

WHITE WING

MAY 2022

MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY



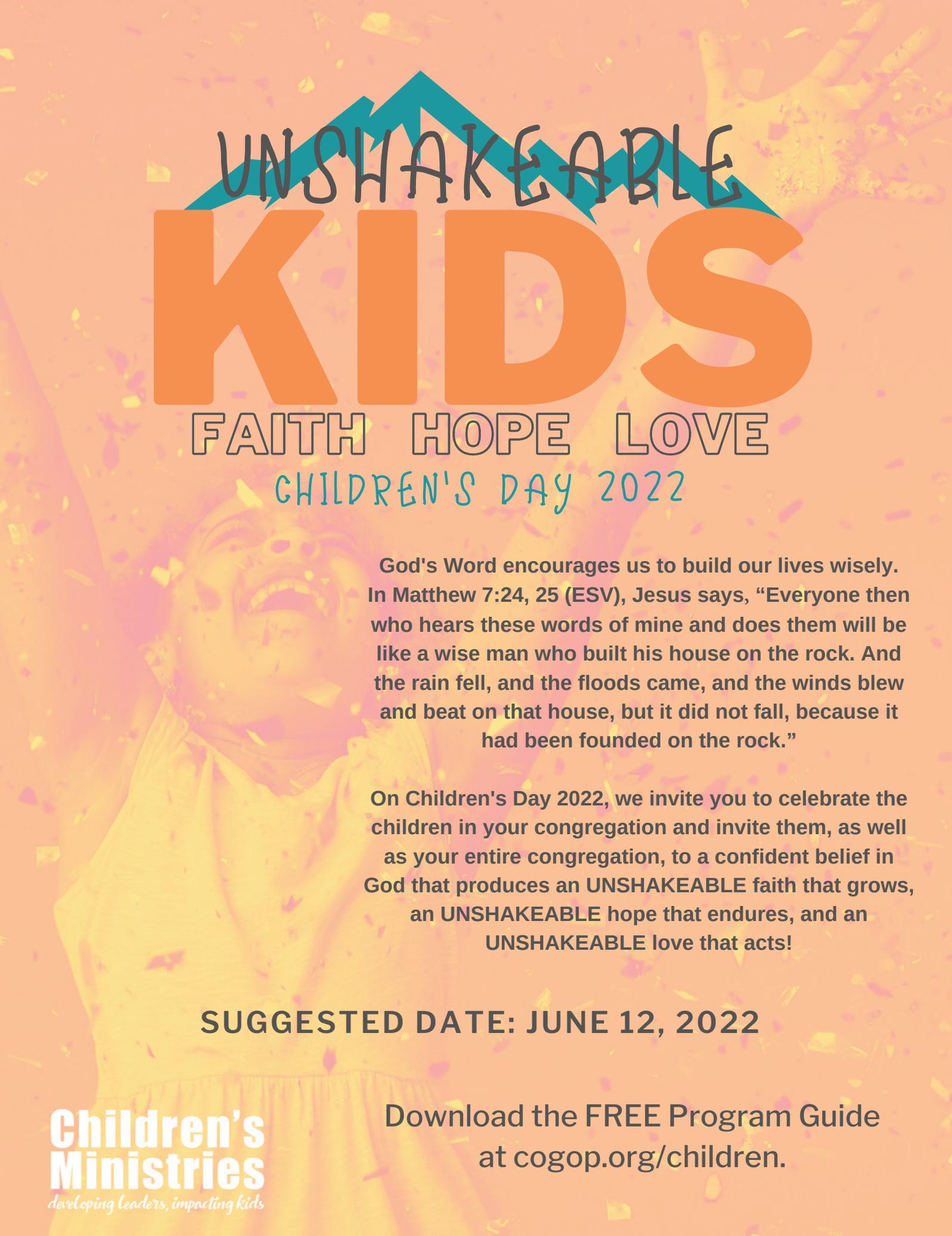
A NEW DAY

IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



FOR GOD HAS NOT GIVEN US A SPIRIT OF FEARFULNESS
BUT ONE OF POWER, LOVE, AND SOUND JUDGMENT.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7 (HCSB)



UNSHAKEABLE KIDS

FAITH HOPE LOVE
CHILDREN'S DAY 2022

God's Word encourages us to build our lives wisely. In Matthew 7:24, 25 (ESV), Jesus says, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock."

On Children's Day 2022, we invite you to celebrate the children in your congregation and invite them, as well as your entire congregation, to a confident belief in God that produces an UNSHAKEABLE faith that grows, an UNSHAKEABLE hope that endures, and an UNSHAKEABLE love that acts!

SUGGESTED DATE: JUNE 12, 2022

**Children's
Ministries**
developing leaders, impacting kids

Download the FREE Program Guide
at cogop.org/children.

WHITE WING MESSENGER



WE BELIEVE in the Holy Trinity—one God, eternally existing in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in one God, the Father, creator of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. All things were made through Him and for Him. He is true God and true man. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered, died, was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, and He will return to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who eternally proceeds from the Father. He is Teacher, Comforter, Helper, and Giver of spiritual gifts. Through Him the saving and sanctifying works of Jesus Christ are applied to the life of believers. He is the empowering presence of God in the life of the Christian and the church. The Father has sent His Son to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues and bearing the fruit of the Spirit are New Testament signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross and that He died in our place. The believer's sins are forgiven by the shedding of His blood. We believe that healing of mind, body, soul, and spirit is available to the believer through the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe in one baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the grace of God brings forgiveness and reconciliation to those who repent, as well as transformation in holiness, enabling them to live a Christ-like life. Sanctification is both a definite work of grace and a lifelong process of change in the believer brought by the blood of Jesus, the Word of God, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe in one holy, universal church, composed of all true believers in Jesus Christ, offering fellowship and calling for service to men and women of all races, nations, cultures, and languages. We believe in the spiritual and ultimate visible unity of the church.

We believe that the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His will to humankind, sufficient for instruction in salvation and daily Christian living. The Bible is the Christian's rule of faith and practice.

We believe that God will ultimately reconcile all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Therefore, we look forward to new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Executive Editor/Publisher:

Sam N. Clements

Managing Editor: Marsha Robinson

Editorial Assistant: Roxanne Corbett

Graphic Designer: Jason Williams

About the Church of God of Prophecy

The Church of God of Prophecy is a vibrant, worldwide body of believers, united in worship, working hand-in-hand to share God's love and a message of hope to the brokenhearted. The organization has more than a million members and more than 10,000 ministers, worshiping in more than 10,000 churches or missions in 135 nations of the world.

Church of God of Prophecy Core Values

- Prayer
- The Harvest
- Leadership Development
- Biblical Stewardship
- Service

Vision Statement

Reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit

Mission Statement

The Church of God of Prophecy is a Christ-exalting, holiness, Spirit-filled, all-nations, disciple-making, church-planting movement with passion for Christian union.

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FACING FORWARD

Bishop Sam N. Clements
General Overseer

Invest Yourself in Others

Jesus believed in the principle of investing. Instead of investing, we practice the principle of preservation; trying to maintain what we have. Our stewardship of souls has been called into question by God, and we are called to repent. In Matthew 25, we have what we know as the Kingdom parables. They tell us about the kingdom of God. Verse 14 says, "For the Kingdom of Heaven is like...." You could say the "King is like" because the Kingdom is an extension of the King. The passage then talks about a man traveling into a far country; but before he left, he called his servants and delivered his goods to them.

He made an investment; to one, he gave five talents, to another, two, to another, one, and you know the story. Two of these were profitable investments, and one was bad. There is always risk involved when you invest in something. Jesus, the most profitable servant in the history of the world, took one life—his own—and invested it all. He believed and operated on the principle that "Except a grain of wheat fall to the ground and dies it abides alone, but if it dies it will bring forth much fruit" (John 12:24). Seed in the ground is an investment. Jesus Christ invested his life, he risked it all.

He took a handful of men and poured himself into them. He taught them by example. He disciplined them. He invested in them the propagation of the gospel. If they did not get it out to the world, it would not have gotten out. He risked the whole gospel on fishermen, tax collectors, and common men whom other people would not have given a second look.

If they will be what they ought to be and if they do what they ought to do, they will take the gospel to the ends of the earth? What a risk! Jesus said to his little flock, "I'm going to release control to you, and I'm going to give my authority to you so that my kingdom can grow." I want to say right here if Jesus Christ could risk everything to invest in people like you and me, then I should be willing to take the risk to invest in someone else.

Many churches are not growing today simply because leadership is not willing to release control. Let me make it clear: When the Lord releases control to you,

it means you are more accountable because then you are more responsible. There are people in our church who have been touched by God for various ministries, but we are afraid to release them because they might mess up or they might make us look bad. I must remind you that the Bible says all the disciples, except for just a few, at one time turned away from the Lord. Some denied him, they betrayed him, but he did not give up on them. When you invest in people, it is not always a guarantee, it is a risk.

We have not always been what God wanted us to be, but for some reason, he has extended his mercy.

When you sow seed in the ground, not all are going to produce, but if you sow enough seed, you will get a harvest. Some are going to discourage us and some are going to disappoint us, but if we can learn to release it to Jesus, we will see an increase. God may want to work in different ways than we have been used to. Some unconventional approaches may be needed to reach this generation, but if God is not inspiring it, it will come to naught anyway. The bottom line is we can't just sit here in our camp and die—we must do something now.

God has always worked through human leadership. Ehud came into a time of confusion in Israel: he ordered Israel to "Follow me," and the resulting victory was eight years of peace. Gideon said, "Watch me, follow my lead, do exactly as I do," and 300 Hebrews defeated thousands of Midianites. Paul wrote, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1 MEV). The scary fact is a congregation will become like their leader. Intense spiritual leaders will raise us intense spiritual followers.

Jesus was aware of this fact, and he chose a few men and poured himself into them. He invested his life in them. It was a risk, but it paid off because afterwards, wherever these men went, people saw Jesus in them. People perceived the disciples had been with him.

