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Hot Chocolate Club

> BACKPACK BLESSING

FOUR WAYS OF KNOWING GOD

ARE THEY TOO YOUNG FOR FAITH?

baptist children & family ministries

manatū iriiri whānau tamariki



children & family

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'm at that stage of the year when lists are becoming the driving factor of my life—and every day it's about how many things I have ticked off the list! Hui was a big tick, in more than one way. It was wonderful to see so many people from our churches gathering together and seeking to hear from God and each other. There were times of celebration and times of lament, but in it all there was a strong sense of unity and knowing that God has called us to shine his light in an increasingly complicated world.

The elves have been VERY busy in our office getting the Advent Trees packaged and posted. The resource room was filled from floor to ceiling and it has been great to finally have the light shining in again this week! It's a thrill to know that over 7000 families will have access to the true story of Christmas this year—we even developed our own app (which I don't really recommend...). Roll on Christmas!

And speaking of Christmas, this issue has some great resources you can use over the festive season. Rachel Roche shares about the under-rated importance of faith formation for pre-schoolers, David Csinos has great thoughts on how to engage all of our spiritual styles and Lois Rodler shares about the Hot Chocolate Club—one of the most exciting initiatives I have come across in

our churches this year. Feel free to contact her and find out more about her great discipleship programme.

I hope and pray that you will all take time over the holiday season to relax, read some fiction, ride a bike (I now own an e-bike which I love!), have coffee with friends and see God in the rhythm of the everyday.

Ngā mihi nui,







WHAT IS A BACKPACK BLESSING?

A Backpack Blessing is a segment in a worship service just before students and teachers return to school at the beginning of the year. The aim is to encourage and help students to feel excited and supported, by their church community and by God, as they go back to school.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Choose a date before children return to school and advertise it, asking students (and teachers?!) to bring their backpacks to the service. (Why backpacks? Because for many children, and adults, there is much excitement about their backpack or new stationery items! Plus their backpacks are students' constant companions while at school.)

During the service, invite everyone returning to school to the front and say a prayer of blessing over them and their backpacks.

Often a special bag tag is given to attach to their backpacks to remind them that God and their church family go with them!

Here are some more ideas to enhance

the experience, plus check out this Pinterest board:

www.pinterest.nz/childrensmission/back-to-school/

- Interview a couple of kids/all the kids.
- What is their school year, school and teacher?
- Subjects and classes? (if older students).
- Encouragement: Psalm 139:14.
- Have a person for each child who attaches a bag tag on their bag and prays for them or stands with them during a group prayer.
- Congregation stands for prayer (blessing).
- Bag tags could be created by members of the church (to make them extra special/meaningful), or you could purchase the tags on the next page.

See our website for resources that you can download, including Powerpoint slides to use in church and a card to go with each tag. Visit www.baptistcfm.org.nz.

Prayer of blessing:

Dear Heavenly Father,

May you bless our children and young people as they begin another year at school, preschool, or school at home. Watch over them wherever they are and keep them safe.

May they always know that they are your children, that you love them dearly and have good plans for their lives. Help them as they journey through this year at home, school and church to discover their part in your big story.

May they develop strong and healthy relationships with their classmates and teachers and help them to see people as you see them. Help them to be strong and courageous. Help them to stand up for those who are rejected by others and to be a friend to those who are lonely and left out.

May 2020 for you [insert child's name] be a year of growth as you learn to be strong and courageous because God is with you.

Lord, may you also bless their parents as they seek to raise their children in a busy and complicated world. Help them to reflect your love and grace and pass on to their children a living faith.

And so, children, as you go with God into the world, may you know His love, His peace and His voice in your life.

Amen.





This article is based on a presentation by David Csinos at a CECE conference. The research is further explored in his book 'Children's Ministry that Fits: Beyond a one-size-fits-all Approach to Children's Spirituality'.

here are four main ways that people (including children) express their spirituality-through word, emotion, symbol and action. These spiritual styles help us experience God and to be spiritually formed.

Healthy spirituality will have some balance between these four styles, even though we will naturally favour one or two. They are like lenses that we put on and see both God and the world through.

As ministry leaders we need to understand our own dominant styles and be careful that we don't structure and set up our ministry to only suit our own style. Ideally, we want to aim for 'harmonious dissonance'. If we favour our own style, we will only be connecting with some children and for others, they won't

feel connected to God at all. For them there will be too much dissonance. Other children, who match our style, may think they have spirituality all figured out and they don't need to grow. For them there is too much harmony. It is in the tension that we grow.

