

# CUT and Paste

A forum for sharing children's ministry ideas

Vol. 3 no. 1 March 2002

## Getting ready for the

# BIG Easter Sunday

### *In this issue*

#### Easter Morning:

#### Worshipping Together

#### Easter Morning Programs for Children

#### Resources for Leaders

#### We'd love to hear your ideas

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EASTER SUNDAY IS COMING. FOR ALL OF US IT IS THE HIGH POINT OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR. IT IS TRULY OUR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY'S REASON FOR BEING.

People who come to worship on Easter Sunday know about its importance. Unlike Christmas Eve that is steeped in sentimentality, Easter is steeped in spirituality.

How do we meet the needs of our guests in the pews on Easter Sunday, while still allowing ourselves to worship and celebrate this most high Feast? What about children whose understanding of Easter does not yet extend beyond chocolate eggs and bunnies? What about the adults who they come with to attend worship that Sunday morning, searching for the message of hope that Easter contains? And, in the most basic terms, how do we reach out to the sheer number of children who worship with us that morning in a way that will truly touch them?

This issue is devoted to Easter ideas — for churches where children are present for the entire worship service and in for places where children's activities are offered during worship. We hope the ideas, thoughts, and resource suggestions will help as you begin planning for this Easter Sunday. And, because Easter is a *season* not just a *Sunday*, adapt these activities to use for the whole 50 days that follow! ♦ CF

## Changes have come to "Cut and Paste!"

When the idea of publishing a newsletter for sharing children's ministry ideas first surfaced, St. Christopher's Church (where Cathy was employed) in Burlington, Ontario was very supportive! Until the subscription base increased, the costs of production and mailing were covered by St. Christopher's. We are very thankful for their encouragement and support. Without them *Cut and Paste* would still be at the idea stage.

We are please to announce that, beginning with this issue, the Division of Congregational Support of the Diocese of Niagara has agreed very willingly to support the *Cut and Paste* endeavour. In fact, they will make it available to all parishes in Niagara and have generously agreed to make this publication available to *everyone* who wishes a copy. And soon, *Cut and Paste* will also be available through the Diocese of Niagara's website at [www.niagara.anglican.ca](http://www.niagara.anglican.ca). People, of course, are invited to continue contributing to the cost of producing *Cut and Paste* through paid subscriptions, but this will no longer be required. Please note the new mailing and contact information. If you know of others who would like to receive *Cut and Paste*, have them get in touch with us. If you prefer to receive it on-line, rather than through Canada Post, let us know that too.

A huge thank you goes to St. Christopher's Church for their initial support — and now, to the Diocese of Niagara!

*Cathy & Ginny*

# Worshipping Together

Many congregations feel it is important that the entire faith community worship together on Easter morning. What can be done to make children feel welcome in the worship service and to keep them involved and attentive?

*Christine Hutchinson-Hounsell* of Guelph writes:

“At St. George’s we hire outside youth to cover childcare in the nursery only and have all of the children in church for the whole service. We provide “activity kits” for use in church. These are available from the sides-people at the door. They are large Ziploc® bags with two new crayons, colouring and activity sheets from “reproducible” books suitable for ages 0-8, and pamphlets from the Bible Society. A label on the front of the bag gives space for the child’s name and encourages the child to take the kits home.”

The activity kits or “*pew bags*” that St. George’s uses are a wonderful idea. (What did we do before Zip-loc® bags??) I especially like the concept of having something to take home as a reminder of their experience of Easter.

The **Bible Society pamphlets** that Christine mentions are available for free from the Canadian Bible Society office nearest you. Each year, they produce one for Christmas and one for Easter. They are colourful, well-illustrated and usually include both the biblical story itself, using the Good News or another appropriate translation, and an activity to go with it. Arrange for them to be sent to your church by calling the Canadian Bible Society toll-free at

1-800-465-BIBLE (2425) or check their website at [www.biblesociety.ca](http://www.biblesociety.ca) to find your nearest office.

