

First Church Sunday School

Jesus Said: "Let the Children Come to Me"



Sally Schulenburg photo

First Church, **Debby (Ddg) Wakefield**, Christian Education Director, said that they have been held "forever." Ddg stated, "Our church has long shown its commitment to Sunday School: through its strong CE Board and through the support and recognition of personnel needed to run the programs."

The Sunday School Year

Rally Sunday marks the beginning of the school year, and in a sense, the church's year as well. Teachers for the new year are commissioned, and sessions of Sunday School classes coincide with the 9:00 and 11:00 AM services.

Once a month, the children come to church services with their parents before being excused to their classes. This gives them a chance to worship as a family, as

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Sunday School has always been a cornerstone of the Congregational way and a vital part of the life of First Church. We are committed to the "Public worship of God, and ... mutual edification in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus."* This edification begins in Sunday

School—from the infants in the Nursery to the junior high level. The foundation laid there continues through Covenant Class, youth groups, and adult education offerings.

When asked about the history of Sunday School classes at

Rally Sunday—What Does It Mean?

"Homecoming"—everyone back together again after a busy summer ... the beginning of a new Sunday School year ... two worship services ... the commissioning of Sunday School teachers ... tanned and happy

faces ... the kickoff of fellowship activities ... a full sanctuary ... the excitement of meeting new Sunday School friends and teachers ... reconvening of boards and committees ... full choirs ... "Celebration!"

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Sunday School, and a Lot More

The Board of Christian Education's mission is to formulate and administer the education programs of the church. This means overseeing the Sunday School—but here at First Church it covers much more than that. Led by 1992 Chair **Beth Kelling**, the Board administers young people's programs, adult discussion groups, Vacation Bible School, and the Christmas Workshop. The Board focuses on special topics through a number of subcommittees: **Adult Education, Curriculum, Family Life, Missions, Youth Education**, and the new **Covenant Class Task Force**.



Les Grube photo

Beth Kelling

Sunday School

A large part of the Board's focus is on the Sunday School—the formal teaching of children age 3 through grade eight. Beth discussed how the Board chooses teaching materials.

"We work very closely with Ddg Wakefield when setting the curriculum. In a way, Ddg acts as a consultant to the board, since she has the experience and access to educational resources we need." As CE Director, Ddg is also a permanent ex-officio member of the Board.

Discussion Groups

The CE Board organizes education and discussion groups for all age levels in the church. These include Life Education Programs for middle schoolers, such as the talk given by Z Schaeffer in May on Decision Making; and adult courses such as Dean Fowler's "Couples Communication" class and Susan Koske's series on parenting issues.

Beth commented, "The Board is responsible for educating everyone—regardless of age. In addition to the existing programs, we are responding to requests for more adult groups. To that end, an Adult Education Subcommittee was formed early this year to define needs and determine a course of action."

Other Children's Activities

As if the above projects weren't enough, the CE Board also oversees the Christmas Workshop and the summertime Vacation Bible School. Here again, the Board relies on the expert, Ddg Wakefield. "Ddg is instrumental in recruiting teachers and helpers, obtaining materials, and advising each year's Workshop and VBS organizers," Beth said.

Goals and Long Range Plans

The primary long and short range goal of this board is, by necessity, ongoing: to provide high quality Christian Education

to all members of the church. The main focus has been on youth through the Sunday School programs, but the Board plans to expand the adult education offerings this coming fall. Specifically for 1992, the Board will incorporate the nine recommendations made by the Long Range Planning Committee.

1992 Members

Beth Kelling, Chair, completes her third year on the Board.

Mary Granberg, Vice Chair, is on the Youth Education and Missions subcommittees.

Cathy Bauer, who recently resigned when she moved out of the area, organized this year's Vacation Bible School.

Ruth Booher. Ruth is on the Curriculum and Family Life subcommittees, and was instru-

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The Congregationalist Newsletter

Editor, Rachel Pearson

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♦ ♦ ♦

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Christian Education Director
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♦ ♦ ♦

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Teaching by the Language of Example

The Sunday School teachers at First Church run the gamut of ages and interests, from teen volunteers to those who could be the grandparents of their students. This is a profile of two of the many people who have devoted their time and talent to our Sunday School.

"All Those Sweet Little Faces"

Chris Davidson began teaching Sunday School when her youngest daughter was in the first grade. Since then, she's put her degree in Early Childhood Education to work for a variety of classes: two- and three-year-olds, 5th and 6th grade girls, and Covenant Class—for a total of 16 of [redacted] years she's been a member of our church.