So, what do these spiritual styles look like in action? Here are some of the ways they are expressed:

Word:

These people like words, written and spoken.

The Bible is important and so is preaching.

Faith formation is about increasing our knowledge of God.

They feel they know God when they know about God.

Emotion: Emotions and feelings are the way to connect with God.

The arts and music are important.

They are demonstrative and charismatic.

Oral testimonies are important because this connects them to the emotions of others.

Symbol: These people like abstract concepts and God is more sensed than concrete.

> Metaphor, images, rituals and symbols are important.

They like meditation, icons, nature and silence.

Action:

Doing is important.

Prayer is more active than spoken.

These people are passionate about injustice and the needs of the world-they want to make a difference.

Each of these styles is formative and can connect people to God. I wonder which of these styles you favour? How do you best connect with God?

It might be good to ask ourselves whether all the children in our ministry have the opportunity to express their dominant style but also be challenged to grow through experiencing other styles of spirituality.

Take some time to reflect on each of the spiritual styles—what do they look like in your ministry currently? What things could you do more of, do less of, or even start doing? It could be helpful to assess your ministry in each of the areas in the column to the right. You may even like to do this assessment with other leaders in your ministry. •

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RAEWYN MOODIE KUMEU BAPTIST

ver since I first heard of Messy
Church, I have wanted to run one!
I have a passion to see people
reached for Jesus, and the concept of
a church service which would reach out to
the unchurched intrigued me.

Kumeu Baptist regularly meet for prayer meetings with other local churches and run the local Light Party together. I first approached St Chad's Anglican-Methodist Church last year to ask if they were interested in the concept of Messy church and together, we went to visit one. The answer was a resounding yes! We then asked each of our leadership/eldership boards for permission to run it together and to split the

costs involved. We put together a planning committee consisting of two volunteers from Kumeu Baptist and four from St Chad's to decide on the details. St Chad's had been running a community dinner regularly and the cooks were happy to provide the meal for Messy Church.

Marelize (yes, of BCFM fame!) is part of the planning team and put together a very professional poster which we then distributed to kindys, mainly music, letter boxes and put on the local community Facebook pages. Church members were all encouraged to bring along neighbours or unchurched friends and family.

Kumeu Baptist planned most of the craft













activities and St Chad's organised games and the meal. We had 11 volunteers from each church, plus members who came along to mingle with the community.

The response was very positive—in fact everything I had dreamed of. 110 people including volunteers enjoyed a great afternoon of activities, worship, celebration and the Easter story from Lost Sheep, *Dave the Donkey*. Families took home a craft made from wood with the verse, "He is not here. He is risen", made salvation bracelets which explained the gospel message and received a Scripture Union booklet with the Easter story for children.

Over the mealtime, church people mingled

with guests and many families were talking about the 'real Easter story'.

Our second Messy Church was held in July and themed around the story of Zaccheus and another 100 people turned up. We ironed out the small kinks from the first one and everyone really enjoyed the time of fellowship, activities and gospel message about how Jesus changes lives.

We have another one on 7th December to share Christmas with our community and next year we hope to run eight afternoons.

We are looking forward to seeing more of our community impacted by the gospel.

For more information please email me: candrmoodie@gmail.com. •



RACHEL ROCHE FRANKLIN BAPTIST CHURCH AND CAREY BAPTIST COLLEGE

id you notice pre-schoolers blowing bubbles at the Baptist Hui? What about that baby smiling at you? Often we miss the little ones as they are thrust 'out the back' of buildings, or parents may not bother to come to events or services as it is 'too hard', or they do not think their children will 'get anything out of it'. Pre-schoolers have certain needs and different abilities than teens or adults. Too often a child's spirituality is reduced to observed capacity. If they cannot say it, how can they be thinking or know it? The reality is that the faith of a pre-schooler will look different than that of an adult. Genesis 1:26-28 tells us: "God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image." This infers people of any age have the capacity for spiritual experiences. "Although children may not be able to articulate a moment of wonder or conceptualize a religious concept, their presence-their mode of being and knowing in the world-may be distinctly spiritual."1

In a Christian environment preschool faith can begin with family members who

pray, sing and talk about God, surrounding the baby with ritual, and memory of God feelings, sights and sounds. As the child gets older stories and symbols provide concrete images for faith to be built on. The foundations are laid for basic trust to develop for faith in God. A vital part of faith formation includes belonging to a congregation. This includes experiencing practices and rituals that define the congregation and the people who participate in them.