**Activity sheets**, photocopied from Easter resource books, can be included in the bags. Or, use appropriate religious clip-art from a word processing program enlarged to fit an entire page. Crosses, butterflies, and Easter lilies are all appropriate choices. (In a deliberate attempt to emphasize the *Christian* Easter story, I stay away from bunnies and eggs!) Include a word-based sheet for children who can read as well as a colouring page that children of any age can colour and design with minimal assistance from the adult sitting with them. Many word processing programs include tools you can use to create word searches, crossword puzzles and fill-in-the-blank activity sheets based on the gospel passage being read in church. If you have access to the ‘web’, these teacher-friendly programs are easily available. Simply type in ‘word search’, for example, and get your favourite search engine to find the site that will do the work for you! Depending on the activity, consider printing or photocopying at half or even quarter size. That size of paper is easier for small hands to manage in the pews and less folding means less work for the activity bag ‘stuffers’.

A **pipe cleaner** added to the activity bag has terrific play value! Include instructions in the bag or suggest during the announcements or children’s story time that it be used to create a cross, butterfly or empty tomb.

Have you tried activity kits in your congregation? What do you suggest including? ♦ CF

## Children’s Programs for Easter Morning

For a variety of reasons, many congregations choose to offer programs for children during the regular worship service. The ‘gang’ at St. Christopher’s in Burlington writes:

“We have a large number of visitors to our Easter morning service. The children are invited to a special program during the readings and sermon part of the worship so that they can learn about the first Easter, create an Easter craft to take home and meet some of the other children who come to church on Sundays.”

Whether you have classes grouped by age, or a program open to all ages, here are a few planning basics. Plan on including: time for welcoming the children, telling the story and creating something special to take home.

**Welcoming the children** is important! For many, they may never have been to church before. Set a tone of excitement and anticipation since Easter is our day to celebrate! Music is always a great way to start. A lively action song such as “Alleluia” or “Ho-ho-ho-hosanna” is fun for all ages and definitely sets a festive tone.

Easter Sunday is *our* day and our chance to **tell the real story**. Connect Easter bunnies with new life, eggs with the shape of the stone, Easter flowers with growth, and budding bulbs with life rising out of death. Read, tell or show the Easter story. If you have a chance to have a group of older children dramatize the story as you tell it, so much the better! However you do it, emphasize the emo-

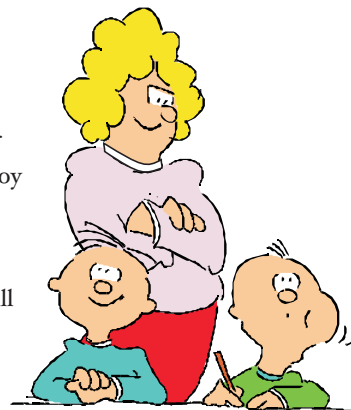
tions of the story — the sadness of Good Friday and the surprise and joy of Easter morning. Make the story really come alive for the children.

Help the children **create something to take home** that will be a lasting reminder of the Easter story. It will need to be simple to make but open-ended enough for older children - boys as well as

girls (!) - to also enjoy. One of our favourites was the Easter tomb. Photocopy a picture outline of the tomb for each child. Inside the tomb area, have them draw or glue an angel and the words from the bible story you told (such as: *Alleluia. Jesus is not here - He is risen!*) Older children can add quite a lot of detail - younger children can do it more simply. Help them to add a small paper plate, anchored by a paper fastener to serve as the stone. As the stone is ‘rolled’ out of place, the wonderful message of Easter is revealed!

**End the activity time** with the children by teaching them the chorus to the hymns that will be sung next in the church service. Provide paper and crayons in a small activity bag for them to use while they join the community for the rest of the worship service.

Do you offer children’s classes on Easter morning? If so, what do *you* do? ♦ CF



# Pew Bags - Taking a great idea one step further

As you consider what to put in the Ziploc bags consider the following question: **What is the activity kit for?** Is our purpose to keep the children quiet and busy, to keep them involved in the worship or a bit of both?