To invest yourself is the greatest risk of all. To invest yourself, you can't play it safe. That is why a lot of people never invest themselves or their resources, they are afraid of the risk. Risk is not hurting this church today as much as playing it safe is! Fear of risk caused Israel to stop short of Canaan. We have circled the mountain long enough! Jesus believed in the principle of investing. Let's be like Jesus.



PRAYER MINISTRIES

CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

PRAYING FOR OUR CHILDREN

Prayer Points: May 2022 Contributor: Bishop Shaun McKinley, PhD

One of the most powerful ways to pray for children is to use Scripture. Because the Bible is the living Word of God, you can pray his Word back to him, interceding for your children and grandchildren about the very things that matter to God and impact your children emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Pray for Things Mentioned in a Verse:

"Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52 NIV).

Pray for the child by name, asking that he or she will increase in wisdom (the mind), in stature (physically), in favor with God (spiritual), and in favor with man (social).

Focus on God's Desires:

"Your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14 NIV).

Pray for your child's salvation based on God's will for the child (see also 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; 3 John 1:4).

Insert Children's Names into a Verse:

"He will command his angels concerning [names] to guard [them] in all [their] ways" (Psalm 91:11 NIV).

Prayer Directives

- Pray for the salvation of your child or children you know (Acts 16:31).
- Pray for understanding and wisdom in bringing up your children (Proverbs 2:6).
- Ask that your children be taught by the Lord and experience peace (Isaiah 54:13).

- Pray that the power of the Gospel will change and fill the lives of children you know (Romans 1:16).
- Pray that your child will be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger (James 1:19).
- Pray that your child will learn to be content with what they have (Hebrews 13:5).
- Pray that they do not forget to do what is right and to share (Hebrews 13:16).
- Ask that they grow in wisdom and in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:9-12).
- Pray that they submit to their elders and show humility to one another (1 Peter 5:5).
- Ask the Father to provide them peaceful sleep and safety throughout the day (Psalm 4:8).
- Ask God to rescue them from evil attacks and preserve them in their faith (2 Timothy 4:18).
- Pray that they be enabled to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only (James 1:22).
- Pray that they would learn to effectively share their faith (Philemon 1:6).

Additional Prayer Resources

- *Praying Circles Around Your Children* by Mark Batterson
- *Blessing Your Children* by Jack Hayford
- *Power of a Praying Parent* by Stormie Omartian
- *Prayers that Avail Much for Parents* by Germain Copeland



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR:

Bishop Shaun McKinley serves as international director of Children's Ministries, administrative liaison to the general overseer, and prayer coordinator for the Church of God of Prophecy International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee. He and his wife, Stephanie, serve as preschool teachers at the Peerless Road Church, also in Cleveland. Shaun is a graduate of Bryan College having earned a Master of Business Administration in Marketing from Bryan College and is a licensed bishop with the Church of God of Prophecy. He was awarded a Ph.D. in Religion and Leadership Studies by the University of the Cumberland.





A NEW DAY

Six Significant Shifts in Ministry to Renew Passion, Commitment, and Ministry Effectiveness

Shaun McKinley serves as international director of Children's Ministries, administrative liaison to the general overseer, and prayer coordinator for the Church of God of Prophecy International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee. He and his wife, Stephanie, serve as preschool teachers at the Peerless Road Church, also in Cleveland. Shaun is a graduate of Bryan College having earned a Master of Business Administration in Marketing from Bryan College and is a licensed bishop with the Church of God of Prophecy. He was awarded a Ph.D. in Religion and Leadership Studies by the University of the Cumberlands.



BISHOP SHAUN MCKINLEY, PhD | INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all of our ministries. As a result, the way we serve children and families has changed, and it has left many of us wondering how to confidently move forward in our ministries. While this "new normal" of our day has its unique challenges, it also positions us to reevaluate our leadership and ministries and adjust them for greater influence.

Fear and uncertainty sought to overwhelm many of us over the past year. However, in the midst of this shaking season, God is just as present now as he was previously. In this new day, the Spirit is calling us to walk in faith and not fear. Our present actions, attitudes, and words are telling the next generation what they need to know about the God we serve. So we must determine to walk with confidence (2 Timothy 1:7), not leaning on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5), taking bold steps forward in faith (Matthew 14:29), so that he can direct our path. As we set our eyes on him, he promises to establish our work (Psalm 90:17).

In recent years, International Children's Ministries prayerfully started each new year seeking a verse of Scripture to serve as our "Verse of the Year." Each year's verse has served as a rallying point for our team and global network, as well as had influence in our strategic priorities for the year. Our 2022 verse has so perfectly aligned our hearts with what we believe the Spirit is speaking to those of us in ministry: "For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment" (2 Timothy 1:7 HCSB).

With this verse providing as our foundation, we are calling on our leaders, volunteers, parents, and other influencers of children to move forward into this NEW DAY with authentic, bold confidence. Real confidence is more than just words or rituals, going to church, having religion, or believing there is a God. Authentic confidence backs up words with actions. If it doesn't, it's not real confidence. As we exercise this spiritual muscle—

confidence—our faith grows as we make choice after choice to trust in God.

Our ministry has identified five foundational elements, or shifts, upon which to emerge from the difficulties of this season. We believe that attention to these areas of ministry, through Holy Spirit empowerment, will enable our ministries to serve children and families with renewed passion, commitment, and effectiveness.

DRIVEN BY VISION AND VALUE

Over the past decade, a popular leadership phrase has been repeated as a key principle for motivating people and advancing an organization's mission. That phrase is "lead with your 'why.'" In children's ministry, most of us know the WHAT of our ministry, things like staffing a nursery, offering kids church, or leading a midweek Bible club. Some of us can articulate the HOW we do WHAT we do. We provide our programs or ministries by recruiting volunteers, providing curricula, and making sure our teams show up on time. But very few of us know or are able to articulate our WHY—the purpose, kingdom value, or biblical reason we do what we do.

In this new day of ministry, it is critical that everything we do, whether virtually or online, flows from a clearly defined source.

For many of us, our goals are to bring heart transformation to the kids we serve and equip them to be lifelong disciples of Christ. But often, this goal fades from focus when making ministry decisions and leading our ministries week-to-week.

As we step into this new day of ministry with confidence, with shadows of uncertainty and instability still looming in some areas of our world, we must have a clear understanding of the WHY for our ministry. This understanding will inform our decisions and flow throughout every aspect of our ministry. The WHY of your ministry provides you with insight into the destination of your ministry as well as the guardrails for how you will arrive there. In understanding your WHY, or your purpose, you will also unify the evangelism, discipleship, and service efforts of your team.

God has not called you to accomplish his purposes on your own but, rather, he invites you to minister alongside members of your church community. Although sometimes difficult to see, he has placed individuals to work with you to fulfill his plan for the children in your ministry and community. Having a defined and written vision statement can unify those serving on your team by clarifying the purpose for your ministry and describing its desired future. Additionally,

by identifying your ministry's mission, goals, objectives, and core values, you ensure that you are in alignment with God's purposes for your church, able to measure progress, provide accountability, and guide your ministries' decisions and behaviors.

Has your ministry done the "hard work" of prayerfully seeking God's will for matters of vision, mission, and strategy? This new day requires these essentials to remain focused in reaching those God has given you to shepherd.

FOCUSED ON FAMILIES AND INFLUENCERS

The impact of your kids ministry is no longer simply about engaging and discipling children. In this new day of ministry, we must also include efforts to intentionally reach, equip, and partner with parents and families.

Parents must not only be awakened to their responsibility but also invited into the discipleship process. This occurs when they know we are on their side and willing to be there for them as they lead their children through the faith walk. There are many practical ways that we can equip parents and wonderful resources that we can provide to engage them in this process. We can also help them identify opportunities where spiritual conversations can occur with their children.

Because parents, and other influencers, spend a majority of their time with our children, they have many more opportunities to help them

learn and apply the Bible to their lives. If the church wants to disciple and influence children for Christ, then we need to realize that we must influence those with whom children are spending the majority amount of their time.

Therefore, our local congregations must develop a biblical vision for the families and inspire parents with the vision God has for them and their children. This vision must also include grandparents, single parents, foster parents, and other adults raising children. Then, the church must make every hour it has with children at church significant and find ways to extend that significance to the home as we equip influencers.

EQUIPPING MISSIONALLY-MINDED KIDS AND FAMILIES

God's Word isn't just about listening and learning. Our journey of faith involves living and doing. Our journey with God isn't just about "come and hear," "come and receive," or "come and see." We are told to "go and show," "go and give," and "go and tell." Our

We are calling on our leaders, volunteers, parents, and other influencers of children to move forward into this NEW DAY with authentic, bold confidence.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING DRIVEN BY MISSION & VALUES IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Dale Hudson has been in Children's Ministry for over 32 years. He has helped build some of the largest and fastest growing children's ministries and churches in the nation. At Christ Fellowship in South Florida, he helped the church grow from 12,000 to over 28,000 people attending each weekend. In nine years there, he built a volunteer team of over 2,600 that ministered to thousands of kids each weekend. Dale is the author of the Relevant Children's Ministry blog, bringing fresh ideas, insight, and content to Children's and Family Ministry leaders.



DALE HUDSON | FLORIDA

Many children's ministries make the mistake of focusing on "what they do" instead of "why they do what they do." They try to build a volunteer team by sharing what new volunteers will be doing.

For example, let's say you are looking for a new volunteer for your nursery. A typical invitation to serve would look and sound something like this:

- You will be receiving the babies from their parents and helping them get checked in.
- You will be reading a Bible story to these little ones.
- You will make sure the baby's diaper is changed before the parents return.
- You will give the baby back to his or her parents at check-out time. Make sure you check the matching security tags before you return the child!

Would you want to sign up for this volunteer role? Hmm. No. Sounds boring to me.

Children's ministries that are driven by mission and values do things differently. They start off by focusing on the "why" and then move to the "what" after the why is clarified. What does being driven by the "why" look like?

