

December 2011: Children's Ministries Year End Report

The Children of First Church continue to bring enthusiasm and excitement as they continue to grow in their faith. Truly embracing the simple message, "Jesus loves the little children", each and every child that walks through our doors feels His love. From Sunday School to Fellowship events, the children are a vital part of our church.

*Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.
Proverbs 22:6*

What follows is an overview of the 2011 year broken down into the areas of Children's Ministry.

Nursery: The mission of the nursery continues to provide safe and nurturing childcare environment that enables parents to attend worship service, Sunday School, Wednesday Night GIFT, and other activities within the church.

We continue to ensure the safety of children while they are in the church's supervision through our updated Child Protection Policy. This updated policy is included in the Children's Ministry Manual that is printed and given to every individual who works with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The manual is a comprehensive document that includes all aspects of protecting individuals in our care.

Sunday School:

Sunday School continues to be a vital key to the Children's Ministry Program here at First Church. In all of our Sunday School classes we have seen very consistent individual attendance but overall attendance has been lower than we would like. Our dedicated teachers give generously their time and talents as they nurture each and every child who walks through the doors. We continue to use Cokesbury's, "Rock Solid: Building a Heart of Faith" as our curriculum.

During the Fall Quarter, our Third Graders participated in our "Learning to Use My Bible" curriculum. Karen Hull-Heinz and John Cummings were the leaders during this course and did an incredible job guiding the children through the Bible. On November 20, 2010, twelve third graders were given their own Bible during a special presentation during the 11:00 AM Worship Service.

During the Winter Quarter of 2011, we have started a new group for parents and their children under 2 years old. The class is designed as an interactive class for infants and toddlers to learn with their parents. Each week there is a Bible story for the little ones with activities and there is also a discussion time for parents about raising children to know and love their Savior in today's world. This group will also begin each class singing with the Sunday School Singers. We hope that we can continue to grow this group and provide a much needed spiritual class for both the parents and their young children. The class is being facilitated by myself and Pastor Lana.

Mid-Kids Events:

We continue to provide some quality fellowship time for the Mid-Kids (5th & 6th Grade) for this group and their friends. Some events for 2011 have been; Exploration Acres, Snapperz, and Game Night. We have also implemented a "Friday Night Frenzy" Night for the months where we do not have a regular event scheduled.

Children's Worship Activity Bags:

As part of the continued encouragement for children's attendance in the Worship Service, Worship Activity Bags are placed outside the CLC for children. Bags are filled each week with Bible activities and Christian books for the children to use during the services.

Trak-1 Technology: Since 2007, First Church is able to run detailed background checks through Trak-1 Technology. It gives First Church 24 hour a day, 7 days a week, 365 day a year, access to their website and gives INSTANT results. This is just part of a wide array of checks that are in place to help provide protection and preserving the safe sanctuary for our children.

Worship Express:

Worship Express continues to grow and is very popular with the children. Our train whistle continues to provide enthusiasm as the children prepare to leave the Adult Worship Service and attend their own Worship. Average attendance is 45 children at Worship Express. Each week the children have a Worship Express bulletin that helps

guide them through their Worship experience. The Worship Express children have participated in Heifer Project, Harvest of Hope, Habitat for Humanity, Feed the Kids, and LUM Mitten Tree.

Although the WIRED Worship does not have a children's time, the children who attend this worship continue to be dismissed to attend Worship Express. If the children are dismissed before the Children's Time at the Traditional Worship Service, they are invited to participate in the Children's Time before going to Worship Express.

Summer Sunday School: The theme this year for the summer was: "Good News Café". "Good News Café" was an exciting adventure looking at the different feasts, foods, and festivals in the Bible. The theme was reinforcement for VBS 2011, and also helped the children learn about the ingredients that can help them follow God throughout their lives. The children learned about the Festival of Weeks, Festival of First Fruits, Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles, challah, unleavened bread, and so much more. We again combined classes: Group 1: Preschool; Group 2: Kindergarten, 1st & 2nd Grade; Group 3: 3rd, 4th & 5th Grade.

