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Connection SDMI



SDMI
USA/CANADA REGION



SUNDAY SCHOOL & SMALL GROUPS

Two Conversations and One Conclusion by Dr. Robert Broadbooks



in the room about the answer. Their perception was that, where they served, the church needed a renewed emphasis on Sunday School and small groups.

A few days later, I was in conversation with one of our university religion professors. He was talking about our church's tendency to adopt the latest methods that regularly surface in the church world. He suggested that chasing after the latest trends will only leave us frustrated and distracted because they do not represent who we really are as the Church of the Nazarene. He said, "We must always remember that we are a discipleship church." He was saying that our purpose is not only to see people come to faith in Christ (as beautiful and necessary as that is) but to help them move on to fullness in Christ and deep discipleship.

Recently, I enjoyed an enlightening conversation with six global leaders from the Church of the Nazarene. The topic was about what these leaders perceived to be the greatest contribution that SDMI could make to their part of the world. Did they need a certain program or structure? How best could SDMI serve them? There was great unanimity

We will experience fulfillment only when we remember to walk in our purpose.

The two conversations seem to point to the same conclusion. We are in the business of discipleship. Frustration comes when we spend our energy building other things like statistics or campuses or programs or bank accounts. Christ wants to use us to make disciples. Christ spent most of His time in one-on-one ministry and in ministry to a small group of believers. He poured Himself into just a few ordinary people and believed that, in the end, the Kingdom would come. As we carefully observe His actions, we can discover the difference between "success" and true value. His disciples changed their world as a result of three years of discipleship encounters with the Master.

Abraham Lincoln said, "I'm a success today because I had a friend who believed in me and I didn't have the heart to let him down." The original disciples had a Friend who believed in them, and they were willing to follow Him all the way to the grave.

So the question I am asking myself these days and the question I would ask you is, "Are you pouring your life into a few key people and encouraging them to do the same?" Jesus' example teaches us that is where true value and ministry effectiveness live.

Bob Broadbooks is the USA/Canada Regional Director.

SUNDAY SCHOOL & SMALL GROUPS: *INDISPENSABLE FOR GROWTH IN HOLINESS OF HEART AND LIFE* by Marshall Duke

Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, underlines fellowshiping with others as being crucial to the believer. “Several logs burn brightly together, but the fire goes out if one is placed alone on the cold hearth. In the same way, Christians need to work together or the fire of enthusiasm will go out.”¹

God has provided incredibly gifted, anointed pulpитеers to Springdale Church of the Nazarene in Springdale, Ohio; but the group worship experience is further honed and individuals become more firmly grounded in the faith when, through small groups, life is experienced together. I cite the following three small group examples:



- “New Life” was begun 15+ years ago. Within that time, participation by some has ebbed and flowed; neither their journey nor their attendance has been steady. But beside them walked the rest of that group, and the relationships kept them “connected.” At a glance, it may seem that little spiritual growth was achieved among these individuals; but considered over a two-to-three-year period, one can see how God used others to encourage and come beside them when life was rough. In so doing, both the givers and receivers grew. In both weekly gatherings and at annual retreats, relationships

are being strengthened, individuals are becoming more grounded, and all participants better understand what it means to surrender completely to God’s control of their lives.

(Recent photo of New Life group above.)

- Dennis Dalton sees “Connected,” his Sunday morning small group, as a “church within a church.” At the congregational level, individual needs can be overlooked; but in this small group, where there is both age and cultural diversity, some incredible spiritual maturation and relationship gains have been experienced. Dennis “pastors” this group that laughs together, studies together, and discusses “real-life” issues together. Recently, when Dennis was rushed to a local ER, word spread quickly; and 8-10 class members were at his bedside, alternately praying and laughing, as life was being experienced together. Only in the small-group setting will you see such a response.

- Jason and Bethany Lum are members of “Turning Point.” Their desire to be parents led to the birth of Marshall, during which the class prayed for his delivery. However, a few hours after his birth, Marshall died due to a chromosomal issue. Members of the Turning Point group stood beside the Lums in their grief. They brought food and sent cards of encouragement, which continued to arrive long after the baby’s death. The Lums became pregnant again; but shortly after Michael’s birth, similar issues again resulted in their baby’s death. After much prayer and God’s intervention through medical science, a healthy baby Greta was born! *(Pictured on right with her father.)*



Wishing to have two children, the Lums asked two fellow Turning Point members to join them in a once-a-week meal fast for a second healthy Lum child. The Lums are currently expecting another baby, and all testing says that a very healthy boy will be born in late Spring 2015!