Let's look again at having the opportunity for someone to serve in the nursery. First, you pray about it. Then you approach a person that God put on your heart and share with the person "why" you do what you do in the nursery.

- You share that nursery ministry is one of the most strategic positions in the entire church.
- You explain that so many brain connections are being made during the early years of a child's life. Children are

learning a vast amount of things during this time, even before they can verbalize it.

- When you serve in the nursery, you have the opportunity to sow seeds into the children's lives and begin helping them build a solid spiritual foundation for their life.
- As you share how much God loves them, you are preparing their heart to say "yes" to Jesus when they are older.
- You might share about a young couple that has been married about a year and now they have a new baby boy. This has been a wake-up call for them. They have started talking about taking their new baby to church. This Sunday, they will walk into the doors of our church for the very first time. They are a little nervous about leaving their new baby in a new place with people they don't know. But because you are there, welcoming them and reassuring them that their baby will be in safe hands, they will leave their new baby in the nursery and go to the adult service. In the adult service, they will hear the Gospel and they will respond by inviting Jesus into their life. And when that happens, you will have had a part in this. By loving and accepting their baby, you helped create an environment where the parents could listen and focus on the message. You will have a big part in them accepting Jesus into their life. God will have used you to help change the entire trajectory of their family.

Do you have a mission statement for your children's ministry? If not, create one. Make it as close to the church's overall mission statement as possible. For example, if your church's mission statement is "To share the love and message

of Jesus with the world," then you might make the children's mission statement to say, "To share the love and message of Jesus with kids and their families."

Your goal should be to bring the church's mission statement into the children's ministry and slightly modify it so it's kid-friendly.

Once you have your mission statement, let it permeate every part of your ministry. Let it be the reason "why" people are serving. Put your mission statement as a tag line for every part of your ministry. Every time you meet, take your families or volunteers to the "why we are doing what we are doing." Every email you send out should have your mission statement as a tag line. Every time you pray together as a group, remind everyone to pray that the mission God has given to your team will be fulfilled.

Just keep taking people back to the why. Every chance you get. Put it in writing. Place it in prominent places where people will see it. Talk about it every time you are with the team. Share it with new volunteers as you are onboarding them. Strive to make sure every person on the team knows why they are serving.

I often say, "People won't sign up to change diapers. But they will sign up to change someone's life." Invite people to join you in preparing the next generation to change the world for Jesus. People long to be part of something bigger than themselves. They want to know that their time here on earth made a difference. They want to know that they mattered. They can see this happen when they start serving with you in children's ministry.

Now let's consider our values. Values are what help you accomplish the mission. If the mission is the engine, then the values are the pistons that drive the mission. Your values are the expression of how you accomplish the mission. Values should be five to ten things you are committed to. Some examples include the following:

- Make church a fun and exciting experience for kids (Psalm 122:1).
- Provide a safe and secure environment (Psalm 4:8).
- Creatively present the timeless truths of the Bible in an exciting, culturally relevant, and age-appropriate way (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).
- Teach application, not just information (James 1:22).
- Partner with parents in their children's spiritual growth (Deuteronomy 6:5-9).
- Reach out to children and their families who don't have a relationship with Jesus (Luke 19:10).
- Help kids and parents build meaningful relationships through small groups (John 13:34, 35).
- Enlist, Equip, Empower, and Encourage volunteers to use their gifts in ministry (Ephesians 4:11, 12).

- Equip kids and parents to reach and discipleship their generation for Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20).
- Be dedicated to excellence (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

I grew up in a small church that had an attendance board up-front. In between Sunday school and church, they would change the numbers on the board. I remember, as a child, always looking with curiosity at the numbers. Did we have more than last week? Did we have less than last week? How much was the offering? It almost became a focal point for the church. While there's nothing wrong with having an attendance board, it's not the church numbers that we should be focused on.

The numbers we should be focused on should be the number of people in our communities that don't know Jesus. That is what should keep us up at night. How can we reach out to them? How can we connect with them? How can we help them see how much Jesus loves them? How can we see them come to Christ? The issue is not if you have 50 or 500 or 5,000 people inside your church. The issue is being surrounded by people who

don't know Jesus. That is what should determine what our mission and values are all about.

When we do this, our heart will begin to beat in sync with Jesus' heart, as we join him in seeking to reach those who are lost and far from him. Will your ministry join him in this mission?

Do you have a mission statement for your children's ministry? If not, create one. Make it as close to the church's overall mission statement as possible.



A New Day Awakening: When writing your vision statement, look to Scripture first. Consider verses like Deuteronomy 6:7; 2 Timothy 3:15; Matthew 28:19, 20; Psalm 78:1-7. Prayerfully ask questions like:

- How do we wish to see the lives of our children impacted through our ministry?
- How, or to whom, is our ministry uniquely positioned to serve?
- How can we partner with God to see this produced?
- What will be the result of this impact?

For practical strategies for developing vision, mission, goals, and values, attend an A NEW DAY training intensive. Find one near you or learn how you can host a training at cogop.org/children.

MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT

Focusing on Families and Influencers in the Church



Melissa Minter is the children's pastor at Central Community Church in Chatsworth, Georgia. She has a B.S. degree in Middle Grades Math and Science from Lee University and a M.Ed. degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Lincoln Memorial University. She has been married to her husband Scott for over 23 years. They have two daughters, one in college and one in high school. Melissa serves on the Children's Ministry International Advisory Team and has been involved in children's ministry since the age of 15. She considers it an honor and privilege to introduce children to Jesus and help them learn to follow him all of their lives.

MELISSA MINTER | CHATSWORTH, GEORGIA

When you see God work in the lives of families, it is a joy to watch. I was privileged to have such an opportunity this past year in my church. We have a dad who had been brought to church as a child but had wandered far from the Lord during his teenage and early adult years. He had come back to the Lord, married a woman with a little girl, and they had added another daughter to their family. Both parents had pasts that included addiction and poor choices. Now as Christians, they desperately wanted to build a godly family with their children.

One Sunday in church, this dad approached me with a question. He wanted to know how to study the Bible with his daughter. I believe he had visions of a child sitting and participating in a Bible study with him. He didn't know what to do because she simply wouldn't sit still and listen. I smiled and suggested he start by simply reading a Bible story to her each night. It was good advice, but I had failed in one respect. I didn't follow through on that advice with the support he needed.

However, in 2021, in an effort to see the children in my church grow in their Bible knowledge, we purchased a Bible storybook for each family and asked them to read three stories a week with their children. The following Sunday, we would review those stories briefly in children's church, providing

some accountability. Armed with the Bible storybook and a new conviction to lead his family based on a sermon he had heard, this dad accepted the challenge to begin reading the stories of the Bible with his family.

Over the next few months in children's church, I watched a transformation take place in this little girl. While in the past she often couldn't understand the questions I asked, much less know the answers, now she was the first one to raise her hand. Because her parents were reading the stories of the Bible to her each week, she knew almost every answer to the questions I would ask in children's church. The other children began to admire how she always knew the answers. I was able to share with her parents that I could see a change in this child because of their commitment. They were overwhelmed with what God had done! When our children's ministry partnered with them, change took place.

In a world that has been forever changed due to the COVID pandemic, it is more important than ever that churches focus on families and those that influence children. During the height of the pandemic, many children were unable to attend church. As our world returns to its "New Normal," the amount of time children spend within the walls of a church varies by country and

circumstances. At most, children spend a few hours a week in church, yet they are with the other adults in their lives the rest of the week. We refer to those adults as “influencers.” These adults include parents, other family members, teachers and coaches, and friends. If the church wants to disciple and influence children for Christ, then we must influence those with whom our children are spending the majority of their time.

This is not to say that church attendance and children’s programs within the church are not important. The Bible makes it clear that we need to be meeting together; however, when we can connect what is happening within the church building with what is happening outside, then our children begin to get a grasp of what Christianity is all about. Serving Jesus is about a lifestyle, not just something we talk about when we go to church.

In a world that has been forever changed, it is more important than ever that churches focus on families and those that influence children.

There are several ways that churches can focus on families and those who influence children. First, pastors and leaders can provide vision. Share sermons about the importance of discipling children at home. I love the wording of Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (NIV): “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

Sharing faith with children happens during everyday moments. At church, children learn the truths of God’s Word, but it is at home where they learn to live out those truths. I remember a time in my daughter’s life when she was struggling because she really wanted a special friend. We began to pray, and God sent her a friend, not in a way that we thought it would happen but according to his plan. This Christian friend is still in her life today. At home, we put the truths of the Bible into action, and God let my little girl see him work! Leaders, help adults see the importance of the day-to-day lessons to be learned at home.

Once influencers understand their biblical mandate to disciple children, we must go a step further and equip them. This can happen through providing resources, such as a Bible storybook or a family devotion book. However, just giving someone a resource may not be enough. Our ministries need to come alongside influencers and show them how to use those resources. Too often, we get into the habit of telling people what they need to do when what they really need is someone to show them how to do it. It is sometimes difficult for adults to

discuss spiritual things with children. If a family is not in the habit of having spiritual conversations, they may not know how to begin. Consider having someone teach a class on how to have a family devotion or how to lead a child to Christ. During the week, the adults could lead a devotion with their children and then return the next week to talk about what worked and where they need additional help. Ask parents and other influencers how they need help, and look for ways to provide support.

Finally, while supporting parents outside of church, be sure to support them when they come to church. Let your church be a family-friendly place. I remember trying desperately to keep two little girls quiet during service. Sometimes I was successful. Sometimes I was not. In all times, however, I knew that my family was loved and wanted. There were adults that poured into my children each week at church. When they moved into youth group, there was a youth leader that took the time to really get to know them. They knew he cared. My church has also given my children opportunities to serve—one in children’s ministry and another in the media ministry. In fact, my youngest is going to college about 45 minutes away next fall, but she is planning to come home each Sunday to help with the media. In her words, “They need me!” I am beyond grateful for a church that makes my teenager feel loved and needed.