Children's Choirs and Music:

Sunday School Singers continues to be led by Lacy Reagan (and others who have filled in while she is on maternity leave). Each Sunday morning this group gathers at the beginning of the Sunday School hour and fills the hall with wonderful songs.

Sonshine Kids is the musical group for 1st through 3rd Grade students. Amanda Rowe is the Director.

The Kings Choir is the musical group for 4th through 6th Grade students. Amanda Rowe is the Director.

Celebration Chimes is a chimes group led by Heidi Fornes with the help of Jean Adams. This group is comprised of children in the 3rd through 6th Grades.

Kindermusik is a new program being offered by First Church. Classes are being taught by Amanda Rowe and Lacy Reagan.

Faith Safari:

Faith Safari continues to provide a lot of enthusiasm. This high energy group has averaged 12 children each Wednesday night. Numbers for this group, as well as other groups on Wednesday Night GIFT have been lower than in previous years. But, we continue to provide quality lessons and activities each week. In the beginning of 2011 we talked about: "13 Very Cool Stories and Why Jesus Told Them". Our Fall theme was "Kingdom Safari" and we discovered "God is loving" through stories of animals in the Bible.

Mid-Kids Wednesday Night G.I.F.T. The Mid-Kids program on Wednesday night program is another step for these 5th & 6th Graders to continue in their faith development. This group is being lead by Ann Caddy. The class focused and will continue to focus on a video presentation with discussion.

During the Wednesday programming, the Mid-Kids also do a service/mission project. The collect aluminum cans, crush them, and bag them up to be taken to the recycling plant.

Vacation Bible School: At VBS 2011 we really learned how to "Shake It Up! We had over 253 chefs and over 84 volunteers helping out during the week and/or helped prepare for our incredible week. The chefs were filled with excitement each day as they found the secret ingredients to live their lives. They found out how they can ; "Be Ready for God", "Give Happily to God", Believe Fully in Jesus", "Remember Jesus Often", and "Celebrate God Forever". The chefs sang songs, enjoyed snacks at the Takeout Treatery & Ice Cream Shop, made crafts at the Tangy & Tart Arts, enjoyed running around at Wok & Roll Rec (which included tow bounce houses all week), enjoyed science at the Foodology Lab, felt the love of Jesus in their class, and laughed with Chef Scoop A'la Mode and Scraps the Raccoon each day. The chef collected food for the Feed the Kids Project and truly found our how they can give happily to others who may need their help.

Some of our excitement for VBS 2010 included....

- Extreme cake countdown on the stage made by the Caddy family.
- A friendly village which included Professor Whoo's Book Nook, Galileo's Goodies, Sunny the Pony's Farm Market, Skylar the Sky Squirrel's Sky High Coffee & Hot Chocolate Shop, and the Shake It Up Café. A big thanks to Ray Buchanan for constructing the framework to be able to build the village.
- A fun "Candyland Hallway on the first floor
- Lots of pictures taken by Jim Driskill
- Special ice cream made during the Friday Assembly thanks to Bill Walker & Bill Fornes.
- A special visit by Baker Greg Lintner (He brought cookies too!)

There are so many incredible things that happened during the week. It is always hard to put into words all the heartfelt gratitude to everyone for making it a great week. Whether you played a small role or a big role, you are what make this week an adventure the children will not forget! I truly know that at our First Church, the children don't just attend VBS, they EXPERIENCE it!

Easter/Spring Celebration: On April 16, 2011 we held a Family Spring Celebration. Families were invited to enjoy family activities. The main event was each family building a wooden bird house and then decorating it. They also enjoyed the bounce house, cookies, and an Easter egg hunt. The response to having an event geared towards families was a huge success. We look forward to providing more events like this.

