

CUT and Paste

A forum for sharing children's ministry ideas

Vol. 3 no. 2 June 2002

Communion Preparation

In this issue

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Different Approaches

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Reaching The
10 to 13 Crowd

We'd love to hear your ideas

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For many years now, and in most congregations, it is common for children to receive bread and wine at communion time. This change has come in part from an understanding of church 'membership'. People are considered to 'belong' to a church community simply by virtue of their baptism. No longer is confirmation a requirement. All members of the community are equally entitled to the benefits that the community has to offer. And certainly receiving communion is one of those major benefits.

As well, some parishes now commonly invite all guests to also receive communion, baptized or not. In an era where not everyone is baptized at a

young age it may indeed be many years of active involvement in a church community before the parents and children decide to take the formal step of baptism.

What are the implications of these changes for us? Simply put, children of every age and every background receive communion. So, it is important that we find a way to help children come to an understanding of just what this special meal is all about. Some church communities require children to take part in some sort of education program either at home with their parents or at church as a condition of their receiving on a Sunday morning. Others take a more flexible approach, offering

workshops from time to time for families where they learn together about the eucharist.

There is, of course, no single, correct approach. Every church will be different, depending on their congregation's approach to communion and 'policy' about who is welcome at the 'table.'

How do you go about preparing children to receive communion? What resources do you make available for families? How do you teach about the eucharist?

Whichever way you do this, please let us know what you have tried. Others can benefit! ◊
CF

Eight Pages!!!

Beginning last issue, "Cut and Paste" is trying out a new format. Each issue will focus on one or two themes. As you'll see, we are concentrating this issue on teaching children about communion and reaching out to older children. We hope you'll agree that this approach will give us a chance to take a more in-depth look at a topic and to have the space to include a greater variety of ideas. We thank Christine Hutchinson-Hounsell of St. George's, Guelph, ON, Frances Parker of St. Paul's, Newmarket, ON, and Donna Ellis, of Christ Church Woodburn, ON for sharing their ideas this issue. A *Cut and Paste* goodie-bag is in the mail to each of them as a way of saying thank you.

What about YOU? What ideas would you like to share? We've heard a lot from our Ontario readers. What about the rest of the country? What concerns about children's ministry do you struggle with? Any ideas, suggestions or questions will be most welcome! Jot your ideas down and send them by e-mail or fax. Since it's summertime, postcards would even be a nice treat for your faithful editors!!

Based on suggestions from several readers, the August issue will focus on ministering to children with special needs. No idea is too simple — no question is too foolish. Remember, we are here to help one another.

So, go ahead and contribute to the discussion. If you do, a *Cut and Paste* goodie-bag may find its way into your mail box!!

**Have a good time
getting every-
thing ready for
the celebration,
emphasizing how
many people
work together to
make the meal-
time special.**

A Communion Workshop

Here is an idea used by a group of churches in the Hamilton, Ontario area. Children and their parents or grandparents were invited to attend a special communion workshop that was held on a Saturday morning. It would be suitable for all ages of children.

Goal

To allow families the chance to be actively involved in learning about the Eucharist, helping them to connect special family meals to this special meal of their church family.

As Families Arrive...

As people gather, invite children and adults to decorate a large piece of mural paper with their names, colourful designs and pictures of them doing their favourite personal and family activities. (Later, this mural will be transformed from a tablecloth to a frontal that will hang along the front of the altar during the communion service. Since it will hang, try to ensure that the artists all work in the same direction.)

Talking Time...

When everyone has arrived and is feeling settled, begin with a fun song or two that everyone knows. Include "I am the Church", "Celebrate God with Us" (by Carey Landry), "Part of the Family" (Songs for a Gospel People) or another song that speaks of the church as a family or community.

Refer to the pictures drawn on the mural and begin a discussion about families. The purpose is to draw the similarities between our own families at home and our church family.

