

## Children's Message Training Information

Thank you for your interest in doing children's messages at WCPC! We hope this guide will help you adequately prepare for and deliver your children's message.

### Some basic nuts and bolts:

- Children's messages are given at both the 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Sunday services. (In the summer at the one service.) You can choose to do both services, or partner with someone else and do one service while your partner does the other.
- Please make your children's message **3 minutes** or less. This helps the worship service to run smoothly and timely and helps you have the young children's attention span the majority of the time. Occasionally, if there is a lot of other extra stuff happening in worship such as a baptism or commissioning, we may need you to be even briefer. If this is the case, Susan will let you know.
- The Sunday morning that you give the children's message, please arrive 5-10 minutes before the service to get your microphone from the person running the sound board. This enables them to do a sound check and make sure everything is in order. (Please remember that microphones need to be very near the mouth to be useful.)
- At the conclusion of the choir or hand bell anthem, please immediately stand up and invite the children to join you up front for the children's message. Please do not wait for applause for the anthem before making this invitation.
- It is helpful to sit on the bottom step and ask the children to sit in front of you. When you have kids beside you or behind you, you often do not have their attention, and they can become distracted by the congregation (trying to wave at parents, etc.).
- It is helpful if you are able to go out with the children at the end of the message so that they all make it back to the narthex to find the children's nursery staff.

### How do I choose a topic?

- We ask you to pick your topic based on one of three things:
- The primary Scripture text on which the pastors will preach. (Ask Shirley, Susan, or the preaching pastor about this Scripture. They will have it by Thursday at the very latest.)
- The season of year. (Epiphany, Lent, Labor Day, etc.)
- What is going on at church that day. (ex. Talking about Bibles when the 3rd graders receive their Bibles)

### How do I select a message to give?

- You are welcome to design your own message. If you choose this route, please run a script of what you would like to say by the pastors by Thursday so that, if needed, they can offer any suggestions to you.
- You are welcome to borrow books from Susan or from the main office supply (in the bookcase) that have many children's message ideas. You can use them verbatim or modify them to suit your own style.

- You can use resources online. There are many resources online, but if you do this, please run a potential selection by the pastors to check on the theology to make sure it is appropriate. Some useful websites include:
- textweek.com scroll to the bottom of the page to Children section
- worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com (lectionary link has the Sunday scriptures from all the texts)
- [www.sermons4kids.com](http://www.sermons4kids.com); (organized by OT/NT, holidays/special occasions, lectionary)
- [www.childrensermons.com](http://www.childrensermons.com); (These are indexed by titles.)
- [www.childrenssermons.net](http://www.childrenssermons.net)
- [www.christiancrafters.com/sermons.html](http://www.christiancrafters.com/sermons.html) (Good also for Sunday School ideas!)
- <http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com>; (this site offers ideas on how to teach the Bible text on a child's level of understanding)

### **Props or no props?**

- Please use props sparingly and carefully. While props can be good to illustrate a point or capture a child's attention, or even help you remember your message, they can also become distracting objects and the children may be so captured by the prop that they do not pay attention to you.

#### **If you use a prop:**

- Please remember that the children who come forward for the children's message are not developmentally able to understand that the object you have is anything other than the object itself. A rock is a rock, not Jesus. A light bulb is a light bulb, not the light of Christ. (After a children's message at one church, a child was found by his parents searching his backyard for rocks and calling them Jesus.)
- However, sometimes there are good uses. If you are talking about a place, you might show a picture of it. If you are talking about a specific object, you might bring it.
- Be prepared to hold your prop. If you stick it by your side, young children will be apt to take it away from you and fiddle with it, and this can quickly take a children's message out of your hand.
- When there are only a few children, if you want them to hold something or touch something, this can be easily done. When there are more than a handful, this becomes too time-consuming and the children can get squirrely or impatient.
- If you are interested in using puppets, Susan has many available to use.
- If you plan to bring something to hand out to each child plan for about 25-30 and tell the children you will pass it out after the message in the narthex or go outside in the courtyard if they get too noisy.

### **Should I do all of the talking, or should I have the kids participate by answering questions?**

- Be cautious about the use of questions. Sometimes questions can be good to get kids thinking and participating, but they can also quickly get out of hand. Once you open up

dialogue with the kids they often don't want to stop talking and you can lose control of both the message and the time. Be very cautious with open-ended questions and validate all participation even if you need to redirect it.

Something to consider: The 8:30 group is usually smaller and quieter and often will not answer questions posed. On the other hand, the 11:00 group is usually bigger and more boisterous and many will answer (but not necessarily on your topic) and may not stop talking afterward.

- Please do not stick the microphone in a child's face to talk. Instead, repeat a great response that is on topic. We do not do messages to put children on display or to open them up to the congregation laughing at them.

### **Praying**

- Please include a prayer at the conclusion of your children's message. You can pray by yourself or choose to do a prayer in which the children (and congregation) repeat the prayer after you.
- Please remember to use "kid-friendly" language.
- If you do a prayer in which the children will repeat after you, it is good to remember that the phrases in the prayer need to be short enough and the words easy enough for young children to repeat. It is better to err on the younger side even if some of the children may be older in the group.
- You can do another type of prayer, but prepare the congregation for it.

### **Other helpful tips:**

- Practice your message in advance! If you are using a prop, remember to think about whether you can hold a microphone and your prop at the same time. David or Laura can usually help out by holding the microphone or a prop if needed.
- It is better to look at the children while you are talking and keep your notes brief. It is best of all to speak from memory as you deliver the message.
- Your children's message will rarely go exactly as planned. Be prepared to be flexible!
- Watch your wardrobe choices! You will be sitting on the steps with children on the floor under you and you may be leaning over a bit. If you want to double-check your clothing choice, sit on a low spot and lean forward in front of a mirror or have someone check for you that morning before leaving the house.
- If you can, recognize the children by name. A good way to learn the children and their names is by shepherding a younger class or coming to Jesus Jam at 9:45 to connect names to faces!

Susan Duncan, Kathy Gage and Tricia Knight can all be called on for help as a resource person for children's message writing.

**Created by:** Susan Duncan