

Sunday School



it's for life!

- lifelong
- life-giving
- about real life
- connected to the Source of life

Notes for Newsletters

Resolutions

The new year beckons to us, inspiring us to think of ways we can make a “new start” to enhance our lives. Some people see this as a good time to set goals or make “resolutions” about diet, exercise, priorities, schedules, finances or relationships. In our spiritual lives and in our churches, we also set goals and make decisions about how we will live this gift of a new year.

Could regular attendance in Sunday School and worship be a priority in your new year? Being an active part of a Sunday School class can provide a place to explore questions of faith and develop supportive Christian friendships. It can be a community where the love and grace of God are experienced, a setting where faith and discipleship are nurtured. It can be a place for you!

Could the new year be a time when your class would set a goal to be more intentional in welcoming newcomers and inviting new friends? Persons of all ages who are not involved in a class sense the need for a place to belong. Often, they would welcome an invitation. Could you begin to practice the “30-Second Rule”—speaking with someone you do not know during the first thirty seconds following the worship service? You might meet a visitor who is seeking a church home or a fellow member seeking to connect with a small group. This will be your opportunity to invite!

A new year is a great time for the church to consider our vision for the Sunday School in light of the church’s mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ. How is God calling us, in this place this year, to carry out this mission?

How about those apples?

(Or Invited anyone to Sunday School lately?)

A doctor in Sebastapol, California, visited a new neighbor to share some apples from the fall harvest. The conversation turned to other things, and the doctor ended up inviting the

new neighbor, who had not found a local church of his denomination, to his Methodist Sunday School class. The new neighbor was Charles M. Schulz, creator of the Peanuts cartoons. Schulz ended up teaching that class for 10 years. He said: “My class is all discussion and speculation and searching for truths that I want each individual to decide for himself [sic].” He felt that knowing the Bible was very important for these discussions. “I took people through the Bible, chapter by chapter, three or four times.... I just wanted them to become acquainted with it. And to make a few connections.” *Quoted in Charles M. Schulz: Conversations, by Thomas Inge, University of Mississippi Press, 2000, interview with Mary Harrington Hall.*

Who do you know who might make some connections if they came to Sunday School? Why not invite them?

God is Good!

“Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.
Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I keep your word.
You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.”
Psalm 119:66-68

How do we know God’s ways? How do we know about God’s life, power, and support? From the beginning of Judeo-Christian faith, God’s people have been called to teach God’s ways of mercy, justice, love, and compassion to others. Certainly, we learn as we celebrate and remember through scriptures and sacraments during worship. We also have an opportunity to read, reflect upon, and discuss with others what the scriptures say to us about God and about what it means to grow as a Christian. Sunday School offers that opportunity. Learn about our God who is good and who does good. Come to Sunday School.

Visions and goals

As your church leadership considers the opportunities of this new year, consider your vision for the Sunday School.

In the Old Testament, the command to teach is evident in many places. (For example, Deuteronomy 31:12-13) In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus' last commandment to his disciples is to "make disciples...teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:18-20) According to Acts 2:42, the first activity of those who have heard the Gospel proclaimed at Pentecost is that of devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles!

How is God calling us to carry out the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ through the Sunday School?

Consider the possibilities:

- What if our vision is that every child, youth, adult and teacher is excited about involvement in Sunday School because they encounter the love of God there?
- What if our church set a goal for adding one or more new classes this year?
- What if our church set a goal to develop more teachers for youth and children?
- What if we set a goal to offer a series of short-term studies on Sunday mornings to reach new persons or persons not involved in an ongoing class?

What if....? What's your vision for Sunday School and how might you accomplish it?

If your planning groups have not yet had an opportunity to view a portion of the Sunday School—It's for Life! video, now might be an appropriate time. (This video is available free of charge by calling Curric-U-Phone, 1-800-251-8591, or view it at the Sunday School website.) A free guide for using the video is included on the Sunday School—It's for Life! web site.

<http://www.cokesbury.com/images/productsites/sundayschool/videosessionplan.pdf>

Prayers

Who is praying for your church's Sunday School teachers? Are you? Do you have an Education or Nurture Committee who could be praying for your teachers? What about enlisting the Administrative Board or Council?

As you start the new year, consider asking the Education or Nurture chairperson to help you make a prayer calendar listing the names of your Sunday School teachers on the days of Lent. Give out copies of the prayer calendar on February 6, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. OR, print a prayer calendar in the newsletter listing the names of the Sunday School teachers.

For the pastoral prayer:

Oh Lord, we give you thanks for the people you have prepared and equipped to teach and lead in our Sunday School classes. Thank you for every insight they offer, every honest question they share, every moment they spend preparing and praying for the members of our classes. Please help us open our hearts and minds to learning and growing into more faithful disciples of yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Want to talk to teachers or students about what's going on in Sunday School?

Here are some of the themes for January and February in Cokesbury's most widely used materials:

- Classes using *Exploring Faith* and *One Room Sunday School* will be studying the life of Jesus in January, focusing on the accounts of Jesus' childhood and the beginning of his ministry. We will be learning more about what God is like as we look at these events from Jesus' life and will talk about how to live as God wants us to live. In February we will move on to studying events in Jesus' ministry that show Jesus as the teacher, the healer, and the Messiah. Jesus' life of love, compassion, and healing shows what children of God are called to be and to do.
- Youth classes studying *Bible Lessons for Youth* will explore what it means to be called during the month of January. They will discover Jesus' call, the calling of Jesus' disciples, and the ways in which Jesus calls us today. In February, youth will learn to overcome obstacles to do God's will by studying Ruth, 2 Kings, and John.
- Users of *Adult Bible Studies* will be focusing on what it means to be called to be God's people in January and February. The studies from the Gospel of Mark in January will look at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the call of Matthew and the sending out of the Twelve. We know that each of us face obstacles to our discipleship and in February these classes will focus on overcoming obstacles, using characters we know from both the Old and New Testaments.

Bible Lessons for Youth, *Adult Bible Studies*, *Lecciones Cristianas*, and *Lecciones Cristianas para Jovenes* all follow the International Lesson Series outlines.

Other places to go for help.

www.sundaySchool.cokesbury.com

www.cokesbury.com/teachinghelps