

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me” but it seems to me that many of our churches do not have quite the same kid-appeal that Jesus must have had. We need to do more than just “let them come” — we need to give them (and their parents) a reason to come. We need to be able to offer them meaningful Christian education in a welcoming community that is eager to make room for families in all aspects of church life. That means that babies are allowed to cry. Toddlers are allowed to wiggle. Older kids are allowed to wear what they are wearing. Every church should hand out kids’ books, paper, and crayons for use during the service. Every church should have a decent nursery. **And every church should have a Sunday School available.**

Stories on the Way: Lesson Plans for Small Sunday Schools can help you extend Jesus’ invitation to the families in your community. Lesson plans and tip sheets will be posted to the website during the summer and the entire year-long curriculum will be made available in pdf form in time for September.



STORIES ON THE WAY



Lesson Plans for Small Sunday Schools

storiesontheway.wordpress.com

Stories on the Way is sponsored by the Anglican Diocese of Montreal and St Barnabas Anglican Church, Saint-Lambert. It is written by Rhonda Waters. Please contact me by email if you have any questions or suggestions: rhonda.m.waters@gmail.com.

If you are struggling to create a thriving Sunday school for your congregation, or simply would like to make your existing program easier to manage, there is a new resource available to you; *Stories on the Way: Lesson Plans for Small Sunday Schools*.

This turn-key program allows any parish to offer meaningful Christian education to the one, two or twenty children who consistently or sporadically attend church. I encourage you to take a look and I hope you are able to make use of this program.

Rhonda Waters

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Stories on the Way is a simple, flexible multi-age curriculum based on the rotation Sunday School model in which the same story is taught using different activities and from different perspectives over a number of weeks.

GOOD FOR...

CHILDREN

This approach is good pedagogy — children need repetition for optimum learning, using different learning strategies each week respects the fact that different people learn best through different activities. The method itself teaches children about the richness of the Bible and the stories that shape our tradition. Best of all, even if a child misses a week or two, they will not miss out on the story entirely!

TEACHERS

Stories on the Way is ideal for team teaching. Teachers could sign up for one story cycle or for the particular week with the learning activity that most appeals to them. *Stories on the Way* is also simple. The lesson plans are also designed to

require minimum advance preparation, reducing pressure on teachers’ schedules and making quick teacher substitutions possible.

SMALL SUNDAY SCHOOLS

Stories on the Way has the flexibility needed by small Sunday Schools. Since it is not based on the lectionary, lesson plans can be prepared for one week and saved for another if there are no kids in church that day. And, while *Stories on the Way* suggests an order and is designed to correspond with liturgical seasons, it does not assume an accumulation of knowledge over the year. Each lesson can stand on its own. *Stories on the Way* could also be used to fill in a gap in your regular schedule or to provide an activity for children during a parish meeting or event.



SAMPLE LESSON

JUMP! BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE WITH JESUS.

(Peter walks on water — Lesson One)

Open with prayer

Introduce the Story

Today, we are going to read a story about Jesus and his disciples (*explain “disciple”*), especially a disciple named Peter. Peter was the kind of guy who asked a lot of questions and got in a lot of trouble but learned a lot while he did it.

Read the first part of the story

One evening, after a long day of teaching and working with the crowds who followed him, Jesus sent his disciples off in their boat to cross to the other side of the lake before him while he went for a walk up the mountain. He needed to be alone to think and pray. After a while, he went back to the lake but the boat was already far away from the shore, blown by the wind and the waves. By this time, it was very late at night and Jesus wanted to reach the boat. He started to walk across the water. When the disciples saw him, walking on the waves, they were terrified. “A ghost! A ghost! “ they cried. Jesus heard them and he said, “Don’t be afraid. It’s just me.” One of the disciples, named Peter, was still nervous and he wanted to make sure it really was Jesus. He said, “Lord, if it is you, tell me to walk to you on the water.” Jesus answered, “Come on then”. Peter carefully stepped out of the boat and began to walk to Jesus. He couldn’t believe it! He was walking on water! He looked around but when he saw the wind and the waves he got scared and he started to sink...

Discussion

- What did the disciples think Jesus was?
- How did they feel?
- What did Peter do?
- How did Peter feel – at first? when he started to sink?
- What is the scariest or hardest thing you've ever tried to do? What happened?
- Is there something you want to do but you're worried about trying?
- Let's see what happened to Peter. What do you think is going to happen?

Finish the story

Remember: Peter was walking to Jesus on the water but when he saw the wind and the waves he got scared and started to sink. Peter shouted: “Jesus, save me!” Quickly, Jesus reached out and caught him. “Why did you get scared, Peter?” Jesus asked, “Why did you stop believing that it was possible?” Jesus helped Peter back into the boat with the other disciples and the storm stopped and they weren't afraid anymore.

Discussion

- When did Peter start to sink?
- How did Peter get back to the boat?
- How did Peter feel when Jesus helped him?

Introduce the Game

We’re going to play a game to help us think about what it feels like when we try to do something that is difficult.

Distribute markers

Explain that everyone will go to one side of the room and put their marker just a little in front of themselves. When they are ready, they can jump over the marker. If they succeed, they should go back to the start and move the marker farther away.

Keep going until they find a spot that is just a little too far for them to jump. Make sure it is clear that this is not a competition.

Pay attention for interesting things to address afterwards. For example, did anyone take a couple of tries to make a jump? Did anyone put the marker way out in front right away? Was anyone very cautious in their advances?

Regrouping

Collect the markers. Ask the group about the experience (How did it feel to jump over the marker? How did it feel when you couldn't do it? Was it fun to try? What did you do if you didn't make it over the marker the first time?) Remind everyone of the conclusion to Peter's story. Ask if they think Peter could have ever walked on the water by himself. Point out that Peter had to take the first step but he needed Jesus to do something that is usually impossible.

Closing Prayer

We’re going to say a prayer that we say at the end of many church services. It is a prayer of praise and one thing it praises God for is the way that God's power can make us do amazing things that we don't always understand or expect.

Let us pray.

Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God, from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.

WHAT IS COVERED?

Schedule for a year of *Stories on the Way* (tentative)

Sept. 12, 19, 26	Creation (as told in Genesis 1)
Oct. 3, 19, 17	Moses and the Burning Bush (Exodus 3)
Oct. 24, 31 Nov. 7	The Call of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-8)
Nov. 14, 21	A new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65)
ADVENT	
Nov. 28 Dec. 5, 12, 19	The Nativity (according to Matthew)
CHRISTMAS	
Dec. 26 Jan. 2	Bonus days (small activities/Kids in Church activities)
EPIPHANY	
Jan. 9, 16, 23	Baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17)
Jan. 30 Feb. 6, 13	Calling of the Disciples (Matt. 4:18-22)
Feb. 20, 27 March 6	Peter walks on Water (Matt. 14:22-33)
LENT	
March 3, 20	Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11)
March 27 April 3	Treasures in Heaven (Matt. 6:19-24)
April 10	Jesus' Passion and Resurrection
PALM SUNDAY	
April 17	Jesus' Passion and Resurrection
EASTER	
April 24	Jesus' Passion and Resurrection (Kids in Church Activity)
May 1, 8, 15	I was hungry and you fed me (Matt. 25:31-46)
May 22, 29 June 5	The Story of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-12)
PENTECOST	
June 12	The Story of Pentecost (Kids in Church Activity)
June 19, 26	Psalm 139