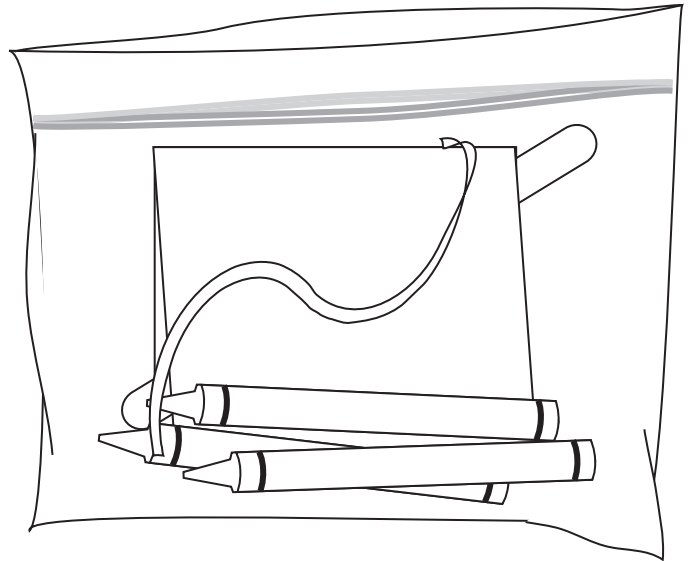
I remember one year creating a *pew bag* for the children to use during our Maundy Thursday worship. I included one activity for each major part of the service — the command to love one another, the washing of the feet, the first communion service, the time in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Jesus' arrest. The kids really enjoyed the activities, the adults could worship and concentrate on the service and everyone was happy — except perhaps me. I realized that while the children learned a lot about the events of that Thursday evening, they did that quite separately from the very powerful worship service going on around them. It was almost a correspondence course approach to learning. There they were, working away on their own, without any help to connect the bag activities with the drama that was unfolding before their very eyes! It made me wonder: what purpose were the activities serving?

I have no easy answer to this question. Perhaps I am simply making too much of the issue. But it does make me wonder. After all, is our role not to help children experience the joys of Christian worship? Depending on the age and number of children in your congregation, here are some ideas to consider for adding meaning to activity bags and other 'in the pew' activities:

1. Deepen the significance of the activities by introducing a key word / symbol / concept during the announcements or children's conversation time and including related activities in the pew bag.

Here are some examples:

- If you choose to talk about the symbol of the butterfly and new life during the children's story, include a small coffee filter, crayons and a pipe cleaner in the pew bag and demonstrate how they can create their own butterfly at their seat.
  - Talk about the word "alleluia" during the children's story time. In the pew bag include a piece of paper with "alleluia" written in large outline letters which the children can colour in as a small banner to take home. Suggest that the children lift their signs high each time the word *alleluia* is sung in the closing hymn.
  - As you share the Easter story during the children's time, emphasize the disciples' feelings of great surprise and joy. In the pew bag include several outlines of blank faces and suggest that the children draw joyful 'Easter' faces.
2. Include items in the pew bag that will help the children participate more fully in the worship service as it progresses. Suggestions / instructions can be added to a label on the outside of the bag.  
For example:
    - Include bookmarks or ribbons to mark the pages in the prayer book or hymn book.
    - Invite children to underline or circle each hymn number, congregational response, or key word (like "Alleluia", "Amen", or "Christ") that appears in their bulletin (not in the book itself!!) If you use an inclusive bulletin where the entire serv-



ice is printed there are lots of possibilities. They could, for example, place stickers of praying hands (included in the bags) beside each phrase "Let us pray ..."

- Include a length of yellow streamer in each bag for the children to wave during the hymns.
  - Include a small tally sheet so that children can keep track of the number of times a key word or phrase, such as "resurrection", "joy", "new life" or "alleluia" is said during the sermon or prayers. (This idea is adapted from a suggestion from a neat book by Jolene L Roehlkepartain called *Fidget Busters*, published by Group Publishing.)
3. Honour the children's work during worship by incorporating the pew activities right into the service. For example, children could contribute the butterflies they create or the 'Easter faces' they draw at their seats to a large poster or banner that has the title "Easter is a time of great joy!" or "Celebrate the new life of Easter". Simply position the blank poster on an easel and have a parent or older child seated nearby, ready to help with tape or pins. Offer a prayer of thanks for their work, bless and display the banner prominently in the worship area or church entrance for everyone to enjoy throughout the Easter season. ♦ CF

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Electronically?

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fairley@tap.net

# Resources for Leaders

## Activity Books

Christian book stores have a great variety of Easter books that contain a variety of photocopiable 'paper-and-pencil' activity sheets. The books are a good investment since they can be used throughout the whole Easter season. Use them for ideas as you are assembling your pew bags or designing your Easter morning children's program.

My favourites include *Jesus' Last Week* and *Jesus is Alive*, two books written by Tracy Leffingwell Harrast for ages 6 to 12. They are part of David C. Cook Publishing Company's *Life and Lessons of Jesus* series and cost \$14.50 each. Another series, *The Life of Jesus*, published by Shining Star Publications includes three different Easter time activity books for ages 7 to 12. I have used pages from *Jesus: his last days*, *Jesus: his last hours* and *Jesus: his resurrection*. The paper-and-pencil activities include a great variety of codes, mazes, fill-in-the-blank and other word-based challenges that the older children really like doing.