In the sanctuary, seeds are sown, lives are challenged, and hearts are softened by the Holy Spirit. In the small-group setting, those seeds are watered, and growth is cultivated as life is experienced together. “Let’s see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out—not avoiding worshipping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25, *The Message*).

¹*Ten Basic Steps to Christian Maturity*. Bill Bright, New Life Resources: 1994.

Marshall Duke is Pastor of Pastoral Care, Springdale (Ohio) Church of the Nazarene, and SDMI Prime Time Ministries Coordinator, Church of the Nazarene, USA/Canada Region.

RESURRECTING “BURIED” TREASURE by Rev. Leslie Hart

“First I learned to love my teacher; then I learned to love my teacher’s God.” – Henrietta Mears

As a child, I loved exploring the woods behind my Granny’s house near the Big South Fork Wilderness National Park in middle Tennessee. I still recall the thrill of discovering arrowheads in a nearby creek bed. Maybe that’s why I enjoy watching “Antiques Roadshow.” I like seeing their excitement when people discover the real value of their “buried treasures,” especially when they realize it is worth far more than they ever imagined! Once real value is discovered, an item previously considered of little importance is certain to be appreciated, protected, and treasured well into the future.

Because it has been “around the house” for so long, children’s Sunday School is also a treasure that—though often overlooked—is priceless. The beauty of Sunday School is that the treasure it holds is not buried but easily within the reach of all. It is the truth of the gospel nestled in the rich soil of authentic relationships. Sunday School gives children the opportunity to experience firsthand the joy of discovering treasures for themselves, to be in relationship with a flesh-and-blood teacher modeling Christ’s love and acceptance. Sunday School offers real encounters between God’s living Word and the children to transform teachable moments into life-altering object lessons. For some, it is the only place they will experience Christ-centered community in action. There is simply no more efficient, effective, productive, or reli-

able means of fulfilling the mission and mandate of making disciples than children’s Sunday School.

Nazarenes are blessed to be grounded in a Wesleyan tradition that appreciates the importance of genuine discipleship in fulfilling the call of Christ upon the Church. We need to rediscover a treasure beyond measure that has been in our family for years. It’s time to bring it out of the basement and take a fresh look. It will undoubtedly need some work. Chances are it hasn’t received much attention in the past few years. But make no mistake—investing in children’s Sunday School is the best investment your church will ever make.



Leslie Hart is a children’s pastor and serves as the SDMI Children’s Bible Quizzing Coordinator, Church of the Nazarene.

YOUR VBS IS ON THE WAY!

by Rev. G. Daniel Harris



This spring, every local church in the USA/Canada region will receive a special kit from Kids Reaching Kids. The kit will contain information about the 2015 Mission Offering Project, *In His Name: A Place for Children with Special Needs*. In addition, each kit will include a complete “The God of the Underdogs” Vacation Bible School (VBS).

This VBS, available in English and Spanish, was developed in response to a growing need within Nazarene churches looking for a VBS that...

- 1) would be effective and lead children to Christ;
- 2) would be carried out without creating a financial burden on the church;
- 3) and would retain a Wesleyan/Holiness emphasis.

“The God of the Underdogs” VBS will feature five underdogs from the Old Testament: Joseph, Esther, David, Hannah, and Daniel. On each day of the VBS, one of these characters will discover that, despite the challenges he or she faces, God remains faithful. Five other special guests—Gally Gator, Pennie Penguin,

Doc Duck, Callie Cat, and Lennie Lion—will show children that anyone who trusts in God can rise above any challenge.

Each VBS kit includes:

- Three 17” x 22” posters
- One set of character trading cards (more can be ordered from the website)
- Daily skits
- Daily Bible stories and memory verses/activities
- Daily craft, snack, and game ideas
- A daily discipleship and missions focus
- A daily student activity sheet.

Additional free resources can be downloaded and reproduced from the website. For more information about the VBS or the 2015 offering project, visit www.gotuvbs.com.