Healthy congregations are super important to Baptist Union National Leader, Charles Hewlett. He has proposed a set of characteristics that define a thriving church-robust leadership, authentic worship. effective mission, healthy resources, and growing disciples. The rest of this article. and Part 2 in the next issue of Connect, will use these characteristics as a framework for my research which uncovered how church practices contribute to a pre-schoolers' faith formation. I will offer practical suggestions to enable churches to be a place of radical inclusion.

ROBUST LEADERSHIP

Leadership is vital for pre-schoolers as firstly, they are dependent on their caregivers and their congregation to "supply the religious vocabulary and ritual necessary for articulating and enacting their God-given spiritual nature."² Secondly, churches are vulnerable places with many different people flowing in and out. The church can support children and families by encouraging consistent, trained, and safe people in a child's life. This means no matter who is in leadership there are things such as annual police checks and safety training to protect children and leadership.

ACTION: Make sure you have policies for child and leader safety in place and actioned no matter who is in leadership.

AUTHENTIC WORSHIP

Preschool children can genuinely contribute to life of the faith community. Their inclusion enables them to share their gifts with the body. By observing, "children become apprentices of the faith community and learn to form identities as community members."3 Over time a child's experience and knowledge grows as they participate in ritual and practices. Children need to participate regularly in our gathered worship, including celebrating communion, baptisms, dedications and membership, AND sung worship, scripture reading, prayer life, serving and teaching.

ACTION: Reflect on your time of gathered worship and consider:

- Is our time crafted with all ages in mind or tailored to adults with children merely present?
- Are we intentionally using our opportunities for inclusive participation and engagement?
- How often do children get to witness and be included in times of celebrating communion, baptisms, dedications and membership?
- How can we encourage children to participate in our sung worship, scripture reading, prayer life, teaching, family time and serving?
- Who needs to be in the room during leadership meetings, service planning and long term direction meetings?

Part 2 of this article will be published in the next issue of Connect.

¹ Tobin Hart, "Spiritual Experiences and Capacities of Children and Youth," in The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence, ed. Eugene Roehlkepartain et al. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006), 164,

² Karen Marie Yust, "Toddler Spiritual Formation and the Faith Community," International Journal of Children's Spirituality 8, no. 2 (2003), 148.

³ David M. Csinos, Children's Ministry That Fits: Beyond One-Size-Fits-All Approaches to Nurturing Children's Spirituality (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011),



LOIS RODLER PIRAMAI BAPTIST CHURCH

ave you ever noticed those kids in your ministry that show a deep connection to the Lord? I call them "magnet kids"—the ones that seem to have a strong magnet between God and themselves. They are drawn towards Him and we see it expressed in times of worship, prayer and discovery.

These kids have been a joy and reward during my 20 plus years of children's ministry, being both a visual encouragement to me personally and carriers of God's presence in our programmes. However, with the need to balance Sunday morning with activities that will engage all kids of a wide age range, time for deeper spiritual pathways can be limited.

It was with great excitement, that three years ago, I heard David Goodwin explain his Hot Chocolate Club resource. The name itself captured my interest, but as he unfolded the concept behind this resource, inspiration flowed through me. I've learned to recognise those times when God is awakening a new thing.

David's resource is a creative six-part discipleship programme for children, based on the Biblical analogy that we are vessels for God to use and fill.

So, three years ago using this resource, and definitely the name, our Hot Chocolate Club was launched. We pitched it for 'kids who want to go deeper with God', aged 8+ and stated that it would be a time of prayer, worship and Bible study. Our first series, using David's resource, went wonderfully! Twelve kids signed up for the series and loved it. It was clear that these kids were hungry for a deeper time of calm, of space, of freedom and of encounter with the Lord, as well as a hunger to learn more of the Scriptures.

After the series ended it was obvious that we would continue Hot Chocolate Club. Each term since, I have written a six-part series covering a variety of topics that have included:

 Treasure—the treasure to be found in the scriptures.

- Easter Journey—a sensory journey through the week before Jesus' death and resurrection.
- Light—Jesus and us as the Light of the World.
- Christmas (2)—the gifts God gives us through Jesus; the nativity.
- Water—discovering different Scriptures about water and what it symbolises.
- GROW—How to grow closer in our relationship with God.
- The Bible—The history and formation of the actual physical book.