For example, "What kind of things does your family do together?" (swim, hike, watch videos, play games) "Do you have special times when you get together?" (Easter, birthdays, Thanksgiving, Christmas) "What do you do when you are all together?" (eat, talk, tell stories, enjoy music, play games). "If I looked in the window how would I know that you are celebrating something?" (special food, fancy dishes, lots of people, decorations).

Connect those family celebrations with those of the church family. "What do we do together?" (Sing songs and hymns, share stories from the Bible, eat - communion!). Talk about our special communion meal. Depending on the age of the children present, read an appropriate translation or paraphrase of the Last Supper. Emphasize

Jesus' command of "whenever you eat this bread... do this to remember me".

Making bread and wine ...

In preparation for a communion meal, the participants work together to make the bread and wine. Given the time constraints, it is probably easiest to make the bread using *Bisquit*. Give each person or family a small bowl, some Bisquit and milk to mix, knead and then form into a small biscuit-size loaf. Everyone can make one. (At communion time, one will likely be enough to bless and share — the rest can be taken home.)

Making the wine is the fun part. Purchase a bunch of red grapes, give each person a glass, a few grapes and have them squeeze to their hearts' content! After straining out the seeds and skins you will have enough to at least partially fill a chalice.

Getting Ready For The Celebration...

Have the children take the mural made earlier and place it on the altar to be used for the celebration. Show how the *tablecloth* (flat on the table top) becomes a *frontal*, allowing everyone in the congregation to see and enjoy the creative work. Set the bread and wine on the altar. Add candles and flowers (just like special meals at home) and blow up balloons and add streamers to create a party, festive atmosphere. Have a good time getting everything ready for the celebration, emphasizing how many people work together to make the mealtime special.

Enjoying the meal together ...

End the session with a celebration of the eucharist. Sing joyously, offer prayers together, read aloud the story of the first communion meal and celebrate! Focus on the key actions of communion:

- *Giving God thanks* for the gifts of the bread and the wine,
- *Blessing* the bread and wine,
- *Breaking* the bread so there is enough for everyone and
- *Sharing* the 'special food' together.

Leave the church, enriched in body and mind by the gift of Christ! ◇

Other activities

For many of our congregations, sharing communion is central to our worship. Here are some activities that help children of every age become more familiar with the 'things' we wear and use 'up at the front' as we celebrate communion.

Make a **chalice and paten** to take home as a reminder of Communion and as an opportunity to discuss the possibility of honouring God by creating things of beauty.

Purchase small clear plastic plates and plastic wine goblets. (Or drop into your local fast food restaurant and ask for some!) Using small squares of tissue paper and white glue diluted with water, create a mosaic/stained-glass effect by covering the plate and cup in colour.

When dry, spray with clear varnish inside and out.

Introduce the children to the names and symbolism behind the vestments (clothing) worn by the minister or priest as communion is celebrated. A **stole** could be made for the clergy to wear at the next communion service. Common christian symbols, especially grapes, wheat, bread and wine can decorate the stole.

Cut the stole out of paper and decorate it with markers or crayons. For a longer-lasting creation that can be worn by your priest at every family eucharist, fashion the stole out of plain cotton fabric and decorate it with fabric crayons, fabric pastels or - if the children are older and if you are brave - fabric paints. **Banners and frontals** can be made at the same time in the same way to create an entire communion 'set'. ◇

For many of our congregations, sharing communion is central to our worship.

Different Ages, Different Stages ...

Here are some ideas for preparing children of different ages for communion:

Christine Hutchinson-Hounsell, of Guelph, ON writes:

"For parents of children **ages up to 5** I have used a video called "Celebrating God's Love: Children & Eucharist" produced by the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado in 1989. It is an excellent 30 minute video with an accompanying study guide. We always provide childcare during this session and have always held it on a Saturday morning.

For children **ages 5-7**, I have offered a Saturday morning session which the child attends with a parent or grandparent. In it we spend time:

- talking about baptism, and baptizing a doll,
- talking about the eucharist and experimenting with bread and wine, and
- talking about ministry and using one of the resources provided by the Primate's Fund for that year.