For younger children, one excellent source of materials is Concordia Publishing Company. Check out Anita Reith Stohs' *A Very Blessed Easter Activity Book*, costing \$6.25. *My More-Than-Colouring Book About Easter* by Cathy Spieler is based on the popular Anti-Colouring Book concept. I am a big fan of these kinds of colouring pages where the children are invited to use their imaginations to complete the pictures. Although it says they are for ages 4 to 7, I know that all children who like to draw and doodle love them. *Lent is for Remembering*, for ages 2 to 5, by Donna R. Rathert (1986), is a part storybook, part colouring book. The clear illustrations provide a good combination of the Biblical story and the church's way of observing each of the key days of Holy Week.

Take a look at Debbie Trafton O'Neal's *Before and After Easter*, published by Augsburg Fortress. While there are no ready-to-photocopy activities here, her books contain a great selection of stories, activities, crafts and recipes suitable for the whole Lent-Easter-Pentecost season. It is a good investment! (Her *Before and After Christmas* book is equally good. Add it to your wish list!)

Finally, look for ideas in *The Easter Activity Book* (Lion Publishing). The author Susan Vesey writes: "Wherever you live, there is celebration in the air in the days that lead up to Easter ... there are lots of idea, activities and stories for you to enjoy to help you make the most of this special time." This book contains activities to do throughout the Easter season that focus on the new life of the resurrection. Ideas are included for planting seeds and bulbs, outside activities, egg decorating, traditional Easter foods, candles, folding palm crosses and much more.

◇ CF

WHAT TOPIC HAVE WE NEVER  
COVERED THAT YOU WISH WE HAD?  
LET US KNOW!

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## Easter Videos

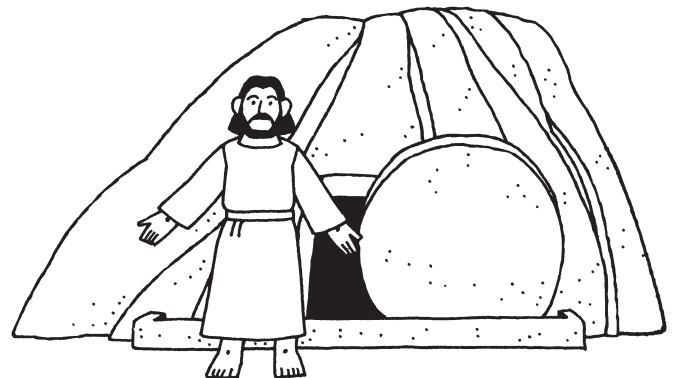
Sometimes, the most effective way to tell a story to a large, varied group of children is using a video. Usually, a children's program held during the readings and sermon time allow a chance to show a 20-30 minute video followed by a short activity.

There seem to be more video titles available every year. While it is always important to look at the video ahead of time to be sure it is appropriate for your group, this isn't always possible. The following titles can be obtained through your local Christian bookstore or, if you're lucky, can be rented at your local video store. Better still, phone a neighbouring church and share what you each have, alternating from year to year!

For my Easter morning program I prefer a video that tells the Easter story in an appealing and straightforward way. The *Beginner's Bible* Easter video is very good for all ages and the song at the end is one that the children can learn and enjoy. *The Greatest Stories Ever Told* bible story series by Hanna-Barbara also has an Easter video. I find it is quite intense, so, depending on the number of preschoolers present, is best to save to show to groups of older children.

If you prefer a video that conveys the *message* of Easter hope, but that doesn't necessarily tell the *story* of the first Easter, there are also many to choose from. They could be shown after the Easter story is read from the Bible, or to children who are already very familiar with it. You might like to consider "*Easter Is ...*" or "*Francesco's Friendly World: The Last Stone*". Our young children especially have enjoyed "*The Donkey's Tale*" (Twenty-Third Publications) which connects the story of Christmas to Easter. This might be particularly suitable for children who only hear bible stories at Christmas and Easter!

Do you have a favourite Easter video? Let us know so we can share the titles with others.