Each series includes reading and discussing scriptures, as well as a physical element such as object lessons or craft. Most kids who attend a series become regulars, and our numbers have grown to nineteen currently.

Our Hot Chocolate Club meets on a Tuesday after school and finishes at 5pm. We start in our church lounge, where hot chocolates are enjoyed and friendships have grown amongst the kids. At 3:30pm we move into our kids' ministry space, which is set up as follows:

- One large table area in the middle of the room.
- Enough chairs for all around the table.
- Soft lighting, instrumental worship music playing, candles and wax melts to provide fragrance.

Our kids are reminded before we enter the ministry space, that we are leaving behind our chit chat and coming in to draw near to God.

We start with a time of prayer where we can all bring any prayer needs. This has become a time where kids have felt safe to share their issues knowing that there is prayerful support amongst each other. It is also a time where we bring our

praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. This is followed by worship, which begins without announcement. Two or three worship tracks, that the kids know well, are played as everyone finds their own space anywhere in the room. There they are free to worship in whatever manner they prefer... hands raised, dancing, kneeling, still. This is their time to connect deeply with the Lord.

Straight after worship we go back to the table and into journaling time. Each child has their own journal which is also used for recording information about the current series. This is a silent ten minutes. or more, where everyone writes or draws what they believe God is showing them, or writes a prayer to Him. This is always a very focused time where each kid is deeply engaged one-on-one with the Lord. After a while I ask if anyone would like to share and there are always keen volunteers. We listen to each other and affirm what God is showing us. There's often a discussion around the interpretation of a picture, as we seek what God is saying. I have found in my experience, that children are very open to hearing from God. They lack the barriers that many adults have and receive from Him in a very clear and simple way. We then proceed into the study time of our theme and finish with an activity.

I have found in my experience, that Children are very open to hearing from God.

Our Hot Chocolate Club is a rich time of relationship building and deeper journeying with God. It is a joy for me as I engage with the kids who attend, and a joy for them, as they so readily express.

If anyone is interested in further discussion or would like copies of the resources we've developed, please feel free to contact me—lois.rodler5@gmail.com. ◆

Resources

SUPERBIBLE

The SuperBible is a collection of 80 comics that tell the Bible Story from Genesis to Revelation. The artwork was done by some of the same illustrators that illustrate DC Comics, Marvel Comics and Disney Comics. The SuperBible is the follow-up product of the Kingstone Bible, first published in 2017 (www.kingstone.co).

Reach Beyond NZ has the worldwide licence to reproduce the comics in any language other than English and Spanish and so far they have the comics translated into 31 different languages. The Māori translation, Te Pūrākau, will be available early 2020 with a discounted option for ministries. Hopefully it will be available to churches for as little as \$2 per comic (these will retail for about \$5.99 - \$6.99 per comic). The plan is to also have English versions available to ministries in the near future.

The SuperBible app is available free to anyone in both iOS and Android from the app stores.

Like all other projects, the SuperBible comes at a cost. Churches and individuals can support their work by praying and by donating.

Visit the Reach Beyond website www.reachbeyond.nz to find out more.







THAT'S A WRAP, THANK YOU!

Thanks to our wonderful friends at mainly music. we are able to offer you an easy way of saying thank you to your volunteers this Christmas. We have a downloadable template on our website (baptistcfm.org.nz) that can be used to wrap around a block of chocolate-and we all know how much people like chocolate! There is even space on the back to add a personal note of thanks. The images are from our Advent Trees and the Storybook app. Merry Christmas y'all! And thanks, mainly music!

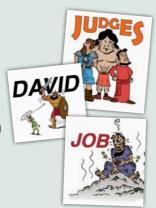


Mustard M Seeds

DOWNLOADABLE CURRICULUM

Since 1993 TnT Ministries has been resourcing and equipping people to teach the Bible to children and teenagers more faithfully, more creatively and more effectively.

Their comprehensive range of printed material covers the entire 18-month to 18-year age range. It has been used around the world and translated into twelve languages. Mustard Seeds is their new range of highly versatile, downloadable material. They are committed to supporting churches serious about teaching the Bible to young people in any language, anywhere in the world. Visit www.mustard-seeds.net.



Six cards, one cross, one true story!

Story in a box is a simple, fun resource, designed to help children know and understand the true story of Easter.