We always provide childcare for younger and older siblings during this session as well."

Frances Parker, of Newmarket, ON writes:

"Our children are welcome to take communion anytime the parents feel that it is appropriate. However, they must be baptized.

Once the children are **8 years or older**, our church holds "communion classes." We have a session going on right now and we have 30 children attending!! They meet once a month on a Friday evening and follow the book *Life in the Eucharist* (Anglican Church of Canada, 1986). After six or more classes the minister will hold a special communion service to celebrate the end of the course." ◇



But They Are Too Young To Understand

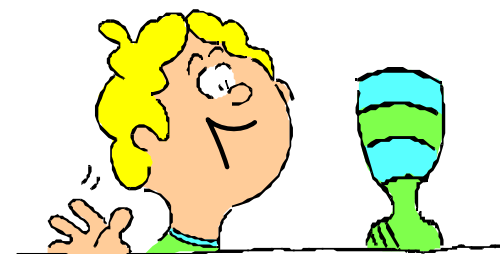
In fact, children can minister to us by teaching us much about celebrating.

How many times have you heard this statement? It is an understandable comment, especially coming from people who place great value in the Eucharist as the central spiritual piece of our worshipping tradition. At first glance, young children who wiggle, chatter and generally seem distracted throughout the communion prayers, can't possibly 'get it'. Or can they?

What do young children understand about the significance of communion? As an answer, I invite any adult to watch the faces of the children as they prepare to receive the 'special bread and wine'. (Unfortunately, it is usually only the clergy and chalice bearers who have the privilege of seeing the faces of the congregation as they come forward to receive communion.) Looks of anticipation, smiles, hands outstretched in joyful expectation of something wonderful being shared — children's faces and bodies tell it all. In fact, chil-

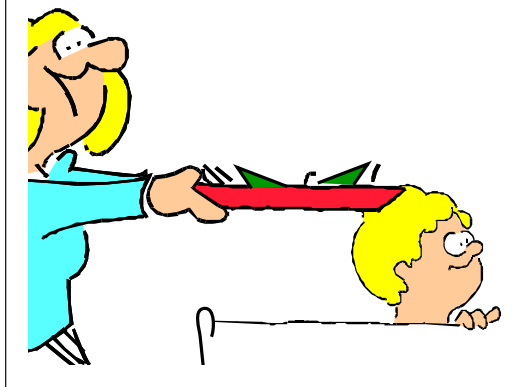
dren can minister **to** us by teaching us much about celebrating.

Do they know that communion is special? Is communion a time of connecting with God? Do they re-member Christ? Absolutely and without a doubt!! As Jesus said "Let the children come unto me ..." They have a lot to teach the rest of us!! ◇



JUST FOR LAUGHS

A little child in church for the first time watched as the sidespeople passed the offering plates. When they neared the pew where he sat, the youngster piped up so that everyone could hear, "Don't pay for me, Daddy. I'm under five."



Learning About Communion — For Older Children

For 9-13 year olds I have offered a multi-session course that focused on baptism, eucharist and ministry. This included activities adapted from the Life in the Eucharist program, server training and confirmation programs. We have also offered a "confirmation" preparation class which was open to this age group and was based on Patricia Bays' book "The Great Adventure" (Anglican Book Centre.) I hold this course every two or three years and this seems adequate.

Christine Hutchison-Hounsell, St. George's, Guelph, ON

When Is It My Turn?

I've often thought that church going is best for auditory learners. Just keep track some morning of how much listening we do. When the moment for participation comes, you certainly don't want to miss out! Children can be helped to learn the words to the prayers and songs so that they can participate fully as well.

Write the words out to the congregational responses so the children can read and follow along. Review them ahead of time by, for example, practicing the words to The Lord's Prayer, and any other responses sung or used regularly in your worship during class time. Learning signs or actions to go with them help the younger children remember the more difficult and longer parts.