Next Sunday, look around at the families in your congregation. You may see crying babies, squirming toddlers, loud children, and tired parents. Look beyond the tears, noise, and fatigue to a group of people that God wants to use to change the world. Let the message start in church, but don’t let it end in church. Support your families and watch the impact of that support reach into the community and world around you. May your church be a place where families feel supported, loved, and, yes, needed. That is what being the body of Christ is all about.



A New Day Awakening: A 2022 study of COGOP parents in more than 35 nations confirmed that COGOP parents of faith love their kids and feel a deep responsibility for their role as a parent. However, only 38% of respondents agreed with the statement, “I’m currently experiencing relational discipleship in my local church.” When it comes to their children, 86% said they valued “having people in my child’s life who disciple them and mentor them.” This indicates that there may be a discipleship gap in our churches and this current generation of parents are in large part where we are hemorrhaging. However, they recognize this need in their own life and invite the church to correct it with their child. Essentially, they are giving us a second chance to get it right. They desire a ministry that is genuinely connecting with their kids. However, they, too, need to experience discipleship relationships right alongside their children to satisfy the longings they have and close the gaps that they feel.



DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW IN YOUR CHILDREN AT HOME AND AT CHURCH

Equipping Missionally-Minded Volunteers, Kids, and Families

I had no idea that saying yes to the command, “Get your guitar and your Bible, and go back to Children’s Church” from my pastor in 1977 would change my life forever. Not only has it changed me as a person and a Christ follower, but it’s also changed me as a husband, a father, an employee, and a minister—and it has changed the lens I view everything through. It began a journey that, at 66 years young and counting, I’m still on “to know God and love his Word and help sons and daughters do the same.” I believe what’s missing from so many ministries and families is an understanding of life from a biblical worldview.

Just as the church needs a biblical vision for reaching children, so does the family. Have you ever asked God what he wants for your family? I realized that God designed the family to put his Word into future generations. If you aim at nothing, you’ll hit it every time. So, if God gives you the desires of your heart, what is your desire and goals for your children? For me, I wanted our family to be close. I wanted them to love the Lord with all their heart and love the Word. In fact, I wanted them to love the Bible so much that it was what they based every choice in their life on.

I learned when I first started working with kids to always keep my promises to them. I never made a promise in children’s church that I couldn’t keep. If I did that at church, I needed to do that at home. I never promised I would be at everything, either. I told my girls I would try, and I was honest if there was a possibility that I could not be there. I’m not saying I’ve never disappointed my children. I have many times, but I’ve told them the truth about life and tried to model what I was asking them to do and believe. So, with these things in mind, here’s my top ten list—as a children’s pastor and a dad—for how to instill a biblical worldview in your kids.

1. Jesus was never too busy for questions. Encourage your kids to ask questions. Listen to what they are really asking and give them the “why” as well as the “what.” Help them understand that there is a difference between a question and doubt or unbelief. Never be too busy for questions, and spend time with your kids. The time you spend with them and the less you “freak-out” over their questions, the more comfortable they will be to ask questions at home and church.

2. Model what you want your children to do when they grow up, and place other models around them. Never

forget when it comes to biblical living that when you point at others, there are three fingers pointing back at you. There cannot be one set of rules for you and another for them. Follow Paul’s words when he says, “Come follow me as I follow Christ.”

3. The number one mistake in teaching the Bible to children is to fill them with facts instead of instilling in them the principles of each story and teaching. Facts go in our head, while principles go in our heart and help us to walk out the truths of God’s Word. Kids need the principles of the Word so they can apply them to their everyday life. Do your children, at home and at church, know the principles within Bible stories or just the stories?

4. One of the greatest lessons I ever learned is that the voice of wisdom and the voice of God are always the same thing. That’s why we need to know God’s Word because it also contains his wisdom. The world tells kids that life is about fame and fortune. We all know parents who are more concerned with their child’s ability to produce wealth than to instill the pursuit of wisdom and truth above all. The Bible says that wisdom is better than riches or gold. If someone is wise, that wisdom will bring blessing, honor, and a good name. Knowledge is the beginning of wisdom. God’s wisdom brings blessings. Have you instilled this truth in your child?

5. In many households, media and television have taken on the parental role. Because of the craziness of our schedules, we never really watched anything when it came on. It turned out to be a tremendous blessing because we were able to fast forward through some stuff and pause and talk about other stuff! When I was a child, Lucy and Ricky couldn’t even sleep in the same bed. Today our kids are bombarded with messages contrary to the Bible. Whether it’s a TV program or the news, you need to tell your children the truth. It seems like all the media wants to talk about is bad news. I know there are some things that need to be reported, but I want to point out the promises of God that work in every type of economy. We still serve a God who is more than enough. He is our supplier and our provider. Feel free to correct the wrong voices, and remind kids what the Bible says. Here’s a wonderful project for both church and home: take TV shows, movies, magazines, and newspapers, and have your children research a topic or a viewpoint. Then write down what the media says

Jim Wideman has the unique ability to help build the local church by strengthening the family, empowering leaders, and building great teams. He is a pastor, speaker, author, and ministry coach with more than 45 years of experience serving in all areas of the local church, including 17 years leading one of the largest children's ministries in the United States. Jim has trained thousands of children's ministry leaders in the U.S. and around the world. He has worked with six different thriving churches in the span of almost five decades, and he has published over 15 books. Jim currently serves as the executive operations pastor at The Belonging church in Nashville, Tennessee. Jim and his wife Julie have been married for 43 years and have two wonderful daughters and three of the cutest grandsons ever!



JIM WIDEMAN | NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

about that topic, then let them research what the Bible says and let them see for themselves how they are different.

6. Whatever the answer is that you are looking for, the answer can be found in God's Word. How should I treat others? Who should I forgive? Who should I be friends with? How should I treat my parents, my family, my employer? Who should we vote for? What should our nation's views on Israel be? It's all in the Book! It's not just for Sunday and Wednesday, it's also for Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The Bible is our guidebook on living and the filter that every voice should be measured against. It's not outdated and is relevant for today! One of the things you can do with your children is to gather the questions they have and then give them the answers from God's Word.

7. Every time Jesus faced the devil or demonic opposition, he spoke the Word. Our tongue has the power of life and death when we speak the Word; we speak words of life. As parents and pastors, we need to help kids watch their words and be intentional about saying what the Word says. This is also how we build our faith. Faith comes by hearing. When we say God's Word, it pumps us up and builds our faith similar to reps with dumbbells and barbells.

8. The children in our churches, as well as the children in our homes, need to know that what the Word says is often different than what the world tells them. Take advantage of teachable moments anywhere, anytime! Kids don't need devotions; they need to be taught to live a devoted life based on the Word! Dare to confront and challenge wrong thinking in the media, as you do life. Take every opportunity you are given to make God's Word real to your kids. If you love the kids over which you have influence, you'll look for opportunities to swap wrong thinking for truth. You will love them enough to confront them in love. What do the children around you need to hear?

9. You should model to children and families a life built on the Word. If your kids don't see you doing these things, they won't do them either. If we are what we eat physically, we are also what we eat spiritually. The more I pray, read, and meditate the Word, it helps the kids around me do the same. When kids ask for our advice, give them the Word. I taught at a conference recently and overheard some people talking about the workshops I had taught, and they were telling some people to go to my workshops because I actually use the Bible. Now if we can stick out at a conference using the Bible, you can also stick out as a parent for giving them the Word! They need the Word more than anything else you can give them.

10. Teach the importance of attending and being active in church. One of my favorite scriptures is Luke 4:16. It tells us that Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day as it was his custom. Jesus modeled for us the habit of

attending church. It was never up for discussion whether my daughters would attend church. If they wanted to take a dance class on a church night, they didn't take the class, they went to church. But not only did they attend, they served. They were active in things for their age group, but they also gave back to others. I was not the only person in our family involved in ministry; we were a ministering family. Now that they are adults, they are still doing what they were trained as children to do. Yancy is in full-time ministry, but she still gives back to her home church. Whitney doesn't just attend a small group, she's the small group leader. Parents, if you make them eat green beans because "they are good for you," why not have them in church—it is also good for them! Don't just tell them to do it; set the example of attending, serving, learning, and growing.

Do the children at your church and the children at your house have a love for the Bible? A love that moves them from studying the Bible to living the Bible. It's not just the responsibility of the pastor, it's both the home and church doing these things together! Same actions bring same results. What are you going to start doing differently?



A New Day Awakening: One way to equip kids and families to be missionally-minded is by engaging them in intercession for others. Here are some simple ideas for connecting kids to prayer needs around the world:

- **Identification Prayer:** Using a globe, spin it and stop on a country. Pray for all the kids the same age, same name, same problems, etc. in that country.
- **Faith Declarations:** Have kids hold up signs with names of countries or people groups on them. The child holding the sign says something like, "Lord, help children in China to hear the good news about Jesus Christ." The other children shout, "Amen!"
- **Floor Map of the World:** Place a map of the world on the floor. Have children stand on different continents, then countries, and pray for the people in these areas.
- **Prayer Walk:** Have a prayer walk in the building by setting up different rooms to represent cities or countries of the world. Use music, photographs, and video clips of the country to guide the prayer time.

For more practical strategies for equipping missionally-minded volunteers, kids, and families, attend an A NEW DAY training intensive. Find one near you or learn how you can host a training at cogop.org/children.

