

▶ SOWING ETERNAL SEEDS...
PAGE...2

▶ MINISTERING TO CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
PAGE...5

▶ TELL THE STORY
PAGE...7

Connection SDMI



SDMI
USA/CANADA REGION



DISCIPLING CHILDREN

SDMI USA/CANADA WELCOMES REV. LESLIE HART AS REGIONAL
CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES COORDINATOR

by Rev. Larry R. Morris



Children and children's ministries are essential to the life and growth of the Church. With that belief in mind, we are pleased to announce that, as of May 16th, 2015, Rev. Leslie Hart has rejoined the SDMI team as the Children's Ministries coordinator for the SDMI USA/Canada Region. Leslie is a Trevecca graduate and an ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene. She has served children and families in churches large and small for more than twenty-five years.

While serving as International Director of Children's Ministries at the Nazarene Global Ministry Center (GMC) in 2010-2011, Leslie presided over the development of Nazarene Safe, the denomination's comprehensive child sexual abuse prevention program. Leslie and her husband, Bill, also a Church of the Nazarene ordained elder and attorney-at-law, have had the privilege of training pastors and children's workers on safe ministry practices across the nation and around the world.

Upon leaving the GMC in 2011, Leslie served as Nashville First Church of the Nazarene's Early Childhood Pastor. She currently serves as Children's Pastor at Gateway Community Church of the Nazarene in Franklin, Tennessee. In 2014, she returned her focus to global ministry as coordinator of Children's Bible Quizzing before assuming the additional role of Children's Ministries coordinator for the USA/Canada Region.

It is with joy and anticipation that we welcome Leslie Hart to the SDMI USA/Canada ministry team. Her unique skills and passion for the discipleship of children will help the Church of the Nazarene reach and train a new generation of disciples. The Church of the Nazarene is blessed to have her in leadership again.

It is very appropriate, in light of this announcement, that this issue of *Connections* be dedicated to Children's Ministries. I pray that you will see in the articles the many possibilities for joining together in ministry. Let us work together to ensure that the next generation reaches its potential in Christ.

Larry Morris is the SDMI USA/Canada Regional Coordinator.



SEWING ETERNAL SEEDS THROUGH PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

by Brenda Parker

What if...

- there was an easy way to invite young families into your church?
- you could really meet a need in the community surrounding your place of worship?
- you could change the lives of families for eternity?

Little Sprouts Learning Center (LSLC), affiliated with Springdale Church of the Nazarene in Cincinnati, Ohio, is striving to do all of these things and more. Every decision made at LSLC is viewed through the lens of offering Jesus to children and their families.



Families enrolled at LSLC can expect a strong preschool education for their children, and the adults will be offered friendship from the LSLC staff. Families are always greeted by name, inquiries are made into lives, and care is offered. The staff prays for their families before school each day. In addition, families are given special invitations to events hosted by LSLC and the Springdale Nazarene Church (SNC), such as Wee Build Night, Thanksgiving dinner and concert, Christmas Eve service, Egg Deco & Family Fun Night, VBS, and the church picnic at a local amusement park. At all these events, the LSLC families are greeted by the LSLC staff and introduced to other church attendees.

Does this model really work? Does it really matter what we do? It does work, and it certainly matters to the Conley family (name changed for privacy). The Conleys came to LSLC for their oldest child, and he loved it! A few months later, the parents were invited by LSLC to attend INVEST, parenting training hosted by SNC. The next week they came to a Sunday morning INVEST follow up class, then Mrs. Conley joined the choir. Next, the grandparents began attending church, and they all joined a small group. Their children loved coming to church, and this family experienced true life change through the power of Christ's love.

Two months ago there was a fire in the Conley home. Church and preschool friends rushed to offer care, prayers, and support for the family. As the Conleys are rebuilding their home, they are telling all who will listen about what God has done for them.

The Conley story is just one of many. God is changing lives through the ministry of Little Sprouts Learning Center in the community surrounding Springdale Church of the Nazarene.

Brenda Parker is the director of Little Sprouts Learning Center (LSLC).



BIBLE MEMORIZATION IDEA

Helping children memorize Bible verses can be one of the greatest gifts we give them. Here is one fun and active idea called "Remove a word..."

This can be played many ways. You can write the verse on a white board. Say the verse with your class then select one child to come and erase one of the words. Continue saying the verse until all the words are erased. Give children an opportunity to say the verse on their own. Then challenge them even further by letting them select a card that instructs them to say the verse in a creative way, such as with your tongue stuck out, while plugging your nose, or while standing on one leg, etc.

MYTHS THAT KEEP PARENTS FROM PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM PORN

by Sam Black



Parents often believe myths about pornography that even kids don't swallow. You can help parents know the truth and arm them with tools to protect their children and teens.