## Sharing the Easter Story

### Easter Books to Read Aloud

It is fairly easy to find simple re-tellings of the Biblical Easter story for young children. Libraries and Christian book stores have them in abundance. However, it is harder to find picture books that can be read to groups that also include older children. Here are two of my favourites:



*The Easter Story* by Brian Wildsmith (Oxford University Press, 1993) is a beautiful story, following the travels of the donkey from Palm Sunday to the Resurrection. Brian Wildsmith's illustrations are outstanding. The children will love his use of gold interspersed on every page.

*The Easter Angels* by Bob Hartman and illustrated by Tim Jonke (Lion Publishing, 1999) is an excellent story for reading to older children. The Easter story is told from the perspective of an angel who finally receives a very special assignment - to bring the message of Jesus' resurrection to the women who visit the tomb. I was fortunate enough to hear the author at a storytelling festival and can vouch, firsthand, for his ability to capture the imagination of his audiences!

## Being a part of the action

In many churches, the children and their leaders often feel, and physically *are*, quite removed from the main life of the congregation. Frances Parker of St. Paul's Church in Newmarket, Ontario writes:

"In our congregation, we only go back to worship in the church once a month because we were finding we had no time for church school. The clergy, however, seem so distant from the children and probably some of the children don't even know who the clergy are. In 2002 we've decided to have one of the clergy visit "downstairs" once a month to talk to the children."

What happens in your congregation? How well are your children known? How well do they know people in the congregation? What have you done to try to bridge the gap? What has worked? What hasn't? Let us know ... just phone, email or write with your ideas.

***"It made it all worthwhile!"***

Share your success stories with us. We all need a bit of a morale booster from time to time. Let us smile with you!

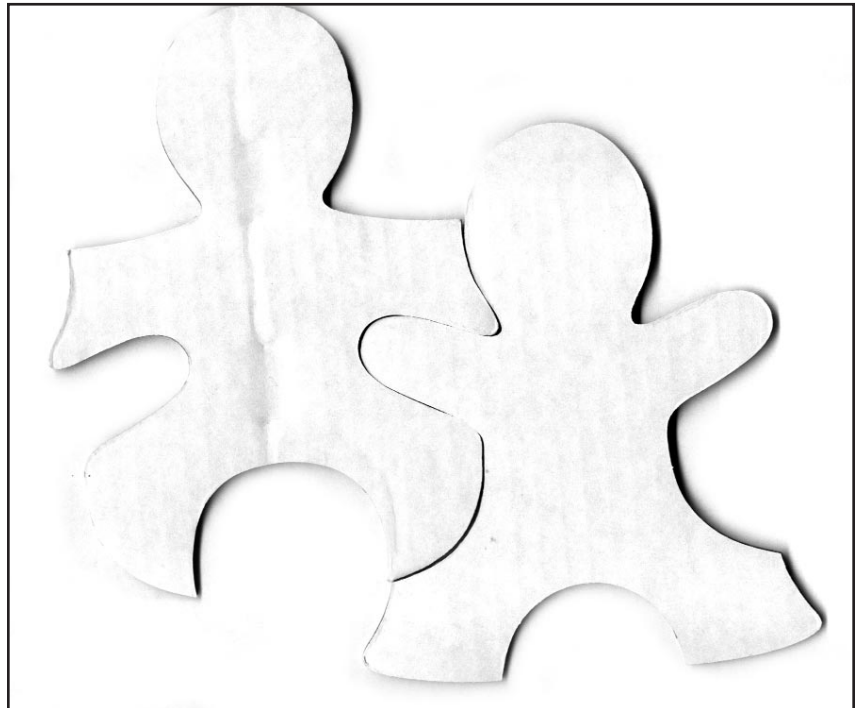
## A Neat Product .... for any time of year

Roylco Limited produces a wide variety of craft and school supplies. They have a great new product called "Kid Puzzle Pieces" (Product #R52024). Each package contains 20 heavy cardboard people shapes, about 6" high. The people are also puzzle pieces that interlock. We used them recently at a family retreat weekend. First, each family member created 'themselves' with markers, wool, buttons and material. In this way, each family created their own puzzle. Then, we connected all the families together and added a few 'blank' people here and there to create our church family. It was great fun and demonstrated the idea of a church family in a clear, visual way.

This people-puzzle concept could be adapted to all sorts of situations - baptism, group-building, camp, outreach activities. There are lots of creative possibilities!!

(Available from craft or school supply outlets. Roylco's website [www.roylco.com](http://www.roylco.com) has a list of Canadian distributors or you could order toll-free through Scholar's Choice at 1-800-265-1095.)

