



GUIDELINES
for Leading Your Congregation

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

*Ministries that help children grow
in faith*

*Written by Mary Alice Gran,
General Board of Discipleship*

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

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Our Identity, Call, and Mission

About now a small voice in the back of your mind may be whispering, “What am I doing here? To what have I said yes? What is my role?” At the same time you may be aware that your congregation has extended to you a *call—a call to serve*. And you have said *yes—yes to leading in a vital mission*.

The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. You have agreed to serve as a leader bringing your unique passions, gifts, and abilities to the church. When the leaders focus on the church’s purpose—*its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ*—and link that purpose to the passions of the people, amazing things can happen.

The fundamental way we fulfill our mission is to reach out to people in the name of Jesus Christ, to relate people to God, to nurture and strengthen them in their journey of discipleship, and to send them into the world to be the church—inviting and receiving others in the name of Jesus Christ. We call this the primary task of The United Methodist Church. Effective leaders keep the whole of the primary task in their sight, working to keep all of its aspects in concert.

Leaders in the church must be first, and foremost, spiritual leaders who model and embrace Christian discipline and teaching. *By practicing the means of grace—prayer, fasting, studying Scripture, corporate worship, celebration of the Lord’s Supper, Christian conversation, and acts of mercy—church leaders stay tuned to the mission of the church and live out the primary task.* Members and would-be members should be able to look to a congregation’s leaders for spiritual example and direction, because true leaders are known by their fruits. People’s lives are changed through their influence.

Leaders use their gifts and talents to enable others to use their gifts and talents to the fullest potential. The flow of information, inspiration, guidance, and vision from leaders is an encouragement to others on their spiritual journey. Leaders help others to see new possibilities. When leaders are focused on the mission of the church, community is built and ministry occurs. The church focused on God is alive with creative energy aimed at transformation.

Four Essential Leadership Functions

Church leaders support and strengthen the church when they pay attention to these leadership functions: (1) help people discover the current

reality in which they live; (2) bring together the congregation's understandings of current reality and desired reality into a shared vision; (3) develop the plans to help the community move from current reality toward the reality of its shared vision; and finally, (4) monitor the whole work of the church as the congregation moves with God's guidance toward its vision.

1. Discovering Current Reality

Accurately describing current reality—the way things are—may be the most important function of leadership. The booklets in this Guideline series offer suggestions for leaders to pay attention to the various committees of the church's ministry. In addition, it is critical for church leaders—lay and clergy—to spend time together discussing the ministry of the whole congregation. The conversation needs to include attentiveness to God's guidance and everything that describes a congregation's "what we are, here and now." Because God is always doing a new thing, this job is continuous. When we pay attention to change, we provide a base of integrity and strength from which to move into the future. Faith in Jesus Christ and a spiritual centering in God offers the strongest foundation to move people fearlessly through the massive changes of the twenty-first century.

2. Naming Shared Vision

Ask the question, "What do you want more than anything else in the world?" and most persons will give a response that indicates that they want to live in a world filled with love, faith, security, and meaning. Because persons desire a positive future, they are willing to invest themselves in organizations that are committed to it. By its very nature, the church is devoted to the creation of a better future. When the church promises to move people personally and corporately toward their desired reality, people will invest time, energy, and resources into the church. As people see their own desires linked to the congregational vision and deeper understanding of God's future, they deepen their commitment and involvement. Building this link is a vital role of leadership.

Naming a shared vision is accomplished by asking people about their lives and their faith, and listening very carefully. By listening, we mean deep listening—the kind that requires setting aside our own agendas and entering into the worldviews of others, and listening for God through the conversation. It is a significant shift in our understanding of leadership in the church to move from telling people what we think they need to know to listening to people in order to find out who they are and what their desired realities are. Effective spiritual leaders listen to the hearts of people and begin to articulate a shared vision.

3. Developing Bridges

To span the gulf between our current reality and the hope expressed in the shared vision, leaders must build a bridge. The third critical function of leadership is to plan actions and develop systems that create the bridge across this gulf. Leaders who are elected to administrative and program committees are responsible for the ongoing work of the church and must pay attention to the present. At the same time, leaders *must* be focused on the future—keeping today and tomorrow in tension—ensuring that the church doesn't get stuck in the past, present, or future.

Church leaders who are attentive to God's leading and who can hold the tension between today and tomorrow are *visionary leaders*. Visionary leaders see it all—current reality, desired reality, and the bridges to get from one to the other.

4. Monitoring the Journey

Perhaps the most critical task for leaders is keeping an eye on the whole of the faith journey of the congregation. When leaders are constantly caught up in “doing” the administrative and program work of the church, there is not any time left for “being” with God in prayer to discern the leading of the Spirit for the congregation. Leaders must step back from “doing” constant activities in order to pay attention to the total direction of the church's mission and ministry. All elected and appointed leaders must spend time together listening to God in prayer, Bible study, conversation, and other means of grace in order to lead the entire community in the work of Christ. Anything less is not Christian spiritual leadership.

Welcome to Ministry with Children

Welcome to the world of ministry for/with/by children.

The smiles of children making new discoveries,
the energy of children in a group setting,
the sounds of children in song and in learning, and
the insights of children as God is present in their lives,
all make for a fascinating ministry.

Remember your own childhood? Think of your first memories of the church. Was it a friendly place? Were you loved? Can you recall special persons or times at church? Where did you learn the stories of God and Jesus? If you didn't attend church as a child, what memories do you want to provide for children?

Now think of your church today. Do children find it a friendly place? Do those persons who teach children have special qualities of loving and caring? Are there opportunities for families to share in ministry and grow in faith? Are there experiences for children to share in the total life and worship of the congregation? Is there quality care for infants and toddlers? Are there a variety of experiences available for young children and opportunities for growth and service for elementary-age children during the week as well as on Sunday? Is there intentional outreach to children in the surrounding community? Are new children integrated into the life of the church in consistent, caring ways?

Children's Ministries was prepared to enable you as a leader of children's ministries in your congregation. Regardless of your church's size or structure, this booklet is designed to help you focus on The United Methodist Church's commitment to ministry for/with/by children.

This booklet contains ideas and suggestions to help you create a church where children experience God's love, feel included in the life of the congregation, and have opportunities to grow in their faith. Children's ministry is like a kaleidoscope. You can create fascinating and endless patterns of ministry for/with/by children. Each child, each teacher, each classroom, offers a combination of endless possibilities for your particular church setting.

