

# STRATEGY

FOR EVANGELIZING AND DISCIPLING CHILDREN



Strategy For Evangelizing and Discipling Children

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# WELCOME

We want to see children coming to know Jesus and growing in faith, you do too (or you wouldn't be reading this!). Our team has spent the last year researching, interviewing children's ministry leaders and pastors, and consulting with experts to try and understand how we can better equip churches to minister to children. During our research it became clear that churches usually have a heart for children's ministry and some activities in place, but lack a comprehensive strategy for evangelizing and discipling children. So what follows are some principles, suggestions, resources and practical tips to help you develop and write your own strategy.

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To begin – let's define two key terms:

## WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

**Evangelism is communicating the Good**

**News/Gospel about Jesus Christ** (cf. Romans 10:14-17, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Evangelism warns people about sin and its consequences (cf. John 16:8), explains God's remedy for sin (cf. Romans 3:21-26, 2 Corinthians 5:21), and calls people to repent from sin and by faith turn to Christ (cf. Mark 1:15, Acts 17:29:31, Romans 10:9-13, Ephesians 2:8).

## WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

**Discipleship is the process of making disciples** (cf. Matthew 28:18-20). A disciple is someone who is with Christ and knows Christ (cf. Mark 3:14), in fellowship with Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:9), is an imitator of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1), renounces the world to follow Christ (cf. Luke 14:26-33), knows the power and shares in the sufferings of Christ (cf. Philippians 3:10), denies him/herself to pursue Christ (cf. Luke 9:23-24), bears fruit for Christ (cf. John 15:8), and is a servant like Christ (cf. Mark 10:42-45).

**AND HOW CAN THEY HEAR WITHOUT SOMEONE PREACHING TO THEM?**

**ROMANS 10:14**

# WHAT IS A STRATEGY FOR EVANGELIZING & DISCIPLING CHILDREN?

A strategy for evangelizing and discipling children is a clear and direct process with the specifics of how the church plans to "reach, rescue, root and release children to grab hold of their inheritance in Christ and transform their world through His power" (4/14 Window Movement). A strategy should include a biblical/theological and practical foundation for evangelizing and discipling children, directives on the use of resources, how to train and equip adults and youth serving in children's ministry, how to equip families, budgeting, communications, staffing guidelines, and ways to measure progress. A strategy for evangelizing and discipling children is essential for the health and growth of children's ministry in the local church.



**REACH, RESCUE, ROOT AND RELEASE**  
CHILDREN TO GRAB HOLD OF THEIR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST AND TRANSFORM THEIR  
WORLD THROUGH HIS POWER

# DEVELOPING YOUR STRATEGY

A good strategy usually takes a few years to develop. Aim to get started rather than trying to get it completed. See it as a work in progress rather than a fait accompli. And be open to modifying and tweaking the strategy as you gain insight and understanding.

## KEY ELEMENTS THAT SHOULD INFORM THE STRATEGY:

*(Expanded on in the following pages)*

### Children's Ministry ...

- is family ministry
- should not be secluded
- should involve everyone
- should incorporate children into the church
- is strengthened through training
- must be resourced
- must be promoted
- requires adequate funding
- should be safe
- should be regularly evaluated
- should be "owned" by the congregation



**SEE IT AS A WORK IN PROGRESS  
RATHER THAN A FAIT ACCOMPLI.**

## KEY ELEMENTS IN THE STRATEGY



ABOUT 50%  
OF CHILDREN ARE LED  
TO FAITH IN CHRIST BY  
THEIR PARENT(S) OR  
RELATIVES.

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IS FAMILY MINISTRY

Parents, siblings and relatives are the most important relationships in the life of a child. Children generally believe what their parent/s believe, value what their parent/s value, and do what their parent/s do. About 50 percent of all children are led to faith in Christ by their parent/s or relatives. From a biblical perspective, God has appointed parents as the ones who are mainly responsible for the spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical care of their children. **The church should not usurp the role of parents (either intentionally or unintentionally) in spiritually guiding and equipping children.** That said, in many cases the Sunday School/Kids Church and or children's mid week programs are often the only spiritual input that a child may receive. **In order for a strategy to be effective it should therefore major on equipping parent/s to be the primary teachers, mentors, and spiritual equippers of their children.**

### CONSIDER:

How are you discipling parents so they can disciple their children?