Trunk or Treat: The ACE Committee and the Children's Ministry combined forces for an event that brought families together for a safe environment for trick-or-treaters. People gathered in the church parking lot and open their trunks (or back of vehicles), decorated them, and passed out candy to all the children. Everyone was able to come inside and enjoy crafts, games, and some goodies! Fun was had by all on this new First Church Event.

Happy Birthday Jesus Celebration: In December, the Children's Ministry and the Youth Ministry co-sponsor this event that helps raise mission trip money for Mid-Kids through Senior High. Parents drop off their children during the night and the Mid-Kids, Junior High, and Senior High, babysit them. The money earned from the babysitting is split between all the youth involved and used towards their mission projects.

Missions:

The Children's Ministry area focuses on numerous missions throughout the year, including; LUM Jubilee, Mitten Tree, Heifer Project International (2011 is our 9th year supporting Heifer), Food Finder's Food Bank, Feed the Kids, and Habitat for Humanity.

Children's Fundraising:

As part of our projects, the children hold several sales to raise money or items for their missions.

Book Sale: During the month of August we collected used books for our September Book Sale. Proceeds went into the Children's Ministry Expansion Fund to help support projects not supported by the budget. (I.E.: purchasing Nativity Ornaments for the children on Christmas Eve).

Soup Sale: During the month of November, we sell Frontier Soups. Proceeds from this sale go to Heifer Project International.

Sucker Sale: During the month of December, the children sold holiday gourmet suckers to help buy animals for Heifer Project International.

Children's Library:

Our Children/Youth library space continues to be a designated space on the Mezzanine level. This is a special place for children and youth to continue to grow in their spiritual faith through written materials.

Acolyte Program:

To help children and youth continue to serve God and help in the Worship Service, we continue to offer 3rdth through 8th Grade the opportunity to serve as an Acolyte. Gwen Richardson is the coordinator of this program. With more families attending the WIRED service, it has become more difficult to get the Acolytes to light the candles on a Sunday morning. Ways to try to overcome this challenge are being discussed.

Family Support Library:

A resource of material continues in the Children's Ministry office that serves as an outreach to families and members who experience a difficult time in their life. Many topics of interest are available.

Village Nursery School:

The Children's Ministry Area continues to work closely with Village Nursery School. We continue to support each other's programming and coordinate space usage within our shared area.

Helping the Community:

During the school year, we have a group that is part of G.L.A.S.S. from Klondike Middle School and Battleground Middle School come to the church to help them learn some very important life skills. This group of Special Education students from these two schools who are part of the "Life Skills" Program come to the church on Wednesday mornings and Wednesday afternoon. Working with Mark the custodian, and me, they do various "jobs", such as, cleaning the chairs, tables, cleaning whiteboards, vacuuming, helping the custodian set up tables and chairs, cleaning windows, sanitize their toys, and other beneficial tasks.

Teen MOPS:

The Children's Ministry Area continues to provide support for the Teen MOPS program by providing childcare on Wednesday Nights, childcare at special events, and providing educational opportunities for the Moppets. The older Teen MOPS children participate in Faith Safari. All Teen MOPS families are invited to Sunday Worship and other events within the church.

Christmas Eve:

For the first time, the Children's Ministry is not playing a role in the planning and worship experience for the 6:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship Service. The Worship Committee has decided that only two services are needed on Christmas Eve and having a totally dedicated Family Christmas Eve service is not warranted. The Children's Ministry and ACE committee will continue sponsor the "Cookies and Punch" for after the 6:00 PM Worship Service.

Goals and Reflections:

This past year has been a very interesting year for First Church. With a lot of focus in 2011 on the possible growth of our physical space, hopefully 2012 will help us focus more on the things God wants and needs us to work on through our ministries. May we continue to do God's work and continue to nurture our church families.

My goals for the remainder of 2011 and into 2012:

- Attend continuing education seminars.
- Researching and validating the necessity of a Family Christmas Eve Service.
- Continue to help children on their faith journey.
- Continuing to be the advocate for children and their families.

Serving in Faith,

Shari Bittles
Director of Children's Ministries