You are invited to discover the best design, the most caring persons, the best resources and materials, the most fruitful programming for children's ministry, so that children will flourish and grow in the light of God's love within the environment of your congregation. You are invited to assure that your congregation particularly includes children in a holistic ministry aimed toward making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Ministry for/with/by children is an opportunity to work and grow in a variety of arenas. You are not expected to attempt this task alone. You are part of a team with

- parents, grandparents, caregivers;
- the pastor and church staff;
- persons in your congregation who are concerned for children;
- persons within the connectional United Methodist Church;
- persons in the community who care about children.

You are blessed with the most important resources for this ministry—your love for children and your commitment to care for children. Love is one of the most important pieces of the pattern; it is constant, even though the pattern changes. Pick up your kaleidoscope now and discover new and exciting patterns of children's ministry for your congregation.

Getting Started

What's My Job?

You are a key person in the children's ministry of your congregation. Your job, as the coordinator of children's ministries in your congregation, assures that children's faith is taken seriously in the life of your church. **Your primary task** (like that of the whole church) **is to help children on their journey as disciples of Jesus Christ.** Given that, what are the relationships and responsibilities for which you are accountable?

Children, and those persons who teach and care for them, are your primary responsibility. Model the love and care that Jesus manifested in his life in order to help children understand their role as disciples. Children are special persons of dignity and worth. Listen to their stories. Know them and call them by name. Keep them safe. Be an advocate for them. They are a valuable part of the congregation, with gifts and blessings to share. In all your actions and reactions, model God's unconditional love for children.

Develop positive relationships with the children and their teachers and with other persons in the congregation. Your role as an advocate for the children will require you to have good working relationships with other congregational leaders and with a variety of other groups. Additionally, having a good relationship with parents and knowing the environment or situation in which the children live will add a valuable dimension to your ministry.

Interpreting and planning for the spiritual, mental, physical, emotional, social, and moral growth of children are important. These guidelines will help you respond to children's needs as you plan for activities and programs.

What Are My Basic Responsibilities?

The responsibilities of your position as coordinator of children's ministries will vary depending on the size of your church. *If you are in a church with few children,* you are the primary person responsible for seeing that the needs of children are met, as well as the needs of other age levels. *If you are in a church with many children and youth,* you may be one of several age-level coordinators. If there is a paid staff person responsible for children's ministry, your job may be modified in relation to the staff persons duties.

Whatever the staffing or size of your church, you are responsible for meeting with the church council (council on ministries or administrative council) representing and advocating for children across the entire spectrum of your church. You have the responsibility of influencing policy and program decisions with the needs of the children in mind, keeping council members

informed about the needs of children and the part they play in the life of the church. (There may also be other groups in your congregation's organizational system with whom you will meet, for example, education work area or nurture committee.) Whatever the organizational structure of your particular congregation, it is your responsibility to:

- Study the needs of children.
- Stay in touch with others who care about children. They will help you design and implement programs, initiate ministries, and plan a calendar to best meet the needs of the children and the total church.
- Keep in close communication with the children, their parents, and their teachers. This will help you understand the needs, wants, gifts, and graces of the children in your church. Share this information with the church council and the children's council as well as with the total congregation.
- Intentionally pray for the children and their families.
- Suggest things that may be new or innovative. You are a voice and an advocate for the children. Be strong in your intent that children become a visible and viable part of the church family.
- Be realistic in your requests. Being innovative means seeing what the possibilities are and being aware of and in tune with realistic expectations and abilities.
- Speak up for quality leadership. Work with the persons who invite teachers and children's workers to find the best persons for the job.
- Speak up for adequate funding. Make sure your financial planners are aware of the needs of your church school. Safe, clean rooms and equipment are expected. Materials to run a program are as necessary as hymnals and bulletins. Assure training opportunities for teachers and leaders.
- Do everything possible to assure your church is a safe place for children and for the adults who work with them. *Safe Sanctuaries* (see Resources) will help you in this task.
- Know about the curriculum materials and other resources that are available. Discover who the resource persons are in your district or conference and do not hesitate to ask for their assistance. Call Curric-U-Phone (1-800-251-8591) for curriculum-related questions.
- Be acquainted with the resource materials available from The United Methodist Church. Magazines such as *Leader in the Church School Today*, *Children's Teacher* and *Forecast* (curriculum catalog) are valuable tools to aid in your planning. (All are available at Cokesbury. See Resources.)
- Keep in touch with other leaders in the congregation who work with youth, adults, and families. You can accomplish more as a team than alone.

What Does the Coordinator of Children's Ministries Do?

Your job will be rewarding if you know what you are to do. Look over the following sample job description. With other responsible persons (for exam-

ple, pastor, chair of education), personalize and date your job description based on your congregation, the setting, and your special gifts. A written job description is helpful whether you are a volunteer or a paid staff person.

Sample Job Description: Coordinator of Children's Ministries

Date Prepared:

General Responsibilities:

- to represent and advocate for a ministry by/for/with children in all aspects of congregational life.
- to be well-acquainted with the age-level characteristics and needs of children in general and specifically in our neighborhood.
- to coordinate the ministry with children for our congregation.

Specific Responsibilities:

- to guide the work of the Children's Council (if such a council exists).
- to evaluate/assess the present children's ministry program.
- to suggest and implement new possibilities for including children in ministry.
- to work with others, such as the pastor and trustees, to assure our church is a safe place for children and the adults who work with and care for them.
- to serve as a member of the church council, charge/church conference and other appropriate groups as an advocate for children.
- to set goals, evaluate, and report progress of the children's ministry to appropriate boards, and groups.
- to gather information about and recruit persons willing and gifted in the area of children's ministry.
- to invite teachers and leaders to participate in children's ministry.
- to know available resources for children and for leaders/teachers who care for children.

Characteristics and Abilities Needed:

- love, care, and respect for children;
- a faith in God to share and the ability to share it;
- an insight/understanding of how children learn and grow;
- a willingness to work with others in ministry;
- a willingness to give of oneself and one's time;
- an open mind and a willingness to risk and learn!

Training Opportunities:

- reading periodicals, such as *Leaders in the Church School Today*, *Children's Teacher*, *Forecast*, *Interpreter*;
- reading new materials in the field of children's ministry;
- contacting appropriate annual conference staff to introduce myself as coordinator of children's ministries and communicate our congregation's needs for training;
- requesting new videos, books, and other resources from the conference center;

- participating in continuing education in lab schools and workshops in district, conference or ecumenical settings;
- attending FOCUS '01 or '05, a national United Methodist Conference for workers with children;
- networking with other area Christian educators and advocates of children;
- finding or starting a support group of children's coordinators in the area.

Accountability:

- to pastor or church staff related to children's ministry;
- to council on ministries or administrative council;
- to work area on education/nurture committee.

Term of Position:

- one year: may be renewed or renegotiated.