Camp Dates

State/Region	Age Groups	Camp Location	More Information
Alabama	Collegiate (15-19) June 5-11 \$225 Senior (12-14) June 12-18 \$225 Discovery Camp (9-11) June 19-25 \$225 Pee Wee Camp (6-8) June 1-4 \$135	Camp Boothe, Greenpond, AL	alcogop.org
Alaska, Washington	Teen (13-19) July 10-15 Pee Wee (5-7) July 8-10 Junior Camp (8-12) July 17-22 Young Adult (18-30) July 15-17	Camp Roganunda, Naches, WA	Joe & Celina Gonzalez WYouthministries@gmail.com Amanda Winslow amanda.lynn.002@gmail.com Jonathan & Jessica Sadler jsadler777@yahoo.com Rob & TC Judd rjjunior@hotmail.com
Florida	Hot Shot Camp (4-8) June 10-12 \$50 Senior Camp (15-19) June 13-18 \$125 Intermediate Camp (12-14) June 20-24 \$100 Junior Camp (8-11) June 25-29 \$100 SC+ Camp (19-20) June 13-18 \$125	Camp Sonshine, Brooksville, FL	flcogop.org
Georgia	Senior (15-19) June 5-10 \$175 Junior (11-14) June 12-17 \$175 Freshman (9-11) June 19-24 \$175 Explorers (6-8) June 26-29 \$125	Camp Echeconnee, Lizella, GA	gacogop.org
Heartland America (AR, KS, MO, OK)	KS/MO Senior (12-25) June 18-22 \$165 KS Kids Camp East (6-11) June 24-27 \$115 KS Kids Camp West (6-11) June 10-12 \$100 OK Senior (13-17) June 6-11 \$145 OK Intermediate (10-12) June 13-18 \$145 OK Junior (7-9) June 20-25 \$145 AR Kids Camp (7-12) June 9-13 \$135 AR Senior Camp (13-College) June 14-18 \$135	Camp Big Cedars, Wanette, OK River Pointe Camp, Rocky Mount, MO Camp Bended Knee, MO Forest Park Camp, KS Camp Kahoka, AR	heartlandcogop.org
Louisiana/ Mississippi	MS Pee Wee Camp (6-8) May 30-June 2 \$115 MS Senior Camp (15-18) June 2-7 \$145 MS Junior Camp (12-14) June 8-13 \$145 MS Sub-Teen Camp (9-11) June 14-18 \$145 LA Pee Wee Camp (6-8) June 5-8 LA Junior Camp (9-12) June 5-8 LA Senior Camp (13-17) June 8-12	Kamp Kumbaya, Eupora, MS Camp Pollock, Pollock, LA	magnoliacogop.com
North Carolina	Primary Camp (5-7) June 8-11 \$135 Junior Camp (8-10) June 14-18 \$160 Junior High Camp (11-12) June 20-25 \$175 Senior Camp (13-14) June 27-Jul 2 \$175 Senior High Camp (15-18) July 11-16 \$175	Camp Maranatha, High Point, NC	Christopher & Carmen Price Joey & Rae Marsh Tony & Dwana Langley Nina Davis nccogop.org



State/Region	Age Groups	Camp Location	More Information
Midwest Rocky Mtn Region (CO, IA, MN, NE)	IA Junior Camp (8-12) June 26-30 MN Kids Camp (6-11) June 12-14 \$75 MN Teen Camp (12-18) June 14-18 \$125 NE Higher Vision Senior Camp, (13-18) August 1-6 \$275	Lutheran Club Camp, Elk River, MN The Crossing Retreat Center, Lexington, NE	midrockycogop.org restoringlivescc.org
Northeast Region (CT, ME, MA, NH, NY, RI, VT, BERMUDA)	Youth Camps August 7-12, 2022 (Virtual) Discoverers (6-8), Trailblazers (9-12), Pioneers (13-18)	Online	Viveen Murray Danviv3@yahoo.com
Ohio/West Virginia	WV Sr & Jr Camp June 6-11 WV Champ Camp June 6-9 OH Sr & Jr Camp June 13-18 OH Champ Camp June 13-18	New River Ranch Campground, Fayetteville, WV Hidden Hollow Campground, Bellville, OH	ohwvcogop.org
Pennsylvania	Elementary Camp (6-10) Jr. High Camp (11-14) Sr. High Camp (15-23) All camps: August 7-11, 2022 Cost: Early bird (by July 16): \$185.00; Regular: \$200.00	Camp Allegheny, Stoystown, PA	pacogop.com
South Carolina	Big Stuff (K3-K5) May 14 \$25 Short Stuff (K5-2nd grade) June 5-8 \$95 Freshman Camp (3rd-5th) June 8-11 \$95 Junior Camp (6th-8th) June 12-17 \$125 Senior Camp (9th-12th) June 24-26 \$95	State Campground Batesburg-Leesville, SC	campagapesc.org/
Tennessee	Senior Camp (15-18) June 4-9 \$100 Teen Camp (12-14) June 11-16 \$100 Preteen Camp (10-12) June 18-23 \$100 Junior Camp (8-10) June 25-30 \$100 Big Shot Camp (6-8) July 2-6 \$68	Camp Hickory Hills Convention & Retreat Center, Dickson, TN	Kim Batson camphickoryhills.org
Texas	Big Shot Camp (6-9) June 15-18 \$135 Kids Camp (10-12) June 22-25 \$135 Youth Camp (13-16) June 8-11 \$135 College & Career (17-25) July 1-3 \$110	Camp Lost Pines Campground & Retreat Center, Warda, TX	txcogop.com
Virginia	Teen Camp (13-18) July 25-28 \$160 Voyager Camp (9-12) July 25-28 \$160 Hot Shot Camp (5-8) July 25-28 \$160	Eagle Eyrie Conference Center	vacogop.org

All camp information is subject to change. Some camp information had not been finalized at the time this issue was published. Please contact your state/regional office for more information.

ADAPTING OUR DISCIPLE MAKING STRATEGIES FOR A NEW REALITY

Embracing New Strategies and Technologies



Valerie Batista is the NextGen pastor at Bridge of Hope COGOP in Greensboro, North Carolina. Bridge of Hope has a rich heritage and is a dynamic, family church for everyone. People of all ages and from all walks of life come to know Jesus in this vibrant, loving community. Valerie is married to Pastor Javier Batista, who is associate pastor at Bridge of Hope. They have one daughter whom they love dearly.

VALERIE BATISTA | GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

As we enter year three of a global pandemic and navigate everything that comes with this “new” reality in ministry and life, Jesus’ great commission to “making disciples” (Matthew 28:19, 20) remains unfulfilled.

How do we effectively obey his command, which is at the core of our mission, when all we know about “doing church” has been disrupted and nothing seems to be going back to “normal”? As a Nextgen pastor (student minister from birth to college), I know that if we lacked laborers and resources before, we are most definitely in a deficit, perhaps now more than ever! Budgets are in the red as the economic ramifications of what is going on in the world are hard to ignore or work through. Who can ignore times of low morale and the mental health state of our workers, students, and families as we face so many unusual challenges—both individually and as a community of faith?

As we take inventory of our losses and challenges, the calling of Christ compels us: “Let the little children come to me. Don’t stop them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people who are like these children” (Matthew 19:14 ICB). So how do we do ministry?

In our local church, one of the answers was and still is constant adaptability. H.G. Wells reminds us, “Adapt or perish, now as ever, is nature’s inexorable imperative.”

Early at the start of the pandemic, we understood the importance and inevitability of embracing new

strategies and technologies as a church. We understood prayerfully that we needed to pivot and adapt. We had no other option but to push where God was pushing, instead of doubling down in place and potentially missing what God wanted to teach us and do for our community.

For example, before the pandemic, our church had been streaming services for almost four years. We had the technology but not the engagement. Frankly, it wasn’t our main focus. All of that changed during the 2020 lockdown where it inevitably became an integral part of our ministry. As a pastoral team, led by our creative pastor who oversees our website, graphics, social media, and online ministry, we took a precise, ruthless inventory of what was working, and what was not.

Looking back, it was a huge challenge but instead of dwelling on that, we put our efforts into strategizing how we would adapt and seize the opportunity we felt God giving us to revamp our online ministry. We took hold of the promise that “with God’s power working in us, God can do much, much more than anything we can ask or think of” (Ephesians 3:20 ICB).

So how is your pivot game? More than once during this season, I’ve had to examine my heart and see how adaptable and teachable I am.

Up to this point, the perspective of our church online audience was that of looking “into” our services without

being active participants. It felt less personal. We decided to create a service tailored for our online viewers. We filmed segments speaking directly to them, giving them prompts and encouragement. When we returned to in-person services, we decided to treat our online audience like its own congregation/mission field indefinitely.

We added a separate, online Children's Church Ministry, which has gone through different iterations. It is now a ministry "for children, by children" led by a handful of families. They follow the same curriculum but operate separately from our in-person ministry.

As we adapted in obedience to God, we found that our perspective could truly make all the difference as we faced the unpredictability of our new reality. Jesus said that the gates of hell itself would not prevail against his church, so we asked ourselves, "Why allow inconveniences to keep us from doing ministry

As a pastoral team, led by our creative pastor who oversees our website, graphics, social media, and online ministry, we took a precise, ruthless inventory of what was working, and what was not.

differently?" As we address a lack of volunteers, we opened up only parts of our ministry until we got more help, using our online ministry to reach the people where they were.

After substantial budget cuts and a significant reduction in our volunteers, we had to become more creative and resourceful. It meant cleaning our closets to find supplies we could recycle in different ways, borrowing from each other instead of buying new materials for decorating our spaces, and repurposing old curriculum to adapt it to our present needs. Just like we had unused resources in our closets, we had people that were not yet serving that God wanted to use. I had to rely on him and think outside the box to prepare them to join me in making disciples.

Have I sometimes felt as if God stripped us to the bare bones, multiple times in the past couple of years? Yes. Have all the challenges kept us on our toes when trying to plan? Definitely. However, I have continuously found hope in the knowledge that none of this has taken God by surprise and that he has already made provision for us for what is to come and that his way is best.

By the time the 2020 lockdown in our state ended, our bank of animated lessons needed to be replenished. I

prayed and prepared to try to find a solution on my own. I look back now and wonder why I was surprised that God was already making provision for his own children and (what I sometimes forget) his work.