Are there any craft products you have found and used with your children? Don't keep your ideas to yourself — share your discoveries with ALL of us!!



# The T-Shirt Evaluation Process

## Looking back ... Looking ahead — a fun way to evaluate the year

As spring approaches, dreams of summer and holidays aren't far behind. Before the time slips away too quickly, it is important to have a chance to think about your church's program year. How has it gone? What might need to be changed next year? As leaders, how have we felt about what we accomplished?

Here is a fun and different way to begin a leaders' meeting. It is an opening activity that appeals to the quirky, fun-loving nature of most children's ministry leaders. It is sure to set the tone for an enjoyable, open discussion that can follow.

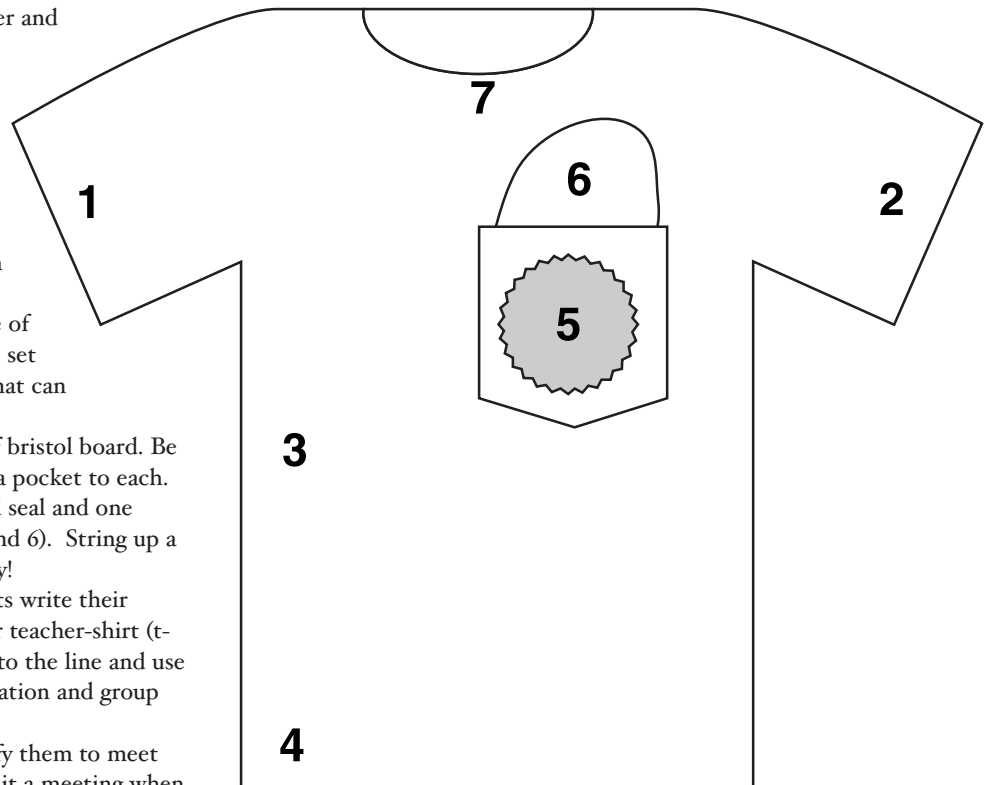
Ahead of time, cut t-shirt shapes out of bristol board. Be sure to have one shirt for each person. Add a pocket to each. Have a supply of coloured markers, one gold seal and one handkerchief-shaped page (for questions 5 and 6). String up a clothesline and have clothespins at the ready!

Pose one question at a time. Participants write their responses on the corresponding part of their teacher-shirt (t-shirt for short!). When done, peg the shirts to the line and use them as a starting point for sharing, conversation and group discussion.

These are the questions we used. Modify them to meet your needs. They can be easily adapted to suit a meeting when parents, leaders and older students are all present.

1. Two best things about this year
2. Two highlights about the kids
3. Three ideas for next year
4. Difficulties / challenges
5. Personal plans for next year (written on a stick-on gold seal to emphasize the 'value' of each person's ministry)
6. Supplies needed (written on a hankie shape, tucked in the pocket)
7. Goals for the children's class time.

This t-shirt idea was developed by Gail Grant of Burlington, Ontario. Thank you!



• Next Issue •  
Let's share ideas about:

Learning about Communion

Programming for Older Children (9 and up)

...  
Send your comments **NOW!**

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