Choose music that children can easily sing along with. The familiar tune of *Kum-ba-yah* can

be sung with these verses:

"Come and eat the bread ...

"Come and drink the cup ...

"Go and live in peace ...

The quiet nature of this song lends itself well to being sung while communion is being distributed.

After communion, the common song "*Thank you Lord Alleluia*" can be sung with the following verses 'zipped' in:

"Thank you Lord for *giving us bread* ...

"Thank you Lord for *giving us wine* ...

"Thank you Lord for *showing your love*"

Small suggestions like these make a big difference in making it easier for children to be full participants in worship! ◇

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Eucharist Resources for Leaders

Life in the Eucharist, published by the Anglican Church of Canada in 1986, is well-known and well-used by many parishes in Canada. The six topics are:

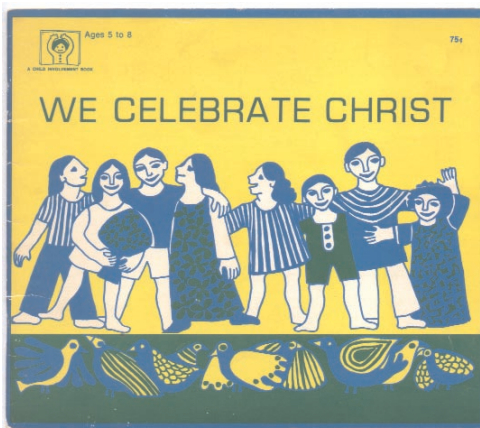
- We gather to celebrate the Lord's meal,
- We read the word of God,
- We share the word of God,
- God gives the gift of life,
- We share the bread of life and
- We live in communion with Jesus.

The program includes a leader's guide, child and parent book and children's book for the Eucharist.

We Celebrate Christ by Eugene S. Geissler, is published by Ave Maria Press. This resource is geared for ages 5 to 8 and is made up of 15 short lessons, presented in a small colouring book / workbook format.

We Celebrate the Eucharist by Christianne Brusselmans and Brian A. Haggerty is published by Silver Burdett & Ginn (1990). It is organized around the central question of "What is the Eucharist all about?" The topics are:

- belonging
- celebrating
- listening
- caring
- making peace
- giving thanks



- sharing a meal, and
- going forth to make a better world.

Learning about communion is very important to helping our children grow in faith. And having a resource or guide book to follow is very helpful for parents and leaders alike. But six, eight or fifteen 'lessons' for families to complete together sounds a bit overwhelming - especially for parents who may be new to church membership themselves.

Have you found any resources that are helpful? Are there some recent publications that take a different approach? We could all benefit from hearing about your favourite!! ◇

Ministering to Pre-teens

MINISTERING TO OLDER CHILDREN IN OUR CONGREGATIONS IS PERHAPS OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE. IN MANY CHURCHES, CHILDREN AGED 10 TO 13 ARE DISAPPEARING FROM OUR SUNDAY MORNING PROGRAMS.

While we may have a bulge of children in our preschool groups, we seem to lose them by the time they hit the double-digit age groups. And when they are there, volunteers leaders find their behaviour in a group often difficult to manage. Where are they? What are they like? How can we reach them? What can we do to keep them interested and involved? Thanks to the contributions of several Cut and Paste readers, we offer in this issue an initial look at this age group. We hope it is helpful!!

What are they like?

The following is taken from the resource book *Reach*

Everyone You Teach by Rosann Englebretson and Marlene LeFever, published by David C. Cook (1998). This handbook provides helpful information about each age group in our church education programs - their interests, their needs and the implications for our church ministry.