Chris has had a chance to watch these children grow into adulthood and to teach more than one generation in a family. Rick Koch, our Minister of Christian Fellowship, was in her Covenant Class; last year she taught Rick's sons, Ben and Dan. Which generation was better behaved? Diplomatically, Chris said they were "about the same."

Chris will readily admit, however, that she likes teaching three-year-olds, which she did last year at 9:00 AM Sunday School. "I stopped teaching Covenant Class when I realized everyone in it was taller than I," Chris said.

Although Sunday School teachers may choose to volunteer for one quarter only, Chris takes the class for the entire year. "It's important for them to have continuity, and to know that Jesus is their friend. If they

start Sunday School at a young age, and attend consistently, they'll have the foundation to build a spiritual life," Chris said. She stressed that working with Ddg Wakefield makes the administrative part of teaching a pleasure.

Though the 1992-93 year will be a teaching sabbatical from Sunday School for Chris, she'll be busy; she just accepted a part-time job teaching four-year-old day care kindergarten.

"My overriding objective is to let each child know that God loves them and that Sunday School is fun."

Daughter Amy is [redacted] Mary, and Carrie graduated from UW-Madison two years ago. Chris also has a dog and cat as well as a full-time career [redacted] erior design.

Could she ever retire fully from Sunday School? Probably not—to quote Chris, "The memory of all those sweet little faces keeps me coming back."

"Wonderfully Rewarding"

An accurate one-word description of **Linda Ryan's** teaching style is "flexibility." Linda teaches the combined three- through six-year-old class for 11:00 AM Sunday School.

This age span includes children who may be away from their parents for the first time to seasoned day-care and kindergarten veterans. Linda shapes this organizational hurdle into a springboard for enhancing the children's creativity and involve-

ment. "The class size is small; so I can give attention to each child. The older ones help the little ones—like the old one-room school house method."

Linda was a speech therapist in the school system, and began teaching Sunday School after becoming the Congregational Home Activities Director because she missed working with young children. Seventeen years later, she's still with the "little ones."

The small class size at 11:00 allows Linda to know the children as individuals. To avoid burn out and provide time to play in the Handbell Choir, she teaches every other week for the entire year.

"I try not to be heavy handed," she said. "Sometimes my goal is to have them say a simple grace. My overriding objective is to let each child know that God loves them and that Sunday School is fun."

Linda obviously loves being with people, and between her volunteer work and career she has the best of all worlds. "I work with the little ones on Sundays, the seniors during the week, and many wonderful volunteers at the Home. You could say I run the spectrum of ages."

Even with the demands of a career and running a household that includes two children in college, it's unlikely Linda will give up teaching. In her words, "Every year I plan to resign, but then I try to imagine not being part of the Christmas pageant! I just love teaching—it's been wonderfully rewarding."