How can you help parents use the 3000 hours they have at home to disciple their children?

*"How can we teach the parents to disciple their children, if they're not being disciplined themselves?"  
(Annette Osborne, SU Global Children's Ministry Consultant.)*

*"We need to multiply our ministry to children THROUGH THEIR PARENTS. As we disciple and train parents, their growth will significantly impact their children" (Christine Yount Jones, "A Blueprint for Family Ministry")*

*"I decided instead of pushing my own resources on parents, I'd start listening to what they're already doing and support them in it. One family shared that they always liked to have meaningful talks at family dinners – so I gave them some questions they could include in their dinner-time talks"*  
Children's Ministry Leader.



**CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE  
CONFINED TO A RELATIONAL  
OR MINISTRY SPHERE  
THAT'S DISCONNECTED  
FROM THE REST OF THE  
CONGREGATION.**

### **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY INVOLVES THE WHOLE CHURCH**

**It takes a church to raise a child! Children who are in Christ are part of the body of Christ and every part of the body (all age groups) should be connected (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-26).**

Here are some things to consider:

#### **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SHOULD NOT BE SECLUDED**

Children's ministry should be part and parcel of the overall vision, mission and ministry of the church. The strategy for children's ministry, while being distinctive, should nonetheless fit into the overall strategy for evangelizing and discipling all age groups in the church. If the general vision, mission and ministry of the church is not something that children can be involved in, then the vision, mission and ministry of the church should be revised. Children's ministry should never be done in isolation or to the beat of its own drum. Jesus rebuked the disciples when they tried to segregate children (cf. Matthew 19:13-14).

#### **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SHOULD BE "OWNED" BY THE CONGREGATION.**

In order for a congregation to "own" a strategy it needs to be involved, in suitable ways, in developing the strategy. The development of the strategy should therefore incorporate forums for discussion, consultations, congregational prayer, preaching/teaching on evangelism and discipleship, personal testimonies about how the strategy is helping a person grow in the way of Christ, and other ways for the congregation to participate in the process. Talk about it!

## KEY ELEMENTS IN THE STRATEGY

### CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SHOULD INVOLVE EVERYONE.

Children's ministry shouldn't be left to or done exclusively by a small group of people within the church. The whole church should be involved in some way (e.g. praying for children, serving alongside children, providing a ride to a Sunday service or mid-week event, eating together with children, singing and reading God's Word with children). A children's ministry strategy should involve children, youth and adults working and worshipping together. The strategy should major on how the congregation supports and encourages families. The pastor should also be involved in significant/meaningful ways (e.g. advocacy, identifying needs, planning intergenerational activities, involving children in the life of the church, building relationships with the children, equipping families, modelling evangelism and discipleship, enlisting leaders, championing and cheerleading children's ministry). If the pastor doesn't give consistent leadership and support to children's ministry, it's less likely to succeed.

### CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SHOULD INCORPORATE CHILDREN INTO THE CHURCH.

One of the aims of child evangelism and discipleship should be to incorporate children into the community of faith. Children and their parent/s and sibling/s need to believe in Christ and belong by becoming part of the life of the church. This is accomplished in many ways and begins before a commitment to church membership. **The key to integrating children into the life of the church is involvement coupled with the building of relationships with youth and adults.** This isn't something that happens exclusively within the Sunday School/Kids Church or children's mid-week program. Some practical ways to include them include: children praying for the sick, reading the Scriptures in the Sunday service, helping in community projects, singing in the choir/worship team, greeting, and so much more!

### CONSIDER:

How do you involve children in your church?

How do you connect seniors with children in your congregation?