Here are just a few examples of how parents are fooled:

- 71% of teens hide online behavior from their parents, yet 82% of parents were unaware that teens clear their browser history to hide internet activity.
- 45% of teens say they visit websites their parents disapprove of, but only 24% of parents are aware of this.
- Teens spend an average of five hours a day online, but parents think their kids only spend two.

It's difficult for parents to accept the true impact of today's sexualized culture on their kids. While 90% of boys and 60% of girls are exposed to pornography, parents are paralyzed from taking action by three myths:

- My child is a good kid and wouldn't look at porn, even out of curiosity.
- If my child saw porn, he or she would just look away.
- The measures I have in place will prevent my child from being exposed to porn.

To learn more about Covenant Eyes and their family protection services, go to www.covenanteyes.com.

As Nazarene leaders, we must dissolve these myths and prepare parents to disciple and protect their kids.

2 Easy Ways SDMI Leaders Can Help Parents

First, you need to learn more about how pornography is impacting our youth and their families. Covenant Eyes has made it easy with a new online e-course based on a workshop called "UNFILTERED: Equipping Parents for an Ongoing Conversation about Internet Pornography."

Through a special partnership with the Church of Nazarene, this e-course is open to the first 500 who sign up at <http://learning.covenanteyes.com/self-signup>. Use the code SDMI to log in.

Second, host a parent workshop at your church using the UNFILTERED DVD, which comes with a printed guide for parents called "Protecting Your Family Online, A Parent's How-To Guide." This 32-minute DVD can be used during a Sunday school class or a small group session for parents. To order your free DVD and free parent guides for each family in your workshop, email sam.black@covenanteyes.com. Indicate in your email how many DVDs and guides you need as well as shipping information.

Sam Black is a manager, writer, and speaker for Covenant Eyes and an SDMI and NYI board member at the Durand, Michigan, Church of the Nazarene.



MORE BIBLE MEMORIZATION GAMES

BALLOON BUST

Blow up enough balloons to place either one word or a word phrase on each balloon. Pin to a bulletin board. Provide either darts or pins. Say the verse with the children. Select one child to come and remove a word by either throwing a dart at the board or using the tack or pin to pop it. Say the verse until all the balloons are gone.

BEAN BAG TOSS

Use several boxes or make a huge grid on the floor with masking tape. Place a word or phrase on each box or square. Say the verse with the class, then select someone to come and toss the bean bag. Remove the word that the bag was tossed into. For fun you may place prizes in each box or square.

CATCH THAT VERSE

You will need a soft ball, a rolled up sock, or a beanbag. Have the kids look up the verse in their Bibles and read it several times. Then form a circle and give one child ball. The child that catches the ball says the verse then tosses the ball to someone else in the circle, who will then say the verse and toss the ball to another child. Repeat enough times so everyone has a chance to say the verse.



COACHING DYNAMIC FOR CHILDREN'S WORKERS

by Rev. Katy Weber



We read in the Old and the New Testaments that children are very important to Jesus. As parents, grandparents, teachers, and church leaders, we want the best for our children. Here are a few ideas of how to coach your team of volunteers to give strength to your Children's Ministries..

behind-the-scenes personalities; please don't ask them to be your "welcome center" greeter on Sunday morning. On the other hand, keep your upfront personalities on the front line; don't put them on a task that is not filled with people and conversation.

Spend time with individuals on your team. Be interested in what interests them beyond life on Sunday morning or your mid-week activity. Give them a call once a month to see what is happening in their lives, specifically with their children. Invite them to join you for coffee or lunch. Be a leader who cares for the person, not only the area of ministry.

Encourage your team members to work together with friends. Have them invite their friends to join the children's ministry team. Link people up with those who enjoy serving together. Mix generations of serving: seniors with younger parents, teens with middle-aged adults. Friendships will develop, mentoring will begin, and healthy growth will take place on your team.

Katy Weber is a children's pastor on the Oregon Pacific district, Church of the Nazarene.

Trust is key! As leaders, we need to be honest and open with our team members. The first area trust begins with is being honest in where and what we are asking them to serve and do. Provide current job descriptions listing expectations, times of service, and who to ask when questions or situations arise that need an immediate response.

Look for the right personality for the position. Some people are



IGNITE

a nazarene conference
for children's leaders

kansas
city 2015
october 5-8

workshops • worship • keynotes
theology • practics • vendors
networking • rekindling

featuring...



Chris Folmsbee



David Csinos



Carla Sunberg



Michael Novelli

...and many more!

brought to you by



NCLN



visit www.nazcln.org for info and registration
early bird registration ends July 20

MINISTERING TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN HIS NAME

by Rev. Julie Keith



The 2015 Kids Reaching Kids Mission Offering Project, *In His Name*, is raising money to help churches all across the globe make a place in their local churches for children with special needs. Currently there are a number of local Nazarene churches who are already ministering to these special children. One of these is Pasadena First Church of the Nazarene in Pasadena, California. Here is their story.