The provision came through an 11-year-old student who created fun, online "kids' Bible Storytimes" with her little brother. We now use their productions without any special streaming licensing. About a year in, her little brother came to me and asked how we could incorporate his favorite video game (Animal Crossing) into our online children's program. After a bit of research and sharing some resources, this family team created a universe of cartoons that is now used weekly as animation for our story times.

We now take our weekly lesson and highlight the important parts for the families that will participate in leading our ministry. These students and their families take the information I provide and create scripts, film, and edit for our Sunday segments. In the past year, these families have created over 40 segments, all while engaging with God's Word as a family and blessing other communities around our state and beyond. Praise God!

I could share many more testimonies of how embracing new strategies and technologies have challenged us. I have seen how integral these strategies and technologies have become when making disciples as Jesus commanded us to, by any means necessary, even ways outside of our comfort zones. We were stretched, but the Lord never left us alone. As you go forward, following his lead in your local church, pray with me: "Father, not our will, but your will be done." Prepare to see his provision.



A New Day Awakening: When it comes to children's ministry, parents need to be involved. They need a place to come together to talk to each other, ask questions, and get advice on how to continue growing their child's faith when their child isn't in church. So put technology to great use by creating a social media group just for parents. You can limit it to just members or include online followers too, especially if you have an online children's ministry program. It's usually easiest to create the group on Facebook, as many of your parents are on there anyway. Or, if your church is looking for a more privacy-oriented network, sites like mewe.com might be a good option.

For more practical ideas for embracing new technology and strategies, attend an A NEW DAY training intensive. Find one near you or learn how you can host a training at cogop.org/children.



Esther Moreno, founder of Child's Heart LLC, is the author of three books, with her latest release, The Progressive Children's Ministry Leader. She has dedicated her life to reaching the next generation for Christ. She has over 15 years of Children's Ministry experience across various churches and denominations. Esther leads virtual trainings for Children's Ministry departments all over the country and also hosts monthly live webinars dedicated to training and equipping Children's Ministry workers all over the world. Esther is a gifted speaker, teacher, and author. She holds a Masters of Practical Theology in Christian Education from Ashland Theological Seminary. She currently lives in Huntsville, Alabama, where she resides with her husband Guylando and their two beautiful children, Grace and Gideon.



ESTHER MORENO | HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

How did they do it? When walking up the steps of a modest church, I was admittedly concerned that their children's ministry program (or lack thereof) would dull in comparison to what my children were accustomed. Would it have the flashy lights, video game-themed waiting room, or the all-star curriculum that they'd come to expect? There was no way I was going to embarrass the couple who invited us by dragging my kids into the main sanctuary, so I cautiously bid them farewell as they walked nervously into a small classroom devoid of all color, gadgets, or even chairs. Needless to say, I was bracing my heart during service for the complaints that would surely come after.

As I rushed down the hall to rescue my poor children, I was surprised to discover that not only did they have an amazing time, but they didn't want to leave. My anxiety quickly gave way to curiosity, and I couldn't wait to discover what made this Sunday experience so special. In short, it can be summed up in one word: Connection. I am a children's ministry influencer. My own children reminded me that all the emphasis we place on creating a great experience amounts to absolutely nothing if there is no heart behind ministry. Now don't get me wrong, I'm glad that you are prepared. I'm glad your environment shows creativity. I'm glad that the ministry has sufficient workers with matching T-shirts and name badges. But when you're teaching those kids, if they don't feel the connection of your heart, then you're simply doing a production. And a production won't change lives; ministry does.

In order to connect, we must get our ministries to a place where we know who we are ministering to. So many children in our ministries are crying out for love. They are crying out for attention. They want you to see them. They want you to understand that there may be more going on with them than meets the eye. But with all the attention on the lights, camera, and action, it is all too easy to forget those matters of the heart. As a result, we miss connecting at the place where real change occurs. Real heartfelt connection speaks louder than any colorful stage. Effective children's ministries must show that they are about more than just a service, but rather the people in the service.

How often do you take the time to really connect with the kids in your ministry? Did you ask Michael how his week was and stop to look in his eyes as you wait for a response? Did you tell Jonathan how cool his shoes were, and ask where he got them from? Did you remind Susana that you know she has a birthday coming up and how amazing it is to turn seven? Did you pick up the phone to call a child that was out to let them know how much you miss them? My point is, you have to be willing to use a spectrum of engagement that is well-suited to connect with a child's heart that makes them feel included, loved, and seen. Nobody wants to feel like they are just another number. The same is true for the children in your ministry. Kids don't just want a real connection. They need it! It's authentic connection that brings forth real transformation in a child's life.

In order to connect, one must cultivate the ability to assess and identify what a particular service or

THE POWER OF CONNECTION

CONNECTING RELATIONALLY AND INTENTIONALLY WITH KIDS

environment requires. Children's ministry leaders have to develop the skill of being able to read their environments. This means recognizing the overall mood in the room, which may dictate another worship song instead of that game you had planned. In other words, you have to be able to identify what is the greatest need. What we bring as leaders is important, but it's not as important as the most critical need in the room. You must never get so caught up in the lesson that you miss the needs of your little audience. At the end of the day, strive to be committed to what you came to do while being simultaneously sensitive to what needs to be done to effectively reach the heart of every child.

Beyond this, you must also understand the needs of the families you serve. This may require you to go the extra mile and check-in periodically. Trust me, it matters. I acknowledge that this undertaking can be inconvenient, time-consuming, and laborious, but this is what real connection is all about. Knowing the needs of the families will give you insight as to how to most effectively connect with the children.

The strength of your connection can be enhanced by personal interaction. For example, make eye contact. Undivided attention is a rare commodity in these days of massive distraction. When children are talking to you, make it a practice to look them in the eye and listen intently. Even as adults, this type of whole-hearted engagement is medicine to the soul. The same is true for children. Even a few seconds of personalized affirmation has the potential to unlock a lifetime of self-worth and spiritual encouragement.

While the pandemic has wreaked havoc and disrupted the way we have historically connected, children's ministry leaders must leverage digital media and connect with children and families like never before. With church attendance continuing to decline across the United States, it is vital that those working with children develop a discipleship strategy that will allow them to reach the hearts of children and parents through digital means. Our children are members of the most technologically savvy generation. Immersed in a world where everything is digital, they see social media and streaming platforms as valid ways to build real relationships and to engage in real community. It's time that the church embrace the reality that digital

is not going away and do the homework necessary to create authentic connections online. The beauty is that in-person will never go out of style and authentic connections online can lead to authentic connections offline.

Whether online or in-person, as children's ministry leaders, our eyes should forever be on the heart of the matter. It was precisely this truth that had my own children so enamored that day. It wasn't the state-of-the-art programming, fantastic games, or digital content that won their praise, but a children's ministry leader who recognized that his connection with them was a conduit to connect them to the heart of God.



A New Day Awakening: Parents need someone to come alongside them and offer help and direction. This is where the church can serve by offering coaching. Parents want help, and they need to be equipped in the right way at the right time. The family of God can have a huge impact on the faith trajectory of kids and parents by making the connection between the church and home. Here are some ideas how:

- Consider offering classes for parents where you model how to lead a family devotion.
- Provide FREE resources for parents that make it easy for them to start faith conversations at home.
- Provide one complete family devotion per month, complete with materials and instructions.
- Send out text messages periodically to influencers with a discussion question.
- Pick a project (working in the church nursery, cleaning the church, visiting the nursing home, taking food to a homeless shelter, etc.), and do it together

For more practical ideas for relationally connecting with kids, attend an A NEW DAY training intensive. Find one near you or learn how you can host a training at [cogop.org/children](https://www.cogop.org/children).

foundations for kids

Foundations for Kids is a tool to teach children biblical, theological, and doctrinal truths that lay a solid foundation for their spiritual journey. To help our children memorize, or echo, these truths, *Foundations for Kids* is designed using a simple question and answer format.

Each set of *Foundations for Kids* cards are color-coded according to theme, helping you keep track of which set goes together. Questions are on the front of the card and the answers, along with Scripture references, are on the back. The goal is to encourage children to memorize and repeat the answers to these questions. Scriptures are available for the child to study or memorize on their own if they wish.



AVAILABLE SETS:

Understanding God

Creation

The Father

The Son

The Holy Spirit

Salvation

Discipleship

The Church

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A NEW DAY

Continued from p. 7

efforts to bring heart transformation to the children we serve must include opportunities for them to live on-mission among their family, friends, church, and communities. In this new day of ministry, we must prioritize opportunities to explore the “missional” life.

The meaning of the word *mission* is changing and developing in this postmodern culture. In the past, *mission* meant a new church plant or a ministry in another part of the world. Today the word *mission* implies practically living out God’s mission in the world today. It includes interacting with the culture around us, meeting the needs of our community and the world, and building authentic relationships that express Christ’s love. Research indicates that children with a strong sense of mission, of having something important to do, use words like “overcome,” “succeed,” and “make a difference.”

The most significant action we can take as we attempt to connect kids with Christ and with the church is to provide opportunities to live out their faith. As we teach kids how to intercede for lost people in their families and serve their communities, homes, and the world, we are helping them grow as disciples. As kids live missionally—learning to recognize a need and respond—they will bring glory to God.

EMBRACING NEW STRATEGIES AND TECHNOLOGIES

Without a doubt, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted all of our ministries. The way we gather, worship, plan, and interact has been impacted. The temptation would be to attempt to return to the old way of doing things, familiar rhythms, and/or preferences. However, a healthier approach to this new day of ministry is to determine those things of value that we need to maintain moving forward, uncover new strategies for integration into our ministries, and lay aside anything that is unnecessary to our mission or doesn’t meet the needs of our families.

Kids need relationships. It’s what connects us and nurtures us as part of God’s family. A big part of kids’ ministry is building those relationships with God and with others. Periods of quarantine or isolation may put a damper on this, but we can embrace technologies in communication and social networking to continue to minister to the heart of each child in your children’s ministry and stay connected with them.

