

ROUNDabout

Winter 2008–09



The newsletter for Gather 'Round leaders

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

On our way home from church recently, my husband and I experienced one of those heartwarming family moments. Our youngest son, age seven, leaned forward from the backseat and said, “So—can we talk about what we did in Sunday school today?”

Talk about a moment of quiet joy! Our congregation has been using the Gather 'Round curriculum for two years. We've developed a family practice of briefly sharing our individual Sunday school experiences in the car coming home or around the dinner table. One of us usually retells the story, with additions and corrections from others (usually our two older sons). We may share an interesting fact or new idea, or talk about the game we played or the craft we made. We check the Talkabout for its suggestion for the day.

Until Jackson piped up spontaneously, it hadn't occurred to us that this parental practice might have become a welcome part of his weekly routine. This is the sort of thing we, as planners, hoped would happen when we created a curriculum in which all ages study the same Bible story every week. As a parent, I have to admit, I was surprised—but so pleased—to find that it really worked for us.

Such a small thing. It takes very little time. But it has created a moment of spiritual and family connection in the middle of our busy lives. I'll take it.

—Anna Speicher, Director and Editor

Take up the Cross

This quarter begins on the last Sunday of November, with Advent texts from Isaiah and Mark and the familiar Christmas story from Luke. From Epiphany through the last Sunday before Lent, we learn about Jesus the teacher from the Gospel of Mark. Our stories tell of Jesus teaching about the kingdom of God and bringing wholeness to hurting people.

Jesus is a model for teachers. Like Jesus, we reflect the love and character of God as we guide children and youth in experiences that bring them closer to God. As Kathy Felty, writer for this quarter's Multiage materials, says, “A room ready for learning, supplies ready to use, and a teacher ready to lead tells children that you value them and your time together.”

Teaching Sunday school is a holy calling. This quarter, when we explore what it means to take up the cross, let's remember that our responsibility is to provide quality learning activities that help children experience God's healing and love. The goal of Sunday school is not to provide childcare, nor to entertain the children for an hour or so, nor to simply have a “fun” experience. Its goal is to engage children in exploring what it means to live as children of God in God's new community.

Librarians' link

Did you know that each quarter a group of dedicated librarians from Pennsylvania voluntarily assembles a listing of recommended children's books and videos? These resources are suggested to supplement or enrich the quarter's sessions. Check www.gatherround.org for the Winter 2008–2009 listing. Find stories to read aloud to preschoolers, or books and videos just right for older children. Many thanks to the women who offer this labor of love.

Alert your church librarians to these listings. They may wish to support Gather 'Round teachers by collecting any resources available in your library and offering them for use throughout the quarter.

Got questions? Ask Anna!

Do you have questions about Gather 'Round that you wish you could ask someone? Are you curious what questions other teachers might have? Ask Anna is a new feature coming soon to the Gather 'Round website. You'll want to check frequently to get tips for teaching based on the questions submitted by other real teachers. There's also a place for you to submit your questions. Here's a sample from Ask Anna:

I displayed each week's teaching picture at children's eye level (in order) around the room. This gave us the opportunity to revisit themes and talk about previous lessons.

EDUCATOR'S TIP

—Jill Schreiber, Preschool teacher
Champaign, Illinois

Dear Anna,

Half of my kids arrive late so I must repeat most of what we have already covered with the early arrivals. That reinforces the learning for half the group but cuts down on the material that can be covered. How can I address late arrivals while not asking the kids who arrived on time to sit through repeat information?

—Clock-watcher in Kansas

Dear Clock-watcher,

It seems that both you and the on-time kids are being controlled by the late arrivals. Everyone is losing out in this practice. Rather than either waiting for the late kids or repeating yourself, find a way to engage the early arrivals and encourage the late ones to come earlier. Try doing fun memory review games. Or think of a way to tweak one of the session's responding activities so that it could be done in the gathering time. Perhaps you could plan an art project for the kids to work on through the quarter and they could add something new to it as they arrive each week. Think ahead to decide what might work best for your group.

Young children have no control over their Sunday school arrival times. You can remind parents when Sunday school begins and encourage them to be on time. If that doesn't work, I suggest that you begin the session when you have a critical mass. When the stragglers arrive, simply welcome them and carry on with the session. During the activity time, you can tell these children what they missed.

—Anna

Copy and distribute to all teachers and leaders.

**PDF at:
www.gatherround.org**

Winter 2008–09 Talkabout • Take up the Cross

The Winter 2008–09 Talkabout is a perpetual folding puzzler with prayers, discussion starters, activities, Bible readings, and trivia tidbits. Enjoy living with the Bible story all week long.



www.gatherround.org



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