

A short list of stuff to do with children and youth

1. Acolyte ministry and teaching
2. Boy Scouts
3. Girl Scouts
4. Venturing
5. Dancers
6. Easter Egg Hunts
7. Nursery
8. Sunday School
9. Mission projects
10. UMYF
11. Music ministry
12. Puppet and clown ministry
13. Lay speaking
14. Destination Unknown
15. Red Cross classes
16. Sleep overs, Lock-ins, and late night movies
17. Game Night
18. Progressive dinners (kids cook)
19. Skills and career classes
20. Arts and crafts
21. Vacation Bible School
22. Sports teams
23. Bible drills

As you can see, the list is endless! Don't worry about money, or resources; just be concerned with safety – then DO IT!!!

1. The best way to teach your children about the liturgical aspect of the church. Offer a continuing acolyte program that includes a snack, a craft, and of course fun. Teach the children about more than candles; discipline, worship practices, seasonal significance, liturgy, Sacraments, and much more can be taught during these times together with the children.

A great resource is: "Come, Follow Me: A Study Book For Acolytes" by Edwin B. Womack (9780788023057) (Student and Leader book)

2. & 3. & 4. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Venturing, is a great way to reach children that would not come to the church for worship, but would come to a scout meeting. Be there occasionally to greet and talk to the parents. Attend all awards banquets, if possible. If the children see the people from the church as friendly, they might be drawn to show up one Sunday!

5. Dancers require someone willing to take the time to research music, moves, and choreography, but it is well worth the effort to teach children the importance of exercise and taking care of, and using the body for the glory of God. Encourage the dancers to perform in the worship service at least once a month. A good resource for American sign language is: "The Joy of Signing" by: Lottie L. Riekehof

6. A new twist on Easter egg hunts came up when my husband started pastoring a little church in the country. Their tradition was for the children to hide the eggs for the grown-ups to find! The children then wander around with the adults helping them find the eggs. Be sure to send out fliers to the neighborhood inviting all to attend.

7. Look around your nursery. Is it in total compliance with Safe Sanctuary procedures? Is it inviting? Is it a fun place to be? Are the little ones learning about Jesus there?

8. Sunday School is a time-honored tradition, but if your Sunday School looks like it stepped out of the 50,s, you might need to bring it around to the 21st Century. Look at your literature. Is it theologically sound? Is it inclusive in the pictures of children? Is it fun? Is it teaching the children about Jesus?

9. Mission projects are as near as the front yard of the church, or as far as the ends of the earth! The point is to include the children. Come up with ideas that teach them the joy of giving at their level. Do not ever underestimate the power of a child to give.

10. The face of UMYF is multi-faceted. Look outside of the general guidelines to see new ways to reach the youth. Always include chances to study Scripture. Intentionally plan events that reach out and include non-members. Always follow Safe Sanctuary guidelines.

11. Music ministry is a very important aspect of reaching children and youth. Music speaks the Gospel when sometimes words won't do!! Make sure the music is good, this does not necessarily mean professional. Good, means well-planned and spirit-filled. Music may come from many different instruments.

12. Puppets can get the message into the heart of a child when they might not be listening to an adult. Clowns and puppets can get by saying things that people could not get by with. They capture the attention and imagination of a child.

13. Please include the children in the speaking part of the worship service. I even have nine year old boy who memorizes Scripture. The children and youth are very able to bring devotions, children's sermons, liturgy, etc.

14. The name says it all. Plan a place that the children do not know where they are going, (their parents do need to know!) and fill a van and off you go! Places like a synagogue, an outdoor Labyrinth, etc. It is exciting to go away as a church to an unknown destination.

15. There are opportunities for learning safety and life saving classes for the different ages. Check into these through the EMT's, Fire Department, and the local Red Cross. Even if the children are too young to give blood, they are never too young to learn about this special gift of life.

16. All of these CAN be done with sleep involved. Many churches do lock-ins and stay up all night, but you can also do them with a nighty-night time for all. These can be done just for fun, or also as fund raisers. Remember to keep the "play" holy!

17. Set up the card tables and fill them with all sorts of board games. Play things like musical chairs, bingo, UNO!, etc. Offer prizes. Give or sell refreshments. This is good old-fashioned fun!

18. Grown-ups are not the only ones who can cook. Offer cooking classes one week, then have a progressive dinner, cooked by the children or youth. Teach safety in the kitchen and good table manners. Have the dinners focus on inviting un-churched people.

19. Many school systems have take a child to work, well; let's use this same concept at church. Have some of the community people come and share their profession. Point out areas that can be considered service to the Lord and to the Kingdom of God.

20. Children of all ages love arts and crafts, as long as the end product is pleasant! Try to tie the project in with Scripture.

21. VBS is a great out -reach if you are intentional about the advertising. Consider changing the time to reach those who were not able to do it at the traditional time. Use plenty of volunteers so that everyone will be blessed!

22. Everyone else does them, why not the church??!!

23. This is a great way to teach the children the Bible. Always offer some type of prizes.