Dan Harris is the SDMI Kids Reaching Kids Coordinator, Church of the Nazarene.



A COACH CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

by Rev. John Comstock



The Discipleship Place (www.DiscipleshipPlace.org) continues to be an excellent source of free, downloadable discipleship and ministry development courses as well as small group materials. Supported by the World Evangelism Fund (WEF), this website has seen significant growth in courses completed over the last several years. The philosophy of The

Discipleship Place has always been to have learning take place in connection with a mentor because we believe information is best integrated into a person's life and practice when it is processed through a trusted relationship.

The last several months we have been piloting a coaching option for lay children's ministry workers. Rev. Katy Weber, a children's pastor on the Oregon Pacific district, has been serving as the coach and has worked with laity across the country. While the person being coached works through the Children's Minis-

try course online, Rev. Weber simultaneously works with each person on a weekly basis for six months. Because we utilize a pre- and post-assessment, we are able to measure the growth of each person in two critical areas of ministry development—confidence and competency.

Because of the success we have seen with the Children's Ministry course, and with the blessing of NYI, we have expanded this coaching opportunity to lay youth workers in the USA and Canada. Similar to the children's coaching process, each lay youth worker will go through an online course while working with the coach. We are excited to announce that Rev. Jim Chapman of Big Chap Ministries has agreed to serve as a coach for youth workers.

If you know of laity working with children or youth who would like to learn more about how they can work with a coach, please email DiscipleshipPlace@nazarene.org or call 888-243-2767.

John Comstock is the SDMI Continuing Lay Training coordinator for the Church of the Nazarene.

“Tell THE Story” PROVIDES FAMILY SUNDAY SCHOOL SOLUTION

by Rev. Marvin Gerbig



As senior pastor of a small church in Illinois, I struggled with staffing children's Sunday School and children's church. Then the Lord gave me the concept of “family Sunday School.” Instead of adult volunteers teaching the various age groups, I proposed the idea of keeping the age groups together and recruiting parents to teach their own children.

As you can imagine, this shift in the traditional Sunday School format was controversial to some; yet, the great acceptance of this model came with joy and excitement from the children, who loved having their parents with them in Sunday School. This cannot be overstated! The children came alive; to have their parents with them gave them great joy.

After I left the church in Illinois, I became aware of a Bible storytelling method called “Tell THE Story.” I could see that the “Tell THE Story” teaching methods would be a great fit to Family Sunday School, particularly for small churches. If parents could be trained in “Tell THE Story,” they would be more than qualified to teach and disciple their own kids.

The “teaching” method that is “Tell THE Story” transcends age groups, making the separation of families unnecessary. This is not to say this eliminates the traditional Sunday School model; rather, the idea is to give a choice to those who cannot staff age-specific groups. Pastors could use “Tell THE Story” teaching methods to meet the spiritual education and growth of children in the context of family. Parents (and even grandparents) could be trained to disciple their children with this simple, easily-duplicated model.

I strongly believe the idea of parents discipling their children is biblical and clearly stated in scripture. “Tell THE Story” opens the door to family ministry and offers help to small churches struggling with staffing their Sunday School classes.

To learn more about upcoming “Tell THE Story” training, email sdmi@nazarene.org or call 800-221-6317.

Marvin Gerbig is a Certified “Tell THE Story” Trainer.

SUNDAY SCHOOL: CHANGE IT UP!

by Rev. Andy Ervin

Have you ever stopped and wondered if the way you are teaching and leading discipleship in your church needs a change? Often we give up pursuing change when we have limited space and a reduction in volunteers. This is the time when change is needed the most.

Seashore Community Church of the Nazarene is located 90 miles southeast of Philadelphia on the very most southern tip of New Jersey called Cape May. Seashore is a church with a long history and great traditions of family and community connections. Eventually, however, church conflict took its toll, and our Sunday School and Discipleship groups were dying off. It was time to examine what we wanted to accomplish on Sunday mornings and throughout the week outside of the worship experiences. After much prayer and conversation, the team was ready to try something different.