*"We include children in the first half of our Sunday morning services. We wanted to worship, pray, read the Word and give our offerings as a church family, and then we split up for our time of learning. When we decided this we knew it meant we would need to consider how we make sure this time is welcoming for children and how we could involve them. We always have an extra special song where the children lead the congregation in a fun action song – it's great to see the entire church worshipping together!"*  
Local church pastor.



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY NEEDS TIME AND RESOURCES



**Take time to reassess how your church prioritizes time, leadership and finances. Consider the following:**

### **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY MUST BE RESOURCED.**

The process of evangelism and discipleship requires good resources. There should be a clear recognition of primary sources and secondary resources and the role they play in the strategy. The primary sources (what informs and empowers evangelism and discipleship) are the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The secondary (supplementary) resources are various forms of curriculum, study notes, programs, material, films, teaching guidelines, sermons, experiential

games/activities, object lessons, songs, supplies, and things that support or help. The secondary resources should never be more important than the primary sources. **Evangelism and discipleship should always major on reading, receiving, reflecting, remembering and responding to God's Word.** The games we play, the things we say, or the programs we design or use should never predominate (draw attention away from God and His Word) in the evangelism and discipleship process.

**Children's ministry should be safe.** Guidelines, risk assessments, abuse prevention rules and procedures to protect and keep children out of harm's way are essential. Adults and youth who work with children should have valid police checks and receive Plan to Protect® training.

*"70% of all decisions for Christ happen between children ages 4-14" The 4/14 Window Movement.*

*"On average, churches spend 4% of their budget on children's ministries." Brant Henshaw*

<http://www.pnwumc.org/news/how-churches-spend-their-money/>

## KEY ELEMENTS IN THE STRATEGY



### **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY MUST BE PROMOTED.**

Good communications are essential for the success of the strategy. The purpose of child evangelism and discipleship should be clearly communicated both verbally and in a written form. PowerPoint visuals, bulletins, church magazines, handouts, announcements, business meetings, small groups, websites, emails, podcasts and social media are all mediums for communicating the strategy.

### **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY REQUIRES ADEQUATE FUNDING.**

A church budget is a good way to ascertain the ministry priorities of a church. Or, to state it differently, a church spends more money on the things it values more. What percentage of the budget is assigned to children's ministry? In the prioritization of expenditures, where does children's ministry rank? If a church is committed to developing an effective children's ministry strategy it needs to adequately provide financial support. This may require a reallocation of funds which in turn requires a reprioritizing of church activities, programs and paid staff.



### **CONSIDER:**

Does your church have a child protection policy? How are you ensuring children at your church are safe? How do you ensure your entire congregation is aware and engaged with your children's ministry?

*"My family picked our church based on their children's program! It was great to see how children were involved in every part of the church and that they took child safety seriously!"*

A parent.



# RE-THINK CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

**Culture changes – a healthy church and children's ministry will change too!**

### **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SHOULD BE REGULARLY EVALUATED.**

A good strategy will include assessment tools or means that enable measurements of the spiritual health and growth of a child through various ages and stages of childhood. The strategy itself should also be evaluated annually and refined/improved constantly.

### **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IS STRENGTHENED THROUGH TRAINING.**

Children, youth and adults all require training in evangelizing and discipling children. Many churches largely view children and youth as recipients of adult teaching or instruction. That is, many churches view children's ministry as something that adults do for children (downward mentoring). Is there a way/methodology that sees children and youth, not just as recipients, but as participants in the training process? Can the strategy make provision for training that will equip (in addition to adults) the children and youth to effectively share, live out, and teach their peers how to grow in faith? A paradigm shift in the way training is conducted may be required if the strategy envisions training that results in child to child, or youth to child evangelism and discipleship. Also, consideration should be given to the content, type of training and how frequently it's required.



### CONSIDER:

How does your church assess the effectiveness of your children's ministry?

Does your church recognize that children need to be equipped to share their faith with their friends?