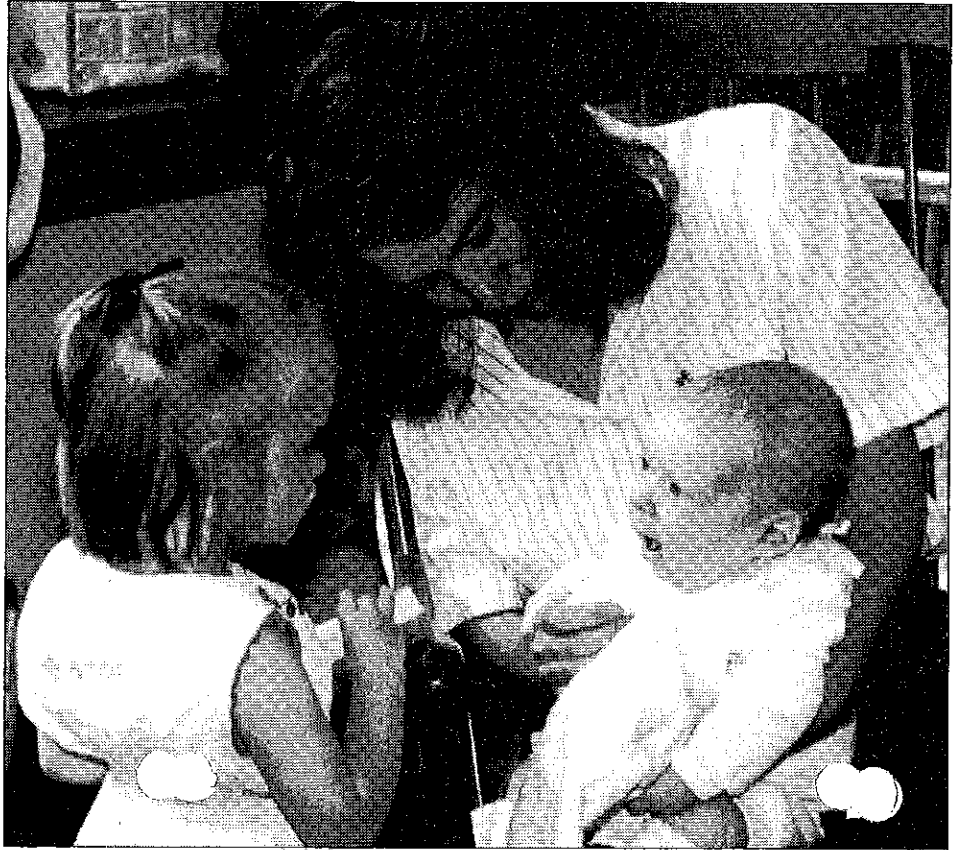
Sunday School *(continued from page 1)*

well as to see what "big church" is all about. These special Sundays include events such as the Thanksgiving offering, presentation of Bibles to third graders, Christmas Kindergarten Pageant, Junior Choir performance, Palm Sunday, and Youth Sunday.

The year's culminating activity is Children's Sunday in June. Each class presents a brief program during the church services about what they've learned. Children's Sunday is a wonderful chance for the rest of us to glimpse the wonder of youngsters learning about the love of Jesus, and to rekindle some of the joy we felt as children learning about God's world.

Setting Curriculum

Two years ago, the Christian Education Board conducted a



Paul Pearson photo

Margie Idzikowski runs the 0-2 nursery each Sunday.



Sally Schulenburg photo

major overhaul of the Sunday School curriculum. Materials from several companies were evaluated and reviewed with the

goal of selecting a program matching the needs and beliefs of our members.

The Board selected the *Bible Discovery* series, produced by the Presbyterian Publishing House of Louisville, Kentucky. The Board reviews this curriculum each year using teacher evaluations.

The lessons are *Bible-based* and allow interpretation by individual teachers, who have been very positive about this series. They say that it is easy to learn, flexible, and provides appropriate age divisions for our church's needs. Each Sunday's lessons are based on the same Scripture passage, with the creative activities and discussions geared to specific age groups. The lessons grow in complexity and depth at each

succeeding grade level, allowing the children to gain an ever deeper grasp of God's word.

Dedicated Teachers

Even the best curriculum would be meaningless without a committed group of teachers to present it. About 25-30 individuals volunteer each year, with most teaching for one quarter. This requires more than just an hour on Sunday; teachers read the coming week's Bible story and lesson plan during the week, and plan activities and methods to present this information. They can use the suggestions in the *Bible Discovery* series or invent their own strategies. For instance, no one at the last Children's Sunday will soon forget the littlest Sunday Schoolers' joyous version of "Happy

Birthday to Jesus"—complete with party hats and horns.

Laying the Foundation

It's been said that "Play is the work of children." Through the early Sunday School "work" activities and the higher grade levels' discussion groups, children learn about God's plan for the world. Christianity becomes more than another multi-syllabic word used by big people. They come to understand that they too are Christians, and are an important part of our church family. In this way, we heed Jesus' admonition in Mark 10, verse 14: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God."

**From Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Christian Education for First Congregational Church, 1980*

Rachel Pearson photo



Sally Schulenburg photo

Sunday School at a Glance

9:00 AM

Average attendance: 135

Nursery (ages 0-2)

Classes for 2, 3, 4, and 5-year-olds

Classes for grades 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

11:00 AM

Average attendance: 20

Nursery (ages 0-2)

Kindergarten (ages 3-5)

Combined class for grades 1-2

Teachers

25 – 30 teachers per year; most teach one quarter

Quarters:

Fall: Sept. through November

Winter: Dec. through February

Spring: March through early June

Families

CE families: 197

CE children: 341

Highest combined attendance: 214

S E P T E M B E R 1 9 9 2

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 Business & Professional Women 5:30 PM	3	4 St. Vincent Meal Cooking 9:15 AM & 1:00 PM Leave to serve 4:15 PM	5
6 Communion in Chapel at 9:40 AM Coffee in Lounge 11 AM	LABOR DAY 7 Church office closed	8 Deacons 7:00 PM Sr. PF Parents 7:00 PM	9 Membership Committee 7:00 PM Pilgrim Fellowship begins: Jr. 4:00-5:30 PM Sr. 6:30-8:30 PM	10 Choir practice starts	11	12
RALLY SUNDAY 13 Services 9:00 & 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 10:00 AM Share a Prayer 10:05 AM Commission SS Teachers SS Registration Grief Group 2:00 PM	14 Trustees 7:00 PM Fellowship 7:00 PM Communications 7:00 PM CE 7:30 PM Benevolences 7:30 PM	15	16	17	18	19
20 Featured Group: Long-Range Planning 10:05 AM	21 M&SG 7:00 PM	22 Church Council 7:00 PM	23	24	25	26
27 Installation of PF Officers	28	29	30			Event notices and reminders may be dropped in the Newsletter mailbox for inclusion in the CALENDAR