First, we looked at what we had to work with. We started with an examination of our space. The fellowship hall had been recently remodeled and was a multi-purpose space. In order to maximize our space, a set was constructed that would service both children's church and Sunday School. A castle theme was chosen, and there were doors and windows designed for both people and puppets to use. Then we looked for people who could communicate well and keep children's attention. For the Sunday School hour, we decided to use a large group with opening exercises that would bring everyone together. Parents and children came to see characters "ham it up" and share a Bible story in a unique and different way.

Next, we considered what curriculum or resource we wanted to use. We have always supported our Wesleyan-Holiness literature and wanted to continue to do so. The team elected to use the Children's Quizzing material as a way to change the scope and sequence and create a great continuum and focus. It so happened that the quizzing cycle was on Genesis, a very good place to start. The quizzing material was set up to work in stages. Large group introduced the text, and then small group became time for review, games, and crafts that further developed the story. The format opened up the recruitment avenue when people saw that they were a part of a team rather than an isolated classroom teacher.

Realizing there will always be times when special seasonal schedules and all-Church events come into play, we adapted our themes and material to include such times and events. The children did not lose track of where we were in Scripture. By the end of the school year, we had read the entire book of Genesis; and there was a sense of completion with the material.

How were other discipleship needs met in the church? The adults had an opportunity to see what their kids were doing, and that encouraged them to participate. We began offering additional electives, such as Bible studies and a parenting class, that were in-depth and brought a great offering to choose from. We also began classes for gender-specific adult groups on Wednesday nights during Caravan and youth group.

What was the result of these changes? A new attitude towards groups and classes grew and continues to this day. Volunteerism is still a challenge, but the team is committed to making discipleship more appealing and fun to be a part of. A decision has been made to stay focused on ministering to the whole family while seeking new avenues for intergenerational experiences.

Andy Ervin is Pastor to Families at Seashore Community Church of the Nazarene, Cape May, New Jersey.

What if your church had a mobile app? What if this mobile app could engage your congregation with daily Scripture, send out audio/text/video content your church uploaded into the app, send event announcements and important communication, and allow people to give financially to your church?

What if your church could have this for **FREE**? It's happening **NOW**!

The deadline for getting the free mobile app is still May 31st, 2014. To date, 81 churches have completed the application process, and 73 churches currently have their app live – a total of 254 churches that either have their app live or are in process. We have saved our churches \$682,752, a number calculated by taking the 254 churches that have their app live and are in process and factoring in a setup fee of \$1500 and the first year subscription of \$99 a month. Don't miss out!



Two webinars have been held to explain the application process and how the app works. We anticipate more webinars in the future and will notify churches of the webinar schedule. Check www.discipleshipplace.org for upcoming webinars.



The M15 Conference has come and gone. It was a valuable time of resourcing, learning, and inspiration for SDMI leaders who were able to attend the conference and the 2015 SDMI District Leadership Conference (DLC). A highlight of the DLC was an opening dinner and presentation by Dr. Tom Nelson, a pastor and author of five books, including *Work Matters*, *Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work*. All attendees received a copy of *Work Matters*.

In addition to 25 workshops, SDMI also offered several mega-seminars. Dr. Diana Garland presented on “Family & Intergenerational Ministry.” In addition to her mega-seminar presentation, Dr. Garland presented a workshop on what makes a real

family and the role of the church in forming and strengthening families in today's challenging world. Dr. David Frisbie and wife Lisa served as on-site counselors and presented a mega-seminar on the topic of “When Bad Churches Happen to Good Pastors.” They also presented a workshop on “Building Effective Ministry to Single Parents.” In this workshop, they addressed what your church can do to reach single parents with effective help and authentic hope.

Other meaningful workshops that were part of the Sunday School & Discipleship Ministry track included “Best Practices of Sunday School and Small Group Leaders,” presented by Eric Bryant of Nazarene Publishing House; “If I Ever Pastor Again,” presented by Dr. Dan Boone; “Biker Ministry Is More than Having a Biker Sunday,” presented by David Midendorf and Nazarene Motorcycle Fellowship Advisory Council Members; “Personal, Professional, and Pastoral Perspectives for Families with Special Needs Children,” presented by a panel including Kari Taylor, Sandy Johnson, and Julie Keith; “Vocational Discipleship,” presented by Dr. Dean Blevins; and “Sticky Truth – Tell THE Story,” presented by Dr. Woodie Stevens. Additional DLC workshops addressed such topics as coaching in ministry development, ministry to young adults, harnessing the potential of the Baby Boomer generation, how to bear fruit and financially bless your district through camp, and pastors as educators.

