

Our VBS story:

"Our children are our best evangelists. They are not afraid to talk about God and Church to their friends."

The following are excerpts from a letter to our synod office. We think it provides some great insights into an effective Vacation Bible School program and philosophy.

- *Resource Center Staff*

- 1) Our Congregation has a little over 200 hundred confirmed members. However, our average Sunday morning attendance is more like fifty to sixty people, with that number even being less in the Summer.
- 2) Our VBS is done ecumenically with St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Tony. Tony is located five miles from Glen Flora, and is in the same School District. Last year we had one hundred and thirty-two children at VBS. About one-third of them come from our Congregation; one-third from St. Anthony's; and one-third from the Community.
- 3) Our staff usually runs between fifty to sixty people, which includes about twelve junior/senior high students that help out in a variety of ways. One thing that is unique about our staff is it includes a number of certified school teachers. This year we have nine classes (Age Three through Grade Six). Of those nine classroom teachers, five are teachers in our local school district and two are classroom aides at school. I rarely have to

ask people to help with VBS, they ask me what they can do to be involved. We also have several men that assist with our canoe and camping trip.

4) Last year we did a number of things during VBS. My philosophy is you need to continually incorporate new things into the week's activities to keep the children interested and excited about coming to VBS. On Tuesday afternoon and evening, the kids in Grades 4, 5, and 6 go on a canoe trip down the Flambeau River and camp over night at Josie Creek Park. Last year as part of the evening activities at Josie Creek, we had a former Boy Scout Leader work with the kids to build a rope bridge over a creek. The kids cut the rope into the lengths it needed to be; tied the knots; and put the bridge up. Almost all of the kids crossed the creek using the rope bridge. It was a great project to promote team building and working together. The younger children, Grades K, 1, 2, and 3, made a gift for Nursing Home residents and delivered it to the area Nursing Home. When they were there they also sang for the residents.

5) This year we have a number of the same activities planned, but we are incorporating new things within those activities. However, a new project for children in Grades 5 & 6 will be to make wooden crosses to be given away at Friday night's program. One of the parents has a wood scrolling business and has offered to bring in her equipment and work with the kids on this project. A local lumber yard is donating the wood. The kids will be divided into teams of five or six and work under the supervision of an adult to design and cut out a cross. I will include a pattern with the photos I send you. Another addition I am excited about is the story for Friday. Actually, it's Thursday's story but we are moving it to Friday. It is after the resurrection when Jesus and his disciples are having Breakfast after they had fished all night and didn't catch any fish and Jesus had

them put the nets down on the other side of the boat. I have twelve men that are coming, dressed as Jesus disciples, and will reenact the story of having Breakfast with Jesus and his disciples.

6) The daily newsletter is a great communication tool. I do it either the night before or early in the morning. It is given to the children the last thing before they leave each day to ensure it gets home. Parents are told in one of the promotional flyers about the daily newsletter and are encouraged to ask for it each day. The newsletter shares what the story for the day was and gives them some suggestions for activities they can do at home to carry on the theme of the story. It also gives the schedule for the next day. We also try to highlight two classes each day with the names of staff and something unique about each class.

7) VBS has definitely touched our community. I have a great opportunity to connect with a number of kids at school, and already in the Fall kids are asking about VBS for the next year. We also have a tremendous amount of support from the local businesses. I mentioned earlier about the lumber yard donating the lumber for the crosses; all of our children's t-shirts are donated by Artisans; and local gas stations also donate various food items that are needed during the week.

I believe we have increased membership from VBS. But I also think our Wednesday Club Program, which is our weekly Christian Education Program, has played a big part in our Church. **Our children are our best evangelists. They are not afraid to talk about God and Church to their friends.** If only adults were as brave.

I could talk forever about VBS, but before I close there are a couple of other things I would like to share with you. Each

morning we begin VBS with a time for Staff Devotions. It is ten minutes before the start of VBS. I believe it is important for our staff to have time to sit and listen and be fed by God's Word before they begin each day. The day is consumed with children and if we are going to be able to nurture them, we also need to be nurtured. Staff devotions are led by the Clergy of both churches. This has been well received by the staff. Almost all of them attend.