CONNECTING RELATIONALLY AND INTENTIONALLY WITH KIDS, FAMILIES, AND YOUR TEAM

In this new day of children’s ministry, we must have a vision and strategy to reach beyond the boundaries of our church building. After all, throughout our recent (or current) season of isolation and quarantine, we’ve learned that to survive and fulfill our mandate, we can no longer depend fully on models that center around the church building.

While services, programs, and events are helpful, our families are looking for meaningful relationships. They need us to support them, almost as surrogate parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins in the family of God. They need our connections beyond just Sunday morning and Wednesday night. They need us in ways beyond just teaching or preaching. The connection of a spiritual family is important to building foundations of faith in the homes of our kids.

The biblical pattern of discipleship and promises found in Deuteronomy 6 were not just given to biological families, but to all of the people of God. Yes, parents are primarily responsible to influence the faith of their children. However, Deuteronomy 6 was actually spoken to a nation chosen to represent God, in community, as a light to the nations. Israel had a responsibility to one another; it was never intended to be just for the parents. An example can be found in the passage of Mary and Joseph losing Jesus on their way to the Passover. Often this is looked on as bad parenting, but this is inaccurate. Mary and Joseph lived in community, where the expectation was that somebody had Jesus, so there was no need to be concerned.

To successfully grow fully devoted followers of Christ, our families need communities that show care, will coach them, and even challenge them. In this new day, we will embrace the many opportunities to not only connect and spiritually form children, but also their parents. While there are no quick fixes to the problems, brokenness, and losses our families are facing in this day, we must intentionally seek to become a community that radically exemplifies “love for one another.”

It is a NEW DAY! How will your local church and children’s ministry awaken to the realities of it? It is my prayer that you will not seek to simply return to the preferences and patterns of the past. May you seek God’s direction to embrace his heart, his vision, and his will for you.



BISHOP GABRIEL VIDAL, DMin | SOUTH AMERICA GENERAL PRESBYTER

During March, a conference was held in Madrid, Spain, called "A Time of Decision." In attendance as special guests were Bishop Sam Clements and his wife Linda. Pastors, leaders, and members of the Church of God of Prophecy in Spain and Portugal met together for a wonderful time in the presence of the Lord. The objective of the meetings was to create a time of fellowship in a worship service uniting the COGOP of Spain and Portugal. National Bishop Edgar Rossini Ortiz Salguero's expressed mission was that each leader receive ministry and encouragement to more joyfully serve God, move forward to establish disciples of Christ, develop leaders, as well as reach the people of Spain and Portugal with the message of salvation. In this time and space, attendees were invited to expose their hearts and lives to the powerful message of God's Word and intercede for Spain and Portugal. Space was given for a special prayer time for Ukraine, also.

They gathered in the city of Leganés, Madrid. Attendance for the two days was 375 persons. Bishop Sam Clements was used by God to speak to the Church about its focus on the future, remembering these are the end times and that God has reserved the best of his power for now. Bishop Clements said, "God has called us to move forward with faith, love, and the supernatural

power of the Holy Spirit." He charged those listening to wake up and rise up in the name of Jesus. Bishop Clements was accompanied by Bishop Gabriel E. Vidal as translator and also by Sister Hanny Vidal. Europe, CIS, and Middle East General Presbyter Clayton Endecott was present, also, and shared a time of preaching. He spoke about the Pentecostal message and that calling is an important aspect of that message: "God saves, sanctifies, fills with the Spirit, gives gifts to the church in order to call men and women to go to the harvest fields and reap the fruits that Christ has scattered through the seed of the gospel that germinates in the hearts."

The Church in Spain and Portugal is very grateful for their leaders and have a message for them: "We love you." Please enjoy a few pictures captured during the event. Bishop Rossini remarked, "The most beautiful pictures remain in our hearts and mark us as servants of God in this new challenge we have in Spain and Portugal. We left knowing we were filled with divine purpose and the Holy Spirit. Everyone returned to their places of ministry ready to go to the harvest fields. Pray for Spain and Portugal."

Information provided by Bishop Edgar Rossini Ortiz Salguero—Spain and Portugal National Bishop

INTRODUCING

ALIGNING THE LOCAL CHURCH with the VISION, MISSION, and VALUES of the INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY



Leadership Development and Discipleship ministries has uploaded a new online course that will do the following:

- Clarify the vision, mission, and core values of the Church of God of Prophecy
- Guide you in developing the vision, mission, and core values of your local church or ministry
- Enable you to develop practical initiatives that align the vision, mission, and values of the local church with those of the international Church of God of Prophecy

Contributed by Bishop Nonito Que,
Overseer of Samoan Islands

Go to www.cblcogop.org to enroll.



MISSION



VISION



CORE VALUES



COMING NOVEMBER 2023

Throughout Scripture, we find the word “chosen” used to denote one who is examined, preferred by others, and selected by God. Throughout the Bible, we read of individuals who were chosen by God, often to do something challenging or seemingly impossible:

- Joseph was chosen to endure betrayal and prison to eventually rise to prominence and power, enabling him to not only save his family but an entire nation during a season of famine.
- Elijah was chosen to demonstrate confident faith in God, standing up to the evil King Ahab and wicked Queen Jezebel, leading to an ultimate victory against the followers of Baal.
- Queen Esther was divinely chosen to boldly speak to the king, reveal the wicked schemes of Haman, and save her people from total annihilation.
- Mary was chosen by God, favored to be the virgin mother and carry the hope and salvation of all mankind in her young womb.

As we consider the world surrounding our children as they grow up, we realize the season in which we serve is not without challenge. Unlike any other time, the church is contending with a rising hostility toward the Gospel, the spread of secular culture, the influence of the media on society, the busyness and distraction of parents, and the collapse of the family, among many other challenges. The children of our families and churches are spending their formative years in peculiar, hard times that cause even the most committed of us to wonder, “Am I up for this challenge?”

Make no mistake: YOU WERE CHOSEN. 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV) reminds us, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

You have been chosen by God to serve him during this time for his kingdom purposes. He placed you in your family, church, ministry, and community to wage war on the schemes of the enemy and engage in the conflict for the hearts and minds of a generation.

At Chosen, the 2023 Institute of Children’s Ministry, we will

- seek God for personal renewal and refreshing,
- renew our commitment to echo God’s love for this generation of children,
- learn strategies, techniques, and tools for declaring his truth in relevant ways to kids,
- discover how to battle the schemes of the enemy to distract and confuse our children,
- return home to partner with God to see his purposes fulfilled for this generation.

2023 FEATURED PRESENTER
JIM WIDEMAN
 Author and Speaker
 Executive Operations Pastor
 The Belonging, Nashville, TN



“ICM was the most amazing experience I have ever had! My husband and I talked most of the way back home about our different breakout sessions and ideas we have. It was life changing for us! I loved the energy and excitement throughout the entire conference. The Holy Spirit was definitely moving!” - Mary, ICM '21 Participant

CONNECT WITH INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES!



DR. SHAUN MCKINLEY
International Director
smckinley@cogop.org



LESLIE GREEN
Project Coordinator
lgreen@cogop.org



JOY HENSLEY
Training Specialist (English)
jhensley@cogop.org



MICHELLE BROOKS-YOUNG
KidServe Coordinator
kidserve@cogop.org



ABIGAHIL AVILA
Training Specialist (Spanish)
aavila@cogop.org



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JOIN US FOR THE 2022 ASSEMBLY FOR KIDS JULY 21-23, 2022

Ahoy, maties! Welcome to Mystery Island where children, ages 4—12, will have the opportunity to explore an intriguing and mysterious tropical paradise while tracking down the one true God.

Morning ministry includes age-appropriate learning and worship experiences for younger children (ages 4—5) and older children (ages 6—12).

Evening ministry will be a time of worship for older children (ages 6—12).



Preschool Morning Ministry, Ages 4—5
Thursday through Saturday
9:30 a.m. through 12 noon

Preschoolers at Mystery Island will come eager and excited to track down the one true God! Join us as we learn, grow, and explore the wonders of the Bible together.

School Age Morning Ministry, Ages 6—12
Thursday through Saturday
9:30 a.m. through 12 noon

God is the greatest mystery that we can discover. Each morning at Mystery Island, we will dig deep to uncover who God is through active and hands-on ministry.

Evening Worship Ministry, Ages 6—12
Thursday through Saturday
7:00 p.m. through 9:30 p.m.

In the evenings, kids will be encouraged to live out a life surrendered fully to the one true God. Come ready to experience creative ministry, engaging worship, and interactive preaching of God's Word.



THE ASSEMBLY FOR KIDS WILL BE HELD IN
CONJUNCTION WITH THE 101ST INTERNATIONAL
ASSEMBLY FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY.
REGISTER AT WWW.COGOP.ORG/CHILDREN.



**JOIN OUR CREW AS
WE SEEK TO FIND
THE GREATEST
TREASURE EVER!**

**ASSEMBLY FOR KIDS
JULY 21-23, 2022**

CM RESOURCE AREA

Wednesday, July 20—Saturday, July 23
9:00 a.m.—6:30 p.m.
(Choose a time slot that works best for you.)

Assistants are needed in the Children's Ministry resource area. Volunteers will connect with pastors, children's pastors, and others who serve children. They will share information about International Children's Ministries and the resources we have available.

MORNING MINISTRY

Thursday, July 21—Saturday, July 23

Each morning, children's ministers are needed to be with the children, ages 4—12, as they worship together and travel through classroom rotations.

TEENS IN MINISTRY

Thursday, July 21—Saturday, July 23

"Teens in Ministry" is an opportunity for youth, ages 13—18, to minister to children during the "Assembly for Kids." Teens selected to serve in this ministry will participate in daily times of intercession for the children, children's ministry training, and be directly involved in ministry to children.

EVENING WORSHIP

Thursday, July 21—Saturday, July 23

Each morning, children's ministers are needed to be with the children as they worship together and travel through classroom rotations.