COMING SOON: Links to these workshops and more will soon be posted at www.m15conference.org and on the “M15 Conference” Facebook page. Watch for information about how you can download video and audio files of M15 worship services, mega-seminars, and workshops.



JESUS BUILT “BRIDGES” by Nathan Roskum

Jesus built bridges – bridges that began at the point of human need and stretched gracefully back to Himself. As commissioned representatives of Christ, our call is to “go and do likewise.” Jesus sought out the marginalized, the downtrodden, the forgotten—those distanced from the religious structures of the day. Throughout the history of the Church, there have been those on the outside; and throughout the history of the Church there have been those seeking to reach people who find themselves on the outside.

Bridges Ministry exists to be this type of connection—a bridge—for singles and young adults.

At M15, the Bridges Ministry (a newly-formed volunteer group as diverse in age, generation, and vocation as our local congregations) was given the opportunity to host a lunch in partnership with Nazarene Youth International (NYI). This partnership purposefully modeled our hope of “bridge building” within our tribe so that young adults and singles can continue to see an intentional, denominational focus for helping them find a sense of belonging and purpose within a local faith community.

The tone of the Bridges/NYI luncheon was set by the metaphor of a coin, used to illustrate how we as a tribe can navigate the shifts and changes in culture and our church. One side of the coin represented what is “established,” the narrative of how we find ourselves living out who we are as a church. The other side represented what is “emerging,” the narrative of the generations that come behind, who are and will continue to lead us forward.

What unites and brings movement is “the edge.” A coin rolls on the edge. Movement happens on the edge.

The edge of our coin, uniting both sides, is the faithfulness of God as we see in the person

of Jesus. This metaphor beautifully illustrates the theme of M15, “Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future.”



Dr. Scott Daniels shared with us in our luncheon from the perspective of those in the denomination who have a voice, have been using it and will continue to use it to make space for young adults. It was important for young adults and singles to hear a tear-filled, authentic voice ardently communicating the love for and need of young people to be connected and involved.

Dr. Daniels’ posture reminds us of a truth we find in our coin metaphor: Without emerging, the established becomes extinct. And the converse is true as well: Without the established, the emerging becomes empty. We need each other. We need to continue to tell the stories of our past SO THAT our future has a shape. And that shape must represent both sides and must be rolling on the edge, focused on Jesus.

Nathan Roskim is the Young Adult Pastor at Nampa (Idaho) First Church of the Nazarene.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL & DISCIPLESHIP CONNECTION

by Rev. Larry R. Morris

Research reveals that 83 percent of new believers who became immediately active in Sunday School were still active five years later. By contrast, only 16 percent of new believers were still active in their local church if they did not become active in Sunday School immediately after becoming a believer.

Dramatic Findings!

What a dramatic difference. The researchers concluded: “With this type of data, one might expect churches to give high priority to getting new members involved in a small group immediately. We certainly found the formerly unchurched to have an enthusiastic view of small groups, particularly Sunday School . . . The picture is clear: the formerly unchurched ‘stick to’ a church when they get involved in a small group. Let us pray that more churches will learn this lesson.”*



“Vision 2020 Faith Projection”

The Board of General Superintendents stated their goal for the Church of the Nazarene in the recent report to the General Board. Their “Vision 2020 Faith Projection” is that global church attendance will reach 3.5 million members, with 2.5 million in both worship and Sunday School & Discipleship Ministries attendance. Strengthening local church Sunday School ministries will help assure that we will meet that goal together.

*Steve Parr. *Sunday School That Really Works: A Strategy for Connecting Congregations and Communities* (pp. 19).

Larry Morris is the USA/Canada SDMI Regional Coordinator, Church of the Nazarene.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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The D6 Conference is about Generational Discipleship. When you take a look at Scripture, it's impossible to separate discipleship from Family Ministry. The D6 Conference helps churches develop and sustain an integrated discipleship strategy that combines the relationship and influence of the church and the home.

Planning to attend the D6 conference this Fall? We would like to meet you there. Join other Nazarenes onsite by sending your email to maketheconnection@nazarene.org with "D6" in the subject line.

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