Time Requirements:

- Sunday mornings and/or weekday programming times;
- time for communicating on a regular basis with administrative groups;
- time for communicating with teachers and parents on a regular basis;
- planning and study time.

Quick-Start Tips

1. Make an appointment with your pastor and/or director of christian education and/or staff person responsible for ministry with children. Keep in close communication with them throughout your tenure.
2. Study the ministry or mission statement of your congregation. Use this as your guideline for evaluating current programs and developing new programs in children's ministry.
3. Gather other persons who also care about children (this may be an existing Children's Council).
4. Chair and guide the work of the Council on Children's Ministries.
5. Formulate your ideas into a yearly plan for ministry with children.
6. Report on the concerns of children and the plans for ministry to, with, for, and by children to the church council (or its counterpart).

Additional Hints (for the sake of your health and sanity):

1. *You are only one person, so do not take on more responsibilities than you can handle.* You may want a specific program so strongly that you agree to organize, lead, clean-up, and report back to the church. However, if you do it all yourself, (a) others are not given the opportunity to be in ministry with children; and (b) you will eventually suffer from burnout.
2. *Know what your pastor, other staff, and church leaders expect of you.* If what they expect and what you expect are two different things, talk now! If the job is not defined, then there is no way you can do it. Define the job before you begin; adjust it as you identify new opportunities.
3. *Celebrate each project as it is completed.* Having a list of "to dos" for

the year and marking them off as they are completed will give you a sense of a job well done.

4. *Document and evaluate your activities*—both successes and near-successes.

What is The United Methodist Church's Commitment to Children's Ministry?

For a second quadrennium (2001–2004), the Council of Bishops has made children a priority in their own ministries through the **Bishops' Initiative: Children and Poverty**. Bishops lead their annual conferences in considering children and the poor (which includes just less than half of the children in the United States) with Bible studies, special initiatives for congregations, accountability at charge conferences, and a variety of programs such as “A Church for All God's Children.”

The primary task of the church is to *make faithful disciples of Jesus Christ*. You, too, are the church. Your primary task as coordinator of children's ministries is to help the children in your congregation and community to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. That should be the foundation on which everything you do is built.

Paragraph 255 of the *Discipline* states that in each local church there shall be a church school for the purpose of accomplishing the church's educational ministry. *It is not an option*. There is a continuing need to educate children. You were elected to serve as the leader in children's ministry for your congregation for a term of one year. You are called upon to fulfill the task set out in the *Discipline*. Keep in mind both what is said specifically about the coordinator and also what is included about Christian education, since both help to formulate comprehensive ministries with children.

In addition to *The Book of Discipline*, *The Book of Resolutions* is an official document of The United Methodist Church. Three resolutions are specifically of benefit to persons active in children's ministries: “Putting Children and Families First,” “Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church,” and “Child Care and the United Methodist Church.” You may want to borrow a copy of *The Book of Resolutions* from your pastor or district superintendent and become familiar with these resolutions.

The general boards and agencies of The United Methodist Church take seriously the role of children in the congregation. The General Board of

Discipleship, through the Office of Children's Ministries, provides resources for you and others working with children in local congregations. This includes national training events like FOCUS (conference for workers with children planned for 2001 and 2005). This board also carries the responsibility through the Curriculum Resource Committee, working with The United Methodist Publishing House, for developing the curriculum component for children. The General Board of Global Ministries advocates for children worldwide and supports United Methodist Women in their "Campaign for Children." The General Board of Church and Society advocates for children in legislative issues. The Commission on United Methodist Men supports the office of Civic Youth Agencies/Scouting. Each of these boards employs staff persons whose major concerns are for children. General Commission on Finance and Administration provides support for congregations in matters of risk and in keeping children safe. Addresses and Web sites are available in Resources or by contacting your pastor.

Your annual conference has persons concerned with children's ministries as well. Generally, conferences have a Children's Council, a coordinator of children's ministries, and/or a conference staff person responsible for children's ministries. Districts also may have persons in complementary positions. These persons can help you know about district and conference programs and support for those who work with children. Additionally, most conferences have a Christian Educators Fellowship, whose members will share their knowledge and skills in ministry with children. You may wish to consider joining CEF. Contact your Conference Center for information. Check with your church office or your pastor for the address and telephone number.

What is Your Personal Commitment to Ministry with Children?

As a young newlywed having recently moved to a new community, I visited the local United Methodist Church. Within a few Sundays, I was invited to join the choir and later to help for one Sunday in the third- and fourth-grade Sunday school class. It wasn't long before I was teaching in vacation Bible school and Sunday school. I fell in love with helping children learn about God's love. That was more than thirty years ago, and I still have that same sensation of pure pleasure when working with children. Now, in addition, I find great joy in working with adults who work with children, especially when I see "light bulbs" of excitement as adults grasp a new idea or become motivated to be in ministry with our chil-

dren in the church. God draws me continually to new places, always with children as the focus. The blessings are many! Have pencil and paper handy and respond to the following.

What is your story? What circumstances brought you into children's ministry? Whom did God place in your life to encourage you? What event was the catalyst? Write your own story of how you came to this place of leadership in children's ministry. Tell why!

God gives us special abilities and gifts. Some are teachers. Some are motivators. Some have gifts of planning or recruiting or visioning or creative problem solving or making terrific bulletin boards or instilling trust, or What gifts has God given to you? List here the gifts you bring. After you have made your list, you may want to ask others what gifts they recognize in you that you may not have yet identified.

At different times in our lives, God speaks to us and leads us in new directions. At this time in your life, God has led you to be a blessing to children, to provide a foundation for their faith development, to make the church a caring place to grow in God's love. **What is God saying to you now? What is your role to be at this time and in this place?**

Prayer for you: (Hint: This prayer may be used with the children's council by substituting plural pronouns for the singular.)

Almighty God, be with me. I come with a willing heart and many gifts to provide a safe and caring place in the church, so that all children will grow in knowledge of God, commitment to Jesus Christ, and love for their neighbor. I ask that you grant the wisdom and vision necessary for the foundation of faith to undergird the children of this congregation. You sent Christ as the example of unconditional love. You sent the Holy Spirit to sustain us in times of difficulty and joy. Send me now to be a strong voice for children. Be with me, so that the children of this congregation and community will know your kingdom. In Christ's name, I pray. Amen.

Write your own prayer.

What is Your Congregation's Commitment to Children?

In most United Methodist churches parents bring infants and very young children to be baptized. Parents speak on behalf of their children and promise to raise them in the Christian life. The congregation makes a

commitment to order their lives “after the example of Christ, that these children, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, Baptismal Covenant II, p. 44).