Another thing we have done at VBS is to serve lunch everyday. We have a full-day schedule, and it was a real hassle having kids bring sack lunches. Last year we began serving lunch. Again, our School District's Food Service Director is a member of our Congregation and this definitely helps to make this go smoother. We had many positive comments from parents about this last year and we are going to do it again this year.

I do a scrapbook every year of VBS.

I also did a PowerPoint™ presentation ([click here](#)) this year (2001) as well.

(We have the photos here and will scan them and add them shortly. - Resource Center Staff)

We invite you to come and witness our exciting program. The only day of VBS we won't be at Church is Thursday when we will be at Luther Park Bible Camp. There are also some evening activities if that works into people's schedules better. On Tuesday evening we do a campfire at Josie Creek. The last couple years we have had a lot of parents come for this and it has gone extremely well. Also, our closing program is on Friday evening at 8:00 PM. If you want to see how many people our little Church can hold, this is the time to come. It is awesome to

see. We have a tradition that we always close with and needs to be seen to really appreciate. All the children, all one-hundred plus of them, bring a flashlight. At the close of the program we turn off all of the lights and sing 'This Little Light Of Mine' with the kids using their flashlights as their lights. It is great.

Hope this is helpful.

Martha Johnson - VBS Director

Below you will find samples of the daily VBS Newsletters. They will help you gain a better idea of how the week is set up.

Pre-VBS

Dear Parents:

The start of VBS 2000 is only a few days away. I am looking forward to spending the week with your children.

Each day your child will bring home a Daily Newsletter. The Newsletter will contain family activities that relate to the Bible Story told that day, and the schedule of activities for the next day.

Attached to this Newsletter is a Permission Slip for the week's activities. Please complete this and send it with your oldest child on Monday. There is a place on the Permission Slip to indicate a T-Shirt size. Each child will receive a T-Shirt which we would like them to wear for the program on Friday evening.

We will be taking an offering each day at Vacation Bible School. This year the project we will be supporting is Heifer

Project International. You will be hearing more about this project as the week progresses.

There are two Worship times at VBS each day. One from 9:00–9:15; the other from 11:30-11:15. If your schedule allows, please feel free to join us.

There is no charge for children to attend VBS, however we will be receiving an offering at the Closing Program on Friday evening to help cover the expenses of the week.

I would also ask that you remember our VBS Staff in your prayers as we continue to get ready for this awesome week, and also during VBS next week. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated staff.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to share this ministry with your children.

Preparing for God's Great Get Together,

Martha Johnson
VBS Director

MONDAY'S SCHEDULE

9:00 AM - 11:45 AM

Morning Activities

For All Children

11:45 AM

Pre-School Age Children

Should Be Picked Up

11:45 AM - 12:30 PM

Lunch Provided For K-6

(BBQ's, Chips, Beverage, Dessert)

12:30 PM - 2:00 PM

Workshops
2:00 PM
Children Should Be Picked Up
CLOSING PROGRAM
Friday Evening
8:00 PM

Monday Newsletter

Dear Parents:

Thank you for a Great Day of Vacation Bible School! We had a wonderful day, enjoyed the afternoon workshops, and met new friends.

Each day this Newsletter will share with you the names of the many people who help to make this week possible.

(Here a list of all the classroom teachers was included.)

Thank you to these dedicated individuals for preparing a new lesson each day, and helping the children to understand how the Bible Story can apply to their daily life.

Also each day in this Newsletter you will find information about the Bible Story your children heard during VBS today. You may want to consider using this story for family devotions at Supper or before Bedtime.

Monday's Story -- Genesis 6.9 - 9.17

Today's story was about the Flood and Noah's Ark. Following

are some discussion questions about the story.

How does the dove fit in the story of Noah and the Ark?

How do you think Noah felt when the dove returned?

Noah was probably very glad to see the branch in the dove's beak. That meant the waters were going down. It also meant that God was taking care of Noah and his family and all the creatures on the ark. God had not forgotten them during the long days on the water. God loved them very much and brought them safely to dry land. God loves us that much too! We're welcome in God's family!