The Special Needs Ministries at First Church of the Nazarene of Pasadena (PazNaz) began with three families who each had a son with autism. These three boys were about three years old and participating in a typical preschool class. The boys exhibited some behaviors often related to autism: hitting, kicking, biting, throwing, and screaming. Not to minimize these or make light of these behaviors, but most of these behaviors served some kind of purpose for the boys. However, some parents of other children were not pleased with these behaviors. They went to the pastor and basically said either these families need to go or they were going to leave the church.

These three families did not leave; instead, they sat down with the pastor to see what could be done so there could be a place for their children. This was the beginning of PazNaz's Special Needs Ministries.

PazNaz's Special Needs Ministries, *In His Image*, has helped the congregation become a community of transformation. It did not get to this place overnight but through many years of struggles, joys, dreams, tears, and dashed hopes. But through it all, there were faithful families who would not give up.

In the early days, buddies were assigned to work with the boys. Soon word got out, and other families began to come. In the ensuing years, various ministry programs were started. Eventually, a specialized class for children began.

Over the next ten plus years, the Special Needs Ministries at PazNaz has grown from a buddy program to a full ministry providing a place for children through adults with special needs as well as support for their families. The ministry went from being a small class in the preschool building to families involved and connected in the life of the PazNaz community.

Each year, PazNaz holds a Special Needs Awareness Sunday. On this day, every Sunday School class and all age-group ministries host a family who comes to share the impact the PazNaz community has had on helping to bring transformation and spiritual formation to their lives and the lives of their children. The PazNaz community does its best to live out 1 Corinthians 12:26-27: "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it. You are the body of Christ and parts of each other" (Common English Version).

To see a video featuring the ministry to special needs children at Pasadena First, or to find out more about the In His Name mission offering project, visit www.krknaz.com.

Julie Keith is the Special Needs Pastor at First Church of the Nazarene in Pasadena, California.



SPARK: A Retreat for Local Children's Leaders

by Rev. Trey Brooks



Think about a lay children's leader in a small church with a small budget. Think about a full-time children's leader from a large church with a large budget. Both leaders have a lot to offer, and both pour themselves into the ministry to which God has called them.

Imagine an event that brings both ends of the spectrum (small church/small budget and large church/large budget) together and everything in between. At this event, children's leaders from all over the local region make connections, build relationships, and learn from each other. They go home with resources in their hands feeling spiritually renewed and encouraged with the task God has set before them. At this event they realize and embrace that, while from different cities and on different districts, they are in fact on one team called to serve God, children, and their families.

With this dream as their goal, a group of children's leaders from Indiana collaborated, and SPARK was born. SPARK is a grass roots event that began in 2011 with two Indiana districts partnering together, and it grew from there.

This past spring, there were three SPARK events (Indiana, Arkansas and Missouri) representing 6 states, 11 districts, 3 Nazarene universities, and 1 Nazarene seminary. These districts partnered together to provide SPARK for their areas. SPARK, a low-cost, 3-day/2-night retreat for local children's leaders at

camp and conference centers, begins on Thursday evening and concludes early afternoon on Saturday.

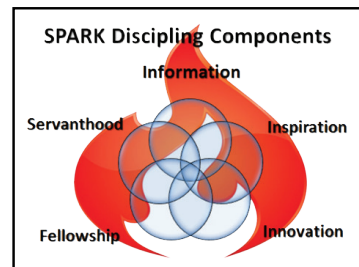
Here are a few comments from past SPARK attendees:

"Thank you, thank you, thank you! When I got [to SPARK], I was not sure I was going to stay a Children's Pastor; but God has met me in a BIG way. I am refreshed, renewed, refocused, redirected, and ready to move forward with new insight, new vision, new goals, and lots of hugs from Jesus (with skin on). Signed, a weary warrior who received rest and relaxation and is ready for battle!"

"I was scared to DEATH to come by myself! But I made fast friends and MANY great memories! I'm praying I will be able to come next year!"

"My expectations for the [SPARK] conference were FAR exceeded from what I had initially expected. I met and interacted with dynamic, passionate men and women of God who were also involved in children's ministry. I learned from some amazing Christians about how they are trusting God for direction in their ministry."

Trey Brooks is a children's pastor at Central Church of the Nazarene on the Kansas City district. For more information about hosting or attending a SPARK event, contact Trey and Candice Brooks at treybrooks@gmail.com.



PRAYER: SIMPLY TALKING TO GOD

by Rev. Leslie Hart

Prayer is simply talking to God. Children can easily grasp this concept. Prayer as a way of life, through continual, candid conversations with God, affirms our relationship with Him. After all, when we are in a meaningful relationship with someone, we talk to them. The more honestly we communicate with one another, the better we know each other. The more often we engage in heartfelt, honest communication, the stronger the relationship grows. As children come to understand that Jesus is always with us through the Holy Spirit, it is easy to include the idea of conversation with Him as a natural part of life.