*"The ultimate statement of the effectiveness of a children's ministry is a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ for each child. We believe that if ministry solutions help children to become active disciples of Christ ... living in that saving relationship ... then the ministry has been effective." (Aim Lower Journal, Children's Ministry Effectiveness Model – Reflect & Innovate).*

**Check out the Children's Ministry Effectiveness Model for a great resource on how to assess your children's ministry!**

[www.aimlowerjournal.com/childrens-ministry-effectiveness-model-reflect-innovate/](http://www.aimlowerjournal.com/childrens-ministry-effectiveness-model-reflect-innovate/)

# WRITING THE STRATEGY

**Asking and answering the right questions is the basis for formulating an evangelism and discipleship strategy.**

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN:**

Take time to pray – consider who you will invite to help you write the strategy (remember this is a marathon not a sprint!). Once you've assembled your team, have them read through this document and any additional books/articles you believe will be helpful.

Don't feel limited to the essential questions when planning your strategy – they are simply primers to get you started. As questions are raised throughout the discussion, write them down and explore them as a team.

## **PLANNING THE STRATEGY:**

Go through the essential questions using the *Essential Questions Worksheet*. Do this as a team and then discuss it with the children, youth and adults in your congregation. When you're finished going through the principles and essential questions identify ones that especially stood out to your group. Did you get especially excited about question 2.4 and want to strengthen the families in your church? Did question 3.4 help you realize that your Sunday morning lesson's need some updating? *Remember some of these questions build on one another – so you don't need to come up with an action plan for every question.*

Plot out your aims based on your discussion using the *Strategy Aim and Objective Worksheet* and set some practical goals for your team. Once you've completed this activity you're ready to start writing your strategy.



## **WRITING THE STRATEGY**

Prepare a written strategy using the principles discussed in the key elements, the answers to the essential questions, and other insights gleaned from the Holy Spirit as He guided and directed discussions/deliberations. The strategy should be biblical, practical, and attainable. It should also state your church mission statement, list aims and objectives, outline what needs to be done, include specifics, and have measurable goals.

## **PRESENTING YOUR STRATEGY**

Once your team has completed the strategy, share it with the congregation – invite them to sign up to help with goals/activities that they may be interested in. Set up dates to meet quarterly/semi-annually for the upcoming year and use the meeting time to evaluate your progress and plan for upcoming activities. Consider putting the strategy up on posters/billboards, and having a copy of the strategy available on your website.





# ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

**Asking and answering the right questions is the basis for formulating an evangelism and discipleship strategy.**

There are five key questions concerning children's ministry and five key questions concerning family ministry, that taken together should provide the grist for writing a comprehensive evangelism and discipleship strategy.

Based on the understanding that children who know Christ as Lord and Saviour have received the full measure of the Holy Spirit, it's recommended that the questions that follow should be discussed with both the children and adults in your congregation, and their answers used to develop the strategy.

*[Note: The questions are not easy to answer. They require groundwork and thought. It's suggested that prior to discussions or meetings that participants are given the question (it may be best to tackle one or two questions at a time) prior to a meeting/discussion so that they can prepare their answers].*