TUESDAY'S SCHEDULE

9:00 - 11:45 Regular Activities

Kindergarten - Grade Three

11:45 AM Leave for Memorial Park

12:00 - 1:10 PM Eat Lunch & Play

1:15 PM Visit Ladysmith Nursing Home

1:55 PM Drop Off @ St. Anthony's

2:00 PM Drop Off @ Glen Flora

Grades Four, Five & Six

11:45 AM Eat Lunch @ Church

12:15 PM Leave for Canoe Trip

12:45 PM Arrive @ Beaver Dam

1:00 - 4:00 PM Canoe Flambeau River

4:00 - 5:00 PM Set Up Camp
5:00 PM Supper
6:00 - 8:00 PM Organized Activities
8:00 PM Camp Fire
10:00 PM Lights Out!

Parents are welcome to attend the Camp Fire!

Children going on the Canoe & Camping Trip received a list of the items they should bring.

Tuesday's Newsletter

Dear Parents:

Our first day of Vacation Bible School brought one-hundred and thirty-three children. The most we have ever had. It is absolutely wonderful!

The extended afternoon activities for children in Grades K-6 included various workshops. Those workshops included: Prayer, Trust, Watching an Artist Paint Pictures, a Community Service Project, Social In-Justices, and learning about Non-Violent Approaches. Thank you to all of the workshop leaders for their help with the afternoon activities.

Today we will continue to share with you the names of persons helping at Vacation Bible School.

(More of the faculty are introduced here.)

These individuals work very hard to keep things running smoothly at Vacation Bible School. Without their help, the week

wouldn't be possible.

Tuesday's Story -- Luke 2:1-7

Tuesday's story is the Christmas Story: the Birth of Jesus.

In this story we learn that Jesus was born into a family, just as each of us was. When he grew up, Jesus taught people how to live as part of God's family. We are part of God's family too, and we have many people in that family who teach us about loving God and loving each other.

Possible discussion questions.

Who is in your family?

What is special about each one of them?

Talk about how all these people are part of your Church family -- the family of God.

WEDNESDAY'S SCHEDULE

9:00 - 11:45 AM Regular Activities

11:45 AM Lunch for All Children
Provided

12:30 - 2:00 PM Water Carnival
All Children (Including Pre-School)

2:00 PM Pick Up Children @
the Glen Flora Ball Park

(2 Blocks North of the Church)

Children will be playing games on Wednesday afternoon that involve water. Please have your child wear clothing that can get wet.

Lost & Found

We are beginning to collect a few jackets and sweatshirts at Church. Please check with your child to see if they are bringing home everything they bring to Church. Thank You.

***Reminder: Closing Program
Friday Evening - 8:00 PM***

Wednesday's Newsletter

Dear Parents:

As hard as it is to believe, the week is already half over. We have been having a wonderful time at VBS learning about God's Promises For us.

The trip the Kindergarten, Grades 1, 2, and 3 children took to the Park and Nursing Home went very well. They enjoyed the free time at the Park, and the residents of the Ladysmith Nursing Home enjoyed seeing the children and receiving the treat the children had made for them.

The Canoe & Camping Trip went well. Paddling into the wind, along with the long stretches of still water, made for some tired kids when they got to Josie Creek, but they were really some great troopers. They worked together so everyone canoed the entire time.

After a supper cooked over the open fire, We organized a rope bridge building event. Using rope, the kids cut and tied together a bridge, and then used the bridge to cross the water. It was a great event.

The evening at Josie Creek concluded with a Camp Fire with our Pastor leading some skits, and others providing music.

This is a great event for our kids and wouldn't be possible without the helping hands of many people.

*Wednesday's Story -- Luke 15:4-7
The Parable of the Lost Sheep.*

Some questions for discussion:

*Have you ever been lost?
How did you feel?*

In today's story, our friend the sheep was lost. But someone came to its rescue. The sheep was very important to the shepherd. He even left the other sheep to go find the one who was lost. Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He will come looking for us if we get lost or stray from God. God will welcome us back with joy! It's great to know that we're important to God!

An activity you may want to consider is showing others that they are important to you by sharing some time with them this week. Visit a homebound friend, play board games, talk with them. Let them know that you care about them and that God does too!

THURSDAY'S SCHEDULE

9:00 AM Leave for Luther Park

Lunch Is Provided

4:00 PM Return from Luther Park

Pre-School Age Children should bring a life jacket for the boat ride if they have one. If not, one will be provided.

Grades K-6 should bring their swimsuit and a towel. There will be time to swim in the pool.