Excluding GST & postage Sold in lots of 10

*Some assembly required



Editor's pick-

1.HE FIRST KIWI CHRISTMAS IS A CHRISTMAS STORY FOR ALL CHILDREN

In December 1814 a large crowd of Māori gathered at a hui to celebrate their first Christmas.

There was no Santa Claus nor any reindeer at this gathering, but there were some amazing gifts. You can read about this unique part of Aotearoa New Zealand's history in *The First Kiwi Christmas*.

This delightfully illustrated story designed for 4-7-year-olds will make a great gift this Christmas.

Children will enjoy finding Paki on each page as they go on a journey to see how Māori and a group of early settlers celebrated Aotearoa New Zealand's first Christmas over 200 years ago.

To read a review of this book, go to: www.baptistmag.org.nz/the-first-kiwi-christmas

You can order copies of the book here: www.bigbookpublishing.co.nz/product/the-first-kiwi-christmas







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Pin the dates

1-24 DEC	Advent A great time for families to use the Advent Story Tree together.
14-15 FEB 21-22 FEB	Messy Church national conferences 2020 Rotorua For programme and registration details Christchurch visit www.messychurch.nz/nz-conferences-2020
21 MAR	Reach Conference by Launchpad (previously Bible-in-Schools) Auckland 9am - 4.30pm (refer to advert on page 19 for more details)
16 MAR - 6 APRIL	Fast4 webinar series: Taking your Children's Ministry from Good to Great Carey Centre for Lifelong Learning Four Monday nights, one hour each Visit www.lifelonglearning.nz/fast4
23 MAY 6 JUNE 20 JUNE	Way2Go Conference Scripture Union's Children's Ministry Training Dunedin Auckland See website for details: Wellington www.sunz.org.nz 0508 423 836
15-17 JUN	Intergenerate Conference Sydney Visit: www.intergenerate.com.au/events
8-10 JULY	Godly Play Core Training Ponsonby Baptist, Auckland To register, email Elke Keeling: keelingelke@gmail.com



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with Annette Osborne and Tammy Tolman

CHOOSING A CUTTICUM

NSW&ACT BAPTIST C&F MINISTRY

lith so many curricula available, it can be hard to decide which is best for your church. The following is a list of areas with questions that may be helpful to consider when selecting a children's ministry curriculum for your age group.

VISION & VALUES

Does the curriculum fit with the vision of your church? Does the curriculum enable leaders to operate within the values of the church?

THEOLOGY

Does it teach content which is in alignment with your church's theological beliefs? Does it deliver lessons which are in alignment with vour church's theology of childhood? Has the content been made age-appropriate, while still maintaining theological accuracy? Does it point to God's grace, Jesus' salvation and the Holy Spirit's power, or is it works based?

LEARNING & GROWTH

Does it match your kids' learning styles listening, discussion, or hands on activities? Is there an opportunity for kids to open the bible for themselves, and apply it to their lives? Is learning purely intellectual, or do the lessons aim for heart transformation?

SCOPE & SEQUENCE

Do the lessons progress chronologically through the Bible? Or are they topic based? How long will the curriculum last? Is material for a term only, or for birth through high school? Are the lessons repetitive, or are kids engaging with new content?

AGE-APPROPRIATE

Is it appropriate for the developmental stages of your group? Is it appropriate for the various faith development stages of your group? Does it provide good transition between age groups?

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Does it help parents engage with and take interest in their children's learning? Does it support parents in taking responsibility for their child's spiritual development?

PRACTICALITIES

Does it work with the number of children you have? Is it designed for big groups. small groups or a combination? Does it fit within your allocated budget? Do you have the supplies and equipment available to make it work? Does the programme require additional leaders, and do you have sufficient volunteers? Is the amount of preparation required practical for your volunteers? Can it be adapted to meet the opportunities or limitations of your context?

Thanks to our friends at NSW&ACT Baptist C&F Ministry for this helpful resource. •



With Guest Speakers



Chris Clarke
Leadership Mentor
and former CEO of
World Vision



Julia Grace
Key Note Speaker
and Mental Wellness
Advocate

and

Workshop Sessions on Behavior Management, Games, Story Telling / Presenting 101, Songs and Curriculum

Saturday 21 March, 2020 | 8:30am - 4:30pm

Elim Christian College, Golflands Campus
94 Golflands Drive Auckland



For a **(MM**/is born to us, a son is given to us.

The government will rest on his shoulders.

And he will be called:

Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6