Children become a part of the church family and experience ministry in a variety of ways at an early age. Prayer in the home, at meals or bedtime, helps nurture them in the faith. They come to church and begin to experience the church as a “special place.” They begin to interact with each other and learn about treating others with love and respect. As they grow older and become involved in ministry themselves, they begin to live out the promises made by their parents and the congregation at their baptism.

The ministry of Christian education is an all-encompassing task. In its broadest sense, it deals with every aspect of our lives. The Christian faith is communicated to children in essentially two places: the church and the family. It is the primary task of the church to transform persons into disciples. We help children grow in their faith in ways that are appropriate for their age level. They learn in many ways about how God is present in their lives. They participate in the life of the church through Sunday school, weekday settings, corporate worship, and acts of mission and service. At home children see faith modeled by their parents, and they learn firsthand how to live as disciples.

Think about your congregation. What are the ways your congregation supports children and their families on their faith journey? What are your congregation’s traditions for children’s ministry? What vision does your congregation have for children’s ministries? How are stories of the faith shared? What opportunities are available for children to express their faith through acts of service and leadership? How are parents sustained in the support of their children’s Christian growth in the home? How are families supported in living out their faith when not at church? How are children helped to cope and heal after experiencing a crisis?

On a separate sheet of paper, develop a form similar to the one that follows. Elicit help from other persons to complete it. Spend some time developing the responses so that the current picture of children’s ministry in your congregation will be as complete as possible. Having a complete picture, you will know what strengths to encourage and where the gaps exist. This will help form a basis for your ministry with children.

<i>Events/ Programs Ministries in which Children Participate</i>	<i>Age of Persons Involved</i>	<i>Who is Responsible? (Person and/or Group)</i>	<i>Budget Information, or How Does Funding Occur?</i>	<i>Values for Children</i>	<i>Values for Families</i>	<i>Values for Our Congregation</i>
<i>Sample: Vacation Bible School</i>	<i>3-yr-olds through 8th grades and their parents, child care for younger children</i>	<i>Education Committee + Lee, Kim, & Maria, VBS co-directors</i>	<i>Budget line items for Supplies, Equipment, Curriculum, etc. Special donations are requested. No limit.</i>	<i>Stories of faith. Mission education. Fellowship. Leading in worship. Fun. Shared experiences with parents. Developing relationships with others.</i>	<i>Learning together about Jesus in a relaxed, fun setting, creating memories for years to come.</i>	<i>Opportunities for many adults to share faith with children. Outreach to community. Responding to needs for family involvement. Developing relationships with others.</i>

What is Your Role in Keeping Children Safe?

1. If your congregation already has a policy and procedures in place for keeping safe children and the adults who care for them, *then your role is assessment and advocacy.*

- Become familiar with the protection policy and procedures that relate to children.
- Assure that the policy and procedures are being followed in every dimension of your congregation's ministry with children.
- Take responsibility for yearly updating of procedures.
- Plan for regular communication with the congregation regarding the procedures.
- Assess communication links with new members and new parents.

2. If your congregation has no policy and procedures in place for keeping safe children and the adults who care for them, *then your role is leadership.*

- Get and read *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*, available from Discipleship Resources (*see Resources*). This book will help you step-by-step to make your church a safer place for children and youth and the adults who work with them.
- Get other people involved, including pastor, Christian educator, Education/Nurture Committee Chairperson, weekday ministry leaders.
- Request the church council to appoint a task force to study the issue and to bring policy recommendations for formal church approval.
- Follow the steps outlined in *Safe Sanctuaries*.
- Call your conference office for support and training.

What is the Role of Children in the Life of the Congregation?

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

"If any of you puts a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believes in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the

world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!”

—Matthew 18:1-7

Jesus was very clear: *Do not put stumbling blocks in the way of children!*

Do we do that in the church? That certainly is not our intent, yet, sometimes we do.

- God gave children minds to think, but do we pay attention to their thoughts?
- God gave children bodies to move, but do we expect them to sit quietly in worship and not disturb the adults?
- God gave children a spirit, but do we fail to provide opportunities for them to express what is on their hearts?
- God gave children insight and abilities to care for others, but do we fail to provide opportunities for them to share their gift of caring with others?

In what ways does your church create stumbling blocks?

Gifts Children Bring to the Church

Children have much to bring to the congregation. Children bring:

- a special spontaneity within congregational life that keeps us smiling, demands flexibility, and adds spice to our life together;
- the ability to see things as they really are;
- total-body worship of God;
- freshness in hymn singing, in celebrating God’s love;
- new understanding of the world as seen through their eyes;
- a reminder of our own vows as we witness their baptism;
- their own confusion, isolation, discouragement, fears, loneliness, pain;
- a filling of a void for persons who are childless, whose children are grown, or whose grandchildren live far away;
- the ability to make us shed tears because of their vulnerability;
- an unhesitating faith;
- questions that we forget to ask or are afraid to ask;
- questions that push us to think about our own theology and that to articulate our beliefs in new ways (Children keep us honest.)
- an openness to God;
- the ability to unlock love with a simple look;
- a way to connect us to today’s real world;
- challenge to an “old” way, consideration of a “new” way;
- pure, unadulterated JOY!

Children are God’s unique gift to us. Do we have the awareness to accept and embrace the gift?

What is Your Role in the Organizational Structure of the Church?

The coordinator of children's ministries may have membership in several bodies:

- ◆ Church council, the policy-making and decision-making body for the church;
- ◆ The nurture committee or commission on education work area (in many congregations the education work area relies on the coordinator of children's ministries to help plan for the needs of children);
- ◆ Council on Children's Ministries, which is responsible under the leadership of the coordinator of children's ministries (that's you) for planning and overseeing the entire plan for ministry with children. (Although this is optional, it is particularly important and helpful. Information about organizing a Council on Children's Ministries can be found on page 21 of this booklet.)
- ◆ Weekday Ministries Board (in many congregations the coordinator of children's ministries may serve on the board of the weekday ministries program.)

Although membership in these bodies may seem to demand an overwhelming number of meetings, you may not need to be present at every one. Ask your pastor or staff person with whom you relate to help you complete the Congregational Meeting Commitment Worksheet in order to know what is expected of you. Remember: *someone* should represent concerns of children when events are planned or when decisions are made. Your advocacy is important! Even in a very small congregation, it is important to have an advocate for children. That is you! Fulfill your role with wisdom and caring.

