

Happy New Year!

January is often a difficult time for church schools. Attendance after Christmas has a tendency to fall, what with colds and flu, snow and children's sports schedules. We need something to brighten us up until the spring sunshine comes.

It might be worth trying a different class set-up for a few weeks. Maybe combine a class or two, especially if your numbers have dropped. Probably the more advanced lesson is the best to use in a combined classroom, as the older children will enjoy helping the younger ones, whereas, if the older ones feel they are being taught "baby stuff" they will not return.

Bulletin Boards and Classroom Decorations

One of the nicest things about going back to school after the Christmas holidays was that the caretakers had spent much of the two week break cleaning and polishing. Think about getting together to brighten up the Sunday School area. First, take down anything that has been up since September! Re-vamp notice boards with bright backgrounds. If you have leftover wallpaper that is not too "busy", it can be cut and stapled to fit. So can lengths of fabric. Think about giving a wall or two a coat of latex paint. It is surprising how quickly it can be done, and what a difference it will make. Put up some of the new posters which go along with your curriculum, or buy one or two from a Christian bookstore. Alternatively, decide on a theme which will reinforce the lessons you will be teaching until Easter and make some bright informative posters yourself. If this is too threatening, tell the children that their artwork from the first lesson will be to decorate the room with pictures of Jesus' life. (Make sure they have enough good art supplies for this to be fun)

Easter Already!

This is a good time to plan what you will be doing at Easter since it is a little early this year, on March 31. Then you can advertise well in advance and build excitement for a different type of Sunday School experience. Sometimes, if we are using a non-Anglican curriculum, there is very little seasonal material so you might consider putting it to one side during the four weeks before Easter and doing your own Good Friday /Easter lessons. Have a meeting to decide what you want to cover. (Books such as Debbie Tafton O'Neal's "Before and After Easter" and "Family Countdown to Easter", or "Best of Blessings - Lent, Holy Week and

Easter" edited by Ginny Arthur, are useful for ideas and inspiration. Call Anglican House for prices, 693-2295) Try dividing your children into mixed age groups and having several "stations", each with a different theme related story and activity set up for the whole four week period. Each group of children "rotates" through the stations, doing a different one each week. Each group will start at a different station.

Example

Station 1 - Show a video of the Easter Story complete with popcorn. Talk about it afterwards. Most children's videos are about ½ hour long.

Station 2 - Read passages on Palm Sunday through to the Last Supper from a children's Bible or Easter storybook.

Act out Jesus' entry into Jerusalem or the Last Supper.

Station 3 - Read the story of the Crucifixion. Arch Book's "Kiri and the First Easter" concentrates on the cross. Make cross pendants using one 2" and one 1 1/2" nail for each one. Hold them together where they cross with fine picture hanging wire and tie cord to the top of the cross.

Station 4 - Read about the resurrection. Talk about how butterflies emerge from dead-looking cocoons and are often used as symbols of the resurrection. Make a variety of colourful paper butterflies. (There are many ways to do this in various craft books)

Cut a bare branch and set it upright in a pail of earth. Hang the cross pendants and the butterflies on your "Easter tree" to have in church as the Church School contribution to Easter Sunday decorations.

Some churches used a Good Friday Programme last year - a 3 to 4 hour session held on Good Friday or a Saturday just before Easter. The Easter story was told and there was a video and a number of different activities from arts and crafts to baking. These have a good record of bringing in many children who do not normally attend church, but good advance planning is essential. I sent details of a sample programme to all Sunday School superintendents / co-ordinators last year. If you would like another copy, please phone or e-mail (see top of newsletter)

Harry Potter

On the back page of the January NB Anglican there is an article on the first Harry Potter book and the movie. It is intended to help teachers and parents of children in the 9 - 14 age group to discuss them with children from a Christian viewpoint.