



tips for youth workers

APRIL 2007

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: TIPS FOR SMALL CHURCHES

Many of the VBS programs that are on the market today are created for the average-sized church with an attendance of 50 to 150 children. This can present a challenge for smaller churches in the areas of facilities, volunteers and materials. When planning your VBS for this summer, consider these ideas:

NETWORKING – consider working with other churches to provide an area-wide VBS. Choose a neutral community centre or use a church that has larger facilities to be the host site. Working together to provide a VBS can be a great example of cooperation within your community.

SUMMER SUNDAYS – VBS is a great way to replace the school year Sunday school and Children's Church formats. It can be even more effective if you combine it with an adult outreach in your church. You could even consider holding it outdoors! (*Consider a children's outreach by delivering the "Jesus for Children" DVD in your local neighbourhoods with an invitation to your VBS attached. Contact christian_education_orderdesk@can.salvationarmy.org for more information.*)

CREATIVITY – Always look for creative ways to adapt materials. If you don't have enough volunteers for skits, try using puppets. If you can't change rooms for your different activities, mark out different areas with posters, tape on the floor and so on to create room "divisions" in the space you do have. Recruit volunteers who can use the skills they already have to enhance your VBS. Are there people with life-skills who can create your VBS's crafts and games? Have a "Jump-Start Day" and invite the whole church congregation to come and help with decorations, name tags, scenery, craft or lesson presentations that need to be made up.

GET OUTSIDE – Consider having Backyard Bible Schools, especially if space is limited in your church building. This way you can rotate your VBS from one neighbourhood to another and increase the number of young people you can reach over the summer. This also allows for materials to be used a number of times – and helps justify the cost. Hold the classes on consecutive weeks rather than at the same time, especially if your pool of volunteers is limited.

INTERGENERATIONAL – Have you considered having an intergenerational program where the whole church family can get involved in an evening program rather than a day program? Try hosting your VBS for an entire week or one evening a week for the whole summer. You may also discover that there are other churches in your community who would like to partner with you in this set up.

RELATIONSHIPS – Most importantly, be sure to take advantage of opportunities to develop one-on-one relationships with the children who attend your VBS. When hosting a VBS in a smaller setting you will discover many more opportunities to interact with individual children. The whole purpose of a VBS is to interact and nurture the young people who come through your church doors (or backyard)!

For more ideas on how to plan for a successful VBS, order your copy of "VBS Smart Pages", Gospel Light Publishing (ISBN 0830716718) through the Supplies and Purchasing Dept (call 416-422-6100 or email orderdesk@can.salvationarmy.org).