

Welcome to Grow! Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School is a powerful tool for churches. On one hand, it is a way to reach out to the community. It can involve children who go to other churches as well as those who don't go to church at all. It is a way to reconnect with children from the church's own Sunday school.

On the other hand, it builds up the church from within. It offers as many contact hours as three or four months of Sunday school. While Sunday school offers the discipline of weekly study, VBS is an explosion of study, crafts, music, and fellowship. It is also a way for volunteers to participate. Some people may not be able to volunteer throughout the year but will help for just one week. VBS is a way for multi-point charges to combine their students and resources to work together in a powerful way. It allows pastors to interact with children and adults that may not be available on Sundays.

Grow! is a curriculum developed at Monroe United Methodist Church in 2012. It is our third attempt at writing our own program. With a new Conference-wide emphasis on the Fruit of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:22, 23), we would like to share this curriculum with other UM churches in Wisconsin.

LESSONS

We use six sessions for VBS. This curriculum can be adapted for five days (by dropping day two or three or combining days two and three).

Day One: God makes crops grow in the fields. Jesus describes obstacles to growth. Psalm 65:10

Day Two: Jesus is the Vine, we are the branches. Fruitful growth comes only with strong connection John 15:1, 2

Day Three: Prayer is planting roots deep in Christ Colossians 2:7

Days Four, Five, and Six: learning the nine points of the Fruit of the Spirit, three each day.

We also include ideas on how to use these themes as Children's Sermons in anticipation of VBS. Having the students hear the same lessons often is a good preview and effective reinforcement.

PRAYER

There is a tri-fold brochure to adapt for your church to have the adults pray. Each day's lessons are outlined so people can add it to their regular devotions. It's an effective way to keep shut-ins informed and involved. Their prayers are an excellent way to participate when they are unable to get to church. The guide can also be used by relatives too far away to visit in person yet want a connection to the spiritual life of a niece, nephew, or god-child.

CRAFTS

Vacation Bible School uses many teaching styles in a short time – music (right brain activity) and memorization (left brain) and crafts (hands on).

There are serious and silly ways to connect the nine spiritual virtues with things that grow, like trees or vines or gardens. These can be expressed on T-shirts, posters, and crafts. We used

small sticks and pasted on paper leaves. Using clear glue, we glued round pictures of the fruit on the back of small glass pebbles from the floral department. Ribbons support the glass on the branches. Go to www.monroeumc.com to see photos.

MUSIC

We have not included recorded music. Our band plays the music live. We can send you a CD with songs in the public domain. Look on YouTube for great ideas.

Many child-friendly songs contain references to the Fruit of the Spirit:

“Peace Like a River” sings about three fruit of the Spirit: peace, love, joy.

“Down in My Heart” sings about love.

“The Fruit of the Spirit Song” has a chorus that repeats the nine fruit twice.

COST

We are pleased to give away this curriculum to United Methodist Churches in the Wisconsin Annual Conference. You can spend more money on better crafts, snacks, or dinner for your students. If you are outside The United Methodist Church or Wisconsin, please contact us about a nominal fee to use this material. Just think – with minimal cost for curriculum, you’ll be able to invest in crafts, decorations, dinner something your leaders have long dreamed of doing.

INSPIRE AND EVALUATE

This curriculum was the culmination of a dozen people working for months, each with his or her own spiritual gifts. Using this at other churches (with different needs) by leaders (who have different spiritual gifts) will produce a wide range of results.

We are very interested in how you were able to use this curriculum.

What inspired you?

How did you change and adapt this material?

What was hard to do?

What was new and helpful?

What have you done at VBS that this curriculum completely missed?

To pass on your comments (good or bad), please e-mail us at monroeumc@tds.net.

or write up your comments on paper

Monroe United Methodist Church

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or talk to us at 608.325-6700

Let us know when you’re using this and we’ll pray for your success.

Thanks.

Randy Booth

pastor