliina. She experienced the calling to come to the camp as a speaker and it worked out very well. Pauliina talked about "The courage of Paul": How Paul's life had many things going on that he needed a lot of courage and trust in God to make the right choices.

0-100 Summer Camp: This was the last camp in summer. It is a camp, where children can be involved with the whole congregational family. This camp was held on 23rd-29th July.

In a family camp, children are of many ages, from baby to teen age and they are there with their parents. It has been touching to see many families coming here every year with their children and seeing the children and families grow in faith.

But how can you support a child to participate even after he has become "over-age" for a children's camp? We have been doing this for years, and that is, when young people are interested after turning 11 years of becoming an assistant director for a family- and children's camp, they are welcome! We give them small and appropriate practical responsibilities where they can help the camp. These young helpers are usually 11 to 17 years of age and they do their job in the camp very enthusiastically and responsibly. This year, one of the helpers, Emma, wanted to be baptised. Emma has been camping with her family for many years. Her parents are always volunteers, and the children have been campers, and after they have grown up, it's wonderful to get them again as assistants! I recommend that everyone take children and youth into the event or camp to help! They become active members and thus find their place more easily in the congregation. In camps they can also design and implement programmes with adult mentors.



Making Muppets course: In the autumn we made muppets for children's work and they came up very colourful and lively ones! Muppets and dolls are always a good addition to children being taught different things.





Parenting and Families weekend:

Karen Holford, Family Director of TED, travelled to Finland on 28-30 September. We organized together for parenting and family weekend where they got new information, how to nurture spirituality at home, and how to grow children's faith at home. We had many family-worships in the weekend. Parents had moments related to parenthood and relationships and children had their own programme.

Children's weekend: Children's weekend was held on 26-28 October. The visiting star was "Bunny, Strawberry and Carrot". Bunny celebrated birthdays and waited hard for her gifts. Bunny thought together with the children what gifts were the most important: Jesus and friendship rose to the utmost importance! God has also given us many different gifts that we can use to help and delight other people or animals. Our life becomes meaningful and we will have a living faith!



NEWS FROM THE BALTIC UNION

Leading them to the Father

Children are precious treasures in our church. Where there are children in Sabbath School and in Divine Service, the church seems to come alive – these curious eyes, heartfelt smiles, soft little hands, and running feet – all these signs tell us that this church will continue in years to come. Children in church are also our responsibility. All we say and do influences them. How can we best share God's Word with them and teach them Christian values?

On 18th November Clair Sanches-Schutte, the Children and Women Ministries Department Director of the TED, and Karen Holford, the Family Ministries Department Director of the TED, visited the Baltic Union to share their experiences and insight in the work with children, to make us think and discuss, and to teach us some important principles that can be used in Sabbath School lessons and beyond.

Karen Holford introduced the approach called Godly Play, which has proved to be the most effective way to nurture children's faith. The participants of the training could experience what it is like to be present in such a lesson. The reverent way of telling the Bible story, the questions at the end, and freedom to use one's creativity created a special atmosphere and made also adults go deeply into the story and meditate on the Word of God. The participants found the method very useful and expressed their desire to learn more about it.



Clair Sanches-Schutte introduced the first topic of the course for Sabbath School teachers – "Understanding Children". Many participants found the explanation of different ages and stages of childhood and faith development very useful and they are looking forward to the future topics. They liked also the opportunity to participate in several interesting discussions during the lecture. In her presentation, Clair Sanches-Schutte told us three parables of leading children to the heavenly Father and made us ask ourselves whether we stand between them and Father with our "I know better" attitude; or whether we hurry them to exhaustion with too much of everything; or whether we really teach them to know the Father, to trust Him and love Him.

At the end of the event, we had also a little lottery (since Christmas is getting closer) to give away a Christmas set of knitted Bible characters that was brought to us by Karen Holford. The lucky winner was Rezekne church in Latvia. May God bless their children, and may these knitted dolls be used in the very best way to teach children about God's love for them.

The event included more than 60 participants from all three countries of the Baltic Union thanks to the active Children's Ministries leaders of our local conferences: Marite Lipska, Vilma Marušauskiene, and Allan Randlepp.

-Alla Nõmmik, Children's and Women's Ministries director, Baltic Union Conference





IT IS WRITTEN

TED news

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