# 1. QUESTIONS ABOUT REACHING, RESCUING, ROOTING AND RELEASING CHILDREN.

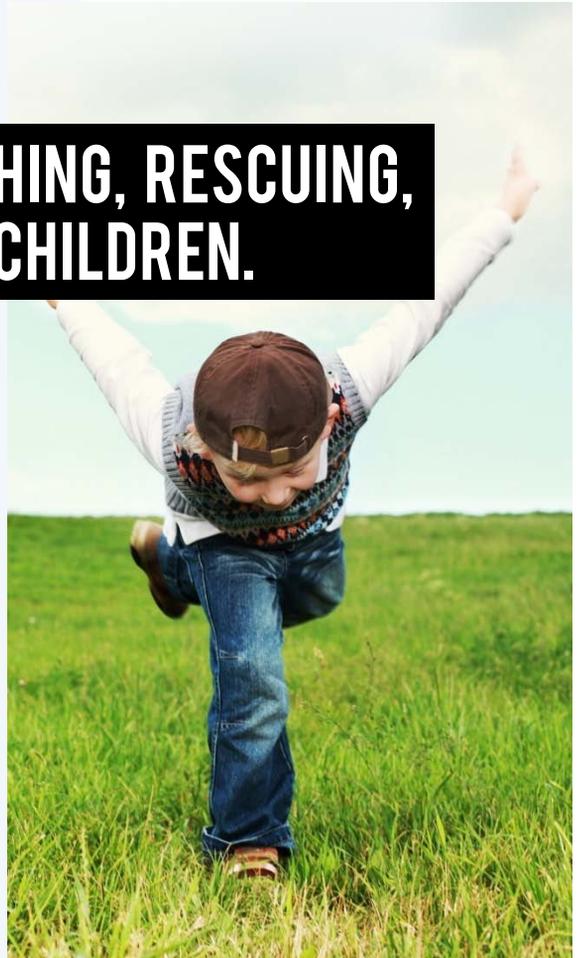
**1.1** What do the Scriptures teach about reaching, rescuing, rooting and releasing children to grab hold of their inheritance in Christ and transform their world through His power?

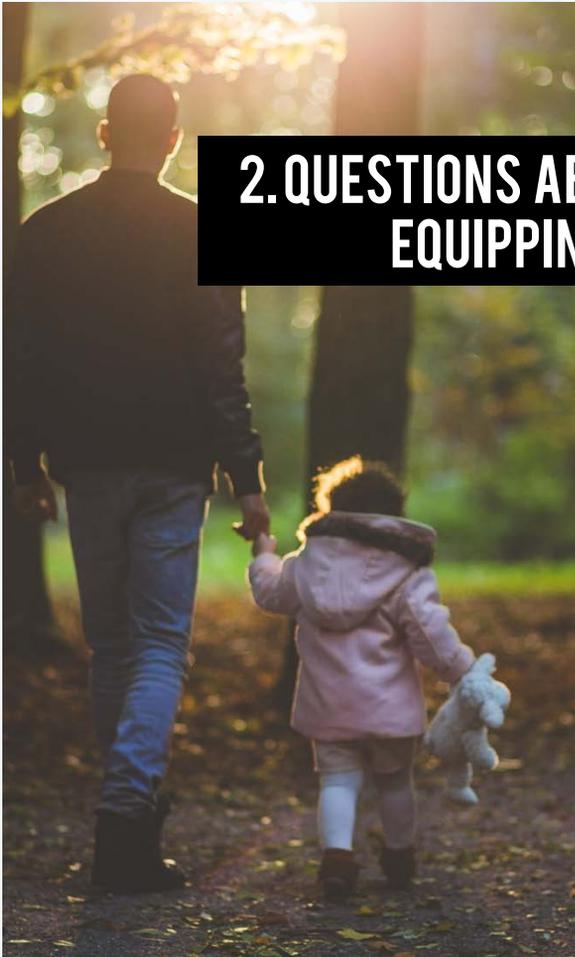
**1.2** How will we reach children? That is, how will we connect with un-churched children in the community?

**1.3** How will we rescue children? That is, how will we share the Gospel/Good News in ways that lead to their salvation?

**1.4** How will we root children? That is, how will we teach, equip and model the way to love Christ and live for Him?

**1.5** How will we release children? That is, how will children reach, rescue, root and release other children to grab hold of their inheritance in Christ and transform their world through His power?





## 2. QUESTIONS ABOUT ENGAGING, ENCOURAGING, EQUIPPING AND EMPOWERING FAMILIES.

**2.1** What do the Scriptures teach about how families come to know Christ and make Him known?

**2.2** How will we engage with families in the community? That is, how will we develop relationships with un-churched families in our community?

**2.3** How will we encourage families to embrace Christ? That is, how will we invite families to be saved and serve Christ?

**2.4** How will we equip families to worship Christ? That is, how will we resource and help families to connect with God's Word and pray together?

**2.5** How will we empower families to engage, encourage and equip other families? That is, how will we strengthen families to build relationships with un-churched families, share the Good News and draw un-churched families to Christ?