Modeling is one of the most basic, practical, and effective teaching methods known. Debbie Salter Goodwin poses this truth as a challenge in her book, *Raising Kids to Extraordinary Faith*: "If the child I am influencing reproduces my prayer life, will it reproduce what Jesus wants?" Deuteronomy 6:4-9 tells us to capture teachable moments and engage in conversations about God throughout daily life. When we take these opportunities and pray aloud with children, we reveal what we truly believe about God and how we really feel about our relationship with Him.

Children trust simple words spoken from the heart. What better model can we give our children than vulnerable, open conversation with our loving Creator? Imagine the next generation transformed by a lifestyle of prayer, continually engaged in natural, healthy and regular communication with our heavenly Father.

Leslie Hart is the SDMI Children's Ministries Coordinator for the USA/Canada Region.



Telling THE Story with Children by Dr. Woodie J. Stevens

More than two-thirds of the world's population can't or won't read. Some estimate that as many as 75 percent of all people learn, gather information, and live their daily lives without reading. They do so by listening and watching rather than reading. *Tell THE Story* is a discipling method that helps individuals present the Bible in a way that is simple to receive, remember, and retell. It is very effective with children and adults alike.



Missionary Collin Elliot and his wife Shireen recently spoke at Sesete primary school and Madizi high school on the Eastern District Africa South Field. Rev. Solomon Ndlovu, a General Board member, serves as the District Superintendent of these schools; a Nazarene layman is the principal of the 700+ students who gathered to listen to the missionaries teach Bible stories using the *Tell THE Story* method. Collin Elliot simply told the Bible story in a fun and engaging way, then Shireen asked open-ended questions to elicit responses from the children. This storytelling method first caught the children's attention and imaginations, and then it captured their hearts. You can see their response to the Word of God by the hands raised when asked who wanted to accept Christ and invite Jesus into their hearts.



Laura Mata-Bolandi of Rockport, Illinois, is a certified *Tell THE Story* Trainer in English and Spanish. She was one of the first of the now 34 certified trainers, having completed her training in May 2014. Every week Laura skypes a Bible story from her home in Illinois to a small group in Costa Rica. Over the last two years, the small group has divided three times. There are now two fully organized Churches of the Nazarene in Costa Rica. The engaging *Tell THE Story* methodology was used to plant these churches, showing that this methodology connects with adults as well as with children. The living Word of God is changing lives through *Tell THE Story*.

What people are saying about *Tell THE Story*:

"Just wanted to drop you a note to say that storytelling is totally wrecking my life...in the best possible way. I find myself constantly thinking about who I could tell a story to next... I've used it in preaching, teaching, pastoral counseling, and random conversations... I've been a pastor for four years, but never felt as equipped for evangelism as I do now." (Daniel, pastor)

"This has been the first time that I felt that I have been given a tool that is broad in scope and far reaching for all age levels in church and society." (Nazarene Sunday School teacher)

"This is a great opportunity to learn a process of discipling that will free you and your people to allow God's Spirit to work in your midst." (Nazarene pastor)

Tell THE Story training is ongoing across the USA/Canada region and around the world. Go to nazarene.org/tellthestory for more information.

The next Level 1 training session will be July 21-23 at Mount Vernon Nazarene University (with Level II training being July 20-24). If you would like to participate in the upcoming training (\$99 for Level I), please email tellthestory@nazarene.org or call the SDMI global office at 913-577-2800.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Tell THE Story Training

July 20-24, 2015

Mount Vernon Nazarene
University

nazarene.org/tellthestory

Engage the Word 2015

40 Days of Bible Engagement

September 27-November 8

engagetheword.org

New SDMI District Chair Orientation

September 29-October 1

Kansas City, Missouri

More information coming soon.

IGNITE

October 5-8

Early Bird Registration
Ends July 20

nazcln.org



— THY —
KINGDOM
— COME —
NYC15

NYC 2015 Call to Prayer

Nazarene Youth Conference 2015 will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, on July 8-12, 2015. NYC has a wide impact on youth across the United States and Canada. Many attendees will look back years later and point to NYC as being a pivotal event in their spiritual lives.

Go to www.nyc2015.com to learn more and to find out how you can pray for each participant.

SDMI USA/Canada Regional Office CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!

SDMI USA/Canada

USA/Canada Region
Nazarene Global Ministry Center
17001 Prairie Star Pkwy
Lenexa, KS 66220

877-240-2417
913-577-2802

FAX: 913-577-0866
Email: sdmi@nazarene.org
Website: usacanadaregion.org/sdmi