**VOLUNTEER TODAY OR LEARN MORE
AT COGOP.ORG/CHILDREN.**



TEACHING KIDS ABOUT STEWARDSHIP: **ALL MY STUFF** BELONGS TO GOD

“Mine!” two-year-old Jessica shouts as she snatches the stuffed bear from another child’s hand. At age two, Jessica thinks everything she sees and wants is hers. This is normal age-appropriate thinking and behavior for a two-year-old, but if encouraged and indulged, Jessica will probably grow up to be a selfish, self-centered adult.

First Corinthians 13:11 NLT says, “When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.” One of the “things” includes a selfish attitude. As we grow and mature, we realize that everything is not ours. As a matter of fact, it is all God’s! According to Psalm 24:1, God owns everything. All the land, all the water, all the buildings, all the cars, all the houses, all the “everything” belongs to God. And he wants us to take care of it all.

Stewardship is taking care of something one does not own. From teaching toddlers to pick up toys to involving preteens in mission projects, we train our children that it’s all God’s and he has given us the privilege to take care of it for him. Teaching and training children to be responsible stewards begins in the nursery and continues throughout our lives.

How can I help children become good stewards?

1. Encourage a sharing attitude by providing practical opportunities for children to share.

Snack time. Give half of the children a snack that can be easily divided into two portions.

Ask the children with snacks what they can do to make sure that everyone has a snack.

Activity time. Have children work in groups and share supplies rather than working individually.

Sharing projects. Give children opportunities to share their gently used clothing, toys, and books with needy children in the community.

2. Involve children in decision making regarding giving projects.

Share a specific need with the children, and let them brainstorm ways that they could help meet that need. Then, as a group, choose the best way to begin working together to meet the need.

If the entire congregation is involved in a giving project, let the children determine how they will raise funds or what specific aspect of the project they will contribute to.

3. Share Bible truths related to stewardship. Use Bible stories to illustrate these truths. For example:

Bible truth: When I give generously, I work with God to accomplish his plans.

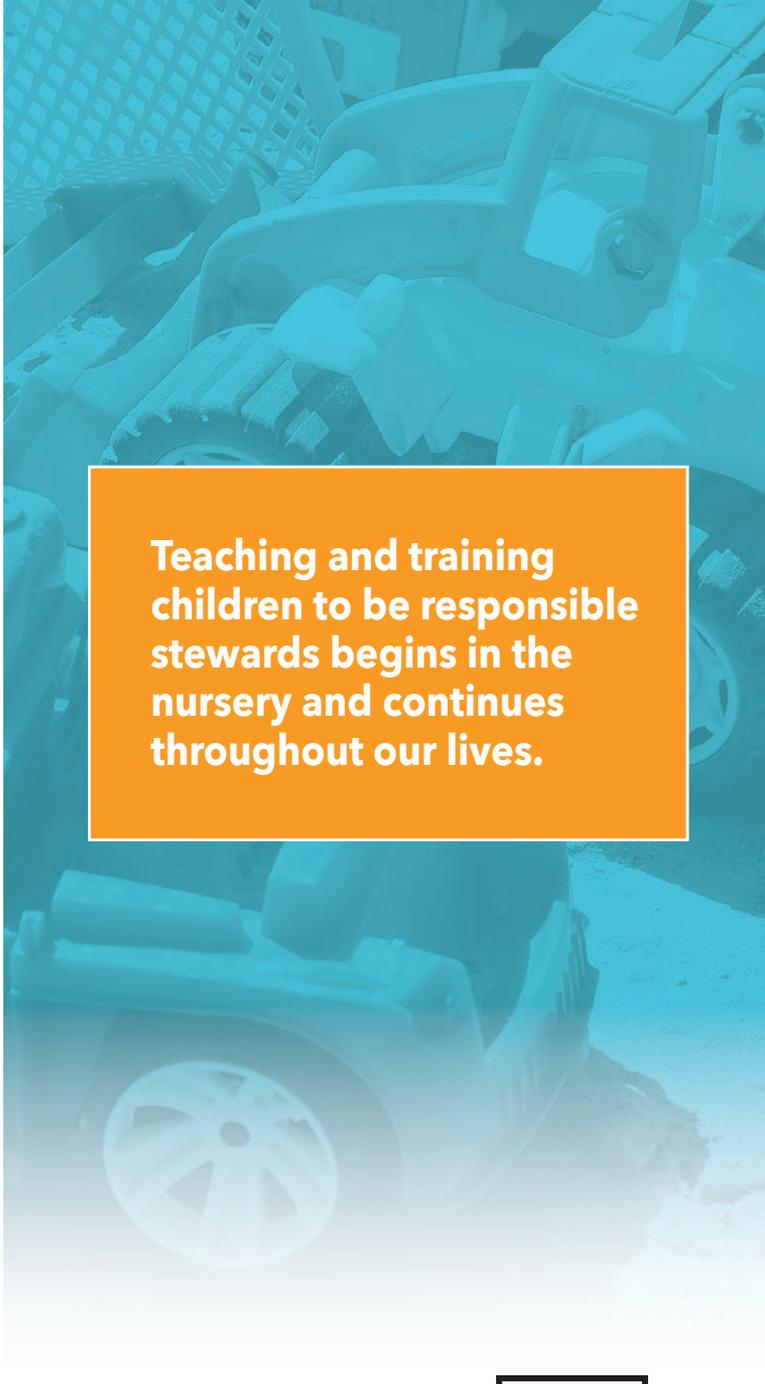
Bible story: “The Israelites Give of Their Possessions and Abilities to Build the Tabernacle” (Exodus 35)

4. Emphasize the importance of giving to the local church. Many times, we allow children to focus on specific giving and sharing projects but do not encourage them to give to the local church. But it is also important that our children learn that their offerings are needed within the local church so that the church can continue providing ministry to them and to others.

Weekly offerings. Consistently give children an opportunity to give weekly. Each week, share one of the ways their offerings are being used—building maintenance, supplies and equipment, provision for specific ministries, etc.

Prayer time for the local church. Let the children work with you to make a list of all the great activities they have experienced in the local church (i.e., fellowship dinners, musicals or plays, festivals, campouts, Bible school, etc.) Then talk about the ways the local church has changed the lives of people in the congregation, community, and around the world. Add these to your list. Remind the children that, as they give and serve in the local church, they are helping these things come about. Pray together for the local church’s ministry and mission.

Stewardship means demonstrating that everything one is, one has, and one receives belongs to God! Christian stewardship is using everything as God wants the believer to use it. Children need to understand and be given opportunities to practice biblical stewardship.



Teaching and training children to be responsible stewards begins in the nursery and continues throughout our lives.

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Children's Ministry Certification is a self-paced, online or correspondence, certificate program for children's ministers.

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Students completing all Level I certification courses may be awarded three-credit hours with Spirit and Life Seminary (SLS) toward the Seminary's course Essentials of Children's Ministry (CM 200). CM 200 is part of the Certificate in Ministry and Theological Studies program at SLS.

Students completing all Level II certification courses may be awarded three elective credit-hours with SLS.

Eligibility for credit is dependent upon application to and acceptance by SLS. For more information, email info@slsem.org or visit spiritandlifeseminary.org.





Introducing...

A NEW DAY

STRATEGIES FOR MOVING CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES FORWARD IN THE NEW NORMAL

A NEW DAY HAS COME

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all of our ministries to children. The way we teach kids, serve families, and connect with volunteers has changed and left many of us wondering how to confidently move forward in our ministries. While the "new normal" of our day has its unique challenges, it also positions us to reevaluate our ministries and adjust them for greater influence.

International Children's Ministries presents an all-new one-day training experience for local churches, districts, states, and regions!

RESERVE YOUR TRAINING DATE TODAY!

A limited number of one-day training opportunities are available. Schedule yours TODAY!

Contact International Children's Ministries at cgpkids@cogop.org or visit cogop.org/children for more information on A NEW DAY or other one-day training intensives.

ONE-DAY INTENSIVES...

- Sharpen skills, clarify direction, strengthen commitment, and build a sense of team.
- Offer relevant, practical, and interactive ministry and leadership training—training your team will enjoy and apply.
- Are concise with training sessions of no more than six hours, including lunch.
- Are targeted with each training intensive focusing on a particular aspect of children's ministry and each session of the intensive expanding understanding and skill.

FOR GOD HAS NOT GIVEN US A SPIRIT OF FEARFULNESS, BUT ONE OF POWER, LOVE, AND SOUND JUDGMENT.

2 Timothy 1:7 HCSB

Children's Ministries
developing leaders, impacting kids

Save the Date

2022 CM LIVE! WEBINARS

CHILD DISCIPLESHIP

MAY 17, 2022 // 7:00 PM ET



JANA MAGRUDER

LIFEWAY KIDS
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES DIRECTOR
AUTHOR OF "NOTHING LESS: ENGAGING
KIDS IN A LIFETIME OF FAITH"



MATT MARKINS

AWANA, PRESIDENT/COO
COAUTHOR OF "RESILIENT: CHILD
DISCIPLESHIP AND THE FEARLESS
FUTURE OF THE CHURCH"

KIDS & CULTURE

AUGUST 16, 2022 // 7:00 PM ET



DR. SHELLY MELIA

DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF
CHILDREN MINISTRY AND FAMILY
MINISTRY DEGREE PROGRAMS



GUYLANDO AND ESTHER MORENO

KIDMIN LEADERS, INFLUENCERS, SPEAKERS,
AND AUTHOR OF "THE PROGRESSIVE
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADER"



ARLENE PELLICANE

JOURNALIST, SPEAKER,
AND AUTHOR OF BEST-SELLING BOOKS
"SCREEN KIDS," "RISING PARENTS," AND
"GROWING UP SOCIAL"

BIBLICAL LITERACY

OCTOBER 18, 2022 // 7:00 PM ET



TINA HOUSER

TRAINER AND AUTHOR OF
"HIDING GOD'S WORD IN MY HEART"



JULIA BALL

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES DIRECTOR FOR
THE PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

CM LIVE! WEBINARS

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