## 3. PRACTICAL QUESTIONS

**3.1** What does our church need to change to become more child/family friendly?

**3.2** How do we welcome children and ensure they are safe when they are involved in church activities?

**3.3** How do we involve children in serving and congregational worship? How do we equip them to do this?

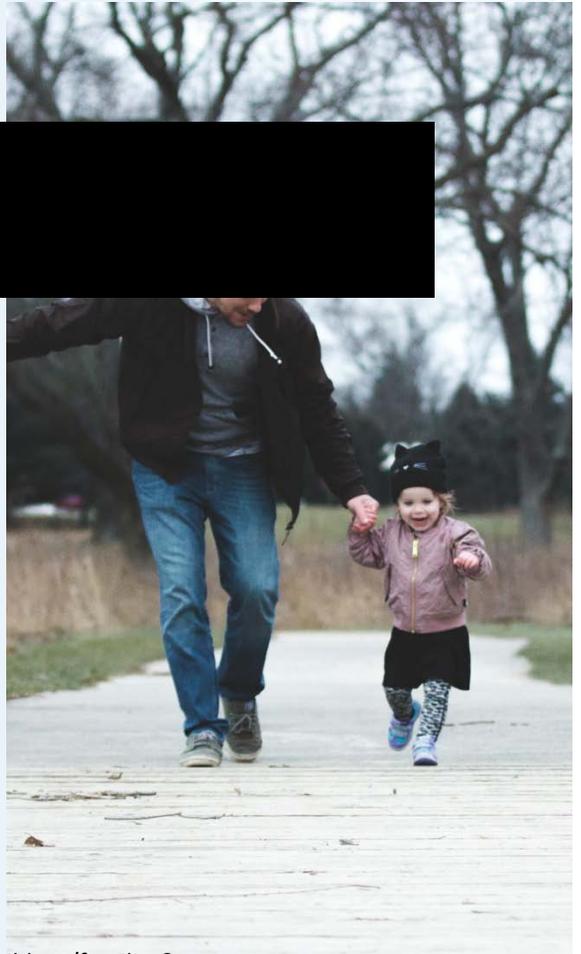
**3.4** What do we want Sunday morning lessons to look like for children? (programming, facilities/design)

**3.5** How do we equip our ministry leaders to better serve our children/families?

**3.6** How do we equip our children, families and church to share Christ with our community?

**3.7** How can church leaders focus their decision making so that children/families/our community are given full consideration?

**3.8** What do we expect of our pastor/minister in regards to children/families?



# SAMPLE STRATEGY

*Church name* seeks to reach, rescue, root and release children to grab hold of their inheritance in Christ and transform their world through His power.

We aim to do the following by 2022:

- To equip parents to disciple their children. *We value the family and will find ways to equip the parents practically and spiritually to raise godly children. We want to establish a culture that understands that parents are the primary people God has appointed to lead their children spiritually.*
- To include the entire congregation in the children's ministry. *Not everyone needs to connect directly with the children on a Sunday, but we want everyone to know how they can help as prayer partners, snack providers, administrators, camp sponsors, and in other ways.*
- Find opportunities to involve children in every aspect of our church ministry. *Children are a part of the body of Christ and we want them to be fully engaged in the church and to use their gifts to serve the Lord.*
- To teach our children to know, love and serve the Lord. *We want to not just model Christian faith, but to include children in congregational worship, prayer, and reading of the Word. Children should learn to live in ways that imitate Christ and to share the Gospel with our community. We want to not just equip them, but provide opportunities for authentic expressions of practical and everyday Christian faith.*

**EXAMPLE AIM**

Equip parents to disciple their children.

**MEASURABLES**

IN 1 YEAR WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL BY ...

Seeing families more involved at church (serving, attending, participating in events).

IN 4 YEARS WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL BY ...

Families attending church more often.  
 Parents asking leadership for tips on discipling their children  
 Parents and children displaying maturity in their faith  
 Church growth due to families sharing their faith with others.