Congregational Meeting Commitment Worksheet

Name of Group	Yes, I attend	No, I do not attend	Meeting Schedule	Written Reports	Oral Reports	My Leadership Role
Church Council						
Council on Children's Ministries						
Work Area on Education/ Nurture Committee						
Weekday Ministries Board						
Other						

How to Form a Council on Children's Ministries

Depending on the size of your church and the number of children you serve, there may be a need for a Children's Council. Consider forming such a council if your church has *any* of the following characteristics:

- a desire to create a shared ministry with parents, teachers, and congregation
- a large number of children
- two or more classes for each age level (pre-elementary and elementary)
- many weekday activities
- full-day child care or after-school care for school-age children
- many teachers

A Children's Council may help in:

- studying the needs of children
- assuring the safety of children involved in the congregation's ministries
- thinking through possible ministries with children
- talking with and working with children and parents or other interested adults
- advising about needed programs for children
- serving as the planning and implementing team for special children's projects and programs
- identifying those with gifts for working with children and inviting them to serve
- addressing needs of special children

The membership of the children's council, except for ex officio members, shall be selected by the committee on nominations and may include the following:

Representative teachers and leaders of children's activities of the church (including its activities in music and the other arts), representative parents, representatives of work areas (Christian unity and interreligious concerns, church and society, education, evangelism, higher education and campus ministry, missions, religion and race, status and role of women, stewardship, and worship) related to the church's ministry with children. Ex officio members may include appropriate staff, chairperson of education or nurture committee, and the director of the weekday nursery school or day care center (if such is provided), when the nursery school or day care center is sponsored by the local church.

What are Some Opportunities for Ministry for/with/by Children?

Begin looking for opportunities for children's ministry by checking the worksheet on page 16. Study it, evaluating the variety of opportunities available for children in your congregation. What is missing?

What needs to be strengthened? What needs to change in content or format?

Look at how your congregation reaches out to receive all children, helps children relate their lives to God through Jesus Christ, helps children grow in Christian faith and sends the children into their world to do God's work.

Ask the following questions. Do children have opportunities to:

- practice spiritual habits, such as prayer, worship attendance, service to others?
- learn/experience the biblical stories of faith?
- learn/experience the music of the faith?
- share their faith stories?
- meet faith "saints" (people with a mature faith who are good examples for children and adults alike) in your own congregation?
- experience scripture as appropriate for their developmental level?
- learn "rituals" of the faith, such as "Jesus Loves Me," the Lord's Prayer, grace at mealtime, the doxology?
- experience positive fellowship with other Christians—adults, youth, and children?
- experience God's loving care through their teachers and group leaders?
- experience opportunities to grow spiritually, physically, socially, psychologically, and emotionally in ways that are appropriate for their developmental level?
- contribute to the life of the congregation?
- be involved in mission education and stewardship education?

Following is a checklist prepared to show you possible patterns of children's ministry. *No congregation is expected to have very program imaginable.*

Every congregation is expected to meet the faith needs of the children. Use this list as a way to begin thinking about possibilities and standards for your congregation's ministry with children.

Develop your own list that fits the needs and the setting of your congregation. Think holistically. ***Remember, the primary task is to help children to know God and to become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.*** This goal should undergird every option and should be the focus of every intersection of a child's life with the life of the congregation.

This list is adapted from *Information: Children's Ministries*, Issue 25 (Summer 1989). It is a list of activities and programs provided by one metropolitan church. Use it as a framework from which to look at patterns that may be applicable to or adapted for the needs of your children, your church, and your community. Use it as a way to think about possibilities and standards for your own setting. Only *you* know the needs and possibilities of *your* setting.

Opportunities For Children

A. Infants, toddlers and twos are offered the following:

1. love and acceptance as children of God;
2. clean rooms;
3. safe rooms;
4. clean/safe equipment, furniture and toys;
5. trained, caring teachers;
6. Sunday school classes;
7. child care when their parents are involved in church programs;
8. a Nursery Home Visitor who connects with them and their parents on a regular basis;
9. day care throughout the week and/or Parent's Day or Morning Out programs;
10. food, clothing, and shelter as needed;
11. a welcome place in worship, fellowship events, and other events where the church family comes together;
12. the opportunity for continuing and dynamic faith development.

B. Preschool Children (ages 3, 4, and 5) are offered the following:

1. love and acceptance as children of God;
2. safe rooms that fit their size, interests, and abilities;
3. opportunities for continuing and dynamic faith development;
4. Sunday school classes;
5. Vacation Bible School classes;
6. music experiences through Sunday school and/or a children's choir;
7. opportunities to be involved in the stewardship program of the church;
8. trained, caring teachers;
9. adult friends with whom they feel comfortable;
10. mission studies and opportunities for involvement in mission projects;
11. food, clothing, or shelter as needed;
12. encouragement and support when they bring friends with them to church;
13. ways to contribute to corporate worship through music, litanies, prayers, and other gifts;
14. weekday classes, such as, preschool, day care, play groups, nursery school;

15. inclusion in corporate worship services of the congregation;
16. quality child care when their parents are involved in church programs;
17. fellowship times at the church;
18. games, music, creative activities.

C. Children in the elementary grades are offered the following:

1. love and acceptance as children of God
2. safe rooms that fit their size, interest, and abilities;
3. opportunities for continuing and dynamic faith development;
4. Sunday school classes;
5. trained, caring teachers;
6. adult friends with whom they feel comfortable;
7. mission studies and opportunities for involvement in mission projects and justice issues;
8. opportunity for stewardship activities and projects;
9. Vacation Bible School and/or special summer programs;
10. after-school care while parents are still at work;
11. after-school fellowship experiences;
12. choir and other music opportunities;
13. Girl and Boy Scout programs, Camp Fire, 4-H groups;
14. acolyte programs;
15. opportunities to serve in worship through litanies, prayers, scripture reading, ushering;
16. concurrent appropriate program when parents are involved in adult church programs;
17. food, clothing, or shelter as needed;
18. encouragement to bring friends to church activities;
19. support groups for special concerns, such as, divorce of parents, death or other significant loss, serious illness of sibling;
20. opportunities for intergenerational relationships.

D. Parents of children are offered the following:

1. opportunities for continuing and dynamic faith development;
2. parenting classes;
3. Sunday school classes of interest to them;
4. food, clothing, shelter as needed;
5. assurance of a safe place for their children;
6. support groups for special concerns, such as, loss of a child or spouse; child abuse; dependence on alcohol or other drugs;
7. support from the pastor, professional educator, and other church staff;
8. knowledge of what their children are studying;
9. opportunities to teach or lead children's groups;
10. resources for better understanding the ways children grow and what children need;

11. knowledge of what is happening in the community that affects children and the role of the church in the community;
12. knowledge about opportunities to act in support of children in their own communities and throughout the world.

What About Expanding Your Ministries in the Community and the World?

Children can and should take an active part in mission and stewardship activities in their church, community, and world.