“*Change* is the definitive word for middle schoolers. They deal with a profound *change in school buildings, routines and friends* at the outset of these years. Peer relationships matter more than ever before. In fact, the pressure to conform to the group will never be greater than been the ages of 11 and 13. *Physical changes*

can add the sense of instability felt by middle schoolers. These changes are not only those commonly recognized as a part of puberty, but also changes in the brain that allow for a *gradual shift from concrete to abstract thinking*. As their reasoning capacities grow, middle schoolers also develop *the ability to reflect on their own thoughts and actions*. They won't always like what they see in themselves. That makes this age an ideal time to keep reinforcing the notions that God really likes them and has a future for them.”
◇

Programming for Older Children

Here is a fine approach to working with older children. *Donna Ellis, of Christ Church, Woodburn, ON* writes:

I have twelve youth in my Sunday School Class ages 10 to 13. In September 2001 I offered the kids a choice. I could purchase an age-appropriate curriculum that they would find fun and interesting OR they could take part in the church service once every six weeks. Already, these kids are taking a turn at reading, serving and crucifer, but this service they would do all the readings including the gospel, the psalm and would choose a couple of more contemporary songs. They unanimously chose the latter.

Now we spend five weeks preparing for the service. We discuss the meanings of the readings and the gospel and how we are going to present it. Sometimes they just read it, sometimes they act it

out, sometimes they puppet it. We choose a more contemporary version of the psalm and two upbeat songs.

We have done three services so far this year. The kids are enjoying them and growing spiritually, the congregation is so pleased to see the kids taking part in the service and the rector is extremely supportive.

At our last service, some of the kids helped to hand out prayer books and bulletins, and take up the offering. The crucifer and server are more relaxed and don't wear their robes on that day.

Our goal in the future is to also take the intercessory prayers for that Sunday.

This idea came to me one Sunday when a parent voiced their wish that their child would be more interested in church. This has truly been an enlightening and rewarding experience for me. I too have learned much and grown spiritually. ◇

Where are they?

Why do we seem to lose our children once they become older? There is no one clear answer but it seems to me that a sense of commitment is one factor. As children get older, more independent and more vocal, the priority that parents place on attending church regularly may have changed. After all, there are many more possible ways to keep children entertained on Sunday mornings! Time conflicts with other activities surface. Soccer practice, swimming lessons, sleeping in and just 'hanging around and taking it easy' may become more appealing. The result is that older children may notice that attending church is something their family does only when there is nothing else to do. Unintentionally, families may in fact be passing along the subtle but powerful message that worship is *optional*.

And if the activities that we are offering children in our churches on Sunday mornings are seen by the children themselves as 'boring' (an older child's favourite and most powerful word!) we are not helping the parents at all! Older children truly do need a different kind of approach in terms of programming to reflect their increase in age and maturity. The last thing

Give them a chance ...

The older children of our churches have a terrific amount of energy and enthusiasm to share with the entire congregation. We are in a perfect position to help them to learn about their special gifts and talents by letting them share them in the safe and supportive environment of their own church family.

Whether you have one or twenty-one older children in your congregation, give them a chance! They can contribute regularly alongside adult members as:

- servers and assistants during the worship service,
- welcomees,
- childcare providers,
- church school helpers,
- special friends to younger children with special needs.

The possibilities are endless!

Be sure they are invited to all meetings and training sessions. Buddy them up with an adult who will give them a chance to participate in a meaningful and important way. Thank them afterwards so they know how appreciated their talents are.

The opportunities for our older children to contribute in a valuable, meaningful way are limitless. Just ask them what they like to do and see them blossom!!! ◇

they want (or need) is another morning of 'school'!

This is definitely the time to get them involved in the life of the church, giving them leadership roles and helping them to use their God-given gifts in visible ways. Project-oriented activities appeal to children of this age and give them something to truly commit to, with all the energy and enthusiasm that this age group is famous for! In this issue there are several examples of new ideas for this age group. Hopefully in

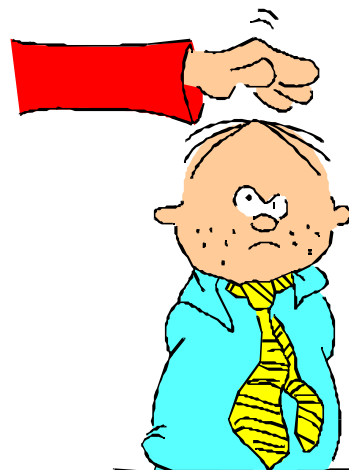
the future we can continue to share more.

