

Fall Programming for Children, Youth and Families

July 22, 2020 with

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Opening Devotions were shared by Mallorie Landman, Conference Youth Ministry Team Chaplain. The devotion was based on “Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7)

1. During these difficult times, be gracious to yourself and others. Every community is different so find what works for your setting.
2. Don't work in a vacuum. Work with a team to make decisions about ministry.
3. Have multiple plans in place. The current pandemic compels us to pivot to new plans quickly. Be ready with Plans B, C, and D when Plan A is not possible! (See sample SS Plan below)

Screen fatigue is a real thing. And will be more so as schools begin to open.

Connect with your school districts to find out their plans and if there is schedule flexibility. Doing online connections frees you from normal time constraints. Sunday School doesn't have to be on Sunday. If church is doing online worship, have staff develop family activities that go with sermon themes each week.

It is OK to make things shorter than they would be on a Sunday morning. If you want to share devotions, children's message, etc. it can be in a 15-minute session. Time is secondary to relationship building.

Children may begin to struggle with mental health issues because of social isolation. They are missing the “rites of passage”- type things. Support them mentally and emotionally as much or more than you do in person. Put together a volunteer team to make phone calls, send letters, any kind of reminder that there is somebody in the church who cares about and supports them. Ask each volunteer to support 4 or 5 youth.

Events and in-person gatherings: You have to pay attention to the kind of risk you want to take on. Example: Create a sanctuary for learning in the local church. If you have families who don't have Internet access, this is an opportunity to do some radical hospitality. Set up Wi-if, offer bottled water, restroom, set up spaces around fellowship hall or narthex area.

Role of teachers and administrators is changing. It may be worth connecting with school admins or teachers and ask what they need. Most UM Conferences have cancelled their fall and winter activities. That is putting a significant amount of stress on camp and retreat facilities. Offer

something that might support them. Socially distant camping or activity based sessions--teach them how to do canning, or sewing and knitting -- skill-building things to survive and keep busy. Overnights retreats with Social distancing if they can do that in cabins.

Consider Zoom meetings with other churches or connections with other youth around the world. Europe or Africa or Philippines.

Recognizing how difficult it is for pastors/youth workers to do so many more things in this time--figuring out how to do things virtually -- develop accountability and support structures to ensure you take time for sabbath. .

Recommended Resources: [Safe Sanctuaries Best Practices During COVID-19](#) from North Alabama Conference, UMC.

Question about Preschools: In WPA, some local churches will offer fewer options for preschool. For example, no classes for 2 or 3-year-olds, and dividing older classes into two groups. Doing in-person and virtual combo.

Amanda Gilligan shared Sunday School Plan she developed for Monroeville UMC

Fall 2020 Kids' Sunday School Plan

All of this is dependent on what phase Allegheny County is in week to week!

Red:

- No in person kids Sunday School
- Online Zoom Sunday School (same time? Do one big room at first then break out into classes and have a regular lesson)
- No nursery

Yellow:

- No in person kids sunday school
- Sunday School paper packets to do at home (could be emailed and/or picked up)
- Online Zoom Sunday School (like above)
- No nursery

Green:

- In person kids Sunday School

- masks will be worn by teachers and kids age 2 and up
- social distancing (kids will be spaced out at least 6 ft)
- supplies will not be shared (each kid will have their own materials)
- small groups of kids (less than 9)
- temp checks??? (could be done at check in desk)
- classrooms will be cleaned after class
- no food brought in
- parents will pick kids up in the narthex and not in classrooms (teachers will pick kids up in Narthex and bring them up to meet parents in Narthex
- Still offer online option?
- Nursery can operate (follow guidelines as best as we can

*Perhaps have a covid liability waiver parents need to sign????