**OBJECTIVES**

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	TIMING	LEADER
Provide parents with practical parenting support. What is a Christian family and how to best parent?	Annual parenting seminar	May	Ashley L
	Give parents a book once a year on Christian parenting (e.g. <i>Parenting Beyond Your Capacity</i> )	October	
	Sermon series on "What is a Christian family?" (4 weeks)	April	Pastor Bill
Create opportunities for families to be together. (Pray, play, worship, serve, share their faith)	Quarterly family events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pray and Play</li> <li>- Park Clean Up Event</li> <li>- Family Game Night</li> <li>- Family Worship Night</li> <li>- Dads and Lads hike</li> <li>- Mom's and daughter craft night.</li> <li>- Community outreach event</li> </ul>	One each quarter	Laura
	Encourage entire church to attend "Family Camp" at district campground.	August	Pastor Bill
	Quarterly intergenerational service	Quarterly	Pastor Bill
Disciple parents so they can disciple their children	Family small group		Markus and Laura
	Make Bible guides available for entire church – consider ones that work for a family	Annually	Pastor Bill

**EXAMPLE AIM**

To include the entire church in our children's ministry

**MEASURABLES****IN 1 YEAR WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL BY ...**

If we see 50% of our church is involved.  
 If we see adults in our church connecting with children during fellowship time.  
 If we see higher attendance at our children's activities (because more of the church shows up).

**IN 4 YEARS WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL BY ...**

If we see 100% of our church involved.  
 If we hear from parents about the blessing other adults are being to their family.  
 If the children's ministry is growing as evidenced by more people being involved.  
 If children know more adults in the church.  
 If our church board is always weighing a decision with children in mind.

**OBJECTIVES**

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	TIMING	LEADER
Prayer partners	Create cards with a family on it and information about the children – ask adults in the church to pick up a card and start praying for that family.	Start in May	Pastor Julie
Get them serving kids more (not necessarily as leaders)	Provide sign up form with various ways that adults in the church can help with the kids ministry (snack, security, leaders, teachers, nursery workers, special needs buddy).	Start in September	Pastor Julie
Events that facilitate new relationships	Tea party – seniors and girls Curling night – seniors and kids	One every 6 months	Esther and 50+ small group.
Introduce our children to the church monthly. "Kids Can!" Time.	Find a way to have children share with the congregation one Sunday morning a month (Share: their testimony, talent (sing a song, play the piano, pray, or a video/slideshow of what they've been up to.)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of every month	Pastor Julie

**EXAMPLE AIM**

Get children involved serving within the church and community.

**MEASURABLES****IN 1 YEAR WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL BY ...**

If we see 50% of our children involved in serving and attending in some area of service or fellowship.  
If our key volunteers are mentoring at least one child each.

**IN 4 YEARS WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL BY ...**

If we see all of our children involved in serving and attending in some area of service or fellowship.  
If children are seen to be responsibly engaged in an area of ministry.  
If children and church leadership are seen to have meaningful relationships.

**OBJECTIVES**

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	TIMING	LEADER
Sign Up Sundays for children to engage in volunteer opportunities	Consider different ministries where they can serve (usher, pray, read scriptures, counting team, worship, announcements, nursery, media, greeting, planning events).	Run twice a year (but keep on welcome desk)	Matthew
Mentoring	Ask key volunteers in different roles to mentor a child as their junior helper once a month. (job shadowing).	Monthly	Matthew
Pastor Connection	Have one child shadow the pastor on a Sunday (sit with them, greet with them, pass the microphone to people when necessary, etc.).	Monthly	Pastor Bill
Train Children for leadership	Fund them to go to district leadership camp.	September	Pastor Bill
	Run leadership camp .	July	Pastor Julie
	Bring them to GROW district training (encourage the whole family to attend).	May	Pastor Julie

## TOOLS AVAILABLE

Download the following from [scriptureunion.ca/edstrategy](https://scriptureunion.ca/edstrategy)

- Essential Questions Worksheet
- Strategy Aims and Objectives Planner
- Children's Ministry Effectiveness Model







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