Another Successful Sundaes on Sunday

August 9, 1992

Photos by Rachel Pearson



Long Range Planning Update

Ideas for Adult Education Offerings Sought

Rally Day is an opportunity to refocus energy into the activities of our congregation. The Long Range Planning Committee welcomes this chance to respond to the suggestions which resulted from the May Planning Retreat. At this two-day event, 60 of you cared, shared, and considered the future of our church.

The LRP Committee and the CE Board are considering some exciting adult education opportunities, to be offered between the church services. However, what seems thrilling to a few of us sitting around a table may not interest the rest of the congregation.

This is where we need your

help. What topics would you like to see offered in adult education? Which programs would keep you at church for another hour on Sunday? The ideas don't need to be "earth-shattering" or even particularly original—just so they're of interest to you. Contact any member of the LRP Committee, or drop a note in the office.

We realize people are busy and time is tight. Let this time crunch be a stepping stone for creativity rather than an excuse for omission. As Congregationalists, we are capable of rolling up our sleeves and developing the potential that is in each of us.

—Jan Burgess

CE Board

(continued from page 2)

mental in organizing last spring's Family Life presentation.

Kathy Collis, Treasurer, is on the Adult Education and Family Life subcommittees and the Covenant Class Task Force.

Jon Hanson is on the Adult Education and Curriculum subcommittees, and was instrumental in forming the Covenant Class Task Force.

Lori Hassett is a member of the Family Life and Youth Education subcommittees.

Richard Koenings is on the Adult and Youth Education subcommittees.

Russ Niederjohn is a member of the Curriculum and Adult Education subcommittees.

JoAnn Norris is on the Adult Education Subcommittee.

Denise O'Meara is on the Curriculum and Mission subcommittees.

Lynn Walsh, a member of the Family Life and Youth Education subcommittees, is also the **Secretary** of the Board.

In Brief

Share a Prayer

A time for quiet reflection. The sharing of concerns with a small group of church members. Coffee and conversation, handshakes and hugs, group prayer in a small setting

That's what the new "Share a Prayer" program is all about—a place to share joys and concerns for a few minutes of prayer, encouragement, and fellowship. Open to everyone, this very informal group will meet each Sunday between services beginning September 13. Contact Bill Godfrey or Jan Burgess for more information.

For Your Information...

You've read their group profiles in the *Newsletter*. You've seen their meetings in the Calendar. Now it's time to meet our church's board and committee members face to face.

The Long Range Planning Committee is launching a "Group of the Month" informational series. On the third Sunday of each month, one group will set up in the Resource Center between services to give a brief presentation and field comments and questions.

First Congregational Church
1511 Church Street
Wauwatosa, WI 53213-2593

Long Range Planning will kick off the series on September 20. Plan to join us and learn more about this diversified, dynamic group.

Our New Look

Cancel your eye doctor appointment. The September *Newsletter* is a bit different. The typesetting was done by the desktop publishing firm of Cavanaugh Ink. of Wauwatosa. This production method was decided upon after much trial and error, investigation, computer memory overload, and comparison shopping on the part of the Editor *et al.*

This is the next step in the Communications Committee's ongoing efforts to improve and upgrade the *Newsletter's* design, layout, and content. And, yes, we haven't forgotten the Name Contest—the winner will be announced this autumn. Watch this space!

The Editor Thanks ...

Jan Burgess for written materials; Beth Kelling, Ddg Wakefield, and Mary York for background information; and Les Grube, Paul Pearson, and Sally Schulenburg for photography.

Our Church Family

Bereavements

Les and Marcia Grube; his mother died August 2
Sharon Koenings; her grandmother died August 6

Hospitalized

Margaret Beck, St. Joseph's
John Demeny, St. Joseph's
Klara Hokenson, St. Joseph's
(infant daughter of
Michelle & John Hokenson)
James Kubal, St. Joseph's
Bob Ornst, Columbia
Verna Van Uxem, St. Luke's
Rehabilitation Hospital

Home from the Hospital

Doug Franklin
Helene Heinz
Bill Law
Howard Millen
Paul Moellentine
Don Zaiser

Wedding

Scott Buck & Jillane Jones
(August 1)

And ...

... best wishes to all students beginning the new semester at colleges and universities.

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