Children, especially middle and older elementary children, are interested in and aware of the needs of others. This is a wonderful time to expand their horizon beyond the local church to the community and world around them. They also have an interest in fairness. Combine these two age-level characteristics and you have fertile ground for an extended ministry in several areas. *Sprouts* (see Resources) is an excellent source of ways to help children develop habits of spirituality and action.

Mission and Stewardship

Introduce children to mission and stewardship issues. Each year the General Board of Discipleship makes available program packets for “The Children’s Fund for Christian Mission.” These packets are free to your church. They describe specific children’s mission projects around the world. Children are invited to undertake projects in which they learn more about the children and mission in general.

All children can become aware of the needs of their community and world through such projects as UNICEF, CROP walks, and Heifer Project International. Hold events such as mission fairs, mission Sundays, special project Sundays, mission summer camp. Set aside some time for children to experience the mission study of a country while United Methodist Women are involved in the study. Consider “Hope for the Children of Africa” as a special mission project.

Include children in stewardship education events and in church-wide stewardship projects. There are many age-appropriate ways for children to understand stewardship of prayers, presence, gifts, and service. Development of good habits can’t wait until they are adults.

There are agencies both within the local community and within The United Methodist Church that can help you plan projects and provide information to increase awareness of mission arenas. Contact the persons in your church, district, or conference who serve in the areas of mission and stewardship. Ask for help and information about the possibilities for including children in the extended mission of your church.

Camping

Every conference provides a variety of camping opportunities for children. Church camps provide age-appropriate faith experiences that frequently lead to a life-changing commitment to God. They also provide a place to bond with other United Methodist children and to pursue special interest areas. Other camping opportunities are available through your congregation's participation in Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire, and 4-H programs. Lifelong friendships often begin in children's camping experiences. In these settings, children are nurtured in a totally different environment. Provide publicity well in advance, as well as funds and transportation for children to attend conference church camp.

Reaching Out to the Community

Check your church community and discover some of the needs of children. Is your church located in an area where an after-school or latch-key program is needed? Perhaps day care or ill-child care for working parents might be a blessing to your community. What about a tutoring program to meet the educational needs of children? Are there children who are hungry or in need of clothing? You, as coordinator of children's ministries, have a multitude of opportunities to expand the ministries of your church to meet the needs of local children. You can help to create a winning situation for everyone. The neighborhood elementary school(s) would be helpful in an identification process.

Inclusiveness

Jesus said, "Go forth into all the world." That commission is not limited to those who are in our country, or look like us, or speak the same language, or celebrate like we do. There are many opportunities for children to learn about others who are different from themselves—whether racially, economically, physically, mentally, ethnically, or in terms of religious beliefs. Be deliberate about providing opportunities for children to learn about and to appreciate others. Provide antibias training for adults who work with children.

Ecumenical Awareness

Make discoveries about other religious programs; share ideas, learn from and about each other. You might invite children from a synagogue to share

their traditions and beliefs. World Communion Sunday is a natural time to learn about other Christian denominations. Join with other congregations near you in a neighborhood Vacation Bible School, Thanksgiving program, or Children's Sabbath observance.

Bishops' Initiative: Children and Poverty

Children, as part of The United Methodist Church, are called to the 2001–2004 quadrennial theme: Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty. As a part of this theme, we are called to help children who are in need. Look at the needs of children in your community. Look at the needs of children globally. Consider using "Children's Fund for Christian Mission" and "Hope for the Children of Africa." How can you help those who work with children remember this emphasis in their planning? What will you do to enable children to reach out to help other children through this special emphasis? Consider becoming "A Church of All God's Children." (Contact your Conference office or access www.umc.org/initiative/ for information.) "A Church of All God's Children" helps a congregation to look at ministry with children from a holistic perspective.

Children's Sabbath

Each year on the third weekend in October, people of faith gather in churches, synagogues, temples, and other houses of faith to lift up the needs of children. Become a part of this special weekend of learning, praying, advocacy, and worship. Contact Children's Defense Fund (*see Resources*) for Children's Sabbath planning guide. Invite other congregations and faiths to join the planning.

Preserving Creation

The important issues of ecology and environment, centering on stewardship of our Earth home, present excellent arenas in which children may become actively involved. Recycling and area clean-up projects provide fun learning experiences for children of all ages. These can be organized with adult groups in your congregation, as a fellowship group or after-school program or with a Sprouts program.

How to Organize and Plan for the Year

Check and double-check your plans to ensure a smooth-running program. Some churches provide programming from September through June; others, the year round. *No matter what pattern your church follows, a year-long planning calendar is a must.*

Find out where your complete church calendar is kept, who records information, and how to “calendar” the events for which you are responsible.

List upcoming dates of events planned for children and coordinate programming with other church ministries to avoid conflicts.

Invite someone to serve as a communications coordinator. Responsibilities would include publicizing all children’s ministries, programs, and activities. This person needs to be creative in their approach to publicity, as well as in the preparation of visuals like banners, posters, and bulletin boards. The congregation needs to know that children are involved in ministry. A special place in your newsletter, Sunday bulletin, or on the church bulletin board that describes children’s involvement keeps the congregation aware of this ministry.

Recruit others to help with programming and with including children in the life of the congregation.

Allow time for preparation and for quality programming. A sample list of possible events for your children’s ministries follows. Place a mark by the events in which your church participates. Place a star next to the events that intrigue you as possibilities—events that can change the pattern of children’s ministries in your church.

Add to these activities the dates for ordering curriculum: July, October, January, April. Also, note dates for purchasing attendance books and supplies. Call your conference and district offices to find out dates for teacher training events and church camp experiences. Calendaring is critical to your program ministries.

As the coordinator of children’s ministries you are a link in the connectional system of The United Methodist Church. Through you, in cooperation with the work area or committee chairpersons, the resources and experiences of the denomination become available to your local church. Call upon the services and resources of the district and conference coordinators of children’s ministries. Pastors and district superintendents can furnish names and

addresses of these persons for you. Plan to attend FOCUS, an international conference for workers with children held every four years (2001, 2005, and so on) sponsored by the General Board of Discipleship. Budget for this in advance. Check with district and conference personnel about upcoming events for workers with children.

Contacts with general agencies of The United Methodist Church can be made directly with each of the general boards. The resources listed in the last section of this booklet will aid you in your journey with children. May God's richest blessings be yours as you seek to guide your congregation's ministries with children.

Weekday Ministries

Weekday ministry is possible in any size church. In all churches the goal and the vision must be that which is best for children.

Why Provide Weekday Programs for Children and their Families?

In 2000, General Conference adopted a resolution on "Child Care and the Church." This resolution guides a congregation's ministry through the week with children to assure that quality programs are established and implemented to meet the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental needs of children today. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me" (Mark 10:14). He also said, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5).