Encourage parents to make church attendance a part of their family's regular routine - whether regular means weekly or monthly or even seasonally. That can be the parent's job. Our job? To help make coming easy for parents and children. Let's try to create experiences for these older children that are appealing and meaningful for them. Let's make them WANT to come back! ◇

Unintentionally, families may in fact be passing along the subtle but powerful message that worship is optional.

Frances Parker of Newmarket writes:

"We have a Sunday school class for our youth, grade 7 and up. One of our ministers teaches this class. Many of this class are also servers or help in the Sunday School so the class varies in numbers from week to week. This minister also runs our Youth Group which meets every second week. There are some children from the community who attend the group also who are not members of our parish. This group is a hard one to hold onto."



Making Memories

At a conference I attended several years ago the definition of youth ministry was given as “making memories”. In many ways, that’s what ministry is all about — creating experiences that children will treasure in the years to come.

My strongest memories of attending church as a child are of special times and events — playing the ‘littlest angel’ in the Christmas pageant, leading the prayers during worship, taking part in a special outreach fundraiser. Many of these special occasions also have photographs to go with them, leaving me with concrete reminders of those special events of my childhood.

One year in the Diocese of Niagara, we offered what we hope continues to be a memorable experience for the older children of our churches. In January, to coincide with the weekly gospel reading, we invited all 12 year olds of the diocese to make a pilgrimage to the Cathedral church, mirroring Jesus’ own trip as a twelve year old to the temple at Jerusalem. Imagine over 100 12 year olds gathering with the bishop for a scavenger hunt amidst the nooks and crannies of the 150 year old building, re-enacting the gospel account of the 12-year old Jesus impressing the scribes and rabbis and then worshipping together cathedral-style! Unlike in Jesus’ day, their pilgrimage

ended the same afternoon — not three days later!!! — with pop and pizza with the bishop and dean.

What did this event accomplish? We hope it helped to make a memory - a positive memory of finding their cathedral church to be a special place of worship, one that they can feel is ‘theirs’ to worship at, treasure and enjoy.

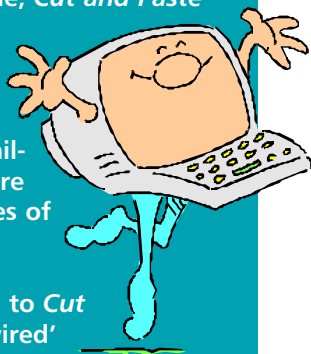
What kind of memories are you making for and with the older children of your congregations? They need not be splashy or high tech - and of course what one child remembers ten years later may be quite different from another. Share your memory-making ideas with the rest of us! ♦

Read us on-line!!

Beginning with this issue, *Cut and Paste* is now available over the web through the Diocese of Niagara’s website at www.niagara.anglican.ca. Be sure to tell all of your children’s ministry leaders where to find us. Soon back copies of *Cut and Paste* can be seen there too!

People who subscribed to *Cut and Paste* before we got ‘wired’ will continue to receive a paper copy of this newsletter until their subscriptions run out. We can continue to mail hard copies to anyone, providing they contribute towards the printing and mailing costs.

We are very thankful to the Children’s Ministry department of the Diocese of Niagara for funding this Cut & Paste project!!



READER’S CALL FOR HELP!

St. Paul’s in Newmarket, ON asks:

It would be nice to see some new ideas for picnic Sunday at the end of June. We usually have a service on the last Sunday before school ends that the children lead. At the end, the children go to the park across the street from the church to play organized games while the adults start their lunch (BBQ, salads, etc.) When the children are finished the games they go for lunch and by that time the adults have had theirs.

How do you celebrate the end of the school year? What picnic ideas do you have to share?

• Next Issue •
Let’s share ideas about:

Children with special needs

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