Child care in the church is not a new field. Several thousand of our congregations sponsor weekday programs, such as daycare, Parents' Day Out, preschool, after-school care, respite care for children with handicapping, abusive, or other special conditions. Many of these programs are intentional ministries of the congregations. Some use space rented from a church, and some are integrated holistically as a congregational ministry.

We can fully accept children as Jesus did. We can invite them into our fellowship and nurture them. Gloria Thomas, in the book *Weekday Programs for Children: Director's Manual* (Graded Press, 1986), helps us consider seriously the *whys* of weekday ministry.

- The church believes that each child is a child of God and should have every opportunity to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually to the fullest potential.
- The church is called to ministry, caring for children, showing concern for families, and providing support and nurture for its own congregation and the surrounding community.

- Children and parents in the congregation and in the community need these programs and need support for their lives.
- A weekday program is one way for the church to live out the message of God's love expressed through Jesus Christ.
- The church has the facilities needed for weekday programs and wants to be a good steward of its space.
- Members of the congregation see this weekday ministry as a way to live out the gospel in the community.

Weekday Ministry Programs

Regardless of the kinds of weekday ministry offered, the church has the opportunity and the mandate to include children from various socioeconomic, cultural, and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Children learn by example. They develop faith first through trust in the adults around them. Their parents often select church-based weekday programs because they feel they can trust the church to care for their children regardless of their own religious affiliation or background. We must work hard to keep that trust by providing quality learning experiences in a safe environment.

A Weekday Ministry Board may be responsible for governing one or more of the following programs in your church.

For Younger Children (infants through kindergarten)

Day care

A program for infants, toddlers, and pre-elementary children that may begin as early as 7:00 A.M. or earlier and continue as late as 6:00 P.M. or later. It provides care and meals and offers developmentally appropriate activities in a safe atmosphere of love and concern for each child.

Preschool/Nursery School

A half-day program for children two to five years old that provides developmentally sound activities in an atmosphere of love and concern for each child.

Kindergarten

A half- or full-day program for children five years of age that has the additional goals of teaching readiness skills to children prior to entrance into first grade.

Parents' Day/Night Out Program

A half-day, all-day, or evening program of care and activities for children while parents are provided free time.

Care for Special Needs Children

A program for children who are physically/emotionally recovering from trauma or abuse, for children where English is a second language, for children who need tutoring or for those who have other special needs. Providing such a program could provide a service that is unavailable in the community.

For Older Children

Before- and After-School Care

A program that provides a safe and enriching atmosphere for school-age children who otherwise would be without supervision before and after school. The program could be extended to a full-time program during the summer or school holidays. Activities may include fellowship, scouting groups, faith enrichment, music, service projects, academic enrichment.

Fellowship Groups

Meet once a week or less. They provide opportunities for development of “group” within the church.

Telephone Ministry to “Latchkey” Children

A program in which children could call or be called when they are alone at home. An excellent way to connect children with caring adults.

For All Children

Ill-Child Care

A specialized ministry for children who have minor illnesses, such as colds or flu. Parents are especially grateful for this ministry.

Evening/Night Care Particularly important for parents who work second or third shifts.

What is Weekday Ministry?

Weekday ministry is *mission* work at its very best. The most important resource of any society is its children. Many children in our communities are in need of safe, quality care during times when parents are at work.

Weekday ministry is *Christian education, nurture, and faith development*. Early childhood and the early elementary years are critical in any person’s life. It is at this time that basic attitudes about the world and self are formed. It is at this time that trust, the fundamental requirement for faith development, is formed. When a church supports families at this critical time and provides an example of the highest qualities of Christian faith, it is reflecting the Christian faith.

Weekday ministry is *stewardship*. Rooms that might otherwise be empty throughout the week are used for the education of children.

Weekday ministry is *evangelism*. Families of young children who have found love and concern for their children in your church’s weekday ministry often become part of the church family. Whether or not this happens, people are still receiving the good news of God’s love through interactions with people of faith.

Weekday ministry is a *business* requiring dependable income, realistic expense projections, binding agreements, accountability, and liability.

It is also important to note what weekday ministry is not.

Weekday ministry is *not* a fundraiser. Everything has a price tag. Depending on the form of your program, fees are expected to be charged. Utilities, supplies, and teachers will add expense. These costs can be charged to the persons using the program in the form of tuition. Tuition will not affect the tax-exempt status of the church if your church is incorporated and your policy statement shows the relationship of the weekday program to the governing body of the church. Although fees may cover the expenses of the program, quality care is expensive. Your church should not expect to make money from any weekday ministry. Any excess funds should be held in trust for “lean” times in the ministry and for increasing benefits for staff in a field that is generally underpaid.

Weekday ministry is not easy. Weekday ministry means shared space. It means wear and tear on the building, more things to store, and more programs to schedule. Meeting licensing requirements may require installation of smoke detectors or push-bar doors. In regions where it snows, the parking lot has to be plowed on days other than Sunday. Other requirements may include regular testing of the water supply, the fire extinguishers, and the safety of the building to meet health department codes. Meeting the requirements will provide a safer place for all persons for every day of the week. Most of these requirements should be in effect whether or not there is a weekday ministry for the safety of all persons in your building.

Accountability

All education in a United Methodist church is provided through the Work Area/Commission on Education or Nurture Committee. A Weekday Ministry Board would work with and report to the agency responsible for Christian education in the church.

Responsibility

A weekday program cannot be taken lightly or casually. It is a sacred trust and a legal and moral responsibility. Once begun, it needs perpetual care and nurturing. The congregation needs to assess its understanding of discipleship as it relates to the weekday ministry program and to reassess and update the program periodically. The Resources section suggests guides for beginning or reevaluating a program.

Resources

United Methodist Boards and Agencies with Support Helps

- General Board of Discipleship, Office of Children's Ministries, P.O. Box 340003, Nashville, TN 37203-0003. Telephone 877-899-2780, FAX 615-340-7071. Web site: www.gbod.org Discipleship Resources, P.O. Box 340003, Nashville, TN 37203-0003. Telephone 1-800-685-4370. www.discipleshipresources.org
- General Board of Global Ministries, National Division and Women's Division, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115. Telephone 212-870-3600, FAX 212-870-3748. www.gbgm-umc.org Service Center, 7820 Reading Road, Caller # 1800, Cincinnati, OH, 45222-1800. 1-800-305-9857.
- General Board of Church and Society, 100 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002-5664. Telephone 202-488-5600, FAX 202-488-5619. Web site: www.umc-gbcs.org
- General Commission on United Methodist Men Office of Civic Youth Serving Agencies/Scouting, P.O. Box 859, Nashville, TN 37202. Telephone 1-800- 509-4563. Web site: www.ummen.org
- General Commission on Finance & Administration Risk Management Division, 1200 Davis St., Evanston, IL 60201-4193.
- United Methodist Publishing House Curric-U-Phone: 1-800-251-8591.
- Cokesbury Service Center: 1-800-672-1789. Web site: www.cokesbury.com
- United Methodist Communications, P.O. Box 320, Nashville, TN 37202. Telephone 615-742-5400. Web site: www.umc.org EcuFilm: 1-800-251-4091. InfoServ: 1-800-251-8140.
- Christian Educators Fellowship, P.O. Box 24930, Nashville, TN 37202. Telephone 615-749-6870. Web site: www.chedfel@cs.com

General Church Print Resources

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2000 (United Methodist Publishing House; available from Cokesbury).

Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation: 2001–2004 (Abingdon Press; available from Cokesbury). Especially appropriate: *Guidelines for Christian Education and Guidelines for Small Group Ministries*.

Job Descriptions for Local Church Leaders (Discipleship Resources). A packet with loose sheets describing the positions of all local church officers and a manual for leadership development which includes training designs.

The Interpreter (United Methodist Communications). The official program journal for United Methodist leaders. Issued eight times a year. Subscription rate, \$8.00 a year. Seven copies provided free to church officers selected by the pastor.

Forecast (free catalog mailed annually to each local church; additional free copies may be ordered from Cokesbury). An annual catalog of United Methodist curriculum resources and other helpful Christian education materials.

Multiply God's Love: The Structure and Organization of The United Methodist Church (United Methodist Communications, Free, Call 1-888-862-3242).

Program Calendar (United Methodist Communications)

Children's Ministries Resources

Children's Sabbath. Yearly planning manual available from Children's Defense Fund. (See Additional Helpful Resource Agencies below.)

Children Worship! MaryJane Pierce Norton (Discipleship Resources).

Thirteen-session worship education resource helps congregations incorporate children (ages 5–8) into the worshipping community.

The First Three Years: A Guide for Ministry with Infants, Toddlers, and Two-Year-Olds, Mary Alice Donovan Gran, editor (Discipleship Resources). A comprehensive manual for the congregation's ministry to young children and their families. Completely reproducible.

Hand in Hand Growing Spiritually with Our Children, Sue Downing (Discipleship Resource). Designed specifically to help parents raise their children as Christian disciples.

Helping Children Cope with Divorce, Jenni Douglas Duncan (Discipleship Resources). Designed to help congregations design and implement a support group for children ages 6–10. Eight sessions with lots of helps included.

Pockets magazine (Upper Room). A periodical designed for school-aged children, including Bible study and stories on Christian values and responsible living in today's world.

Putting Children and Their Families First: A Planning Handbook for Congregations, Laura Dean Friedrich (GBGM Service Center). A helpful resource for congregations to use in assessing needs and developing plans for meeting needs of children and families in their community.

Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church, Joy Thornburg Melton (Discipleship Resources). Outlines policies and procedures to help congregations be safe places for children and youth and the adults who care for them.

Sprouts: Nurturing Children through Covenant Discipleship, Edie Harris and Shirley Ramsey (Discipleship Resources). For children grades 3–6. Explains weekly support of each other in efforts to live as disciples of Christ.

Stories for Sharing: Exploring Stewardship with Children, Susan Patterson-Sumwalt (Discipleship Resources). Six lesson plans designed for children

ages 3 through 11. Each session is based on a story or parable of Jesus and includes ideas, a story, and creative learning opportunities and experiences.

Mission Projects for Children:

Children's Fund for Christian Mission, P.O. Box 34003, Nashville, TN 37203-0003. Telephone 1-877-899-2780.

Heifer Project, International, P.O. Box 808, Little Rock, AR 72203. Telephone 501-376-6836.

School or Health Kits, Church World Service, P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515. Telephone 219-264-3102. UNICEF, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017. Telephone 212- 326-7000.

Hope for the Children of Africa, UMCOM, P.O.Box 320, Nashville, TN 37203-0320.

Weekday Ministries Resources:

BibleZone, a fun, inspirational way to teach the Bible to children. Teacher's guides and kits available from Cokesbury.

"*Child Care and the Church*," in *The Book of Resolutions*, 2000. Check with your pastor.

Child Care Programs in the Church—How to Start. Available free from the Office of Children's Ministries, P.O. Box 840, Nashville, TN 37202-0840.

Civic Youth Serving Agencies/Scouting Packet, available free from Civic Youth Serving/Scouting office of United Methodist Men. P.O. Box 859, Nashville, TN 37202. 1-800-509-4563.

Congregations and Child Care: A Self-Study (Ecumenical Child Care Network; also available from the National Association for the Education of Young Children). A self-study for centers in churches to help reexamine programs and establish appropriate policies and practices.

Don't Just Sit There: Bible Stories That Move You. For ages 3–5 and 6–8. Available from Cokesbury.

Pathways to Discovery. A boxed kit with everything you need for a year of planning with a children's fellowship group that meets weekly during the school year. Faith forming. Available from Cokesbury.

Wonder-filled Weekdays. Sixty-five lesson plans for Christian preschool ministries. These lesson plans integrate developmentally appropriate activities with religious development and will help teachers make faith connections. Available at Cokesbury.

Additional Helpful Resource Agencies:

Children's Defense Fund. Advocacy for children. Sponsors Children's Sabbath. Newsletter and other helpful information available about today's children. P.O. Box 90500, Washington, DC 20090-0500. Telephone 202-662-3589. Web site: www.childrensdefense.org

Ecumenical Child Care Network. Publishes a newsletter with articles of particular interest to church-sponsored weekday programs. Accreditation and other resources available. Write for membership information to ECCN, 8765 W. Higgins, #450, Chicago, IL 60631. Telephone 312-693-0300 or toll-free 1-800-649-5443. Web site: www.eccn.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Accredits high quality early childhood programs. Membership organization, publishes the magazine *Young Children*, as well as books, pamphlets, videos, and posters. Write to NAEYC, 1834 Connecticut Ave., NW Washington DC, 20009. Telephone 1-800-424-2460 for membership information and resource list.

SchoolAge Notes: A National Resource Organization on School Age Care.

Excellent newsletter resource for after-school and summertime weekday ministry for school-aged children. P.O. Box 40205, Nashville, TN 37204-0205. Telephone 615-242-8464. Web site: www.schoolagenotes.com

Department of Human Services. Each state sets standards for preschool and school-aged programs. Contact your state office for the licensing standards. Additionally, school principals and counselors, community health personnel, scout leaders, and others are helpful connections in meeting the needs of all children in your community.

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